

Defusing Conflict

An eight session programme for young people with challenging behaviours or lifestyles



Communication in conflict

dfuse

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Introduction

For some young people, conflict and confrontation are regular occurrences that they encounter on a daily basis. This is particularly the case for those who are marginalised, excluded from education, lead risky lifestyles, have challenging behaviours, or are in the youth justice system. The conflicts they face, and the pressures they may feel can be complex – and many have not yet refined their approaches to dealing with such situations.

At Dfuse, we train people to manage conflict and antisocial behaviour without their actions escalating into confrontation or violence. Young people have significantly benefitted from learning defusing techniques – however, many struggle to then apply these skills when faced with a challenging situation – and allow aggression to take over, instead.

Some young people resort to aggression, as it is how they learnt to manage conflict growing up. Others use aggression as a way to assert dominance over others and boost their self-esteem. However, for young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), aggression is often a response to being frustrated that they do not understand a situation, or are struggling to communicate effectively. There is a very real need to address these issues. It has been estimated that within the youth justice system, 60-90% of young people have some form of SLCN.

Imagine arguing with someone in front of your friends when you don't understand what the problem is. Everyone is talking at once, using words you don't understand and you are completely confused. You keep trying to argue back and defend yourself, but you know you are not making any sense. People then start laughing at everything you say, but you have no idea why. The angrier you get, the harder it is to get your words out. This is what it might be like for a young person with SLCN.

Dfuse has worked with Speech Language Therapists to produce this Defusing Conflict programme. It includes activities designed to support the participation of young people with SLCN. For example, extra consideration is given to developing listening skills and empathy for others. These skills are incredibly important for effective defusing, and are areas with which young people with SLCN typically struggle.

Whatever the root cause for aggressive responses, the Defusing Conflict programme can help workers to explore positive approaches to conflict with young people. Through these activities, a deeper insight can be achieved into why a young person responds to conflict in the way that they do. Is a young person using aggression as a tool to boost self-esteem, or are they frustrated and simply struggling to communicate?

The Defusing Conflict programme explores:

- The definition of conflict, the difference between a disagreement and a confrontation.
- How individuals respond to conflict situations with friends; people they live with, people in authority and strangers.
- Behaviours which make a conflict worse and the consequences of allowing a situation to escalate.
- Spontaneous responses to conflict and how to manage the physical effects.
- The Dfuse defusing approach, a model for approaching any conflict situation.
- How personal feelings can affect an individual's approach to conflict.
- How to listen effectively to other people.
- Finding face-saving ways out of situations.

The Defusing Conflict programme is not deficit-based – it is not intended to be used as an ultimate solution, i.e. ‘you have a problem with anger, therefore you must go on this programme’. The Defusing Conflict programme provides a neutral, non-judgemental framework and language for workers and young people to explore potential conflict situations and to debrief incidents which have occurred (or were avoided). It does not talk about good or bad behaviours. Instead, it explores perspectives of how different behaviours can lead to better to worse consequences.

By exploring behaviours, responses and consequences alongside learning new tools for communicating, this programme encourages young people to come to their own conclusions about how they will react to challenging situations and conflict in the future.

The Defusing Conflict programme was first tested with a group of five young men in a Secure Training Centre. The training was well-received and had an impact on their attitudes and behaviours. What’s more, the results were positive. Participants were able to recall the content of the course in discussion with staff, and they could identify both escalating and de-escalating behaviours in theoretical and personal conflict situations. Case and Key Workers identified benefits for all participants and behaviour change was measurable by a reduction in the number of violent or aggressive incidents. In the two months prior to the training, four of the boys were involved in a total of thirteen incidents. In the two months after the training, one boy was involved in just two incidents.

You know the young people you work with better than any external training agency. So we will provide you with everything you need to deliver the Defusing Conflict programme yourself. Training by an external agency can help to improve attitudes towards conflict. However, it may be more beneficial for young people to undertake an on-going education programme, which is revisited as and when incidents occur.

This resource pack provides you with the tools to deliver the Defusing Conflict programme over a number of weeks and to reinforce learning, as and when required.

The Defusing Conflict programme is designed to be delivered over eight sessions of fifty minutes to an hour – but you can choose to run longer sessions by extending the discussions, or using the additional activities. You could run shorter sessions by using fewer activities – or just use the activities when an opportunity arises, perhaps to create a discussion following an incident.

The examples used throughout the materials in this resource pack fit into four categories:

1. Conflict with friends.
2. Conflict with people you live with.
3. Conflict with people in authority.
4. Conflict with strangers.

Use this resource pack in a way that suits your setting and the needs of your group. Adapt the examples and case studies if necessary so that they best fit the typical conflicts situations experienced by your group.

The eight sessions follow a similar format:

- A visual prompt for discussion (either images or a film clip).
- Group work activity and feedback discussion.
- An additional activity to extend the session or expand the range of learning.
- Feedback and reflection on the learning from the session.

For each session, this resource pack includes:

1. Background notes, which introduce the objectives of the session and the defusing skills information.
2. A session plan outlining each activity.

The resource pack has been designed to keep your preparation time to a minimum. You can quickly read through the background information and then use the session plan to choose which activities you are going to use. All the materials are included so will just need printing, and film clips can be downloaded by logging onto the Dfuse website.

There is a worksheet for young people to complete following every two sessions, perhaps as part of a one-to-one meeting with a Key Worker, or similar. The worksheets aim to help them to reflect on what they have learned, and are therefore important elements of the Defusing Conflict programme. The worksheets will also provide valuable evaluation evidence.

