2000

Conflict resolution: a counseling skill

Carol Jean Friedmann

University of Northern Iowa

Copyright ©2000 Carol Jean Friedmann

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp

Part of the Counseling Commons, Education Commons, and the Social Psychology and Interaction Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Recommended Citation


https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/711

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
Conflict resolution: a counseling skill

Abstract
Conflict resolution is a counseling skill (Ivy, 1994; Haley, 1976; Pearce, 1996). Counselors are in a unique place to both promote conflict resolution skills and use counseling skills while practicing conflict resolution for longer lasting and therapeutic resolutions. Two environments in which counselors have been especially active regarding conflict resolution have been in the schools and in the family (Moore, 1996).

To take a closer look at conflict resolution, this paper will do the following: define conflict resolution; look at common attitudes and ways of handling conflict; examine the effects of destructive conflict resolution and the effects of teaching constructive conflict resolution; and look at how some communities and schools are introducing conflict resolution skills. What the counselor’s role has been and could be concerning conflict resolution skills will be discussed throughout, but will be specifically addressed in the conclusion.
CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A COUNSELING SKILL

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Postsecondary Education

University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Carol Jean Friedmann

Spring 2000
This Research Paper by: Carol Jean Friedmann
Entitled: CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A COUNSELING SKILL

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

2-17-00
Date Approved
Adviser/Director of Research Paper

2-17-00
Date Approved
Second Reader of Research Paper

Michael D. Waggoner
Date Approved
Head, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Postsecondary Education
There is a tendency in our society to treat conflict as a pathological state and to seek its causes and treatment. Generally, scholars and practitioners view conflict as something undesirable, an enemy to effective group functioning and organizational performance (De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997). The word conflict is associated with pain, disharmony, and anger by most people (Borisoff & Victor, 1998; Brown & Fisher, 1988; Kottler, 1994; Potter, 1996). The way people deal with conflict is often a reflex strategy based on fear and past experiences (Johnson, 1993; Katz & Lawyer, 1993; Kottler, 1994; National Association for Community Mediation [NACM], 1993; Weeks, 1992). Yet, conflict is an intimate part of our lives and something the counselor grapples with in other people’s lives as well as their own on a daily basis. Because people are in conflict with others, inner values and thoughts, or the environment, conflict resolution is a primary reason people seek counseling (Nugent, 1994).

Conflict resolution is a counseling skill (Ivy, 1994; Haley, 1976; Pearce, 1996). Counselors are in a unique place to both promote conflict resolution skills and use counseling skills while practicing conflict resolution for longer lasting and therapeutic resolutions. Two environments in which counselors have been especially active regarding conflict resolution have been in the schools and in the family (Moore, 1996).

To take a closer look at conflict resolution, this paper will do the following: define conflict resolution; look at common attitudes and ways of handling conflict; examine the effects of destructive conflict resolution and the effects of teaching constructive conflict resolution; and look at how some communities and schools are introducing conflict resolution skills. What the counselor’s role has been and could be concerning conflict resolution skills will be discussed throughout, but will be specifically addressed in the conclusion.
Conflict Resolution

Definition

Conflict comes from the Latin word conflictus, meaning the act of striking together (Miriam-Webster, 1998). The first meaning Webster gives for conflict is “fight, battle, war”. The second meaning listed is “competitive or opposing action of in compatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons)” or “mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands (p. 242).” The synonym is discord.

Miriam-Webster (1998) defined resolution as “the act or process of reducing to simpler form as in “the act of analyzing a complex notion into simpler ones”; “the act of answering: solving”; or “the act of determining (p. 997)”. The synonym is courage. This seems appropriate, since conflict is often fear inducing. As will be seen later, the act of reducing to simpler parts, finding a solution, and determining the true nature of the conflict are among the skills necessary for conflict resolution.

Negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and litigation are all positive paths to conflict resolution. Negotiation is the bargaining that takes place directly between two or more parties who are in conflict. Mediation uses a neutral third party to facilitate conflict resolution, assisting the parties to understand and negotiate with one another. Arbitration is resorting to calling in a third party to hear both sides of the conflict and impose a decision that both parties agree to abide by. This differs from mediation in that in mediation the resolution of the conflict remains in the hands of those in conflict. In arbitration the conflicted parties have given up their right to find a solution to a third party. Litigation occurs when the conflict is brought before the court system for a decision that is legally binding (Slaikeu, 1996; Greenstone & Leviton, 1997). For the purposes of this paper, positive conflict resolution will be referring to negotiation and mediation.
Common Attitudes and Ways of Dealing with Conflict

Weeks (1992) described five ineffective ways people deal with conflict: conquest, avoidance, bargaining, applying a band-aid, and role-playing. Others (Eckstein, 1998; Scott, 1990; Borisoff & Victor, 1998; Lerner, 1985) agree with this list, applying similar labels to the same observed behaviors.

We confuse good relations with approval, shared values and avoiding disagreements (Brown and Fisher, 1988). To have disagreements or conflict is equated with having a poor relationship in the culture of the United States. This has caused some problems in relationships. One of the reasons ineffective ways of dealing with conflict are chosen has been our discomfort with conflict. The other reason is the degree of effort and time required to invest in conflict resolution.

Conflict cannot be avoided entirely. A major factor in marital dissatisfaction is the inability to listen and resolve conflict productively, more so than the amount of love or good sex. Company executives and middle managers spend twenty-five percent of their time dealing with interpersonal conflict (Borisoff & Victor, 1998). Time spent by principles and teachers resolving student conflicts robs time from teaching and lesson planning (Johnson & Johnson, 1998).

Research findings (De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1998) indicated that contrary to our culture’s tendency to avoid conflict, conflict, when managed in constructive and healthy ways, is positive for schools, relationships, and the work force. Seeing conflict as an opportunity for creativity, growth, and learning instead of pain and humiliation is a reframe of conflict that helps to avoid ineffective ways of dealing with conflict (Brown & Fisher, 1988; Borisoff & Victor, 1998; Coulson, 1996; De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997; Kottler, 1994).
Effects of Destructive Conflict Resolution Behaviors

In their review of research, De Drue and Van De Vliert, (1997) reported that avoidance has a negative impact on interpersonal relationships and resolution of conflict. This negative impact sometimes even exceeded the negative impact of open opposition. According to De Drue and Van De Vliert (1997), suppressed conflict compared to active confrontation leads to escalation of the conflict in the future. By suppressing an unwanted thought it may lead to increased presence of this and related thoughts when the suppression is alleviated. Add to avoidance and suppression, blaming, invalidating, and eliminating possibilities as ways to negatively effect conflict (Hudson & O’Hanlon, 1995).

There is considerable evidence that corporal punishment as a conflict resolution behavior used by some parents is associated with the subsequent aggression of children. Straus and Yodanis (1996) conducted a study to explore for a relation between corporal punishment of teenagers, adult depression, and assaults on spouses. When controlling for age, socioeconomic status, ethnic group, and witnessing violence between parents, there was a significant correlation. Analysis showed that for each increase in corporal punishment of an adolescent, starting with just one instance, there was an increase in the approval of violence and actual violence toward a spouse of that adolescent as an adult. The greatest predictor of the use of destructive conflict resolution behavior, more so than early attachment or lack of attachment to a care giver, was found to be a history of abuse, the use of violence to solve conflict (Janoff-Bulman, 1997).

Two other studies suggested that bullying and victimization by siblings occurs more often than is commonly acknowledged. This form of conflict has long term effects on self-esteem and on the ability to cope with life in adult relationships (Goodwin, Kennedy, & Roscoe, 1987; Madsen & Smith, 1996) when not dealt with. Teaching
conflict resolution skills to these children and their parents and the effects of destructive conflict resolution behaviors may possibly reduce this bullying and victimization.

A study by Bird, Gryl, and Stith (1991) found that violent dating relationships relied on the negotiation styles of negative affect, indirect appeal, and emotional appeal more frequently than did partners in nonviolent relationships. They also relied on confrontation and escape/avoidance as coping strategies. These negative conflict resolution behaviors and extremes in coping with conflict from highly emotional confrontation to avoidance appear to be connected with violence.

