



Conflict Resolution in Schools

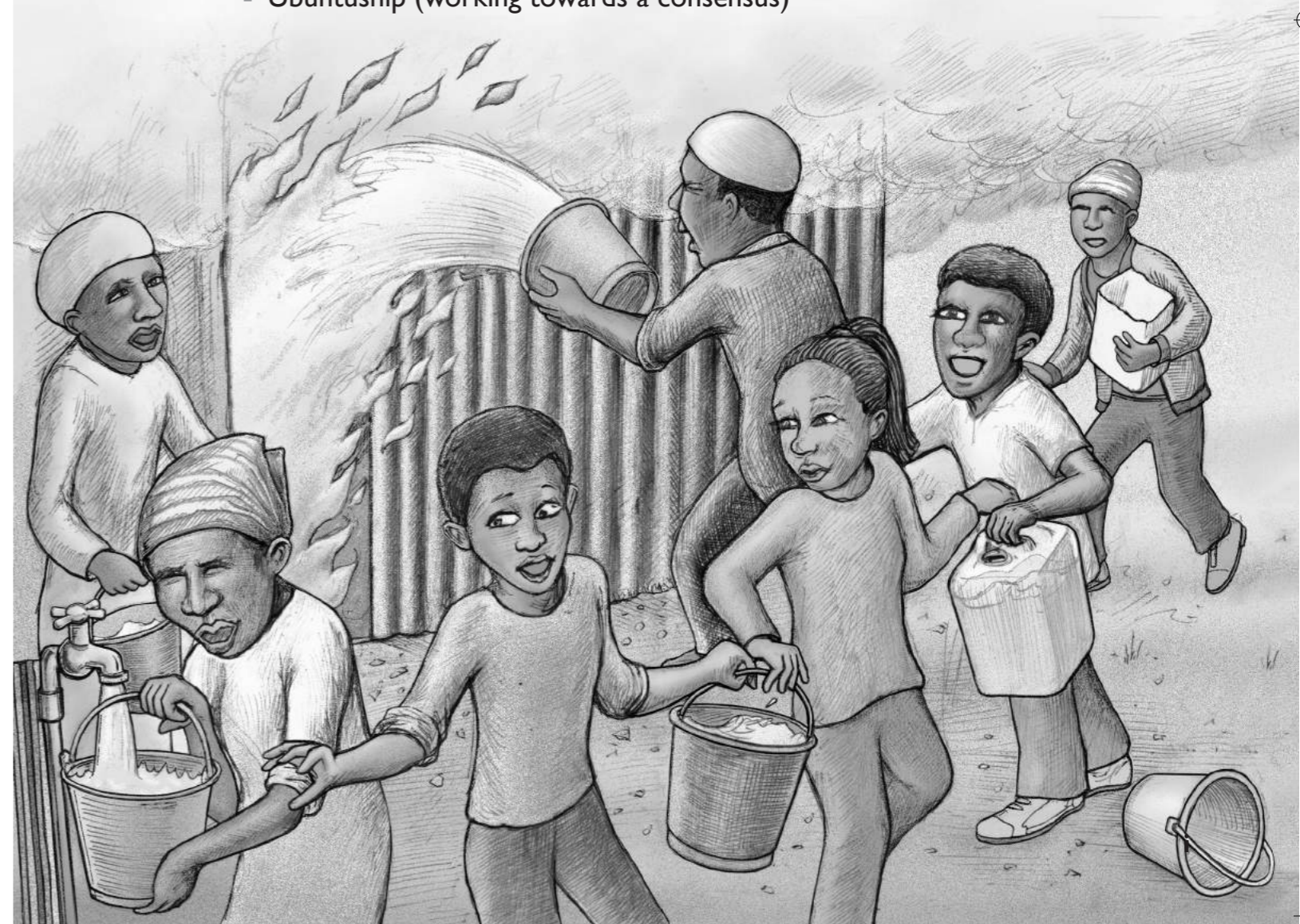
Guide for Educators in South Africa

Booklet 6

CO-OPERATION

Topics in this booklet:

- Building co-operation
- Co-operation tips
- Lesson plans
 - Understanding co-operation
 - Ubuntu (working towards a consensus)



Conflict Resolution for Schools

Notes

Guide for Educators in South Africa

Booklet 6 - Co-operation

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Background: Co-operation

Background

Co-operation is defined as people working together towards mutual goals, instead of working separately or in competition with one another. Through co-operation we can accomplish tasks more quickly and easily than if we attempted those tasks by ourselves. Furthermore, there is the benefit of enjoying each other's company and appreciating each other's skills and abilities as we work.

