

Sentence Completion Activity

Instructors Note

Time Needed:

20-30 minutes, including debrief

Instructions:

We carry our own conflict standpoints with us, including our interactions with conflict parties as we help them address their own conflict situations. In other words, who we are as humans informs who we are as conflict practitioners. This has both intended and unintended impact on parties and how they are influenced to understand their own conflict situation.

This in-class activity is designed to accompany a class discussion about cultivating greater practitioner self-awareness in relation to chapter three in the required reading, “Cultivating Capacity for Conflict Work.” The exercise is a useful way to open up a conversation about how our own background and lived experiences shape the ways we develop our own personal attitudes about conflict – our own individual “conflict standpoint.”

Step 1 – Completing the form

There are two ways to complete the form.

1. Distribute the form and ask students to wait before filling it out. You then tell them that you will read each incomplete sentence prompt out loud and then as soon as you stop reading the prompt, they should jot down what first comes to their mind. In this way, students don't over-think each prompt and everyone is moving through the exercise together. Take your time reading each prompt and wait before moving on (this is the approach I take in my classes).
2. Simply distribute the form and ask students to complete the incomplete sentence prompts.

Step 2 – Small group debrief

Once the class has completed the form, ask them to work in small groups to share and compare their responses, including whether and how their responses changed in different conflict contexts. It is important to let participants know they are free either to share or not share any information they wish, since some responses may be personal and private. Invite them to look for similarities and differences among their responses.

Then, ask participants the “so what” question: What do the individual and compared responses reveal about how different people develop the same and different attitudes towards conflict?

Step 3 – Large group debrief

Bring the class back together. Ask them to report out what they discussed and noticed from the small group discussions. Relate their experiences to the themes introduced in chapter 3 of the primary text. Lead a discussion about how our own individual pre-dispositions and idiosyncrasies toward conflict can influence how we work with parties. In other words, for example, in a class of 35 students, there may be 35 different unintended and idiosyncratic deeper attitudes about conflict. It is unfair to unknowingly project these predispositions on parties. This underscores the value of cultivating greater self-awareness so as to minimize the unintended impact of our own lived experiences on others.

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Theories of Conflict

Sentence Completion Exercise

Complete each sentence below in your own words:

- 1) The person who influenced me most about how I deal with conflict is:
- 2) I learned from this person that:
- 3) The event(s) or experience(s) that most influenced me about conflict was/were:
- 4) The event(s) or experience(s) taught me that:
- 5) Growing up, I dealt with conflict by:
- 6) In my family, conflict is:
- 7) Among my friends, conflict is:
- 8) In my professional life, conflict as:
- 9) My faith/philosophy/belief tells me that conflict is:
- 10) My faith/philosophy/belief tells me that we should respond to conflict by:
- 11) I am *most* successful dealing with conflict when:
- 12) I am *least* successful dealing with conflict when:
- 13) Three (3) adjectives that describe “conflict” are:
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