It seems evident that destructive conflict resolution begets more destructive conflict resolution, poor relationships, depression, poor self-esteem, lack of positive conflict resolution skills, and poor ability to cope.

In a study conducted among adolescent Arabs it was found that adolescents of parents who used reasoning in their conflicts were more likely to use reasoning in conflict. Adolescents of parents who used verbal and physical abuse in their conflicts were more likely to use verbal and physical abuse (Dawud-Noursi & Haj-Yahia, 1998).

Social learning of conflict resolution styles was the subject of a study conducted by Dunn and Herrera (1997). This study looked at the connection between modeling experienced by 33 month-old children and the behavior these same children displayed 3 years later at six years of age. This study found the strongest modeling influence for these children was between the mother and the child's sibling, more so than mother’s direct interaction with the child or the sibling’s direct interaction with the child. There was a positive correlation with the child’s use of constructive conflict management and the mother’s use of other oriented reasoning. There was also a positive correlation between a mother’s use of reasoning that focused on her own needs, or no argument, and the child’s
destructive conflict management with a friend three years later. These findings were statistically significant irrespective of the child’s conflict style at 33 months.

It seems that destructive conflict resolution behaviors are learned. Therefore, if conflict resolution behaviors are learned, positive conflict resolution behaviors can be taught, and apparently at a very young age.

Positive Effects of Learning Positive Conflict Resolution Skills

According to De Dreu and Van De Vliert (1997) and Johnson and Johnson (1998) conflict contributes to both attraction to and understanding of relationships, greater productivity and creativity and integration of seemingly opposing interests in schools and in business. They suggested stimulating conflict while ensuring that conflicts will be managed in constructive and healthy ways.

Business

The Wehrle-Einhorn’s (1994) found that in the business environment, teaching the use of mediation for conflict resolution and prevention was one means of ameliorating the stress of increasing diversity in the workforce related to recent increases in immigration. A higher score in assessed conflict skills was found by Donovan, et al. (1998) to be significantly related to supervisory ratings of on-the-job performance in managing conflict and seemed to be unrelated to measures of cognitive ability. It doesn’t take a genius to learn conflict resolution skills, and the benefits have been a noticeable difference in supervision. These skills are an area of competence that can be accurately tested (Allred, Dennis, & O’Niel, 1997a & b; Chung & O’Niel, 1997; Donovan, et al, 1998; Grummon, 1997), an advantage for employers.
Schools

Research studies by Buie-Hune (1997), Cochrane and Saroyan (1997), Cunningham, Cunningham, and Martorelli (1998), Johnson, et. al. (1994), and the Department of Justice (1995), illuminated benefits of teaching conflict resolution skills to children. The benefits found were: development of self-regulation, responsibility, self-confidence, problem solving skills, positive attitudes, increased pro-social solutions and decreased aggressive solutions, use of skills in non-school settings, positive attitudes toward conflict, and better retention of academics. In addition, there were fewer conflicts referred to teachers and the principal, reduced physically aggressive playground behavior, successful peer resolution of 90 percent of the playground conflicts, conflict resolution skills being used more often, less class time spent on discipline and interruptions, and altered beliefs that respect was achieved through violence.

Johnson and Johnson (1998) did some comparisons. They studied four groups of children in grades 1 through 12. One group was not exposed to the conflict resolution program and those students consistently indicated more frequently that they would resolve the conflict scenarios by either forcing the other person to submit, or by withdrawing, unsatisfied, from the situation and the relationship. Consistently none of the untrained students indicated that they would use integrative negotiations as a means to resolve a hypothetical conflict. In contrast the trained students, even years later, tended to use integrative negotiation and mediation to resolve conflicts not only in school but at home and in the community.
Stern, Van Slyck, and Zak-Place (1996) argued for the use of resolution education, training, and practice as an intervention for optimal adolescent development. They presented an argument that these skills promote resilience, coping, problem solving, and assist in the resolution of interpersonal conflict when interpersonal conflict is developmentally high. As an educational, developmental, preventive, and remedial model, it works equally well.

