

Building Bridges

A Negotiation Curriculum for High School Students

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Introduction

In response to the urgent need young people have for dealing more effectively with their differences, Professor Roger Fisher, author of *Getting to Yes* and Douglas Stone, author of *Difficult Conversations*, developed a curriculum and materials for teaching negotiation skills to high school students. This curriculum can be readily implemented, and is intended to have an immediate, real-world impact on the way young people handle conflict. Through this curriculum, students will also gain a better understanding social and international conflict, and will be better prepared assist in the peaceful resolution of those conflicts in their lifetimes.

Because negotiation and non-quantitative problem solving are not standard courses in high school curricula, this curriculum was developed to serve as a five to ten hour unit which can be inserted into other courses such as social studies, life skills, business or current events.

The curriculum is based on a few core principles:

Negotiation skills can be learned. Through case simulations, readings, exercises and class discussion, students learn and experiment with a set of essential problem-solving tools that will help them to deal with conflict. The case simulations provide a powerful method of engaging non-traditional learners, as well as providing a break from the daily routine for others. Through this curriculum students learn to:

- focus on underlying interests and not on positions or demands;
- invent solutions that are good for both sides;
- use legitimacy and persuasion rather than force, will or violence;
- develop empathy, to see the problem from the other's perspective;
- to listen; and
- to become aware of the role emotions play in negotiations and conflict.

Negotiation skills are a source of empowerment. Teenagers often believe and act as if they have little or no control over events that affect their lives. When confronted by difficult issues, a sense of hopelessness can set in. How do I let my boyfriend know the boundaries of our romantic involvement? How do I discuss the racial stereotyping I feel from a classmate? How do I let my employer know that I no longer think my salary is fair? How do I discuss my disappointing grades with my parents? Students who master the tools of problem solving learn that even these difficult problems can be successfully handled. They learn that they have choices other than aggression and violence on the one hand, and passive acceptance on the other.

Students can facilitate their own learning. One of the most exciting innovations of the curriculum is that it can be student-facilitated. So, for example, in one pilot program at Westwood High School near Boston, twelve juniors and

seniors were pre-trained in negotiation and facilitation skills (for a total of eight hours). These twelve students were able to train the entire sophomore class. Having student facilitators has many advantages. First, it provides leadership training for the students who facilitate. They have the rare experience of standing up in front of their peers and leading discussion, and helping people to learn from each other. Second, student-led classrooms provide all students involved a greater sense of ownership over the experience than if they were teacher-led. It is often easier for a student to hear new ways, for example, to relate to ones parents when the suggestions are coming come from other students. Students at the Westwood pilot were nearly unanimous in their endorsement of this delivery method.

Agenda for a Half-Day Workshop

Every group is different, but my experience indicates that there are certain topics which almost always interest high school students. They like talking about:

- (1) getting respect from friends and adults;
- (2) honesty and lying;
- (3) the role of anger in negotiation;
- (4) boyfriend\girlfriend issues, particularly relating to communication (how boys don't understand girls and vice versa);
- (5) how it's possible to negotiate with parents who don't listen; and
- (6) things that are wrong with society.

A common theme that runs through all of this is that teenagers often feel like no one is listening to them and that no one understands them (though student leaders may feel this less intensely). So your listening and understanding go a long way.

8:30 -- 8:50	Plenary Session. Introduction
8:50 -- 9:15	Role play of "How Could You Say That!" in front of plenary (negotiated poorly on purpose.) Discussion of how the negotiators might have done better.
9:30 -- 9:40	Working Groups. Quick introductions in working groups.
9:40 -- 9:45	Hand out "The Leather Jacket." Explain how to do a role play. Have them read their confidential instructions. Pair them up.
9:45 -- 9:55	Negotiate "The Leather Jacket." If they finish early, they can review in their pairs.
9:55 -- 10:10	Review "The Leather Jacket." How did it go? Let's hear about the negotiations. Put up outcomes. Who didn't reach agreement? Why not? Negotiate in front of class? Mediate the conflict? People who reached agreement, how did you do it? How do you know what's fair? Does fairness matter? Does being friends matter? Would it be different with a parent? Would it be different if you could return it? Did anyone lie about anything? Should you? How was it like things from your own life? Has anyone dealt with friends in this kind of situation? What are some good guidelines to follow?
10:10 -- 10:20	Break. During the break, think about a negotiation you've been involved in and think about whether it could be used as a role play.