One-to-one sessions are a useful time to look at what young people want to gain from the Defusing Conflict programme and how what their learning applies to their day-to-day interactions.

A short briefing note is provided (page 53) which will give you a bit more information on how SLCN affects communication. This briefing note could also be distributed to other staff in your setting to increase their understanding of what they might be able to do to support young people who struggle to communicate.

Young people practicing the skills taught on the Defusing Conflict programme may approach situations in a different manner, which may appear incongruent to those not aware of the programme. To help staff in your setting to recognise and support young people in practicing their new approaches, there is a template for a poster (page 55) which can be printed and displayed in communal staff areas. This informs staff who are undertaking the Defusing Conflict programme when the sessions are running, and what they can do to reinforce the learning following each session.

Programme evaluation

We kindly ask you to evaluate this programme, both to enable you to see the benefits for young people, and to help Dfuse to further improve the contents of this resource pack. All the tools you need to evaluate your activities are included here, however Dfuse staff will be available to help with your evaluation, should you need any assistance.

The Defusing Conflict programme will mostly be delivered in youth work or youth justice settings, and given the transient nature of young people within these settings, it is unlikely that you will be able to measure any isolatable long-term impact. Young people will move on and therefore the evaluation information must be generated throughout the programme.

We accept that it is unrealistic to expect a short intervention to result in significant, irreversible and life-long behaviour changes. As is the case with other skills-based programmes, long-term behaviour and attitude modification require the reinforcement of learning to be reinforced, the development of interest, and regular opportunities to practice using the skills to gain feedback.

The evaluation focuses on the impression the programme makes on the young people's perception of conflict, their willingness to manage conflict, and their ability to communicate. It intends to provide evidence on whether the programme has been effective – at least in the short term – by observing a positive impact on attitudes, behaviours, and a willingness to deploy the skills to defuse, rather than escalate conflict.

The evaluation tools

This resource pack provides a range of evaluation tools designed to capture information as naturally as possible throughout the programme. Much of the evidence comes from activities within the session, or from worksheets or conversations held between participants and setting staff.

To help you evaluate the programme...

1. **Evaluation forms** for young people to complete after each session (page 57). These are used to identify attitudes towards the learning and to address areas of the programme which could be improved.
2. **A questionnaire** for Workers to complete on each participant (page 58). This will ask for the Worker's observations on the programme's impact, any amendments they think are necessary, as well as suggestions of any other tools which are required to reinforce or build on the learning.

3. **Data collection** of any rewards, special measures or behaviour reports both before and after training. The type of data collected by each setting will be different, and can be recorded on the form (page 59).
4. **Review worksheets** to be completed by young people with their Workers, to recap after sessions two, four, six and eight (pages 60 - 63). There is an additional end-of-programme review (page 64). This data will show the learning achieved on the programme and any adjustments in attitudes towards conflict.
5. **Individual or group learning goals** – an activity is included in session one to help identify individual or group learning goals. This will depend on the dynamics of the group in the first session and their willingness to participate. Some attempt should be made to identify and record learning goals. These should then be reviewed at the end of the programme to evaluate evidence of progress.
6. **Incident de-briefs** should be completed following a conflict situation which escalated or was defused by a young person (page 65). This form can provide useful real-time evidence of young people deploying their defusing skills. Using this tool can help to identify and reward positive behaviours or reveal the need to revisit any learning points from the programme.

As this resource pack is in draft, Dfuse will be in regular contact with you throughout your delivery. We would like to assess your thoughts on each session, your thoughts on any areas for improvement, and any amendments to the training notes you deem necessary. This information will heavily influence the next iteration of this training programme and therefore your insight and feedback will be much appreciated.

If you are not delivering the full eight-week programme, the evaluation tools can still be used, perhaps with some adjustment. Keep a record of what was delivered and how, as this will be invaluable for assessing the impact of these activities against others.

Session One – How do you deal with conflict?

The learning outcomes for young people:

- To understand the purpose and format of the Defusing Conflict programme
- To understand what conflict is, and the difference between a disagreement and a confrontation
- To identify personal responses to conflict

This introductory session is aimed at establishing the format and purpose of the sessions, and encouraging the group to begin to think about how they currently deal with conflict situations. It is incredibly important to establish that you are not speaking to them as an ‘expert’ in conflict resolution (unless you are!) Your role is not to tell them that their approaches to conflict are wrong, or to tell them what to do. Your role is to facilitate their thinking about conflict, from a position of having some insight into these issues. Open discussion should be encouraged, but it is vital that young people feel safe and that the environment is non-judgemental. Your aim, as facilitator, is to grow shared respect and to build an environment of trust where young people feel they can safely discuss their experiences – and in doing so, gain the group’s ‘permission’ for you to facilitate this programme. If the notion of ‘earning permission’ bothers you, then perhaps this programme is not for you to facilitate.

Contract / Ground Rules

As with all group work, establishing ground rules is incredibly important. Examples of suggested ground rules are provided, but your group may already have some. If so, revisit them to highlight their importance, and check that they are appropriate for this training. For example, some groups ban swearing, but when talking about conflict and anger it may not be possible to maintain this. If you are establishing new ground rules, encourage suggestions from the group to give young people ownership of the process. You may want to revisit them briefly at the start of each session.

Activity One – What is conflict?