Couples

Positive effects of learning conflict resolution skills can be found in couples counseling as well. Davidson and Horvath (1997) conducted a study by randomly placing 40 couples in a treatment group or control group. The treatment group was taught two conflict resolution skills, reframing and restraining, in three sessions. This appeared to have significantly helped couples with their target complaints and conflict resolution in comparison with the control group. These improvements remained at a 6-week follow-up. Data of studies evaluating PREP (Premarital Relationship Enhancement Program) and EPL (Ein Partnershaftliches Lernprogramm) have shown that couples who participated in these preventive training programs were significantly more satisfied with their relationship and showed a lower rate of divorce. Thirty percent of the control group's marriages dissolved in three years, while only ten percent of the intervention group separated or divorced during this same time period. Both these programs concentrate on communication and conflict resolution skills (Bodermann, 1997).
Family

Family mediation, most often used in cases of separation and divorce, has been shown to greatly enhance meeting needs of the relationship partners. Most important, it has greatly reduced the negative effect on the children of such breakups, as the orientation is changed from adversarial to seeking win-win solutions. Not only does it accomplish this great task 90% of the time, but it also on occasion salvages the relationship with the opening of blocked communication and the teaching of communication and conflict resolution skills. Even if the relationship is not salvaged, as the couple works through their settlement, they end up doing a great deal of the emotional work of dissolving the relationship that cannot happen in an adversarial atmosphere. This increases the non-couple's ability to let go and move on with their lives and be present for their children. The skills learned in mediation will continue to be used to enhance peaceful conflict resolution for the non-couple in the future. Research findings have indicated that children of divorce are harmed more by their parents' conflict than by any other single factor (Benjamin & Irving, 1995; Erickson & Erickson, 1988), hence peaceful conflict resolution is important for their well being. Another aspect of family mediation is the parent/child relationship. Lemmon (1985) stated that parent-child mediation has been successful when the child is a teenager. Psychotherapy and authority are both difficult and most often unsuccessful interventions with adolescents but mediation recognizes that both persons in conflict have power, an essential point in working with adolescents.
Conflict Resolution Structure and Skills

Both the structure and the skills involved in conflict resolution are similar to those in counseling. Although exact conflict resolution steps vary, the general procedure follows. The basics that can even be taught to a preschooler (Friedmann, Shlomo, Tzuriel, & Zeliger, 1998) are that the two in conflict agree to try and work things out, tell the truth, and refrain from interrupting or hurting each other. Then each side tells his or her story. To check out that the story was correctly heard and to validate the sender, either the mediator or the other person involved in the dispute repeats what they heard. Then the other disputant tells his or her story and gets validated in the same way. Once the stories are told, solutions are sought that continue to validate both parties in the conflict. Once a possible solution is agreed to, it is put into action and evaluated for effectiveness and revised as needed (Arezzo, Hendrix, Roedell, & Slaby, 1995; Borisoff & Victor, 1998; Brown & Fisher, 1988; Carns & Carns, 1997; Greenstone & Leviton, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Moore, 1996; NACM, 1996; Potter, 1996; Weeks, 1992).

Skills used in counseling are the skills used in conflict resolution. They include: building rapport, active listening, observation of non-verbals, awareness of systems, reframing, self-control, awareness of meta-communications, anxiety reduction, escalation and de escalation of emotional intensity, searching for things held in common, defining differences, looking for positive intentions, allowing to save face, and defining needs and wants, all with the intention of increasing understanding and facilitating communication between those involved in the conflict (Arezzo, Hendrix, Roedell, & Slaby, 1995; Borisoff
Introducing Conflict Resolution Skills to Communities and Schools

There are numerous ready-made conflict resolution programs which can be introduced in schools. In addition, there are numerous books authored to introduce the concepts of negotiation and conflict resolution. Many communities and schools have cooperatively put together their own unique programs that fit their particular needs (Arredondo, D'Andrea, & Daniels, 1999; Mercy & Potter, 1996). A selection of some of these creative programs and methods of introducing and conducting conflict resolution will be presented.

