

# Conflict Resolution

Conflict can arise through personal differences between individual pupils, problems which occur outside school life and are brought into school, or from difficulties arising from the breakdown of relationships between individuals or groups of pupils. This guide will provide you with the basic steps you can take to help pupils resolve conflict and develop the necessary skills to deal with difficulties which arise.

## 1. FORMULATE POLICY

When a school has a clear process for conflict resolution which is used by everyone, it helps pupils to learn the skills of dealing with conflict and to know what is expected when it does occur.

## 8. PRACTISE IN THE CLASSROOM

If pupils can learn skills such as calming down techniques, active listening, debating and problem solving during lessons away from actual conflict, the better they will be able to employ these skills when conflicts do arise and strong emotions run high.



## 7. BE CONSISTANT & PATIENT

Helping pupils learn the skill of conflict resolution takes time, particularly where strong emotions are involved, or pupils have not had good conflict resolution modelled before.



## 6. DISCUSS SOLUTIONS

Share ideas and problem solve. Seek to reach agreement on the most suitable solution or solutions. This may need to be modelled by an adult to begin with.



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## 2. MANAGE EMOTIONS

Before any conflict is to be resolved, pupils need to access their executive functions such as thinking, listening and problem solving. This is not possible when their emotions are in charge. Help them to find the best way of calming down, and support them in this process if necessary.



## 3. ESTABLISH THE FACTS

Seek to gain the whole picture of what has happened from all parties so that the different perspectives are understood by all. This involves pupils actively listening to each other.

## 4. BUILD EMPATHY

If pupils understand their own feelings and those of others, it will begin to build empathy and an establishment of connection and reconnection between all those involved.



## 5. IDENTIFY RESPONSIBILITY

Where appropriate, it is important that pupils take responsibility for their actions and the consequences it has had for those involved. A good prompt for this might be 'Could you have done something differently to change what happened?'



### Meet the Expert: Anna Bateman

Anna Bateman, subject matter expert on mental health & wellbeing and school improvement adviser

# Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence helps people to perceive emotions in themselves and others, take control of stress and overwhelming emotions and build and maintain better relationships.

So how can you help your pupils to become more emotionally intelligent and manage exam stress, conflict and promote good mental health?

## 1. DEVELOP SELF-AWARENESS THROUGH THE CURRICULUM

Provide opportunities through the curriculum for pupils to widen their emotional vocabulary, and understand the emotions of characters through literacy texts and current news.



## 2. DEVELOP SELF-AWARENESS THROUGH PSHE

Explicitly teach pupils to connect emotional vocabulary with their own physiological experience. Teach pupils that feelings give us information that is helpful, and there are no good or bad feelings, just uncomfortable or comfortable ones.