This activity features a selection of images of people interacting. Participants are asked to choose the images which best represent what they think ‘conflict’ is. There are no right or wrong answers, as this is simply a starting point for discussion. All of the images could be perceived as conflict in one way or another. Some show people arguing or appearing unhappy, whilst others show competition. One image depicts an armed conflict and others show criminal acts. Ask participants to describe what they think is

going on in the picture they chose and why it is a conflict. Use this discussion to highlight that **conflict occurs when two or more people disagree, want different things or misunderstand each other.**

Some conflicts are based on perception, where two people have a different understanding of the same situation. For example, one person may think they are telling a funny joke, but another may find it insulting. Some people place great value on being spoken to with ‘respect’, and if they feel this has not been shown, they may feel obliged to take offence in order to maintain their status. Perceiving that someone has intentionally meant to cause offence or disrespect can be a big issue for many young people and it is useful to bring this to the discussion early. For some people, any point of conflict is seen as a confrontation, and a disagreement will almost always lead to aggression.

Ask the group: ‘What is the difference between a disagreement and a confrontation?’ There are two pictures which can be used to illustrate this. Use the discussion to highlight that both are forms of conflict, but **a confrontation occurs when something happens to make a situation worse.** For example, a disagreement might be due to the fact that one person thinks Spurs are the best football team, but their friend thinks that Arsenal are the best. Their views are in conflict – because they disagree about which is the best football team – but they can still enjoy each other’s company. Disagreements can be managed peacefully. If the disagreement escalates to the point that insults are thrown and things become aggressive – it has become a confrontation.

Activity Two (additional) – Disagreement or confrontation?

This additional activity can be used to further highlight the difference between disagreements and confrontations. Participants are asked to define whether various conflict situations are disagreements or confrontations. This might seem simple, but some of the situations are potentially volatile and some people may feel that they have no choice but to confront. Consider a scenario where one person accidentally spills a drink. Some participants may not accept that it is an accident and view it a deliberate provocation. With this point of view they may feel that they have ‘no choice’ but to retaliate and as a result, will turn a disagreement into a confrontation.

Disagreements are part of everyday life, but how things progress is up to those involved. Disagreements can be resolved peacefully and positively, or be allowed to become confrontational – which often benefits no-one. Winning a confrontation with aggression and force may appear to make the problem go away, but it may not resolve things. If a disagreement is managed well, trust and understanding for each other’s perspective can increase. It is up to those involved to make sure that situations do not end badly. Session two explores how situations escalate and the consequences if they do.

Activity Three – How do you deal with conflict?

This activity asks participants to consider how their disagreements with a variety of different people could end. These include friends, people in authority positions, strangers, and people they live with. You can bring in your own examples, too. Individuals are encouraged to think about how conflicts usually progress, and to identify any they might wish to improve. The results of this activity can provide useful evaluation evidence if reviewed again at the end of the programme.

The activity looks at four different ways in which conflicts might end – with a fight, with an argument, or with both parties either walking away or leaving happily. Participants are asked to indicate how conflicts with each group usually end. For example, for ‘people in authority’, some might indicate that a fight is the most likely outcome, while others might stress it’s an argument. The discussion can be continued by asking for more details and whether they would like the outcomes from these situations to be different.

Of course, there are many more ways that a conflict could end, and the group will inevitably suggest a few ‘it depends’, which affect how they react. A young person might say: “It depends how they talk to me, if they are rude then I will be rude back.” This provides an opportunity for a deeper conversation about what influences responses. This leads nicely onto session two – what makes conflict worse?

Some people may be respectful of strangers or people in authority, and refrain from getting into arguments with them. But the same group might find themselves constantly arguing with people they know. Or vice-versa. This might suggest that they have the capability manage conflict without escalation, but choose not to (or struggle to) apply it to all groups. Praise the positive responses and enquire as to why the responses are different for different groups.

This is also a great time to have a discussion about the difference between what they would like to do, and how they actually react. Some young people might give examples of how they wanted to react violently, but did not. This could lead to a discussion about what stopped them from being violent and perhaps allow them to identify positive behaviours which can be built upon.

Ideally, by the end of the session, each young person will have identified room for improvement in the way they manage conflict. If this is too challenging for individuals within the group, it is acceptable at this stage to focus solely on group goals and generic improvements, which may be better identified by asking: “What do you want to get out of this training?”

Session One Plan – How do you deal with conflict?

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. Introduce yourself and ask young people and staff to say their names.
2. Explain the format of this programme – eight sessions, each covering a different aspect of defusing conflict.
3. Explain the purpose of this programme: To explore a range of scenarios to help young people develop positive approaches for managing conflict and dealing with difficult situations without escalation – and in doing so, get better outcomes from conflict situations.
4. Explain the purpose of this session: To look at how conflict becomes confrontation and identify what they want to get out of the programme.
5. Discuss the suggested ground rules for the session using the poster, if necessary, (tool 1) and ask if these can be upheld for this training. Do they want to amend or add any ground rules for this course?

Activity One – What is conflict? (15 minutes)

1. Place the 16 images of conflict (tool 2) around the room and ask the group as individuals to choose one or two which they think explain what conflict means, i.e. “When you think of ‘conflict’ which image best reflects what you are thinking?”
2. Ask some of the group to show their images and to say why they chose them. Ask the group “What is conflict?” Discuss their ideas.
3. Ask the group: “What is the difference between a disagreement and a confrontation?” Use the disagreement or confrontation posters (tool 3) to record the group’s thoughts.