Peacemakers Program

Probably the framework most well known for introducing conflict resolution/mediation to the schools follows the form of the Peacemakers Program. Johnson and Johnson (1998) described the following procedures for implementing a Peacemakers program.

Create a cooperative context. This would consist of structuring the majority of learning situations so students must cooperate with each other in order to derive the greatest benefit and rewards from their participation in the classroom (Lo, Wheatley, & Smith, 1994; Pedersen, 1992). An example would be to have math class divided up into groups with the members of each group having a mixture of proficiency. These groups
then would work cooperatively on their set of problems. Those groups finishing early
could assist those groups still working as long as the class remained orderly. Each group
would then negotiate how they were going to present the concept their problems
represented to the rest of the class. There may be a rule that each child in the group must
have a part in the problem solving and presentation and have a good understanding of what
they are a part of. A reward could possibly be offered for the most cooperative and
helpful group.

Help all students understand the nature and desirability of conflict. Through
participation in conflict simulations and the Peacemakers curriculum, students are taught
the value of conflict. Often scripted conflicts are acted out where one script uses positive
conflict resolution skills and the other uses negative resolution behaviors. Students then
experientially know the difference. The students know the advantages of dealing with the
conflict constructively versus having either someone else intervene to take care of the
conflict, leaving with the conflict still unresolved, or worse, leaving with emotional or
physical wounds (Bosworth, Dubay, & Espl,age, 1996; Bush & Folger, 1994; Holly,

Teach all students the problem-solving negotiation procedure. The procedure
taught by the Peacemakers Program is: a) Describe what you want. b) Describe how you
feel. c) Describe the reasons behind your wants and feelings. d) Summarize your
understanding of what the other person desires, how he or she feels, and the reasons
underlying both. e) Propose three options for resolving the conflict that maximize joint
benefits. f) Jointly choose one solution and formalize the agreement with a contract or a handshake.

**Teach all students the peer-mediation procedure.** The peer mediation procedure taught is as follows. a) End the hostilities. b) Convince the disputants to commit to the mediation process and agree to negotiate in good faith. c) Help the disputants successfully negotiate with each other. d) Monitor the disputants’ compliance with the terms of the agreement. e) If peer mediation fails to resolve a conflict, the teacher is enjoined to serve as mediator. If teacher mediation fails, then the teacher must arbitrate the dispute. If that fails, the principal is called upon to serve as mediator, and if that fails, the principal arbitrates a decision.

**Reinforce and upgrade students’ conflict resolution skills.** An important component to a program teaching conflict negotiation and mediation is the opportunity to learn more and do more in this effort of making peace. This maintains student interest and enthusiasm (Johnson & Johnson, 1998).

It takes the whole school community to successfully carry out such a program. All the possible positive results make such an undertaking worth it for the development of the children individually and the improved learning atmosphere of the school in general. The school counselor is in an ideal position to implement such a program and reinforce students and faculty alike in applying the Peacemaker skills. The skills taught fit easily into the affective, communications, social skills, mental health, and coping curriculum counselors already take part in. In addition, assisting teachers to incorporate cooperative
learning and conflict situations in their regular curriculum fit the school counselor's role as consultant to teachers concerning the mental health and developmental problems of their students (Dougherty, 1995). Being available to both students and faculty to work out problems are opportune times to reinforce the applicability of conflict resolution skills in multiple arenas. Some unique applications of school or youth based programs follow.

**RIPP**

RIPP (Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways) was created by a Richmond school (Dahlberg, Farrell, & Meyer, 1996). Some of the unique elements of RIPP are units on violence in the media, coercion, mindlessness, premature cognitive commitments (described as operating on auto pilot), mindfulness (to replace mindlessness with creation of new categories, openness to new information and awareness of more that one perspective), and the acronyms of SCIDDE (Stop, Calm down, Identify the problem and feelings, Decide on options, Do it, Look back, and Evaluate) and RAID (An acronym for options to handle the problem and feelings: Resolve, Avoid, Ignore, or Diffuse) (Dahlberg, Farrell, & Meyer, 1996).