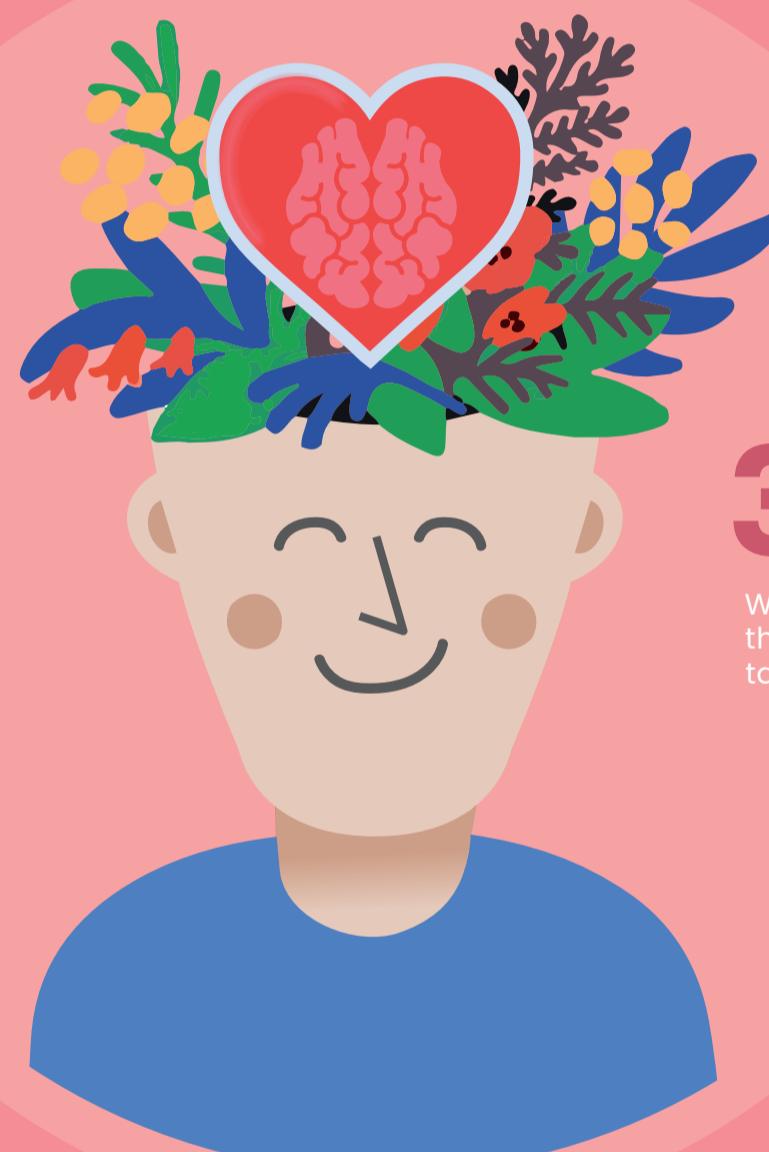
## 6.5 APPLY TO CONFLICT SITUATIONS

At times of conflict, it is helpful to remind pupils that they can use these skills to understand, empathize and regulate their own emotions. They can also use problem solving skills to resolve conflict.



## 5.5 HELP PUPILS TO PROBLEM SOLVE

Once pupils can understand and regulate their emotions, they can then make healthier choices and problem solve more effectively because they are not hijacked by strong emotions. Help pupils develop the skill of problem solving regularly.



## 3.5 DEVELOP SELF-AWARENESS IN THE MOMENT

When pupils display a particular emotion, help them name it. When you can name it you can tame it.



## 4.5 MODEL HEALTHY SELF-REGULATION

Self-awareness leads to regulation. Provide pupils, through modelling and discussion, ways of managing and regulating overwhelming feelings i.e. calming down techniques, mindfulness, safe space or walk and talk.



# Encouraging Empathy in Pupils

Studies show that emotional empathy is developed in children as early as age 2, and where they have good attachment experiences and modelled behaviour, a child will develop a good level of empathy. Cognitive empathy develops slightly later on when children begin to understand that another person's way of seeing the world may be different to their own.

In school, the environment, people, values, systems and culture all help determine how pupils develop empathy. Here is a guide to help create the conditions in which empathy can thrive.

## 1. CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

Develop a trusted, safe environment where pupils can talk about their feelings without fear of judgement, being shamed or belittled. This is in the context of whole-school values and within a classroom environment.

## 2. MODEL EMPATHY

Demonstrate empathy through the interactions you have with pupils and other adults. When they share their feelings or experiences, listen and validate them. 'It makes sense to me, given what you have told me, why you feel that way.'

## 10. FIND A BALANCE

Sometimes, we need to dial the empathy up for a distressed pupil or colleague, but having the dial turned up all the time will lead to compassion fatigue and overwhelm. We need to learn and know when it is best to dial it down too.

## 9. DEVELOP DEBATING SKILLS

To develop cognitive empathy, help pupils learn the skills of debating. Being able to hold your own perspective and also see that of another, takes practice.

## 8. DEVELOP LISTENING SKILLS

Being empathetic requires us to be really present "with someone" when they are in times of need. Teaching pupils active listening skills through games and role play will help.

## 7. MANAGE CONFLICT

As school life is so busy, telling pupils what to think, feel and do at times of conflict can seem like a quick solution. To develop empathy however, help pupils to stop, employ breathing and calm down techniques, actively listen and then respond.

## 3. ESTABLISH WHOLE-SCHOOL BUY-IN

Take time to establish whole-school buy-in from senior leaders and teachers to parents and pupil ambassadors; it is crucial that the whole-school community understands their part in demonstrating and developing empathy.

## 4. DEVELOP SELF-EMPATHY

In order to have empathy for others, we first need to learn to have empathy for ourselves. Help pupils who are perhaps overly hard or dispassionate towards themselves, and encourage behaviours and thoughts which promote kindness and self-care.

## 5. TEACH EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Improve pupils' understanding of their own emotions and expand their range of vocabulary. Discuss what it feels like on the inside and what shows on the outside when we have a particular feeling. Discuss with pupils instances when they may have felt a certain way.

## 6. DISCUSS CHARACTERS IN TEXTS

Develop cognitive and emotional empathy by regularly helping pupils to imagine and feel what it might be like for a particular character or group of people.



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# 10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators MANAGING EXAM STRESS

At some point in their education, children are almost certain to encounter exam stress, which can cast a shadow over their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. Mental health charity YoungMinds estimate that a staggering 87% of pupils suffer from exam stress – highlighting the urgent need to minimise its impact on children's health and happiness.