Activity Two (additional) – Disagreement or confrontation? (15 mins)

1. Divide the room into small groups. Give each group the eight disagreement or confrontation cards (tool 4) and ask them to decide whether they think they are disagreements, confrontations – or could be either.
2. Discuss their thoughts.

Activity Three – How do you deal with conflict? (15 minutes)

1. Place one of the ‘when in conflict’ posters (tool 5) and its possible outcomes in four corners of the room. Place ‘none of these’ in the middle of the room.

2. Call out these groups of people in turn – friends, people you live with, people in authority, and strangers. Ask the group to stand next to the sign which best sums up how conflicts with that group usually end.
3. Ask them to explain their choice. Ask whether they are happy with the way the conflicts end. Is there anything they would like to learn how to change? Make a note of these goals for use in future sessions.
4. There is an individual worksheet for each young person to complete as a record of the activity (or instead of moving around the room). There is also space for them to indicate what they would like to change.

Review (10 minutes)

1. **Recap:** Review the session and highlight the notable learning points.
2. **Evaluation form:** Ask the young people to complete the evaluation form.
3. **Feedback:** Address each young person and ask them to say something positive about the session, but don't let them repeat what someone else has said (e.g. "I thought Dave had a good point", "I like this room", etc.)
4. **What's next:** Briefly introduce the topic for the next session: To explore how conflict can be made worse and looking at techniques for managing conflict.

Tools for Session One

Tool		Page	Preparation
1	Suggested Ground Rules	67	Print one copy large enough so that everyone can see the page – or write your own ground rules on a flip chart.
2	16 images of conflict	68	Print and cut up a set of cards for each five people. Place the cards around the room before the activity.
3	Disagreement or confrontation posters	72	Print one copy of each poster. Stick poster 1 onto a flip chart with 'disagreement' written on it and stick poster 2 onto a flip chart with 'confrontation' written on it.
4	Disagreement or confrontation cards	74	Print and cut up one set of cards for each small group.
5	When in conflict with posters	75	Print one copy of each of the posters and place the words 'fight,' 'argument,' 'all happy' and 'walk away' in four corners. Place 'none of these' in the centre of the room.
6	When in conflict with worksheet	80	Print one copy per person.
	Evaluation sheet	57	Print one copy per person.

Session Two – What makes conflict worse?

The learning outcomes for young people:

- To understand how conflict situations can be made worse
- To be aware of techniques for managing conflict without making situations worse

This session explores how conflict can escalate into destructive situations, which are likely to lead to bad outcomes for those involved.

Activity One – The parking problem

The short film clip displays a conflict between two men which quickly escalates. The men begin to argue when one parks his car across the other's driveway. This film can be used to explore why conflict escalates and assess the group's perspective of who is at fault.

There is potentially more going on in this scenario than we can see in the clip. The group may be able to suggest what. They may feel strongly that one of the men is to blame, and that the actions of the other man are therefore justified. You can also enquire about how they would respond in a similar situation.

Use this conversation to explore perspectives on conflict, but make sure you bring it back to this – **it doesn't matter why a situation has started, or who was in the wrong – what matters is how the situation is managed.** **When a conflict is allowed to become confrontational, often there are no winners.** The film shows a situation where two people have ended up with potentially bad consequences because a disagreement was allowed to escalate. Neither of these men has 'won', no matter the outcome of the physical fight.

A disagreement becomes confrontational when one person does something which angers or threatens another person. This includes being disrespectful, dismissive or rude, making the argument personal, causing embarrassment, making threats or being aggressive. In this film, the homeowner was aggressive. The other man tried to keep it friendly but soon lost his cool and became rude when the homeowner started giving him orders.

Activity Two – Worse or better?

This activity builds on the discussion about the reasons for escalation displayed in the film by asking the participants to categorise a range of actions into those which are likely to make a situation better, and those

which could make it worse. There are likely to be a lot of “it depends” comments, as the actions on the cards are deliberately vague. Participants may demonstrate ways in which the same action can be both escalating and non-escalating. For example, leaning forwards might indicate you are listening, or it might be seen as an invasion of personal space.

Everything you do – or don’t do – sends a message to other people. The words you choose to use, the way you put those words across, the position of your body and your gestures – all communicate messages. The following can make a situation worse:

- The words – swearing, dismissing people, insults and put-downs.
- Tone of voice – obvious anger and aggression, sarcasm, talking loudly or shouting, and being patronising.
- Body posture – an aggressive stance, squaring up and standing too close.
- Gestures – finger pointing, rude gestures, patting someone's head and signalling aggression (“come on”).

Sometimes messages are sent deliberately to communicate how you feel about a situation, for example visibly showing your anger. Other times, messages are sent knowing that they are likely to annoy the other person, for example a rude hand gesture, or a sarcastic tone of voice.

Often, people will react without thinking and immediately regret doing so afterwards. These responses often change how a situation progresses as they become the new focus of a conversation instead of the original issue. For example, if someone bumps in to you accidentally and you call them names without thinking, those insults are likely to become the focus of the argument, rather than what they did.

Messages can be sent accidentally. Or people may perceive an action in a way it wasn't intended. For example, a frown might be because someone is trying hard to listen, but another person may perceive it to be disagreement.

