

## From Theory to Practice:

### Intervening in Interpersonal Conflict

#### Experiential Learning Activity (ELA)

#### Guide for Instructors

#### The Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project

## ELA Overview

In this activity, students will practice intervening in interpersonal conflicts. The activity was designed to engage students in the challenges involved in applying conflict resolution theory and intervention tactics to conflicts that are relevant to their daily lives. The aim is to help students develop intentionality as they move from conflict analysis to conflict resolution and as they learn to connect theory to conflict resolution practice. The course professor will determine which frameworks, theories, and tactics to teach throughout the course, and students will be asked to test these out in the exercise. We have included a list of suggested topics and course materials in the Appendix.

In the exercise, each student will write a role play based on an interpersonal conflict that they have experienced, and they will use these role plays to practice the concepts, theories and techniques that they have learned throughout the semester. Each student will play the role of an intervener, a conflict party, and an observer in different role plays, but the main focus will be on their role as an intervener. Students will video record these role plays. The students will use these videos to inform their future practice by analyzing what worked and what they could have done better in one of the two possible variations.

The development of each ELA represents the collective effort of faculty and project staff of the Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. The primary authors of this activity are Alexcpf gt Cromwell and Sandra Cheldelin. ■



# Role Play Pedagogy

As a pedagogical tool, role play activities offer instructors a way of teaching students about complex disputes and ways of intervening in them. Such activities give students a sense of the challenges of intervening in interpersonal conflict and the wide range of emotions experienced by those involved in conflict situations. Because students design the role plays, they are able to relate to the individuals who are involved in the conflict, which allows them to think about how these conflicts are similar to ones they have experienced themselves. As they test conflict resolution strategies, they will gain a sense of what might work to resolve some of the conflicts in which they might be involved

Although role play activities are a rich form of learning, they may be challenging for instructors and students. Students who are unfamiliar with role play may be nervous, which can lead to overacting and playing into stereotypes. Instructors can guide students through such challenges by noting them while observing students engaged in role play and addressing them in debrief sessions built into the activity. The benefits of a successful role play activity make it well worth the challenges, as students have a rare opportunity to experience conflict as an intervener, as a conflict party, as an observer, and as a student.

## Learning Outcomes

This Experiential Learning Activity has been designed to help students:

- Integrate course content by planning an intervention based on the concepts, theories, and techniques that students have learned in class.
- Experience the challenges involved in intervening in interpersonal conflicts.
- Understand the dynamics of interpersonal conflict.
- Apply theories, concepts, and frameworks presented in the course to interpersonal conflicts relevant to their lives and develop intentionality in connecting theory to practice.
- Take the perspective of individuals who are different from themselves.
- Analyze their conflict resolution practice to gain skills in handling interpersonal conflict

### Resources required for each group:

- A phone, laptop, or camera capable of recording video footage
- Multiple spaces or breakout rooms to video-tape privately
- Some means of broadcasting the videos to the rest of the class  
(See Appendix for Detailed Instructions)

This ELA requires approximately 5-7 hours. It is designed to run over multiple class meetings. The recommended number of class meetings is at least four. This could also be condensed into 3 sessions by combining Activity Day 2 and 3 or assigning variation 3 (the reflection paper) instead of having a 4th class for Activity Day 4.

# Instructions for Activity

## Two weeks before the activity

- Give students the Student Guide and ask them to read the Role Play Write-up Assignment and the Sample Role Plays.
- Set a due date for the role plays and inform students that some of the role plays they will write will be used in class. (Ask students to indicate if they are uncomfortable with having their role play acted out in class.)

## One week before the activity

- Collect the role play assignments from the students.
- If you do not have the time to review and edit the role plays that students submit, you can use the 6 sample cases in the Appendix of this guide for the rest of the activity.
- Choose from among the role plays several that students will find most relevant to the conflicts that they experience in their daily lives. When choosing the role plays, look for criteria such as: a clear description of the issues in the conflict; detailed role descriptions explaining how each person in the conflict thinks and feels about it; and enough information for the intervener to develop a substantive strategy.
- The number of role plays needed depends on the number of students. Students will be broken up into groups of 3 or 4, depending on the size of the class. If you have 6 groups, you will need 6 role plays.
- Change the names in the role play for confidentiality purposes and, if necessary, expand on some of the roles so that students will have sufficient information when they act them out.
- Number the role plays - case 1, case 2, etc. - and create numbered groups for your students. Assign each student a case based on their group's number. Group 1 will intervene in case 1, group 2 will intervene in case 2, and so on. Tip: the ideal size for a group is 4. Groups of 3 are also ok, if needed. Do not assign them to a case that has more than two conflict parties.
- Bring copies of all the role plays for each student.

