

The Counseling Connection

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"Empathy is the key to negotiating and resolving conflict."

Dear DRMS Parents & Guardians,

It is hard to believe that we are at the end of 2021 and ready to close out the first semester of the school year. Our wonderful faculty and staff have created dress-up themed days for the next

12 days that has everyone excited to finish the school

year on a happy note. As we end 2021, the counseling department is going to fo-



cus on conflict resolution and ways to effectively handle & approach conflict.

Conflict is Inevitable

Conflict is a part of our lives every day. It cannot be avoided, but how we handle it is what makes the difference in the outcome. It is our goal as a counseling staff to teach your child to respond

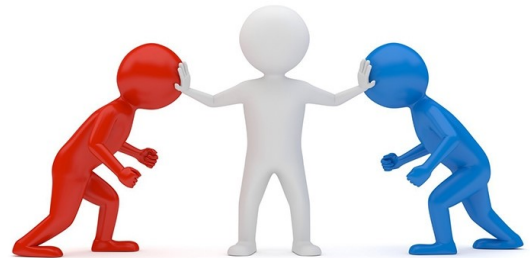
and not react to conflict. Our focus will be on giving students resources and ideas of ways to manage conflict in a healthy and appropriate way. Working together with parents and

showing students consistency both at home and at school with how to handle conflict will produce an environment conducive for learning.

Appropriate Ways to Handle Conflict

First and foremost, students need to recognize and admit when they are having a bad day. This is the most common cause of conflict at school. Usually one little thing changes the mood and sets the tone for the day. Awareness= power. When a child is aware they are in a vulnerable state they can work to prevent a re-

action and focus on a response. Once conflict occurs, students should know how to appropriately respond. This may mean separation from the conflict- taking a time out- this can mean taking deep breaths or even counting slowly, or this can mean effectively communicating feelings.



Conversations at Home

Handling conflict needs to be a topic of conversation at home. If your household has siblings it is a great time to practice the right way to handle conflict by role playing different scenarios. Most students know the right way to respond to conflict, but they lose sight of right and wrong when they are in the

heat of it. If the adults in their lives are talking to them about how to handle conflict and are modeling the correct ways, then eventually they will learn how to properly respond. Your children will encounter conflict for the rest of their lives. Give them the tools to be

“Reacting is emotional.

Responding is emotional intelligence.”

successful adults that handle it appropriately.

When Conflict Does Occur

The counseling staff wants to help students that are not handling conflict well. We offer In School Suspension for those students that are struggling following the guidelines and expectations. We have decided any student that has earned ISS will have a mandatory five minute meeting with a counselor. During these meetings the

counselor will discuss the conflict that occurred and ways to handle it differently next time. Like we said, conflict is unavoidable, but students need to be taught how to handle it when it does occur. It is our hope that these mini meetings will allow students the opportunity to see the conflict from another lens and make improvements.



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Teaching Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Middle school students lack the maturity to master this skill, but it is never too early to start. Oftentimes when we work with students and conflict we will ask them, “Well, how do you think that made your classmate/teacher feel?” Or,

“How would you feel/react if someone did that to you?” When a student can see the conflict from another perspective it drives decision-making for the future. A lot of times students never even think of it that way and when they do they are shocked and it becomes a very eye-opening moment. Adopt

some of these questions and lead discussions with your child at home when conflict arises. Teaching empathy is essential for students and crucial for humanity.

Teaching Compromise

Students have to be willing to compromise in the midst of conflict. Within the heart of a conflict nobody is all right or all wrong. Therefore, every participant has the ability to self-reflect and decide on what they could have done differently and what they will do differently next time when they are presented a conflict. The important thing to remember about compromise is that it involves all

parties. It will only work if everyone makes a compromise to resolve the issue. Compromising benefits relationships, promotes stronger relationships, is efficient during a school setting, and can lower the tension.



Misunderstood

Students often feel misunderstood in the midst of conflict, which in turn significantly increases the tension of a conflict. Most conversations with students about conflict surround how unheard they

feel; that their point is never valid or understood. The biggest way to handle conflict with adolescents is to listen first. Listening does not mean agreeing. It just allows for a student's voice to be

heard and validated, which in reality is all students really want. They want to feel like their voice is valuable and that the adults in their lives are truly trying to understand their side.



Questions?

Please reach out if you have any questions or would like more information about the support we offer here at Dan River Middle School to ensure success for all students.

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Middle School Parenting Tip #5

Did you know deep down your child actually likes boundaries and limits? Ask any child who their favorite teacher is and they always say the one that is the most strict and holds them accountable. Students find safety in knowing what to expect. Set rules for electronic usage and stick to it. Have rewards and consequences in place when the guidelines are not followed. It encourages students to be considerate of others, teaches respect, and allows them to realize they can't always get what they want.

@PeacefulMindPeacefulLife

BOUNDARIES:

If someone throws a fit because you set boundaries, it's just more evidence the boundary is needed.

— UNKNOWN