



Field Practice Resource: VOEmP for Conflict Resolution

VOEmP is an acronym that provides students with a model to resolve conflict by promoting listening, empathy, and active problem-solving through understanding. The letters of the acronym stand for Voice, Own, Empathize, and Plan.

Why this matters

By enacting the VOEmP model, students practice every one of the CASEL core competencies. First, students practice self-awareness and management by expressing themselves. Then, students build deeper self-awareness through owning their contribution to the conflict. Students develop social awareness through perspective-taking and identifying how their partner feels. Both participants practice responsible decision-making through their shared planning.

CASEL Competency Supported: Relationship Building

Relationship building is the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

Getting started

This tool works best when practiced in advance using hypothetical scenarios. For scenarios, create cards that list different conflicts for students to problem-solve. If this tool is needed to resolve an actual conflict, it helps to initially have a mediator, group leader, or educator help students work through their process fairly.

How to do the activity

1. Ask students to consider a time when they have experienced conflict with another person. Practice a “Stop and Jot” by asking them to write down a challenging situation they faced. How did they handle it? Were they proud of the steps they took? Was there anything they wish they had done differently?
2. Create a “Human Scatterplot” by asking students to place themselves along two axes. The X-axis represents the tools they know to resolve conflict. The Y-axis represents their confidence using conflict resolution tools. This allows students to self-assess and then learn from one another
3. Pair students up and ask them to share techniques they have found useful when negotiating conflict. Collectively, generate a list of tactics for problem-solving between two people.
4. Introduce the acronym VOEmP and explain that it stands for Voice, Own, Empathize, and Plan. Ask students to identify similarities between their tactics and the VOEmP model. If there are differences, ask students about the benefits of these steps to conflict resolution.
5. Set up scenarios for students to practice their conflict resolution skills. Hand out cards that list different scenarios, so students can work through the steps. They should try to remain in character while they reach a resolution that works for both parties.
6. To wrap up, return to the scatterplot. Ask students to reflect on the tools they learned, then place themselves on the graph. Now do they know more tactics for resolving conflict with other people? Would they feel more confident navigating this in the future? What questions still remain?
7. Upon completion of the activities, ask students to make a commitment in their journals. Writing down a commitment leads to a higher likelihood of behavior change in the future. Give students the prompt, “The next time I am involved in an interpersonal conflict, I will...”

Extensions

To begin the activity, group leaders can role-play a conflict. This may take students by surprise, but will likely capture their attention. The intention is to spark a discussion about what was effective or ineffective through a fictitious scenario that is light-hearted and even humorous.

Further resources

See: National Outdoor Leadership School's [“3 Steps to Successful Conflict Management”](#) and [“How to Mediate Conflict”](#) from SELPractices.org

This source was adapted from the VOMP Model of Conflict Resolution.