# Activity Day 1 (1 hour-1 hour and 15 minutes)

## Introduce the activity (30 minutes)

- Explain that the aim of the activity is to offer the students opportunities to think practically about how the concepts, theories and techniques that they have learned in class apply to resolving real conflicts.
- Pass out the Student Guide and explain the following steps that they will engage in throughout the multi-day activity:
  1. Review your assigned role play case in groups. (Activity Day 1)
  2. Prepare an Intervention Strategy using 5 theories, concepts, or techniques. (Before Activity Day 2)
  3. Discuss your Intervention Strategy during the Intervention Brainstorm. (Activity Day 2)
  4. Record your interventions, with each group member intervening once. (Activity Day 3)
  5. Choose the best one and present it as a group (or adjust according to which variation is chosen by the instructor). (Activity Day 4)
- Go through the guidelines for each of these steps in detail to make sure that students fully understand what is expected.
- Show a few sample videos (*See Appendix for links.*)

## Explain the Case Assignments (20-30 minutes)

- Have students break into their assigned groups
- Give each student a copy of all the cases
- Explain that the case that they will intervene in corresponds to their group number. Also, tell them that they have received a copy of each case, because they will hear about all the cases later in the Intervention Brainstorm and when other groups present. The idea is that they should be familiar with these cases so that they can give good feedback to their fellow students during the brainstorm and after the presentations.
- Inform the students that they will each take turns playing the role of the intervener in their group's case and creating a video for each intervention. If the group has 4 members, then they will record 4 videos. Each group member will be the intervener in one of the videos, and in the other 3 videos when they are not the intervener, they will play one of the roles of the conflict parties specified in the role play or the observer role. The videos should be 5 to 7 minutes in length, and either the observer or the video recorder should be the timekeeper for the group. The timekeeper will be responsible for making sure that the role play is within the time limit specified by the instructor.

- Make clear to students that they have the option of intervening as a third party or as one of the people involved in the conflict. The idea here is to have students understand that not all conflicts need a third party and that many conflicts can be resolved between the two parties themselves. Also explain that they can adjust the roles based on the number of people in the role play, and whether or not the intervener tries to solve the conflict as a party to the conflict or as a third-party intervener. For instance, if the role play involves two people in the conflict, then two people in the group could play these roles, the intervener could intervene as a third party, and the fourth member of the group could video record it while playing the role of observer and timekeeper. In this same conflict the intervener could instead intervene as one of the conflict parties, which would mean that one of the group members would play the role of the other conflict party, and the other two members of the group would be observers, with one of them as the video recorder and one of them as the timekeeper. In all situations the videotaping can be done by one of the students from another group or by positioning a smart phone, camera, laptop, or tablet to record the video without anyone holding it.
- Encourage students to focus their video on the process of intervening. They should not feel pressured to come to a resolution in 5 minutes, which would be unrealistic. Ideally, students should engage in a realistic discussion that explores the core issues of the conflict rather than resolve it.

### **Assign Intervention Strategy**

- Inform students that a printed copy of their Intervention Strategy will be due in the following class session, as they will be used in the Intervention Brainstorm.
- The Intervention Strategy should identify at least 5 theories/frameworks/skills that they can apply to their intervention. For each of these, they should write at least one paragraph connecting this approach to the conflict in which they will intervene. The Intervention Strategy should be between 500 and 750 words.

### **Questions about the Assignment (10-15 minutes)**

Set aside time to address any questions that students have about the activity, such as:

- Are we developing individual intervention strategies or doing so as a group?
- How many videos are we making?
- What will I be doing in the video, if I am not intervening?
- Which case are we working on?
- Do I have to be a third party when I intervene?
- Do we have to resolve conflicts in our videos?
- How long should the videos be?
- How should we organize our group presentation?

## Activity Day 2 (45 minutes - 1 hour)

- In preparation for Day 2, develop a new list of groups that students will meet in to brainstorm their intervention strategies. There should be three or four students in each group. The key when creating these groups is to make sure that no student has anyone in their group from their original "case" group, with whom they will be recording their videos. This way none of them will learn about the intervention strategies that other members of their group plan to use.

### Intervention Brainstorm (30-40 minutes)

The purpose of this part of the activity is to give students the opportunity to discuss their plan and to receive feedback on it from other students. This will help them to explore possible pitfalls of their approach and will push them to clearly articulate exactly what they will try to do in their intervention and how they will make it happen.