Co-operation can be working together closely in groups, or it can be from a distance. For example, scientists in different countries often co-operate without ever seeing each other or sometimes even speaking the same language.

We obtain the best results through the co-operation of many. We need combined personality types, skills, talents and knowledge to be the most productive. People need interaction with other people. Through co-operation we learn to compromise, negotiate and share.

In the past, people were more interdependent. They lived in closer communities, helping one another and socialising together. They looked after each other's homes, possessions and families. Communities combined their resources, sharing their produce, skills and abilities. For example, they took it in turns to work together to build houses for families.

We are now part of a global community that has moved towards a more individual approach. We work to gain money to spend on the commodities we need or desire. Competition is instilled in us in education and in employment. The spread of the capitalist system strengthens this individualist outlook, encouraging competition, rather than co-operation.

Whilst the ability to compete is not wrong in itself, the wheel has turned to such an extent that many of our children are no longer able to work co-operatively. Yet the to a

vast extent, human interaction is co-operative in character. Indeed, to be able to function in only a competitive mode is to constantly strive individually, despite your own weaknesses and faults, whereas the way of a fully rounded and emotionally mature human is to acknowledge and work on your weaknesses while using your strengths to perform. People can only feel fulfilled when they are using their own special skills and talents. Furthermore, it has been found in the USA that academic performance often increases when co-operative activities are used appropriately.

Co-operation is one of the most important aspects of the peaceful classroom. It can lead to creative conflict resolution (learners finding 'win-win' solutions), tolerance, appreciation of diversity, effective communication, sharing and working together. Co-operation also builds a sense of community and good feelings.

Building Co-operation

There are three steps involved in reducing competition and encouraging co-operation:

- Change classroom practices and build a sense of community;
- Train the learners in the skills of co-operation;
- Use co-operative learning strategies.

Changing classroom practices simply means the establishment of routines and procedures that encourage and reward co-operation. In China, for example, children's clothing often buttons down the back, so children must help each other to dress and undress. For young learners, there will be some children who can tie and untie shoelaces, and others who cannot. To give the learners the job of helping the other learners that cannot tie their laces brings a feeling of co-operation and support. This is just one example where learners can support other learners. Before the educator steps in, consider the possibilities for learner co-operation.



The school conflict resolution peer mediation system is a good example of learner co-operation. Some educators have found peer tutoring support to be another worthwhile example of learner co-operation. In this case, peer tutors have to be appropriately skilled and trained. The biggest learning point is that tutoring does not give the answers, but helps with the methods of problem-solving!

The most basic way to encourage a sense of community in the classroom is to develop projects in which the whole class can participate. This can be as basic as drawing a class mural on a wall (or if there is not an available wall at the school, a large painting sheet can be hung on the classroom wall), to preparing a class notice board, to establishing a class "kindness project" (such as adopting an animal or human cause to help and work for, either directly or through fund-raising activities).

Co-operation games and lessons are another method. There are three key rules for co-operative games:

- Everybody wins, nobody loses;
- Everybody gets to play – nobody sits on the sidelines;
- The group is challenged to work together.

Co-operative games do not have to replace the traditional competitive games, but they can provide a useful antidote to excessive competitiveness.

Praise and reward are another part of changing classroom practices. We often praise learners for solving a problem all by themselves ("Well done, you did it all by yourself!"). But we rarely give praise for co-operative efforts ("We did it together!" or "You did a great job of working together there!").

Co-operation Tips

- LISTEN carefully to others and be sure you understand what they are saying;
- SHARE when you have something which others would like to have;
- TAKE TURNS when there is something that nobody wants to do, or when more than one person wants to do the same thing;
- COMPROMISE when you have a serious conflict;
- DO YOUR BEST whenever you can. This will inspire others to do the same;
- SHOW APPRECIATION to people for what they contribute;
- ENCOURAGE PEOPLE to do their best;
- MAKE PEOPLE FEEL NEEDED. Working together is a lot more fun that way.