In the same way that words, tone, body posture and gestures can make a situation worse, they can also be used to make a situation better:

- The words – use positive supportive words, say sorry if you have done something wrong and use good manners.
- Tone of voice – talk with a friendly tone.
- Body posture – as shown in the picture, look friendly, relaxed and non-threatening. Move back to give them space and have an open body posture, showing your palms.
- Gestures – avoid fast and sudden movements.



Many people struggle to walk away from a conflict situation, especially if there is a threat to their social status or self-image. For example disagreeing with someone's point of view, for some people, will feel like a personal attack. They may find this hard to accept and retaliate. Others will not walk away from a conflict situation for fear of looking bad in front of others, or feeling like they are losing. Session seven looks more at finding face saving ways out of conflict.

An important part of defusing a conflict situation is to show that you are listening to what the other person is saying. This helps you understand the reasons behind someone's behaviour, and also shows you are interested in what they have to say. Sessions five and six look at listening skills.

Activity three (additional) - Consequences

This additional activity encourages participants to explore the possible consequences of conflict situations between: strangers; friends; people in authority; and people who live together. Each of the scenarios has the potential to escalate – or not. **There are no winners when conflict is allowed to escalate – and often there are serious consequences.**

During this activity, it is likely that some of the young people will suggest that there are certain situations where escalating a conflict is unavoidable, and that they do not have a choice, but to respond.

By focusing on what it might 'cost' if a situation escalates encourage the group to think about whether an escalating attitude is likely to cost them more than they gain. For example, a young person who feels that they have been 'disrespected' might feel they must use violence to redress the balance. However, this might lead to them being arrested or losing their job, the custody of their children, their place on the local football team, etc.

Think about the possible consequences and ask yourself, do I really want that.

Session Two Plan – What makes conflict worse?

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. **Ground rules:** Revisit and confirm that the group is happy to work within them.
2. **Recap:** Summarise what happened in the last session and highlight the key learning points.
3. **This session:** Introduce the topic – exploring how conflict can be made worse and looking at techniques for managing conflict.

Activity One – Parking Problem (15 minutes)

Show the film of two men arguing about parking. Ask the group to suggest what they think is going on in the film. Why did it escalate into a confrontation? Refer back to session one, where the group discussed the differences between disagreements and confrontations.

1. Ask who they think who is in the wrong and why. Ask what the consequences might be for the two people involved (injury or prosecution, on-going bad relationships, etc.) What could they have done differently?

Activity Two – Worse or better? (15 minutes)

1. Organise the participants into smaller groups and ask each to sort the ‘worse or better?’ cards (tool 7) into three piles. 1) Make the situation worse, 2) Make the situation better, and 3) Don’t know/both.
2. Ask each group to show the contents of their ‘don’t know/both’ pile. Try to come to some agreement about which of the other two piles the ‘don’t knows’ should be in. You might need to explain the action on the card in a bit more detail to help with this. Ask the groups to give examples of when the ‘both’ actions might make things better, and when they might make things worse.
3. If there is time, ask each individual to tell the rest of the group about one action they often do when in conflict from the ‘worse’ pile, and then one from the ‘better’ pile. Ask which of the actions from the ‘worse’ pile they, as individuals, would like to avoid and which from the ‘better’ pile they would like to be able to do more of. Make a note of their goals to refer to later.

Activity Three (additional) – Consequences (10 minutes)

1. Show one of the consequences scenarios (tool 8) to the group. Ask what could make the situation worse and what the consequences might be if it did get out of control.

2. Discuss why it might be desirable to avoid these consequences. Ask the group: What choices do those involved have? What are the possible options? What are the consequences of each action? Is there an option which leads to a good result for both people?
3. Use the worksheet (tool 9) to discuss the scenarios, and the possible consequences that could occur if the conflict was managed well or allowed to escalate. An example has already been completed, which could help to promote discussion if the group isn't very talkative.

Review (10 minutes)

1. **Recap:** Review the session and highlight the notable learning points.
2. **Evaluation form:** Ask the young people to complete the evaluation form.
3. **Feedback:** Ask the group to review what they have learnt – each individual should be able to identify at least one action which might make a conflict worse. If possible, ask them to suggest an area which they wish to address in their own lives.
4. **What's next:** Briefly introduce the topic for the next session – to look at the effects of conflict on the body, how these can be managed, and an approach for managing conflict.

Tools for Session Two

Tool		Page	Preparation
Film 1	Parking argument	Online	Download the film from the website.
7	Worse or better cards	81	Print and cut up one set of cards for each small group.
8	Consequences scenarios	83	Print out and cut up. Give one of the scenario cards to each small group.
9	Consequences worksheet	84	Print one copy for each small group.
	Evaluation sheet	57	Print one copy per person.
	Session one and two review	60	Print one copy per person.

Session Three – What makes conflict better?

The learning outcomes for young people:

- To recognise spontaneous responses to conflict
- To be aware that responses to conflict can be managed
- To identify ways to make conflict situations better

This session looks at the effects of escalating conflict on the body, and how people behave when under stress. The group is given the opportunity to explain how they respond to conflict and to explore strategies to manage these effects using the Dfuse approach to defusing.

Activity One – Late night party

This short film shows a late party going on in a block of flats which is disturbing one of the neighbours. The neighbour complains a number of times, but each time he comes to complain he becomes angrier, to the point that a fight breaks out. Anger responses are the main topic for this clip, but the conversation could easily lead to alcohol and drugs, peer pressure and invasion of personal space.

Spontaneous responses to anger appear to happen without thinking and usually make the situation worse. For each anger response, there is first an action (a trigger), followed by a decision (of how to respond) and then the response.