**Building a Program from the Bottom Up**

Another program (Jackson, Jackson, & Wiist, 1996) was built from the children up and involved the entire community. The school started their program by having the children in their home-rooms identify whom in their class they looked up to and admired. These persons were then chosen as peer leaders and taught social skills for solving problems in non-violent ways and encouraged with expectations for productive rewarding
careers, service to community, and enhancement of academic achievement. It is possible that these natural leaders may have relied on coercion and violence in the past, and may have been admired for their toughness. They were also taught how to organize and conduct violence prevention activities for friends, classmates, and school. They were instructed through videos, journal writing and field trips. This was expanded by inviting parents, guardians, or parental figures of the peer leaders to participate in parenting education covering communication, managing anger, conflict resolution, effects of violence in the media, disciplinary techniques, cultural ceremonies and traditions, crisis prevention, and intervention skills. Then area residents identified as neighborhood natural helpers by the adults and children, were invited to participate and organize self-help groups, block and neighborhood associations, building coalitions to address violence prevention. This program built on the three critical factors identified for building resilience in youth: a caring, supportive adult, opportunities for involvement in meaningful activities and decisions effecting their development, and high expectations for their behaviors (Jackson, Jackson, & Wiist, 1996). The name of this community was not mentioned in the article.

Another school asked the children in their home-rooms to identify those students who successfully navigate the school environment. Those selected student experts were then interviewed on how they handled conflict situations. There were eight themes that evolved and these were used then to build the program. Using this method to draw up a conflict resolution program for a school or community would insure that the program
avoids ethnocentric concerns and is relevant and applicable in the environment and values of the participants (Cognetta, King, Sdovholt, & Ye, 1997).

Culture Specific Programs

Involving the whole community was also a theme in a multifaceted, community-based violence prevention program targeting African American male adolescents called SAGE (Supporting Adolescents with Guidance and Employment) (Browne, Flewelling, Graham, Paschall, & Ringwalt, 1996). This program involved adult mentoring, African American culture and history lessons, manhood and conflict resolution training, a summer employment component, and an entrepreneurial experience (Browne, Flewelling, Graham, Paschall, & Ringwalt, 1996). Another program targeted at African American males was called Brain Power which targeted attributional bias and reactive aggression (Friday & Hudley, 1996).

Hamburg (1994) and Donahoe (1996) explored the possibilities of using education in mediation or conflict resolution as a means for teaching humans to have more constructive orientations towards those outside their group, while maintaining the values of group allegiance and identity, especially during childhood and adolescent development. They may provide some background for developing a program. Sensitivity to conflict resolution preferences of differing cultures (Gabrielidis, Pearson, Stephen, Villareal, & Ybarra, 1997; Gire, 1997; Tinsley, 1998) may prove beneficial.
Addressing Impulsiveness Approach

Daehlm, Doyle, Dykeman, and Flammer (1996) designed an anti-violence program that addressed impulsiveness, empathy, and locus of control, as this combination predicted 23 percent of the variance in school-based violent behaviors. Impulsiveness was the key predictor, accounting for half of the variance. They used a small group approach, using the peer culture and social bonding to pro-social peers to promote pro-social behaviors. They also recognized in the group the potential to live out rivalry, hostility, and contrasting mores. By addressing these in the safety of the group, new approaches to these problems could be taught, thus preventing the replication of negative conflict resolution behaviors learned at home. Hopefully the new approaches then would be passed on to the next generation.

