

Rules for A Fair Fight

Imagery, Discussion, and Small-Group Brainstorming

Objectives:

- The students will:
- describe the similarities between a conflict and a game or sport.
 - develop rules intended to ensure that conflicts are handled fairly.
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Materials:

chart paper and markers for each work group; masking tape; whiteboard

Information to Share:

Conflict is normal. While most of us don't go out the door each morning looking for conflicts, we tend to encounter one or two just about every day. If we think of conflict as a contest—like a tennis match or a game of volleyball—we recognize that it is a *cooperative event*, a challenge, a test of skills. If we really want to perform well on the conflict court, we have to know the rules of the sport, avoid making too many fouls, present ourselves and our ideas in the most effective ways possible, and respect the rights of our opponent. We have to fight fair. Guidelines for fighting fair might include:

- Identify and focus on the problem.
- Attack the problem, not the person.
- Listen to your opponent.
- Demonstrate respect.
- Take responsibility for your own actions.

Directions:

Ask the students to think of a sport or game they enjoy playing—baseball, chess, tennis, volleyball, wrestling, basketball, Monopoly, Scrabble, etc. Tell them to take a few moments, close their eyes, and

imagine themselves playing that game with a skilled opponent, being totally involved and energized.

Now, without opening their eyes, ask the students to recall a recent conflict they had with another person—anything from a mild disagreement to a noisy fight. Tell them to picture this contest in as much detail as possible.

Next, suggest that the students allow their minds to transform that image of conflict into a sport or game, seeing it as a contest of opposing ideas, opinions, beliefs, perceptions—whatever it actually was. The opponents in the conflict may not agree, but the fact that they are interacting means that they are playing this game *cooperatively*.

Invite the students to open their eyes and comment on this imagery experience. Generate a discussion about the analogy of conflict as game or sport. Encourage the students to further develop the notion, while making key points of your own (see “Information to Share”)

On the board, write this heading:

RULES FOR A FAIR FIGHT

Ask the students to form work groups of five to eight, and choose a recorder. Distribute the chart paper and markers.

Tell the groups that you want them to brainstorm a list of rules for the game of conflict. In your own words say to them: *Your list doesn't have to be long, but it should accomplish certain things. Rules ensure an even start, safety, and adherence to certain agreed-upon behaviors throughout the game. Rules protect both the players and the object of the game. It may help to think about the rules of a specific sport or game and keep those in mind as you work.*

Allow 10-15 minutes for brainstorming. Then have the groups display their lists and share them with the class. Facilitate a culminating discussion.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the benefits of thinking of conflict as a game with rules?
2. When you are in a conflict, how can you encourage the other person to "fight fair."
3. What can you say or do when the other person keeps breaking the rules?
4. What have you learned about conflict from this exercise?

Extension:

If time permits, have the groups brainstorm a second list—a list of GAME FOULS. Explain that, just as in a sport, fouls are behaviors that are not allowed because they create an unfair advantage, are disrespectful or dangerous, or destroy the object of the game. Have the groups display and explain their two lists, side-by-side.