- Begin by asking if students have any questions about the Intervention Strategies that they developed or the activity in general.
- Break the students into their new groups for the Intervention Brainstorm.
- The group members will then explain the case that they are working on and share their Intervention Strategy with their small group and their rationale for this strategy. Specifically, each member of the group should
  - Describe the conflict that they will be intervening in
  - Share their intervention strategy
  - Explore the following questions based on each person's conflict and intervention strategy:
    1. Why did you choose to apply these particular theories/frameworks/skills in your intervention?
    2. Could other theories/frameworks/skills also be applied?
    3. How will you help the parties to understand each other, or see the other's point of view? If you are intervening as a party to the conflict, how will you show that you are trying to understand the other person's perspective and at the same time get yours validated?
    4. Think about some potential challenges that may arise during this process. How will you deal with them? NOTE: These guidelines are in the Student Guide and can also be put on a PowerPoint slide.
- Give students plenty of time to discuss their strategies in depth. It is recommended that the instructor go around from group to group, address any questions that they have, and check in on their understanding of the overall assignment.

### Debrief (15-20 minutes)

Once students have had time for a thorough discussion on their intervention strategies, reconvene the class to debrief using the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn from talking to each other about your intervention strategies?
- What theories/frameworks did you find to be most applicable?
- What were some of the similarities and differences in your approaches?
- What are some of the challenges that you think that you will face? How will you deal with them?

## Activity Day 3 (1 hour 15 minutes - 2 hours)

### Video record the interventions (1-1.5 hours)

- Have students split up into their originally assigned groups and tell them to find a quiet spot on campus to record their role plays.
- Remind students that each group member should intervene in the same conflict based on the intervention strategy that they developed and the other members of the group should play the other roles specified in the role play.
- Also remind them that the videos should be roughly 5-7 minutes in length and each member of the group should record a video where he or she is an intervener. The final number of videos should equal the number of group members.
- Encourage them to focus on the process of engaging in an intervention, not on coming to a resolution in such a short period of time.
- Instruct students to do the following in each video:
  - Set the stage for the conflict. Explain who will intervene, who the conflict parties are, and who will play each role.
  - Introduce the theories that they are using in their intervention strategy.
  - Role play the intervention (Again, the intervener can be party to the conflict or a 3rd party)
- Instructors can ask the students to submit the videos for individual grading.

### Debrief (15-30 minutes)

- Use the following questions to engage students in exploring their role as interveners
  - What went well in this session?
  - What challenges did you face? How did you deal with these challenges?
  - Did your intervention work as planned? What surprised you?
  - What could you have done better? What will you do the next time that you intervene in this type of situation?
- Next, use the following questions to have students think about their role as parties to the conflict:
  - What was it like assuming the role of people in a conflict?

- o What did the intervener say or do that really worked for you?
- o How did this experience help you to understand conflict dynamics that occur in interpersonal conflicts?

## Activity Day 4 (Time dependent on Variation)

There are two variations that an instructor can choose from to help with debriefing this experience. Variation 1 focuses on larger class discussion. Variation 2 is a reflective writing assignment. In Variation 1, which takes between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours, the instructor will show a few videos with the student who intervened explaining their approach, followed by a larger class discussion. Variation 2 will allow students to analyze some of the videos and think through what worked well in the video intervention and what could have been done better.

### Variation 1: Group Presentations

Students give group presentations on videos from the previous session (1.5 – 2.5 hours. It is recommended to have a break in between)

- Have students present their videos in the groups that they made their videos in. Each presentation should be 15-20 minutes long.
- Tell them that when they present their video as a group, they will decide on 1 of the 4 videos that they made and show it to the class. Their decision should be based on:
  - o How realistic the depiction of a conflict is,
  - o How well it incorporates course content, and
  - o Whether or not the intervention provokes discussion
- The main focus will be on the intervention, but each student will focus on his or her own role in the video. They will then show this video, and each of them will discuss their role in the video and address issues specific to their role.
- When they present their video, interveners can discuss:
  - o Why they did what they did. What specific techniques they applied from the course.
  - o What worked, and what did not work.
  - o How the dynamics between the conflicting parties and themselves impacted their specific choices as interveners
  - o What they learned from this process
- People who played roles as conflict parties can discuss:
  - o Why they did what they did. What specific techniques they applied from the course.
  - o As a person in the conflict, what the intervener did that worked for them or didn't work.
  - o How they were impacted by the dynamics between themselves and the other conflict party and themselves and the intervener.
  - o What they learned from this process.