## 1 PRACTISE WORKLOAD WISDOM

The build up to exam season is such a busy and pressurised time in a child's education that it can be difficult for youngsters to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Encourage them to consider whether their current workload is realistic and allows them sufficient time to relax and recharge. Work with them in crafting a revision timetable that's manageable and includes breaks and occasional days off.

## 2 ADVISE CLEARING THE CLUTTER

A disorganised work environment is proven to negatively effect our ability to focus, as well as our emotional state. Encourage children to keep their desk, notes and revision materials tidy – creating a dedicated, well-kept study space to promote maximum focus. Foster their creativity by suggesting they incorporate vibrant colours, mind maps and even quirky drawings into their revision notes.

## 3 MASTER THE MATERIALS TOGETHER

Revision seems far harder when a child is uncertain where to begin or what sources to consult. Support them in confirming revision materials with their various teachers – emphasising the importance of gathering a range of resources to get a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Feeling more prepared should nurture the child's confidence and help to dispel some of their anxiety.

## 4 RECOMMEND CREATIVE NOTE-TAKING

Writing out notes in full – rather than simply bullet pointing – can be a strong start to a child's revision. Reinforce this idea, encouraging the use of flashcards (featuring shorter versions of previously taken notes) for effective repetition and memorisation. Discuss the power of regularly reviewing notes to help them stay in the child's memory.

## 5 USE VISUAL AIDS AND MNEMONICS

Encourage the use of visual aids like videos and sticky notes to enhance learning. Some children find these resources far more useful than simply reading their notes as written. Explore creating mnemonics for a fun and effective study approach – and it's also worth noting that the strategic use of colours is a proven means of triggering recall during exams.

$$I = E \times R$$
$$C = I \times d$$

## 6 GATHER A 'TECH TOOLKIT'

Technology can be a huge advantage in exam prep. Educational YouTube channels and revision websites like BBC Bitesize can be immensely powerful resources for helping children to expand and retain their knowledge. You could also recommend the use of flashcard apps and educational podcasts for revision and reminders when young people are on the go.

## 7 KEEP IT FUN

Revision tends to go far more smoothly if children are having fun in the process. Injecting some humour into their notes, for instance, can make details more memorable – as can relating information to their real-life experiences. Try to encourage a variety of study methods, such as incorporating physical activity (even simply taking a walk) into their revision routine.

## 8 SUGGEST ACTIVE REVISION STRATEGIES

Make sure children are aware of different study techniques. You could emphasise the effectiveness of spaced repetition by reviewing material regularly over time to reinforce learning and improve retention. Discuss the benefits of active recall methods – such as self-testing or explaining a concept aloud – in identifying where their strengths and weaknesses lie.

## 9 ENCOURAGE A POSITIVE MINDSET

It can be easy for children's thoughts to fall into a downward spiral when they're stressed about exams. Try to foster a growth mindset by emphasising the importance of giving it their all rather than aiming for complete perfection. Positive self-talk and the use of affirmations can build confidence and reduce anxiety, while visualising success and setting realistic goals can help them stay motivated and focused.

## 10 HELP THEM TO SEIZE THE DAY

There are lots of things children can do on the day of their exam to reduce stress and increase their focus. Talk them through some helpful exam-day strategies – such as arriving early, reading the instructions and the questions carefully, and pacing themselves during the test. Suggest some relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or visualisation, to help them manage any nerves before and during the exam.

### Meet Our Expert

Minds Ahead design and deliver the UK's only specialist postgraduate mental health qualifications. Winner of the Social Enterprise UK: 'One to Watch' award, the charity provides training and support to education organisations and local authorities. This guide has been written by Adam Gillett – a learning and development specialist who is also Associate Vice-Principal for Personal Development at Penistone Grammar School.



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# Managing Stress

Stress is an uncomfortable experience of pressure or worry caused by problems in your life. Stress can cause many different symptoms and may affect how we feel physically, mentally, how we behave and make choices. It is not always easy to recognise when stress is the reason you are feeling or acting differently.

This guide will give you some top tips so that you can take action to reduce the symptoms of stress in your life.

1.

## WARNING SIGNS, PART 1

Warning signs of stress include emotional symptoms such as anxiety, fear or loss of confidence and cognitive symptoms such as poor concentration, poor memory or repetitive thoughts.



10.

## PRIORITISE WELLBEING

As a way of preventing stress, you should prioritise your wellbeing and be consistent about it. A one-off activity will have some impact, but it won't help you manage stress or maintain wellbeing in the long term.

9.

