

Conflict Resolution in Practice

Building Empathy, Skills & Safe Classrooms

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify common discipline issues in schools.
- Understand dynamics of teacher–student conflict.
- Apply strategies to foster a peaceful, inclusive classroom.
- Teach and model empathy & active listening.
- Guide students to collaborative problem solving.
- Recognize and address roots of aggression in youth.



Agenda

1. Discipline Issues & Reduction Strategies
2. Teacher–Student Conflict Dynamics
3. Crafting a Peaceful, Inclusive Classroom
4. Building Students' Empathy & Listening
5. Enhancing Student Problem-Solving
6. Roots & Expressions of Aggression
7. Q&A / Action Planning

Discipline Issues in Schools

Common challenges:

- Disruptive talking, defiance, bullying
- Tardiness, absenteeism
- Technology misuse

Consequences:

- Lost instructional time
- Damaged teacher–student rapport
- Escalation into larger behaviour problems

Strategies to Reduce Discipline Issues

- Proactive classroom management: clear routines, posted expectations.
- Positive reinforcement: praise, token systems, “caught-being-good”.
- Restorative approaches: circles, peer mediation, conflict conferences.
- Data-driven interventions: behaviour tracking, early warning signs.



Teacher–Student Conflict Dynamics

- Power imbalance: authority vs. autonomy.
- Triggers: unclear instructions, perceived unfairness, teacher stress.
- Student reactions: resistance, withdrawal, acting-out.
- Impact on learning climate: tension, reduced engagement.



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Strategies for Teacher–Student Harmony

- Use “I” messages: “I noticed you haven’t handed in...”
- Private redirection: avoid public shaming.
- Collaborative problem-solving: invite student input on solutions.
- Self-regulation modeling: calm tone, de-escalation techniques.

Creating a Peaceful & Inclusive Classroom

- Welcoming norms: morning check-ins, community agreements.
- Cultural responsiveness: integrate diverse perspectives in lessons.
- Flexible seating & grouping: foster collaboration across differences.
- Safe spaces: zones where students can cool down or seek help.



Developing Students' Empathy

- Perspective-taking exercises: role-play scenarios, “walk in their shoes”.
- Literature & stories: discuss characters' feelings and choices.
- Journaling prompts: “How would you feel if...?”

Why is Empathy Important for Children?

Prepares them
for their future.

Helps children
in building healthy
relationships.

Encourages
kindness and
inclusivity .

Enhances
emotional
intelligence.

Allows students
to respect others
feelings.



Teaching Active Listening Skills

“Listen–validate–reflect”
model:

01 Listen fully without interrupting.

02 Validate (“I hear that you’re frustrated...”).

03 Reflect back (“So you feel upset because...”).

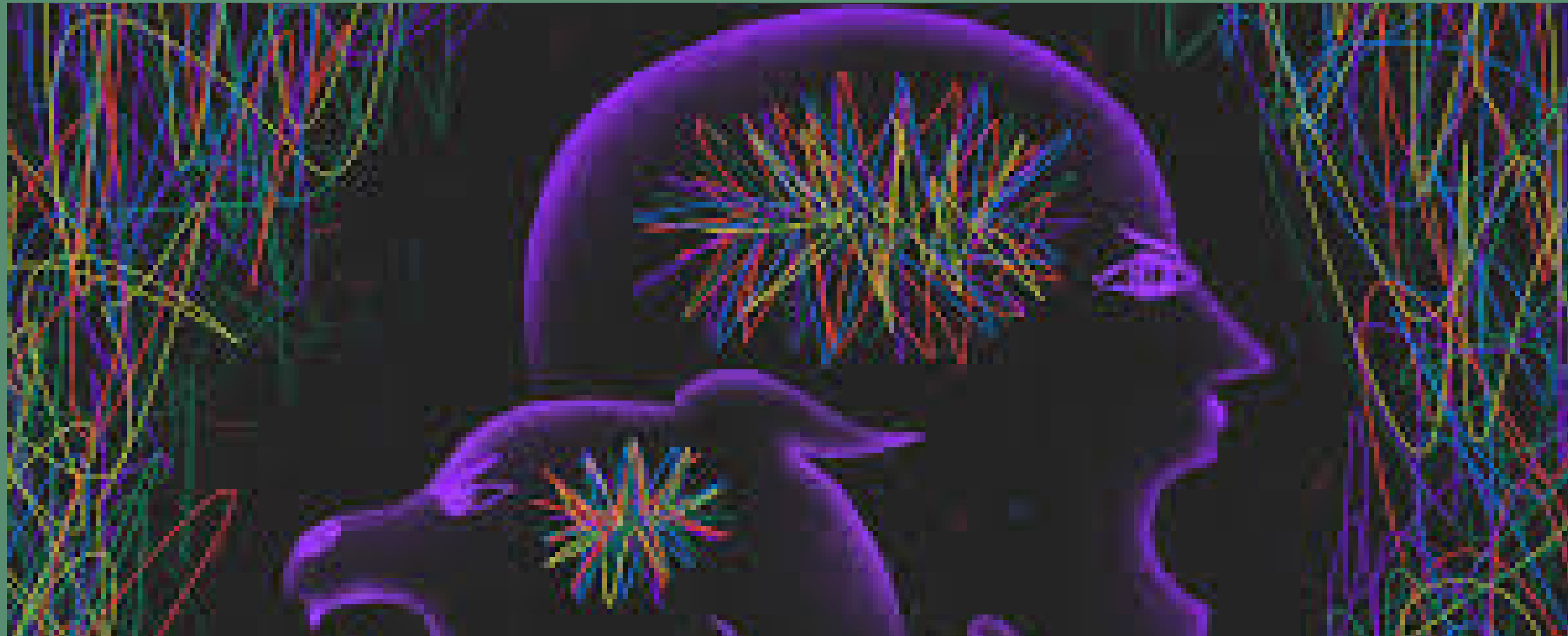
Enhancing Student Problem-Solving



- Structured protocols.
- Define the problem.
- Brainstorm solutions (no criticism).
- Evaluate pros/cons.
- Agree on next steps.
- Use graphic organizers: conflict maps, decision trees.

Exploring Roots of Aggressive Behavior

- Individual factors: impulsivity, past trauma, unmet needs.
- Environmental factors: peer pressure, classroom chaos, family stress.
- Social learning: modeling aggression seen at home or media.



Recognizing Aggression's Expression

- Overt: hitting, yelling, verbal threats.
- Covert: gossip, exclusion, passive-aggressive remarks.
- Early warning signs: clenched fists, raised voice, stony silence.



Intervention Techniques

- Calm-down strategies: breathing, time-out corners, sensory tools.
- Restorative conversations: what happened → who was affected → how to repair.
- Referral pathways: counsellor check-in, peer support groups.



Scenario 1: Group Project Tensions

- Context: In a mixed-ability Grade 8 English class, students are working in groups of four to produce a short video adaptation of a poem.

Initial Frustration

- Trigger: One student, Maya, feels her ideas keep being dismissed by louder classmates. She rolls her eyes when suggestions she makes are ignored.
- Escalation: Another student, Jamal, snaps: "Stop eye-rolling—if you don't like our ideas, just say so!"

Verbal Clash

- Trigger: Maya fires back: "You're not the boss of this group!"
- Escalation: Voices raise; other group members take sides. One tries to defuse it but is shouted over.

Task Breakdown

- Trigger: Frustrated, Maya storms out of the group's workspace. The remaining three scramble to reassign her roles last-minute.
- Escalation: The video shoot goes off-script, clips get lost, deadlines missed, and the teacher intervenes to mediate.

Scenario 2: Student–Teacher Misunderstanding

Context: In a Year 10 math class, Mr. Ortiz is reviewing homework problems. He asks Ravi, who often struggles with algebra, to explain his solution on the board.

1. Perceived Public Shaming

- Trigger: Ravi hesitates and mumbles, “I wasn’t sure,” which prompts Mr. Ortiz to say, “You need to come prepared or sit quietly.”
- Escalation: Ravi’s cheeks flush; he mutters under his breath, “Great, thanks.”

2. Defiance and Retaliation

- Trigger: Later, when Mr. Ortiz asks for an answer from the class, Ravi loudly whispers the wrong solution, then laughs when the class giggles.
- Escalation: Mr. Ortiz admonishes him: “That’s disruptive. Pull out your notebook now!” Ravi slams his desk.

3. Classroom Disruption

- Trigger: Instead of compliance, Ravi stands up and shouts, “You don’t even get what I’m thinking!” Other students start talking, some cheering Ravi on.
- Escalation: At this point the teacher calls for a time-out, escorts Ravi out of class, and later refers him for a follow-up conference.

Scenario 3: Playground Bullying Moves Indoors

Context: Two Year 7 students, Ana and Luc, have an ongoing rivalry that began with teasing on the playground. On this particular day, they both end up in the same classroom seating chart.

1. Low-Level Teasing

- Trigger: Luc, seated behind Ana, taps her on the shoulder and whispers, "Nice new hair, clown." Ana turns, scowls, and snaps back, "Shut up."
- Escalation: Luc laughs, other classmates glance back; Ana's attention is diverted from her worksheet.

2. Retaliatory Behavior

- Trigger: Ana scribbles on Luc's desk with her pen. He punches the desk in retaliation, rattling her papers.
- Escalation: Luc shoves Ana's chair; she spills her books.

3. Overt Aggression

- Trigger: Furious, Ana stands up and shoves Luc. He grabs her wrist; she yanks free and punches his shoulder.
- Escalation: The teacher rushes over as both are shouting insults and grab each other again, requiring immediate intervention and separate disciplinary follow-up.

Scenarios

Each scenario illustrates how small slights or miscommunications can spiral into full-blown conflict without timely intervention, and highlights points where mediation or de-escalation strategies could be most effective.



Thank you
so much!