- People who played the role of observers can discuss:
  - o What happened, and what techniques/tactics were used. They should describe any evidence of students practicing content learned throughout the class.
  - o What the parties did to successfully manage this conflict.
  - o What worked and what suggestions they can offer to make it work better.
- After each group presents, give other students opportunities to ask questions

#### Debrief (15 minutes)

- Use the following questions as a guide for the debrief
  - o What did you learn from the way that your fellow interveners, who mediated the same conflict, intervened? What surprised you based on what you had heard about their original plan?
  - o What was it like watching yourself intervene in the conflict? What would you change about what you did knowing what you know now?
  - o What did you learn from your experience of playing a role as a member of the conflict?
  - o What did you learn from observing your peers as they played the role of conflict parties and as they intervened?
  - o What are some general takeaways about intervening in interpersonal conflict that you gained from this exercise?

#### **Variation 2:**

Review several videos from the previous session (30-45 minutes)

- Have 3-5 students volunteer to screen videos of their intervention.
- After a video is shown, have the intervener discuss
  - o Why they did what they did. What specific techniques they applied from the course.
  - o What worked, and what did not work.
  - o How the dynamics between the conflicting parties and themselves impacted their specific choices as interveners.
  - o What they learned from this process.
- After each person presents, open up a general discussion about the video using the following questions as a guide:
  - o What worked well in the intervention?
  - o What could have been done better?
  - o What are some lessons for conflict intervention from this video?

## Debrief (15 minutes)

Use the following questions as a guide for the debrief:

- What did you learn from the way that your fellow interveners, who mediated the same conflict, intervened? What surprised you based on what you had heard about their original plan?
- What was it like watching yourself intervene in the conflict? What would you change about what you did knowing what you know now?
- What did you learn from your experience of playing a role as a member of the conflict?
- What did you learn from observing your peers as they played the role of conflict parties and as they intervened?
- What are some general takeaways about intervening in interpersonal conflict that you gained from this exercise?

## Variation 3: Reflection Paper

Have students write individual reflection papers. This can also be combined with Variation 1 to further students' learning.

### Sample Prompt:

Reflect on your experience intervening in your particular case. What happened? Were you able to apply what we have learned in this class to the intervention? What worked well, and what did not work as well? What did this teach you about yourself and how you deal with conflict? How can this help you with future interventions in your own and other people's conflicts?

## Post-simulation

### Assessing Student Learning

There are multiple tools for instructors to use to assess student learning. Some examples include:

- Written Intervention Strategies developed by the students
- Individual videos of interventions submitted by students
- Group presentations
- Instructor observation of activities, including videotaped conflicts and debriefs
- Reflection papers

### Evaluating the Activity

- If you want to collect evaluative information on the activity itself in order to improve it, you could request that students respond to the following questions in writing or class discussion:
  - o Did you find the activity to be engaging? If so, how?

- o What did you learn from participating in this activity?
- o What would you keep and what would you change about this activity?

### **Suggestions for Recording and Sharing Videos**

Students can upload their videos onto personal YouTube accounts as "unlisted" and then submit the link for the video to the instructor. This will allow the instructor to watch the video but protect the students. An alternative is that the instructor can create a YouTube account for the course and have students post the videos onto the account on the private mode. This will allow only people who have the password for the YouTube account to be able to view the video.

Students can easily record the videos on their smartphones or tablets and upload them directly to YouTube. Videos can also be recorded using the camera on a laptop using iMovie or Windows Media Player and can be uploaded directly to YouTube from there as well. A final option is to record the video with a digital camera and then upload it to YouTube. ■

## **Appendix 1: Exercises**

### **Case 1: Conflicting Schedule**

#### **Conflict Context**

Emily and Sara are two really good friends that manage to stay close no matter how complicated their schedules are, but ever since the semester started they haven't been able to see each other as often as they used to. This semester has presented them with more challenges than they expected, and they both feel stressed about not being able to see each other like before. It is only natural that they grow apart since they don't hang out that much lately. Both of them realize this and it is making them worry about the decay of their friendship. Their conflicting schedules are not allowing them to see each other. Whenever one of them tries to set up a hangout, the other is unavailable and so forth. Sometimes, Emily suggests to Sara she should skip class so that they can hang out, but she won't take time off to do the same for Sara. This whole situation is getting more complicated than they both expected. There's an unspoken conflict on the rise and it is starting to bring unnecessary tension to their friendship.

## Roles

**Emily** is a very busy girl. She has two jobs and is a full time student. She doesn't have time to see many of her friends during the weekend because of work, and on the weekdays she has a busy schedule with school and work in between. These days she feels like she doesn't really have time to socialize. The only friend she used to see often was Sara, but ever since their schedules changed they've hardly hung out this semester. Emily is frustrated that Sara isn't as available as she used to be and lately, Emily is bombarding Sara with messages asking her when they are going to hang out. Whenever Sara says that she is busy, Emily has been feeling very frustrated and as a result she has been making a lot of jokes at the expense of Sara.