Many people do not understand why they respond to triggers in the way that they do. They will use terms such as, “I go blank” or “I just see red”. It is hard to manage responses without knowing what drives them.

For some people, the response is so ingrained that it appears automatically and without any thought. For example, “If someone pushes me, I punch them” or “If you shout at me, I’ll shout back louder”. The response to those triggers is so rehearsed that the decision part of the process is not noticeable.

Fear can also drive spontaneous responses. **Stress caused by conflict can cause adrenaline to be released into the body, which increases the heart rate and can make thinking and hand co-ordination difficult.** This is because the body is preparing to fight or run away.

When under stress, perception of a situation can also be affected. Time may appear to slow down – “It looked like it was happening in slow motion”, or speed up – “I don’t know what happened, it was over so

fast”, and threats may seem greater than they are. Some people get tunnel vision, where they’ll see or hear only one thing. For example, people who have been threatened with a weapon remember the detail of the weapon really well, but it is often perceived to be larger than it actually was.

The film shows how the attitude of those involved escalates the situation. Some of these features of escalating conflict are visible in the film:

- Arguments get worse making a resolution of the initial conflict more difficult.
- Tactics can become more destructive, involving violence and displays of emotion (such as anger).
- More people become involved and the conflict grows.
- Respect for the other person is reduced.
- Relationships break down and effective communication becomes difficult.
- A desire to win the argument (not the initial conflict) at all costs takes over.
- If winning doesn’t appear to be possible, then the desire for the other person to lose (at all costs) can take over – i.e. there are known consequences for an action, but the desire to make the other person suffer becomes the priority.

Activity Two (additional) – Physical effects of conflict

This activity builds on the discussion from the film to explore the effects of conflict on the body.

As people get angry, their appearance often changes. They may show tension in their face and jaws and grit their teeth, they may purse their lips or have wide eyes and a fixed stare. They may also look like they are preparing to fight by puffing out their chest, standing tall and clenching their fists.

It is not possible to eliminate the effects of anger altogether, but they can be reduced by:

- Taking a few steps back. This will help to reduce fear and when combined with breathing deeply and slowly, can slow down the heart rate and adrenaline production. It also means that you are further away from the other person, which reduces the feeling of being threatened.
- Changing the way you think about the actions of others may help to provide a new perspective. For example, one young man stopped himself from reacting to provocation from a smaller boy by thinking: “I could easily take him, but I don’t want to hurt him.”
- Be curious about why the other person is behaving the way they are. Think “I wonder why they did that”, rather than “they did that on purpose”.
- Don’t take the actions of others personally, especially if they are deliberately trying to provoke. For some, this approach will be a challenge.

- Try to recognise the anger triggers and think about making conscious decisions about how you want to respond, rather than automatically reacting. The defusing approach will look at this later.

Activity Three – It keeps getting worse...

Conflict is made worse when someone does something which angers or threatens others. The group may have different interpretations, but the images in tool 11 show a scenario where:

1. One person accidentally causes the other to drop their drink.
2. The person who dropped the drink then shouts abuse at the person who bumped into them.
3. Heated words are exchanged and they provoke each other.
4. The threats increase and the men square up to fight.

The group is asked to share their thoughts: what each man does, how the other reacts to it – and why.

Note: Some previous participants expressed a view that there is no such thing as an accident in this type of situation, only deliberate provocation.

This activity introduces the Dfuse approach for defusing conflict:

- **Don't react without thinking** – spontaneous reactions often make situations worse.
- **Get your head in the right place** – managing conflict requires at least one person to stop the situation from escalating and to find a way to end the conflict. You can choose to be that person.
- **Think about what's going on** – ask yourself: Why are we in conflict? Is this just a misunderstanding? How dangerous is this situation? What is the biggest issue? In this scenario, the biggest issue is the way the men speak to each other, not the spilled drink.
- **Decide how you want it to play out** – how do you want the situation to end? Consider whether what you want is realistic and how likely you are to get it. You may need to adjust your expectations if what you initially want is unrealistic.
- **Once you've decided what you want, focus on that and avoid doing anything that will reduce your chances of getting what you want.** Don't let others escalate the situation.
- **Whatever you do, keep yourself safe** – if at any point you feel at risk, take action to reduce any aggression in the situation and move away to a safe distance. Get away quickly if you feel an attack is imminent.



Session Three Plan – What makes conflict better?

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. **Ground rules:** Revisit these and confirm that the group is happy to work within them.
2. **Recap:** Summarise what happened in the last session and highlight the key learning points.
3. **This session:** Introduce the topic – looking at the effects of conflict on the body, how these can be managed and a useful approach for managing conflict.

Activity One – Late night party (15 minutes)

1. Show the film of a conflict between people at a house party, and a neighbour. The clip shows people getting angrier as the argument continues and displays the physical effects of conflict.
2. Ask the group – how did they know the people were becoming angrier? When did they know that the men were going to start fighting? How did they know? What could have been done to avoid a fight?

Activity Two (additional) - Physical effects of conflict (15 minutes)

1. Following the film discussion, ask the group to identify the effects of conflict in the body and to draw them on the outline of the person (tool 10), or the outline of a participant on a very large piece of paper. Prompt their thinking by asking:
 - What changes do you notice in your body when you are having an argument?
 - What happens to how you think?
 - What do you say or do without thinking?
2. Ask the group to suggest how the unhelpful effects of conflict might be managed. An example of a completed outline of a body is given in tool 10.

