

THE STRUGLE

Week 1 - Conflict is Unavoidable

THE MAIN POINT

Everyone has to deal with interpersonal conflict, whether they like it or not. Addressing conflict is complicated because it doesn't always turn out well, and sometimes it forces us to admit truth we don't want to acknowledge. This meeting will challenge students to think about how they handle conflict.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Snacks
- Make copies of the comic used, or have a projector to make sure everyone can see it.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome everyone. Ask them how their week is going. Thank them for joining the group. Go over the rules before jumping in to the discussion.

RULES FOR SMALL GROUP:

Commitment - Commit to being at every group meeting (make it a priority!)

Confidentiality - What is shared here stays here.

Be honest or be silent - don't make up an answer just to have one. Sometimes the most honest answer is no answer, so if you need to, just say pass.

Respect - for one another, their thoughts/ideas/opinions (no put downs).

ACTIVITY

Divide your small in group into two smaller groups of the same size. Give your students a trivial topic to debate, then give each group an opposing side of that debate. They don't have to **agree** with their given argument; *they just have to argue*. Let them have three minutes to prepare their argument and, once prepared, one minute to argue. A few examples of meaningless arguments:

- Is a hot dog a sandwich?
(Group #1 - argue YES. Group #2 - argue NO.)
- Green Skittles - stick with **green apple** flavor, or go back to **lime**?
(Group #1 - argue in favor of green apple. Group #2 - argue for lime.)
- "Team Thanksgiving" vs. "Team Christmas"
(Group #1 - "Team Thanksgiving" argues in favor of holding off on Christmas decorations/music/etc. until at least after Thanksgiving. Group #2 - "Team Christmas" argues that Christmas season should begin November 1, as soon as people put away their Halloween costumes.)

GOING DEEPER

Obviously those debate were kind of trivial and silly, but we've all been in situations where we get into an argument and it gets real. It's especially difficult when we get into a conflict with someone we're close to. The dictionary defines conflict as "a struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands" (merriam-webster.com).

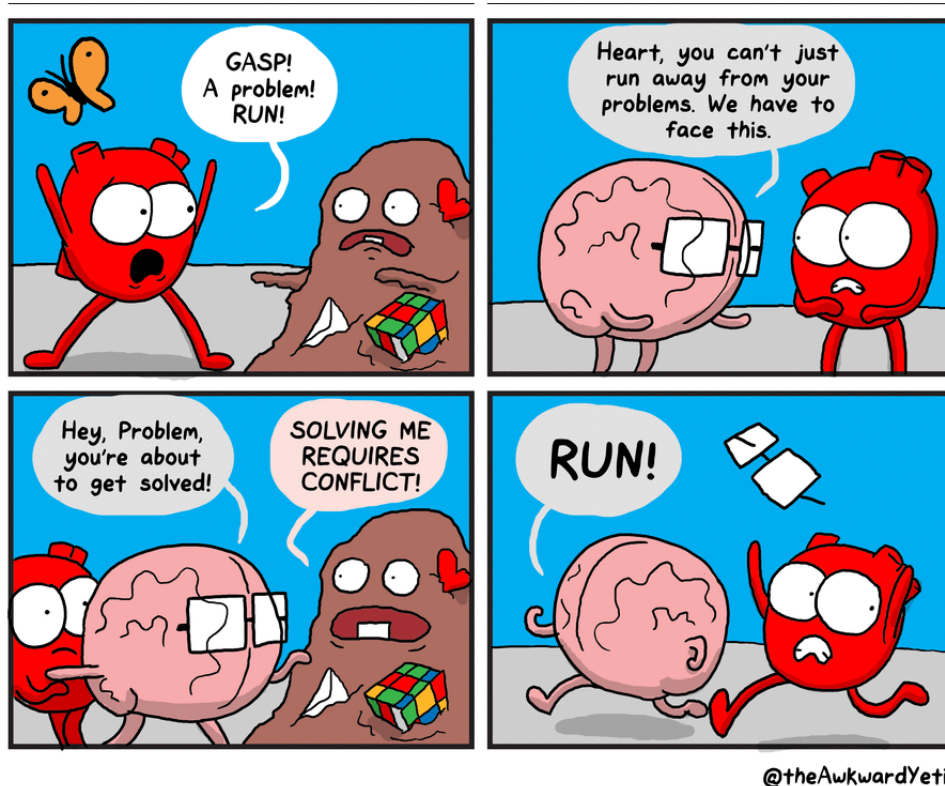
Conflict is a part of life. Everyone goes through it. I guarantee that you will experience conflict at some point in your life...probably soon. Even the best relationships will deal with conflict. The important thing is dealing with our conflict in the right way.

- What are some things you observe about conflict from those silly debates we just had?

- How many times would you say you've experienced *actual* conflict with another person over the past week? What happened? Do you think you handled it the right way?
- Tell us about a time in your life when a conflict - between you and someone else - came out of nowhere; you weren't expecting it, or ready for it. How did you feel when this happened?

Conflict is complicated. Some people actually enjoy it, but most of us can't stand it. It's awkward and uncomfortable.

Let's take a look at this cartoon from the online comic strip "The Awkward Yeti."



- Have you ever identified with Heart and Brain? In what way?
- Why does conflict cause many of us to want to run away?
- Here are a few thoughts about why many of us would prefer to stay away from conflict. I'll share them one at a time; let us know if you agree or disagree, and tell us why.
 - **Conflict is often turbulent.** It feels more peaceful to just hope it goes away.
 - Sometimes, addressing conflict only makes it worse.
 - Sometimes, it **forces us to be honest** about something we don't want to admit.

Have someone read Romans 12:18. If *possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with*

everyone.

- Think about this saying. What does it say about conflict? What does it NOT say?
- Notice it says "If possible." Are there times when it's NOT possible for there to be peace?
- "...be at peace with everyone." Does that mean it's wrong to have disagreements from time to time? Why or why not?

TAKE AWAY

Again, conflict is a part of life. In any relationship we have, our desires, opinions, or expectations will clash. The key is to learn to work through conflict the right way. The goal is not to win or get your way. The goal, as we read in Romans 12:18, is to live at peace with each other.

Over the next few weeks, we're going to walk through what it means to deal with conflict the right way. We challenge you to come back for the next few weeks as we journey through this really important topic.