PLEASE DON'T ISOLATE OR

EXCLUDE ANYONE INVOLVED. Everybody has something valuable to offer, and nobody likes being left out.

Further Resources

Websites:

Wikipedia Encyclopedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperation>

Good Character

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/YCC/Cooperation.htm>

Publications:

Title: Creative Conflict Resolution.

Author: William J. Kreidler.

Publisher: Scott, Foresman and Company.
ISBN 0-673-15642-7.

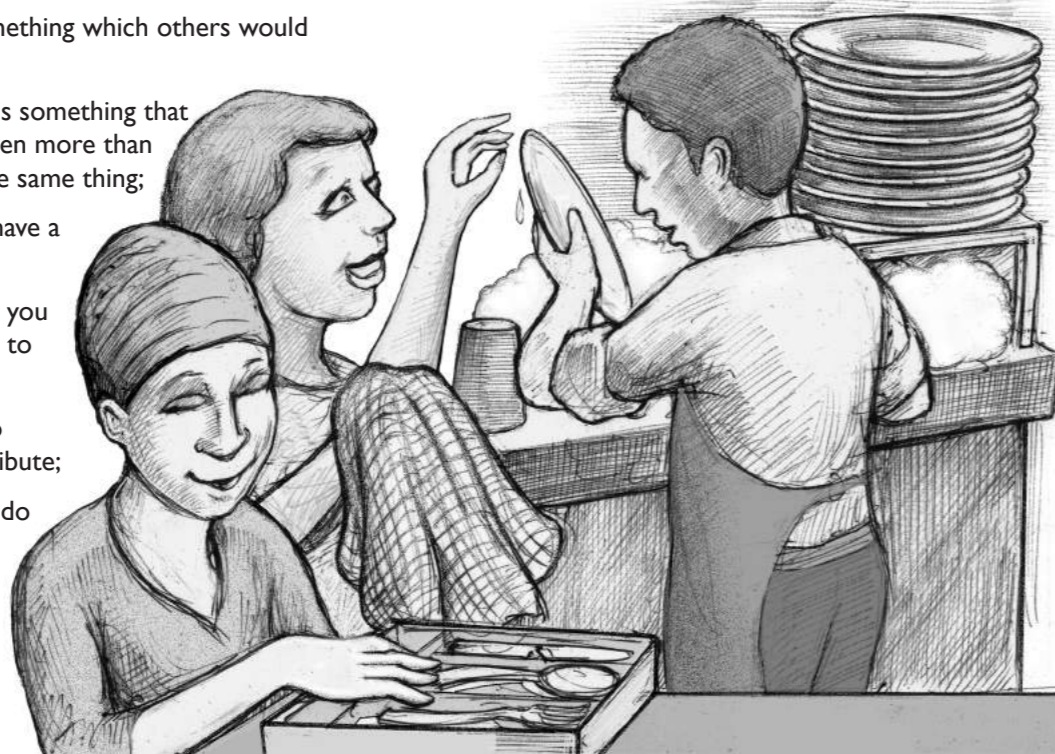
Title: The Values Book.

Authors: Pam Schiller & Tamera Bryant.

Publisher: Gryphon House.
ISBN 0-87659-189-6.

Title: The Selfish Gene
Second Edition (1990).
(Includes two chapters about the evolution of co-operation).

Author: Richard Dawkins
ISBN 0-19-286092-5



Notes

agreement within a group can be so difficult. However, seeing any problem from more than one perspective often results in a better solution. Working alone we only have our own 'world view' and we are much more likely to make mistakes or to forget things!

When it is proving too difficult to reach agreement in a group (this is particularly likely in larger groups) other methods may be necessary. In this case, the group should agree on another method or process for reaching agreement (for example: voting on it, testing a few options and selecting the best, picking at random e.g. out of a hat etc. - if appropriate)

Learner Worksheet

Not applicable

'Ubuntu Ship' Exercise

Divide the class into groups of three or four learners. Explain to the class that each group has chosen to travel

aboard a brand new luxury ship, 'the Ubuntu Ship', to visit a previously unexplored paradise island. Each group can take only ten things with them (as well as a small rucksack of clothes). These can be things to use, barter or sell (if there are natives on the island), or for survival. Each group is free to decide what they would most like to take. They will have to stay on the island for at least one month, and will have the choice to stay permanently if they like it.

