

The Body and Somatics

Class Activity – The Human Thermometer

After examining this first perspective, the following can be an engaging and revealing class activity.

Time Needed:

At least 30 minutes depending on the size of the group

Instructions:

Invite the entire class to stand up. They can stay in place until after you give them the following instructions:

“In a moment, I will ask you to create what is called a “human thermometer.” To do this, in a moment I will ask you to line up along a wall based on the degree to which you personally believe there is a causal connection between our human organism and conflict behavior.” [When it is time, you can have them line up either along a classroom wall or if you need more wall space in the corridor outside the classroom if it is not disruptive to other classes].

- The far-left end of the line is “zero%” – meaning a person standing there believes there is zero causal connection between the human organism and conflict behavior.
- The far-right end of the line is “100%” – meaning a person standing there believes there is a 100% causal (and perhaps controlling) connection between the human organism and conflict behavior.
- Note: These are relative measures. Don’t worry if no one stands at the extreme ends. It is simply to provide reference points. Feel free to keep pushing the ends of the “thermometer” further to the left and right to make room for everyone.
- The line must be a single continuum where there can be no “clumping.” That is, if some students all say they are the same degree (e.g. “54%,”) then they must talk with each other and decide together who is to the right and who is to the left of one another so they are actually in a single line next to one another.
- Note: Promote discussions among students and **encourage them to really talk with each other** where they think they are relative to one another. Make this process fun if at all possible.

Copyright ©2026 by Kenneth H. Fox. This document and any derivative work may be used, with attribution to the copyright holder, at no charge for non-commercial educational purposes. All other use is prohibited without prior written authorization of the copyright holder.

- Once everyone is in a single line, starting at the far left, ask each person to describe briefly what led them to stand at that location on the thermometer at this moment [e.g. why 26% rather than 78%? Etc.]
- Note: This is **not** to debate about which view is correct. There are no right or wrong answers. The purpose is for students to hear from one another about the full range of beliefs about the connection between the body and conflict behavior. Students who do not wish to speak up my pass (some folks are not comfortable speaking up about their personal views in a large group).

When everyone who wishes has spoken, here is where you debrief (while they are still standing if possible):

- Comment on how broad the range is of people on the thermometer.
- Comment that a conflict practitioner's beliefs about the connection between the body and conflict behavior can (and in subtle ways, does) impact how they understand, interpret, and judge and interact with the parties with whom they work.
- Note that, regardless of where any given person stands on the thermometer, there will always be others elsewhere on the thermometer who will treat parties differently from them. This is not a judgement about who is right or wrong, but instead an important observation about the impact we, as practitioners, have on parties based on our own beliefs, whether we know it or not.
- Engage the class in a conversation about "so what?" and "now what?" – what are their take-aways for conflict practice?

End of activity.