Activity Three – It keeps getting worse (15 minutes)

1. Show and explain the ‘It keeps getting worse...’ poster (tool 11) and ask the group to suggest what is going on in picture one. Then ask the groups to work through each of the pictures and to suggest what is going on, what each man is doing to make the situation worse – and what they might be saying to each other.
2. Show the defusing flowchart posters (tool 12) and briefly explain each point. Ask the groups to apply the process in the flowchart to their interpretation of the spilled drink scenario. Ask them to identify how the situation could have been defused or prevented from getting worse by using this approach.

What decisions could each man have made? What could they have done differently to defuse, rather than escalate, the situation?

Review (10 minutes)

1. **Recap:** Review the session and highlight the notable learning points.
2. **Evaluation form:** Ask the young people to complete the evaluation form.
3. **Feedback:** Run a review activity of your choice to get a feel for how the group is getting on with the workshops.
4. **What's next:** Briefly introduce the topic – understanding how personal feelings can affect responses to conflict, and how to manage them.

Tools for Session Three

Tool		Page	Preparation
Film 2	Late night party	Online	Download the film from the website.
10	Physical effects of conflict	86	Print one copy for each small group.
11	It keeps getting worse...	88	Print one copy for each small group.
12	The Dfuse model of defusing conflict	89	Print one large copy and stick on the wall, or print one for each small group.
	Evaluation sheet	57	Print one copy per person.

Session Four – How am I feeling?

The learning outcomes for young people:

- To recognise how personal feelings affect reactions to conflict
- To understand how tone of voice can affect the meaning of what is said

This session highlights that how young people feel has a big impact on how they will interpret and respond to situations. Also, the people they might be in conflict with will also be experiencing their own feelings and moods, which will affect their behaviour, too.

The issue of ‘feelings’ can be a difficult one for a lot of young people. Asking them to talk about how they are feeling can feel far too personal, and can lead to them clamping up completely. Therefore, use your judgement to think about how you might approach this topic with your group in a way that they might be more comfortable with.

Some young people are able to reflect on their feelings *after* an incident has occurred. However, they may have difficulty reflecting on those emotions *during* an incident. Other young people will struggle to label and understand subtle changes in emotions. For example, they can say when they are angry but have difficulty identifying that they were frustrated prior to this. These difficulties can make it challenging for a young person to recognise when a disagreement is escalating into a confrontation.

Activity One – On the phone

The film for this session shows a group of friends standing at a bus stop. While one is on his mobile phone, arguing with his girlfriend, the rest start messing around and throwing chips at him. The man gets increasingly agitated with his friends and finally lashes out at one of them. This behaviour is out of character for the man and his friends are surprised. This scenario can lead to a conversation with the group on the link between how the man was feeling, and how he behaved.

Behaviours are often affected when people are in a bad mood, are tired or stressed. They might not want to speak to people, might ignore someone who is speaking to them, or even push past them as there is something occupying their mind. It is not necessarily the case that they mean to be rude or confrontational, but it might come across like that. In the same way, it is possible that when someone else is being ‘disrespectful’, there might be reasons for their behaviour which have nothing to do with the person they are communicating with.

The analogy of an ‘exploding volcano’ can be used to explain that *before* a person ‘explodes’ there will be lots of feelings ‘bubbling below the surface’. Some of these will be visible in the behaviours – the equivalent of smoke, or small vents and jets.

The group can label these ‘thoughts and feelings’ and ‘words and actions’ using cards provided. For example, thoughts and feelings – the man was angry because his girlfriend was breaking up with him. Words and actions – the man *pushed* another man against the wall.

Links can then be made between the thoughts and feelings, and the words and actions. Even though the man’s friends were only messing around, the feelings the man was having about the argument with his girlfriend lead to him react aggressively.

This is not to provide an excuse for aggressive behaviour – you are entirely responsible for your own responses to any situation, no matter how bad you are feeling or how much you are provoked.

By recognising the links between the thoughts, feelings, words and actions of others, you can understand, and therefore compensate for, their behaviours. For example, in the film, the friends could have seen that the man was agitated on the phone and that it was probably not the best time to tease him.

By recognising the links between your own thoughts, feelings, words and actions you can choose when to enter into a conflict and when to avoid it – so as not to escalate the situation. In the film, the man on the phone could have recognised that he was angry and that this would be likely to make his reactions more aggressive. He probably should have completely ignored his friends messing around.

Activity Two (additional) – When volcanoes collide

The film clip ends when the man pushes his friend against the wall. We don’t see how the friend responds. However, it is important to recognise that how he is feeling at that moment will affect his response – if he is still in a good mood from when he was throwing chips around, he might realise he took things too far, and apologise straightaway. Alternatively, he might feel angry about being pushed, and feel that his friend should have taken it as a joke.

For this activity, the group will be presented with scenarios in which two people are experiencing their own feelings and moods. The group is then encouraged to think about how this might affect responses, how these might be perceived by the other person, and the effect this might have on the conversation.

Within this activity, there is scope for the young people to think about conflict situations in which they have found themselves, and to reflect upon what they were thinking/feeling before the conflict escalated. This might be a challenge for some young people, and it might be difficult for them to discuss in a group environment.

Activity Three – What does that mean?

Tone of voice, and the words we stress, can change the meaning of a sentence entirely. In fact, some research says that tone and intonation carry up to 70% of the meaning (consider that this is also applicable to sarcasm and humour).