10:20 -- 10:35	<p>Students develop their own role plays. Ask them to think of negotiations from their own lives, with parents, friends, teachers, bosses, siblings. Some will claim that they never have any or can't think of any. Help them out by asking who they have arguments with, or disagreements with, or ask them if they ever feel angry about anything. If they still protest, ask them to make one up. Not everyone needs to think of one. If you get two or three pretty good ones, that should carry the class. The role plays can be about anything (I don't like taking care of my little brother all the time; my father won't let me stay out; I'm telling my grandmother I'm going to keep my baby, but she wants me to give it up; my boyfriend's white and I'm black and he doesn't like being seen with me in school because his friends make fun of him; my best friend went out with my girlfriend, etc.)</p> <p>Once they've thought of a situation and who it involves, ask them to pair up and explain it to someone else in the class. They should explain the situation, and how both sides see it.</p>
10:35 -- 11:30	<p>Students take turns doing the role plays in front of the class. Ask for volunteers. Have them act them out. Let them go for as long as it seems interesting. There are a variety of things to try once they get going. You can lead a review of the negotiation. You can ask for students to say how they might do it differently. You can have tag team, and let other students fill in. You can ask the original two students to reverse roles (this usually works well). You can ask a student if he or she will mediate. You can ask how this relates to social and international negotiations. Sometimes one pair will last the whole session, and other times it will take a total of five minutes. Once the first pair is finished, get others up there.</p> <p>Another option for this period of time (if they absolutely refuse to think of their own cases), is to have them do the Playing Time case. They can take about five minutes to read and think about it, and another ten or fifteen to negotiate. This will bring you up to about 10:55, at which point you can review for twenty or so minutes (have them exchange instructions).</p> <p>If you have time left at the end, you can ask them to break into groups of four to generate a list of ten guidelines or things to remember when you negotiate (This can actually occupy up to 45 minutes if necessary, between the time it takes them to generate the list, and the time it takes to review the lists in the larger working group. It's a good way of engaging them in discussion.)</p>
11:40 -- 12:00	<p>Plenary Session. Closing thoughts.</p>

"How Could You Say That!"

Confidential Instructions for Terry

You are Terry, a sophomore in high school. About a week ago, you decided to look for a part time job as a salesperson in a clothing store at the mall. Your older brother/sister Cory, a senior, has been a well-respected salesperson for three years, and you thought talking to Cory would be a good place to start your search.

Unfortunately, you have always had a hard time talking to Cory. "Perfect Cory" does well at everything, whether it's school work or working at the clothing store. You on the other hand have never really tried your hardest in school or at anything else, partly because you already knew you could never be as good as Cory. You really look up to Cory, but also feel jealous. You hated having teachers that Cory had because you knew you were always being compared to Cory, and that you could never do as well. The one thing you are really good at is music and dancing, something you went into because Cory had never done it. You've had a good time in the talent shows and dances and made a lot of good friends.

This winter you decided to apply to become a salesperson even though that is something Cory is good at. You felt that if you really applied yourself, you could be as well-respected as Cory. You also thought it might bring you and Cory closer together.

But your conversation didn't go as planned. You told Cory you wanted to work at a clothing store in the same mall and asked for some advice on how to find a job. You were surprised when Cory started yelling at you about how it was probably too late in the year to get a job. You asked Cory if anything could be done, and you were extremely upset by the reaction. You don't remember exactly what was said, but it was something about how Cory thought you wouldn't work hard and wouldn't get to work on time. Cory made it sound like you were planning on spending the whole time at work talking on the phone with friends. It was as if Cory thinks you can't do anything right. It really hurt you to have your own brother/sister putting you down like that. You had already made a decision to work hard; you'd think Cory would want to help you instead of making you feel even worse about yourself. You told Cory to forget you ever asked for any advice.

It's been three days since that conversation, and you and Cory haven't spoken to each other. You've communicated through your mother, who has informed you that Cory *did* talk to some people for you, but that nothing turned up. Given what Cory probably said about you, it doesn't surprise you that no one wanted you.

Recently, you and Cory promised your neighbors you would help them move some pieces of furniture from their apartment. They are willing to pay you well for your help, but they need both of you. Although you could really use the money, you aren't sure you want to do it because you are still furious with Cory. You have agreed to talk this over with Cory to try to straighten things out, though you're not sure anything will come of it. You've decided you'll only agree to do the job if Cory apologizes and you feel satisfied with Cory's explanation for why certain things were said.

"How Could You Say That!"

Confidential Instructions for Cory

You are Cory, a senior in high school. For the past several winters you've worked at a part time job as a salesperson at a clothing store at the mall. You've worked extremely hard, and the people you work for regard you highly. You've also worked quite hard in school and generally get good grades.