This is how she normally deals with being frustrated so she does not see why there is anything wrong with making these types of jokes. She just really wants to spend time with her friend and doesn't understand why things never work out! She thinks that Sara is being selfish and not setting time aside to spend with her. She is trying to express her frustration through jokes and she is hoping that at some point Sara will get the message.

**Sara** is also a busy girl. She works full time and goes to school three times a week. But her class schedule is not great because some of her classes are at night and she feels tired most of the time. The only time she can see her friends is on the weekends. She has tried to see Emily on the weekends but it never works out because Emily works all day long and by the time she gets out she is too tired. Sara feels upset that she hasn't been able to hang out with Emily but she also feels like Emily is not being understanding and it really bothered her when Emily asked her to skip class. Sara thinks that she gives too much to Emily but she doesn't do the same for her. Lately, whenever Emily asks her to hang out, Sara gets annoyed and tells her that she can't see her because she is "busy" but she actually isn't. Sara has also been getting tired of Emily's bad jokes because they hurt her feelings. And she doesn't know how to approach Emily about the whole situation without causing such a big storm.

**Observer (If necessary):** Observe the interaction from beginning to end. What happened? What techniques/tactics were used? Please look for evidence of listening, paraphrasing, reframing, empathy, revenge, power, negotiation, etc. In addition:

- What did the parties do to successfully manage this conflict?
- What worked and what suggestions could you offer to make it work better? ■

# Case 2: Lab Partners Struggle over Lessons

## Conflict Context

James, Liz, and Wendy are lab partners for a group assignment that spans the course of a semester. The lab assignment requires many hours and frequent trips to campus to complete, requiring the lab partners to work together and share supplies to complete the necessary steps. Tasks must be completed within specified lengths of time to prevent errors and collected data must be shared between the partners, requiring communication. The lab assignment counts for a significant portion of the final course grade, making it important for the partners to work well with each other.

Over the period of weeks, Liz and Wendy do much of the required preparations, together. Thinking that James is too busy or uncommitted to the assignment, they often didn't include him in their scheduling or communications. As the semester moves forward, they become dissatisfied with his lack of contribution and decide to get even by restricting his access to some of their work. James is upset because a deadline is approaching and he feels unfairly excluded from the group's product, which he needs. James sees the poor group dynamic as a result of Liz and Wendy's limited contact with him. Liz and Wendy don't think James should be allowed to complete the assignment using their hard work and suggest that he do it alone. Wendy and Liz tell the professor that James hasn't done any work and remove their materials from the group's locker so that they can teach him a lesson. James knows that he contributed to the assignment and feels like Liz and Wendy are manipulating the situation.

## Roles

**James:** Living off campus with a long commute makes it difficult for you to come to the laboratory regularly. You've taken this course before, so you understood the difficulty of the assignment and the scheduling needed. You were ready to get the lab work done with your partners and had your own ideas on how everyone should work together as a group. While your hours were irregular, you feel like you've made a notable effort. You're surprised at their harsh actions and you feel like Liz and Wendy should have communicated with you like you asked them to at the beginning of the class. Now you feel they are unfairly limiting your role in

the project. You're upset that they lied to the professor and about the work you've done on the project. You don't understand why they didn't talk to you or why they don't want to share the workload. You just want Liz and Wendy to communicate with you about their progress so that you can plan on helping them and to have access to the needed materials to carry on with the assignment.

**Liz:** You're married, work fulltime, live off-campus, and have a child. You've made time to come into the lab almost every day to work on the project and you're tired of James's lack of effort. In your opinion, James didn't put in the hours you did to get the work done and you don't think he should be able to use your data. Both you and Wendy feel the same way and want James to work, on his own, to catch up. You feel like he's taking advantage of your work and will do everything to stop him from getting by. You've made a point by removing the materials you and Wendy worked on and James needs to comply with the situation. You're not afraid to do whatever is necessary to reinforce this point and you won't take lightly to negotiations. No matter what, James shouldn't get out of doing his fair share and, at this point, you could care less about his help in the future.

**Wendy:** You are tired of doing all of the work with Liz and don't see why James should get credit for a project that you and Liz did all of the work for. You are just as busy as James is, and from the beginning he has shown that he is not as committed to the project as you and Liz are. This is not the first time that you have worked on a group project where you feel like you have done all of the work and certain people in the group have tried to ride on your coattails. For once, you are going to get credit where credit is due. In spite of this, you don't necessarily want James to fail the assignment or anything. You just want things to be fair, and you and Liz did all of the work, so that's that.