The groups should develop their list of ten items by consensus.

When finished, have the groups read their lists to the class in turn.

For older learners, you could take the exercise a step further, trying to obtain consensus from the class on the final list of ten items (from amongst all the suggestions given). This will illustrate that it is even more difficult to obtain consensus from a larger group! Sometimes other strategies such as voting are needed.

See above for questions to explore.



Understanding Co-operation

Objectives

- To help learners to understand co-operation and its benefits

Age/level

Ages 9 to 14

Duration

A lesson or part lesson, plus writing homework

Materials

Blackboard and chalk or flip chart and marker pen

Procedure

Introduce the subject of co-operation to the class. Use key information from the Background Information on Co-operation. Stress the benefits of co-operation.

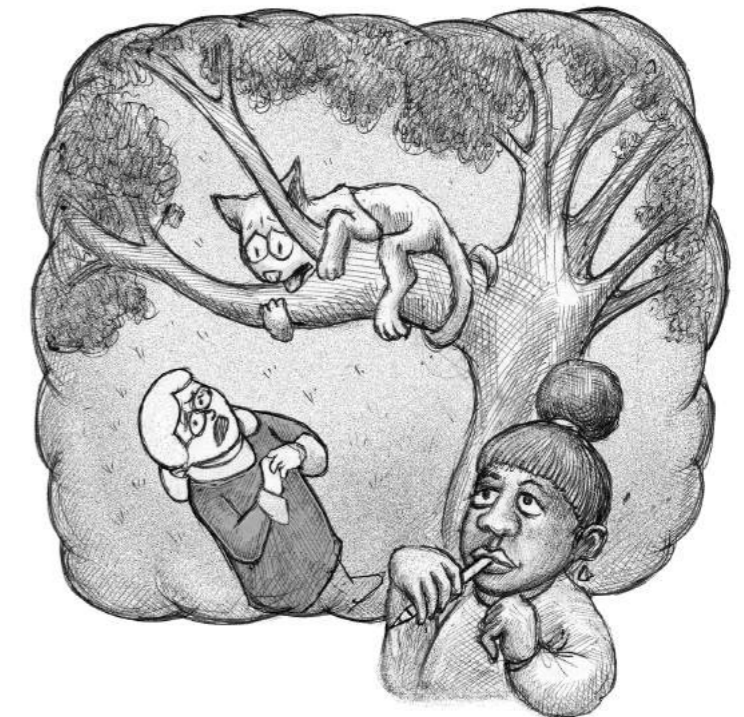
Write the 'Tips for Co-operation' on the board. Explain to the class that these are the behaviours that make up co-operation. Then, ask them to mark themselves on a scale of 1 to 5 for each of the co-operative behaviours (1 = lowest score, i.e. "very poor", 5 = highest score, i.e. "excellent". For each of the behaviours ask them to give an example of how they are either good at it, not so good at it, or bad at it.

For example:

	Mark (1 to 5)	Example
Co-operation Behaviour		
Listening		
Sharing		
Taking turns		
Compromising		
Doing your best		
Showing appreciation		
Encouraging people		
Making people feel needed		
Not isolating or excluding people		

Discuss some of the results in the class.

Ask the learners about the things that they do together with their friends. What games or activities are more fun when they do them with friends?



What jobs are there at home or at school that somebody helps you with? What jobs do you help your parents with at home? Is it less boring to do jobs with somebody else?

Brainstorm the kind of jobs that you can't do on your own.

Then, continue the discussion. Bring out the fact that it is both easier and more fun to co-operate, rather than to compete. Looking at their markings, how could they become better at co-operation? How could the class become better at co-operation?

Give the learners written homework to do – see suggested questions below.

Issues to Explore

See the Background Information on Co-operation. Use some examples and some key facts from this background.

Learner Worksheet

Writing about Co-operation

Think of a really good experience you had as a member of a group. What made it good? Think of a bad experience. What made it bad? What can you learn from the comparison?

Describe a time you had difficulty co-operating. What made it difficult? What did you do about it? Is there something you could have done that would have made it easier?