## MANAGE YOUR TIME

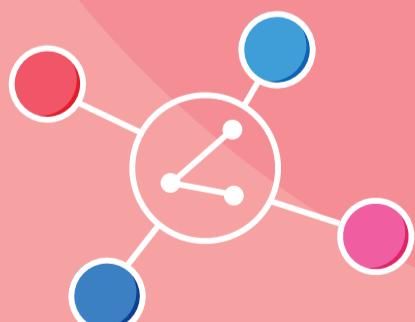
Prioritising tasks, including emails and wellbeing activities, will be a crucial first step to change and taking control. Get someone to help you to keep on track with the change.



8.

## CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Amend your thinking and expectations of what is possible or doable. Reduce the pressure on yourself by reframing the problem or accepting that not everything will be finished or perfect. Most of the time, good enough is ok.



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2.

## WARNING SIGNS, PART 2

Warning signs also include physical symptoms such as excessive sweating, racing heart rate, headaches and muscle tension. Behavioural symptoms might include, poor sleep, irritability, drinking excessive amounts of coffee or alcohol or losing your temper.



3.

## UNDERSTAND YOUR TRIGGERS

Take time to reflect on situations which may be causing stress. Once you know what they are, you can begin to reduce your exposure to the stressors and/or manage the causes.



4.

## TAKE CONTROL

Often stress symptoms are caused by feeling out of control. Not doing anything about the stress triggers or symptoms will make things worse, so start by understanding what you can and what you can't control.

5.

## MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES

Plan regular, healthy activities which will reduce stress symptoms. These will be a non-negotiable part of your week and a regular antidote to stress.

6.

## INDUCE CALM

Activities known to help induce calm range from deep breathing, meditation and mindfulness to walking, outdoor exercise or gardening.



7.

## USE YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK

Plan opportunities for fun and enjoyment with people you care about and who care about you. This could be sharing a new experience or an activity you enjoy doing together. Share and talk about your feelings too, sometimes that is all that is needed to cope.



### Meet the Expert: Anna Bateman

Anna Bateman, subject matter expert on mental health & wellbeing and school improvement adviser

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WORRY AND ANXIETY

Worry and anxiety are common emotions experienced by children, often triggered by uncertainty or fear. While worry involves concern about future events, anxiety is a persistent feeling of dread or apprehension. Current statistics indicate a rising prevalence of anxiety disorders among children, and this guide has some expert advice on understanding and addressing these concerns.

## UNDERSTANDING WORRY AND ANXIETY

Worry and anxiety are emotional responses to stress or uncertainty. Worry is typically associated with potential misfortune, while anxiety is characterised by feelings of fear, apprehension or unease. Both can manifest physically through symptoms such as restlessness, fatigue or muscle tension. Understanding the distinction between worry and anxiety is crucial for effectively addressing these concerns in children.



## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

## LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

Untreated worry and anxiety in childhood can have potentially lifelong impacts on a person's mental health and wellbeing. Chronic anxiety may increase the risk of developing anxiety disorders, depression or other mental health conditions later in life. Additionally, unresolved worry and anxiety can negatively impact self-esteem, confidence and overall resilience. It's essential to address these concerns proactively and provide appropriate support and intervention.

## THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Excessive worry and anxiety can have profound effects on children's mental and emotional health. It may interfere with their ability to concentrate, sleep or participate in daily activities. Chronic worry and anxiety can also lead to physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches or difficulty breathing. Left unchecked, these concerns can escalate and potentially contribute to the development of anxiety disorders later in life.



## Advice for Parents & Educators

### ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Parents and educators can foster a supportive environment by encouraging children to express their worries and anxieties openly. Actively listening and acknowledging young people's emotions can help them feel understood and supported, reducing the situation's intensity. Creating opportunities for regular check-ins and discussions about one's feelings can promote healthy coping strategies and strengthen communication bonds.



### TEACH COPING STRATEGIES

Empowering children with effective coping strategies is essential for managing worry and anxiety. Encourage the use of relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness or progressive muscle relaxation to calm anxious thoughts and promote a sense of composure. Additionally, teaching positive self-talk and problem-solving skills can help children develop resilience and confidence in managing challenging situations.



### CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Parents and educators play a crucial role in creating a supportive environment that promotes emotional wellbeing. Establishing routines, providing predictability and offering reassurance can help relieve anxiety and create a sense of security for children. Foster a culture of empathy and understanding, where children feel safe enough to express their emotions and seek support when needed.



### SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Recognising when to seek professional help is vital for addressing significant or persistent worry and anxiety in children. If worry or anxiety significantly impacts a child's daily functioning, interferes with their relationships or academic performance, or causes significant distress, it may be necessary to consult with a mental health practitioner. Early intervention can prevent long-term consequences and promote positive outcomes for children's psychological wellbeing.



### Meet Our Expert

Adam Gillett is Associate Vice Principal for Personal Development at Penistone Grammar School and works on secondment one day a week for Minds Ahead, which collaborates with schools on improving their mental health provisions.

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