But although things have been going smoothly at school and at work, your social life hasn't always been as good as you'd like it to be. You are jealous of your younger brother/sister Terry who just seems to be naturally popular. You always feel awkward and self-conscious around other people, and have the feeling that you'll say something stupid and that people just won't end up liking you that much. Terry is involved in talent shows and dances and seems to be the center of attention in that circle of people. Terry doesn't make much effort to spend any time with you, and you sort of wish Terry looked up to you more.

A few days ago, Terry asked to talk to you about becoming a salesperson. You were actually flattered that Terry wanted advice from you and you wanted to be helpful. You told Terry that it was a little late in the year to be looking for a job, but that there were probably still some jobs left. You also told Terry about the kinds of things they look for when they interview you. You said they want people who will work hard and who are responsible about things like getting to work on time. You couldn't believe Terry's reaction. Terry started yelling about not wanting any of your stupid advice. You felt really hurt by this because it just made you feel like you can't do anything right when it comes to dealing with people. Terry knows how much you want to be looked up to, but Terry always ends up making you feel like a loser.

Even though you felt really hurt, you still wanted to help Terry get a job. You called at least five different stores and told them how great Terry was, but none had openings. Since the fight, Terry has refused to talk to you. The two of you have been communicating through your mother. You told your mother that you recommended Terry and assumed you would get a thank you and an apology from Terry. You were furious when your mother told you that Terry still didn't want to talk to you. You feel like you're really trying to be a good older brother/sister but that nothing ever helps.

Recently, you and Terry promised your neighbors you would help them move some pieces of furniture from their apartment. They are willing to pay you well for your help, but they need both of you. Although you really need the money, you aren't sure you want to do it because you are still furious with Terry. You have agreed to talk this over with Terry to try to straighten things out, though you're not sure anything will come of it. You've decided you'll only agree to do the job if Terry apologizes and you feel satisfied with Terry's explanation for why certain things were said.

The Leather Jacket

Confidential Instructions for the Seller

You bought a leather jacket about four days ago at Leather World down at the neighborhood mall. The jacket usually costs \$150 but you got a great deal, buying it during a special one day sale for \$100. It's one of the best jackets you've ever seen and you'd been saving to buy it for months, but you waited because you knew it would be on sale.

There's one problem. You bought a medium, but now you're thinking you should have bought a large. You love the jacket, but you've decided it's definitely too small for you to wear. You tried to exchange it but were informed that you couldn't because you bought it under a "no return, no exchange" policy.

Luckily for you, your friend is interested in buying it. You'd like to sell it to your friend and then use the money to buy a large. Of course, the sale is off, so you'll have to pay the full \$150 for it. You hope to get as much money for the jacket as you can.

The Leather Jacket

Confidential Instructions for the Buyer

Your friend bought a leather jacket a few days ago at Leather World down at the neighborhood mall. The jacket usually costs \$150, but your friend bought it on sale for \$100.

Apparently, the jacket is too small for your friend, because your friend has asked you if you want to buy it. The truth is, you absolutely love the jacket and definitely want to buy it. It fits you perfectly and you look great in it.

The only question is how much it will cost. You've been saving money for a jacket for awhile, so it's not a matter of not having enough cash. It's just a matter of wanting to get the best deal possible.

Playing Time

Confidential Instructions for the Coach

You are the Coach of the Varsity Basketball Team. A Player on your team wants to talk to you about getting more playing time in the games. So far, you haven't used the Player much in games. The team hasn't been doing that well, and you've been sticking with your star players. You feel the Player doesn't play good enough defense, hasn't been working as hard as some other players in practice, and isn't as physically strong as other players of the same size.

You understand this Player's frustration; everyone wants more playing time in the games. But you're the coach and you want to make sure that the player knows that you are in charge of these decisions. You can't give players more playing time just because they complain. You have to base your decisions on what is best for the team.

On the other hand, you want all the players on the team to be happy, and you certainly can't afford to have this Player, who is only a junior, quit the team. As you prepare for your talk with the Player, remember that you are the Coach and you alone get to decide how to handle this.

Playing Time

Confidential Instructions for the Player

You are on the Varsity Basketball team at your high school. You are only a junior, and were thrilled when you made the team.

But lately you've been discouraged. You've gotten very little playing time in games, and really aren't sure why. You feel like you are at least as good as those who are getting more playing time, and you give 100% in practice. You don't know where you stand with the Coach, but since you haven't been getting playing time, you assume the Coach doesn't particularly like you.

You spoke with the Coach briefly after practice yesterday, and the Coach agreed to meet with you today to talk things over. You are beginning to wonder if you'll ever get a chance to play, and it has even crossed your mind to quit the team. You figure if you're going to spend all that time and energy practicing, you should be getting some real playing time in the games. For the moment, you've pretty much decided not to quit, but that could always change depending on how you feel about your talk.