**Observer (if necessary):** Observe the interaction from beginning to end. What happened? What techniques/tactics were used? Please look for evidence of listening, paraphrasing, reframing, empathy, revenge, power, negotiation, etc. In addition:

- What did the parties do to successfully manage this conflict?
- What worked and what suggestions could you offer to make it work better? ■

## Case 3: =8 c 'Bch5 ddfcj Y'cZMci f': fJYbXg'

### Conflict Context

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## Roles

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# Case 4: Three is a Crowd

## Conflict Context

Matt and Sam had been close friends since freshman year and recently moved into a house together as freshman. Early at the beginning of the year, however, Matt got a girlfriend and began spending a lot of time with her. For the past several months Sam has spent little time with Matt, and whenever Sam tries to ask Matt to hang out he gets a non-committal answer. Several times Sam has told Matt that he needs to spend time out with his friends, but Matt barely responds. Sam and Matt share a bedroom and Sam gets angry when Matt and his girlfriend get back at 3 in the morning asking for the room. Sam also complains to his friends that Matt never cleans up his room, the bathroom, or kitchen. Recently Sam has been telling his friends that he is not sure if he will still be able to be friends with Matt, even if he breaks up with his girlfriend.

## Roles

**Sam:** You prefer to confront conflicts head on and talk about them, and you can't stand that Matt does not communicate with you. You always knew Matt was quieter than the rest of your friends, but since he entered this relationship it's as if Matt is a completely different person. After Matt started seeing his girlfriend, you ended a long-term relationship and needed someone to be there for you, but Matt didn't reach out to you all. All you want is to have at least one real conversation with Matt, but even that feels uncomfortable. He even has the gall to text you for the apartment even after he knows you're having a party. After several attempts to reach out to Matt, you've almost given up. You are tired of investing so much in a relationship that seems like it is not working.

**Matt:** You are generally a quiet person and prefer to avoid conflicts as much as necessary. For the past month you've grown tired of some of the jokes your friends make towards you, but now that you finally found your first girlfriend you are the happiest you've been. If only your friends, especially Sam, saw it that way and respected your space. He constantly throws parties and you feel you cannot really live in your apartment anymore. Sam always asks you about rent money and cleaning up, but he leaves just as much of a mess around the apartment. At a recent party your electric toothbrush was knocked into a toilet, and when you confronted Sam about it he brushed it off like it wasn't a big deal. You are tired of Sam not taking your relationship seriously and as a result you spend more time at her place.

**Observer (if necessary):** Observe the interaction from beginning to end. What happened? What techniques/tactics were used? Please look for evidence of listening, paraphrasing, reframing, empathy, revenge, power, negotiation, etc. In addition:



- What did the parties do to successfully manage this conflict?
- What worked and what suggestions could you offer to make it work better? ■

## Case 5: A Wedding at Stake

### Conflict Context

Sally, Abdi, Rob, and Jeff became close friends in high school. As upperclassmen, Sally and Abdi began dating and continued their relationship into Blanket University. In their sophomore year, Abdi and Rob were living together while Sally was living elsewhere with some friends. One night Rob and Abdi went out to a party and Abdi ended up bringing a girl home from the party and cheating on Sally. Upon learning what had happened, Rob told Abdi that he should confess to Sally. Three days later, Abdi decided it was the right thing to do. Once Abdi told her, they ended their 3-year relationship leaving Rob and Jeff caught in the middle. Sally was understandably upset about the situation and Rob and Jeff felt like they should support her. At the same time, Abdi was their friend and they wanted to support him too.

About a month after Abdi and Sally broke up, Jeff and Sally started spending more and more time together. After a few months, they began steadily dating but only told Rob and a few others, so as not to upset Abdi, who still had feelings for Sally. During this time, Sally and Jeff did not want Rob spending time with Abdi because he had done so much harm to Sally, and Abdi was upset when Rob spent time with Sally and Jeff because of his feelings for her. Over the years, things have gotten worse between Sally, Jeff and Abdi, and Rob has tried to get his friends to talk to each other about the situation with no success. Rob is now engaged and he really wants Abdi, Jeff, and Sally to come to the wedding despite their inability to get along. He just wants to be together with all of his friends on his special day.

### Roles

**Abdi:** You sincerely regret cheating on Sally. You wish that that night never happened. You made a serious mistake and wish you could take it back. You still love her and care about her, and realize how much you hurt her. Now that she's with Jeff, you don't know how to react. You're so angry that he gets to be with Sally and you don't. You wish Sally would understand how sorry you are and that, even after the last few years, you would do anything to be with her again. You can't stand to see Jeff and her together, so you just avoid situations where they're involved, even if that means avoiding Rob's wedding. Although you understand that you made mistakes, you don't think that you deserve to have them rubbed blatantly in your face.