Systems Approach

Carns and Carns (1997) pointed out that persistent problems are a result of patterns of interactions rather than isolated events. They advocated taking a systemic point of view, looking for the systems maintaining the patterns, and involving the systems in addressing the problem. They pointed out that disenfranchised members of systems become symptom bearers and that without involving all members of the systems in seeking solutions and ways of maintaining positive changes, the patterns will eventually repeat themselves. They utilized conflict resolution skills and helped authority figures in the systems to see the identified client(s) as the symptom bearer of the systems. They used mapping the system relationships to accomplish the latter. More permanent solutions may be found, they felt, if the purposes of the dysfunctional behavior could be determined.
Early Childhood Approach

An area of importance, especially in view of how early conflict resolution styles are learned and how much violence young children are exposed to in their homes, neighborhoods, and in the media, is the work with pre-school children. Play is the media toddlers and young children use to learn about and integrate the world around them. Pre-school teachers and care-givers in day care have noted the increase in aggressiveness of the children and the time they spend in controlling behaviors. Then, some teachers have relied on less free play and more controlled curriculum in order to minimize aggressiveness among young children. Two dynamic books, Teaching Young Children in Violent Times (Levin, 1994) and Early Violence Prevention (Arezzo, Hendrix, Roedell, & Slaby, 1995) describe how depriving children of free play is a solution for the teachers but is harmful to the integration process of children.

These sources contain a multitude of very sensitive suggestions on how to use free play to assist young children work through the violence they are witness to and integrate healthy ways to cope with and handle conflict. Others advocating similar sensitivity and hard line on violent behaviors are Afferbach and Fonville (1995), Moran and Whittington (1990), Honig (1998), and Hutchins, Sims, and Taylor (1997). Levine (1994) stated that we need to decide that teaching social responsibility and nonviolent conflict resolution is as valued and as central a part of the early childhood curriculum as the three R's and should be fully integrated with them. It isn’t until then that we can develop strategies for teaching about peace and nonviolent conflict resolution in a way that will truly make a difference in children’s lives today and ultimately in wider society and beyond.
Pair Therapy Approach

Along the lines of a gentle but effective way to increase conflict resolution skills and gain all of the other academic and socialization benefits described is pair therapy (Bartini, Charak, Flor, Galda, & Pelligrini, 1997; Booth, et al., 1998; Schultz, Selman & Watts, 1997). Pairing entails putting together two children with opposite, but equally ineffective, relational approaches to friendship. An example would be pairing a shy or fearful child with a bully or aggressive, controlling child. The two children meet together one or two times a week for a set amount of time under the watchful eye of an adult whose goal is to help each child develop the capacity both to stand up for himself and to be a caring sympathetic friend to others. They meet for up to an hour. During their time together they do activities that require them to interact, whether that would be play a game, put on a play, or talk about a subject they have in common. The supervisor makes sure of their safety and equal respect and gently, most of the time unobtrusively, guides them through places they get stuck in negotiations. This would be helpful for some of the children still left on the fringes when implementing an all school program of mediation/conflict resolution skills.

Conclusion

Conflict resolution is a skill with broad implications. Counselors help clients deal with every sort of conflict daily in every context they might find themselves. Our world is shrinking, bringing a diversity of cultures shoulder to shoulder with different viewpoints and values. Our people need to be more aware of the long-term consequences of violence and the skills to use constructive conflict resolution. Due to their knowledge of mental health, communication skills, relationship skills, and the importance of conflict resolution skills, counselors in their positions in schools, communities, businesses, and hospitals are
in the opportune place and time to advocate for the teaching and practicing of conflict resolution skills. The list of positive benefits is long.

This paper attempted to give a broad overview of conflict resolution. This was done after defining conflict resolution. Attitudes toward conflict often stand in the way of approaching conflict positively. Destructive conflict resolution behaviors have long-lasting negative effects. The good news is that positive conflict resolution skills can be taught and the benefits are quite pervasive, from a more positive outlook, greater creativity, and better relationships to improved academics and language skills. The structure of conflict resolution is so simple even pre-school children can be coached through the basic steps. The skills of conflict resolution are those already used in counseling. In the discussion of implementing, a basic peer mediation program was described. Following, some of the more creative interventions for introducing and using conflict resolution were summarized for the reader as resources for introducing conflict resolution in his or her own counseling environment.
References


Cunningham, C., Cunningham, L., Martorelli, V. (1998). The effects of primary division, student-mediated conflict resolution programs on playground