Think of a time somebody (a friend, another learner, family member, etc.) was very un-cooperative with you. Write an imaginary letter to that person describing what he or she did, how it made you feel, and what you would like this person to do differently in the future.

Write about a problem in the world that might be solved if people would co-operate. Why are they not co-operating now? How could they do a better job of co-operating?

Co-operation Activities

Objectives

- To give learners the opportunity to practice co-operative activities to build understanding of the benefits and advantages of co-operation

Age/level

Ages 9 to 14

Duration

One lesson
(Longer period required if staging a play on co-operation)

Materials

- Blackboard and chalk or flip chart and marker pen;
- Rope (Tug of Peace);
- Music, chairs (Co-operative Musical Chairs).

Procedure

Review the subject of co-operation with the class. Write the 'Tips for Co-operation' (see page 5) on the board as a reminder.

Then, use some of the co-operation activities listed below to give the learners an opportunity to practice co-operation.

After each activity, praise the learners' efforts. Ask whether the activity was fun and if so, what made it so? Would anything have made it work even better?

Then, continue the discussion. Bring out the fact that it is both easier and more fun to co-operate than to compete.



Issues to Explore

See the Background Information on Co-operation. Use some examples and some key facts from that section.

Learner Worksheet

Not applicable

Co-operation Activities

Tug of Peace

Tie the ends of a long piece of rope (30cm – 45cm per learner) to make a circle. Place it on the floor and invite the learners to sit around the outside of the circle. Challenge the learners to grab the rope and pull themselves up into a standing position. It may be best to practice with small groups and then to move on to larger groups.

Back-To-Back Lifts

Break learners into pairs. Ask partners to sit back to back on the floor. On the count of three, partners should help each other to stand up, keeping their backs pressed firmly together and pushing against each other.

Co-operative Musical Chairs

Set chairs out as if you were going to play standard musical chairs (two rows of chairs, back to back). Start with one chair per learner. When you play music, the learners walk or skip around the chairs and when you stop the music they must all sit down. Then, after each round, remove one or two chairs. But this game is different! Now the learners have to figure a way to make sure that everybody has a seat, even though there are not enough chairs.



They can sit on laps, share seats, etc. Continue the game until there is only just enough space for everybody to sit down and then stop. Applaud the learners' efforts, how well they co-operated and helped everybody.

Co-operation Play

Make up and stage a class play all about the benefits of co-operation. It takes a lot of co-operative effort to stage a play – preparation of costumes, backdrops, props, etc. You could also stage the play for parents so they too can also understand the benefits of co-operation.

Making Music

Break the learners into four groups and explain that they are going to make music. One group claps, one group whistles, one group taps on their seats, one group makes shushing sounds with their mouths (like cymbals). Each group plays their sound when you point to them. The object is for each group to co-ordinate itself into something that sounds good without talking to the other member(s) of the group. In order to accomplish this they have to listen to what others are doing and adjust accordingly. Point to the groups one at a time, letting each group get their act together. Then, start adding the groups together allowing time for them to adjust what they are doing until they start to sound good. Eventually, you'll have all the groups going at once in a well-coordinated ensemble.

Ubuntu Ship

Objectives

To give learners the opportunity to:

- Work together on a co-operation activity, to embed the principles and practise of co-operation;
- Practice working towards a consensus.

Age/level

Ages 9 to 14

Duration

One lesson

Materials

Blackboard and chalk or flip chart and marker pen

Procedure

Review the subject of co-operation with the class. Write the 'Tips for Co-operation' on the board as a reminder.

Remind the learners what 'consensus' is (a general agreement between all parties).

Then, carry out the 'Ubuntu Ship' exercise below.

After the exercise, praise the learners' efforts. Ask whether the activity was fun and, if so, what made it so. Would anything have made it work better? Was it difficult to reach consensus? Why?

Which items was it easy to agree on? Why?

Which items was it difficult to agree on? Why?

How did the groups solve disagreements?

Then, continue the discussion and widen out to points about co-operation more generally.

Issues to Explore

See the Background Information on Co-operation. Use some examples and some key facts from that section.

In particular, stress that there are many areas of our lives where co-operation is necessary. This is not always easy, as each person has their own 'world view' and their own needs, interests, perspectives etc. That is why reaching