You don't want to be a groomsman at the wedding if that means putting up with Jeff. You just don't want to deal with seeing Jeff and Sally together, and think that it's simply not fair.

**Sally:** It was extremely painful to deal with Abdi cheating on you. You were so hurt. You don't understand how he could throw away your three-year relationship for a night with some random girl. You're still angry about it, even after all of these years. You know you used to love him, but you don't think he's a good person and don't trust him. You still care about him though; after all the two of you dated for years. Although Rob knew about him cheating on you for three days and didn't tell you, you understand why he wanted Abdi to tell you the truth himself. You don't understand why Rob is still friends with Abdi, though, after everything that he put you through. As Rob's friend, you should mean more to him than that. Your relationship with Jeff has been amazing, and it feels great to have such a strong relationship. You're glad Jeff doesn't want to be around Abdi and wants to beat him up, it makes you feel protected and as if Jeff really cares about you and what Abdi put you through.

**Jeff:** You were close friends with Abdi throughout high school, but after what he did to Sally, your relationship with him totally changed. You don't understand why somebody wouldn't want to be with such an amazing girl. You definitely don't understand how somebody could cheat on somebody they love. It's just so morally wrong and you would never do that. Abdi isn't a good person, and you would love nothing more than to beat him up to make him pay for what he did. Rob is one of your best friends and you're excited for him to be getting married, but you don't understand why he is a still friend of Abdi's. Abdi just is not a good person and doesn't deserve to have such a great friend like Rob. You think that Abdi should just stay away from Sally and you for his own good. You hope that Rob realizes that Abdi is not a good friend before the wedding because that's what is best for Rob and his future.

**Rob:** You've been through so much with Sally, Abdi, and Jeff and you're so sick of seeing them all upset about a situation that happened in the past. Now that you're getting married, you want everyone to be a part of your big day and you just don't understand why the situation hasn't settled down.... It's been years!

Jeff is going to be your best man, Sally has been friends with your fiancé for years, and you've been friends with Abdi for so long, you don't think it's fair that you should have to choose between them. You feel hurt and confused as to why Abdi is acting this way and doesn't want to be a part of the wedding. You know that there is no relationship between Abdi and Sally and Jeff anymore, but you wish things could go back to how they used to be before all of this.

**Observer:** Observe the interaction from beginning to end. What happened? What techniques/tactics were used? Please look for evidence of listening, paraphrasing, reframing, empathy, revenge, power, negotiation, etc. In addition:

- What did the parties do to successfully manage this conflict?

- What worked and what suggestions could you offer to make it work better?

**Observer (if necessary):** Observe the interaction from beginning to end. What happened? What techniques/tactics were used? Please look for evidence of listening, paraphrasing, reframing, empathy, revenge, power, negotiation, etc. In addition:

- What did the parties do to successfully manage this conflict?
- What worked and what suggestions could you offer to make it work better? ■

## Case 6: The logo

### Conflict Context

Sean and Jessica are brother and sister. Sean is four years older than Jessica. They have small disputes every now and then, but generally get along. A few weeks ago, Sean began running for city council. He asked Jessica to design a campaign logo. Jessica has little to no experience in graphic design so her housemate, an art major, volunteered to help. Thus, Jessica became the middleman between Sean and the housemate. The housemate was very flexible and accommodating on such short notice. She made a logo, Jessica sent it to Sean, and he requested changes. He said he needed it completed ASAP. Within the week, Jessica and her housemate showed Sean their final product, but Sean never responded. Two weeks later, he contacted Jessica asking for changes. The following day, Jessica told her housemate, who was leaving to spend the weekend with her boyfriend's family. The housemate said she would work on it there the next day. The next night, the housemate had not emailed Jessica so Sean called Jessica and was very upset. Jessica tried to contact the housemate, but was unable to reach her. By midnight, the housemate explained they lost power due to the snowstorm and there is no cell service where she was staying. She emailed the final version to Jessica early in the morning and Jessica then sent it to Sean. She called Sean, but he seemed very ungrateful and said he would look at it later, but never called back. That night, he made his website public, using the housemate's logo.

### Roles

**Sean:** As a young politician trying to get your name out there and raise money in the process, your plate is more than full. You're picking up cases for one law firm, doing research for another, gaining clients of your own, and not to mention trying to run a campaign. You are beyond stressed, but feel you have a point to prove. You thrive in intense situations and are not afraid to face conflict head on.

**Jessica:** You are annoyed and feel Sean is being self-centered as usual. You understand Sean has a lot going on, but so do you as a full time student with a job and other commitments. Lots of times, you go full days without even seeing your housemate, who is also busy. Knowing this, you are afraid to ask too much of your housemate, who has never even met Sean. You avoid conflict and would rather talk about this situation to your parents before talking to Sean. You want Sean to succeed, but he needs to be more understanding of your time too.

**Observer (if necessary):** Observe the interaction from beginning to end. What happened? What techniques/tactics were used? Please look for evidence of listening, paraphrasing, reframing, empathy, revenge, power, negotiation, etc. In addition:

- What did the parties do to successfully manage this conflict?
- What worked and what suggestions could you offer to make it work better? ■

## Appendix 2: Suggested Topics and Sources for Intervention in Interpersonal Conflict

1. The TRIP model: Wilmot, William W. and Joyce L. Hocker. *Interpersonal Conflict*, 8th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011. (Ch. 3).
2. The Anatomy of Peace: Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006.
3. Difficult Conversations: Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. New York: Viking, 1999. (Introduction & Ch. 1)
4. Dual Concern Model/Conflict Preferences and Styles: Wilmot, William W. and Joyce L. Hocker. *Interpersonal Conflict*, 8th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011. (Ch. 5).
5. Getting Revenge: Tripp, Thomas M. and Bies, Robert J., *Getting Even: the Truth about Workplace Revenge—and How to Stop It*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2009 (Ch. 2)
6. Emotions: Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. New York: Viking, 1999. (Ch. 5)
7. Power: Wilmot, William W. and Joyce L. Hocker. *Interpersonal Conflict*, 8th Ed. New York:

McGraw-Hill, 2011. (Ch. 4).

8. SPITCEROW: Developed by Chris Mitchell. Available from <http://pcmsauhaifa.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/mitchell-basic-framework-for-conflict-analysis-spitcerow.pdf>

9. The 8 Steps of Healing the Heart of Conflict: Gopin, Marc, *Healing the Heart of Conflict: 8 Crucial Steps for Making Peace with Yourself and Others*. New York: Rodale Inc. 2004. (Ch. 1 - 8)

10. Interpersonal Negotiation: Wilmot, William W. and Joyce L. Hocker. *Interpersonal Conflict*, 8th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011. (Ch. 8).

11. Third Party Intervention: Wilmot, William W. and Joyce L. Hocker. *Interpersonal Conflict*, 8th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011. (Ch. 9).

12. Mindfulness: Nhat Hanh, Thich. "We Have the Compassion and Understanding Necessary to Heal the World," in *Mindful Politics*, ed. Melvin McLeod. Somerville: Wisdom Publications. pp. 128-138. 2006.

13. Forgiveness: Bayda, Ezra, *The Path to Forgiveness in Mindful Politics*, ed. Melvin McLeod. Somerville: Wisdom Publications. pp. 171-180. 2006,

14. Narrative Mediation: Winslade, John and Monk, G. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. 2000. (Ch. 1)

15. Nonviolent Communication: Rosenberg, Marshal. *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*. Encinitas, CA: Puddledancer Press. 1999. (Ch. 2 & Ch.3)

16. Roadblocks and Listening Skills: Bolton, R. *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts*. 1986. (Chapter 2-4)

17. The Conflict Resolution Method: Bolton, R. *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts*. 1986. (Ch. 13)

18. Appreciative Inquiry: Watkins, Jane Magruder and Bernard J. Mohr. *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. 2001. (Ch. 3)

## Appendix 3: Video Link

Uco r g'Kvgtxgpkp Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3FxmWRIU3w&feature=youtu.be>

# About the Project

This Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) has been developed as part of the Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project (UELP), U.S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)-funded initiative that aims to enhance Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) pedagogy in order to improve undergraduate learning.

The CAR field is uniquely positioned to deliver educational experiences that help students make the crucial link between abstract theories and practical application through learning activities such as: conflict mapping, intervention design, role plays, and simulations. The ELAs developed as part of the UELP advance specific learning outcomes, including critical thinking, problem solving, and perspective taking.

Each ELA produced through the UELP has been designed either to augment existing course curricula or to be used as a stand-alone activity. Instructors are encouraged to adapt activities to meet the needs of their specific learning environments, including class size and course objectives.

All UELP project materials are available for public use and may be reproduced without permission. Please ensure that all printed materials display both the FIPSE and George Mason University logos as well as the project URL ([tp://scar.gmu.edu/experientiallearningproject/home](http://scar.gmu.edu/experientiallearningproject/home)).

As your partners in advancing undergraduate education, we are committed to improving the quality of the learning experience and encourage all feedback and recommendations to support that commitment. Additionally, we welcome stories that highlight moments of student insight that arise from participation in these activities. If you are interested in supporting the collection of data for ongoing research, please contact us through our webpage. ■



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