This activity requires you as the trainer to read out the same sentence (“I didn’t say you took the money”) a number of times, each time emphasising a different word in order to change its meaning. It is important that you know what you mean, so take some time to think about this beforehand. For example: “I didn’t say you took the money” could imply that you didn’t ‘say’ it, but you may or may not think it.

Some of the young people will find it hard to hear where the stress is and to explain the intended meaning. You will need to be very clear in your emphasis. Do not be subtle or this activity might not work. You could even use gestures alongside the words you are stressing. For example, if you say: “I didn’t say you took the money,” you could also point to yourself.

This activity shows the group that one set of words can have many meanings and it is important to work out what the person saying them really means. Also, as the same set of words can have lots of different meanings, it is easy for us to assume the wrong meaning, especially when we are already stressed, tired or have adrenaline racing around the body!

For some people, it will be easier to work out how a statement has made them feel and then use this to work out what they think the person meant. This is important in conflict as often people react to their feelings, but we really need to find out what someone actually means.

Session Four Plan – How am I feeling?

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. **Ground rules:** Revisit the ground rules and confirm that the group is happy to work within them.
2. **Recap:** Summarise what happened in the last session and highlight the key learning points.
3. **This session:** Introduce the topic – understanding how personal feelings can affect responses to conflict and how to manage them.

Activity One – On the phone (20 minutes)

1. Show the film clip of an argument between friends at bus stop. Explain to the young people that the man on the phone's behaviour was out of character and ask them why they think he might have reacted in that way. What was he feeling? Why did he get angry?
2. Talk through the 'exploding volcano' analogy, explaining that there may be lots of emotions bubbling below the surface before the person 'explodes'.
3. Support the young people to label the possible thoughts and feelings, behaviours and actions, using the volcano visual and prompt cards to help (tools 13 & 14).
4. Discuss how the man's feelings might have impacted on his behaviour.

Activity Two (additional) – When volcanoes collide (15 minutes)

1. Split the group into small groups and give each a copy of one of the scenarios (tool 15), and a copy of the picture of two volcanoes (tool 16).
2. Explain that each volcano represents one of the people in the scenario they have been given.
3. Their task is to think about what each of the two people in this scenario might have been thinking and feeling, and how this might affect their words and actions. They can label these on the volcanoes.
4. Once the groups have had time to think about their scenarios, ask them to share their thoughts with the other groups. Explain that people all experience their own feelings and emotions, and that this will affect how they interact.
5. Extend the discussion by talking about the possible consequences of allowing instinctive reactions to take over, and how adopting the defusing approach could have led to a better outcome.

Activity Three – What does that mean? (10 minutes)

1. Read out this statement to the group: "I didn't say you took the money," taking care not to pause or emphasise any of the words. This statement can have different meanings depending on which words you emphasise.
2. Re-read the statement six times, and each time emphasise a different word in the sentence (apart from 'the'). After each time, ask the group what the statement means. Some young people may struggle to answer this, but if you ask: "How would you feel if someone said this to you?" they may then be able to work it out.
3. Ask what was easier – working out how the statement made them feel, or explaining what the statement meant. Highlight to the group that for some it was easier to work out how the statements made them feel before they were able to work out what they thought the person meant.

Review (10 minutes)

1. **Recap:** Review the session and highlight the notable learning points.
2. **Evaluation form:** Ask the young people to complete the evaluation form.
3. **Feedback:** As this is the halfway stage, ask each young person to think about the main thing they have learned so far in terms of dealing with conflict.
4. **What's next:** Briefly introduce the topic for the next session – learning how to listen and using these skills to check that they understand what the other person has said.

Tools for Session Four

Tool		Page	Preparation
Film 3	On the phone	Online	Download the film from the website.
13	The exploding volcano	90	Print one copy for each small group.
14	Thoughts & feelings, behaviours & actions	91	Print and cut up one set of cards.
15	When volcanoes collide scenarios	93	Print and cut up one copy for each small group.
16	Two volcanoes	94	Print one copy for each small group.
	Evaluation sheet	57	Print one copy per person.
	Session three and four review	61	Print one per person

Session Five – Are you listening?

The learning outcomes for young people:

- To understand the importance of listening
- To know how to check understanding

This session looks at the importance of listening to other people, in order to better understand their perspective and to establish an accurate meaning of what they are saying.

A good listener will be able to keep the other person talking. This is helpful, as the more they talk, the more you can understand their point of view. If they are angry, then letting them vent by keeping them talking will help to calm them down. Maintaining a high level of aggression uses a lot of energy, and when people are encouraged to talk, aggression dissipates.

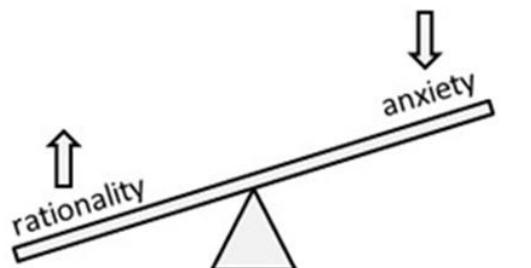
Activity One – The broken phone

The film shows two girls in a park. One becomes angry when she realises that her phone is not working properly. She accuses her friend of breaking the phone. She is so angry, that she is not listening to her friend's side of the story.

The aim of this film is to show young people that listening is important when trying to resolve a conflict. However, some might say that listening is far more difficult when a person is feeling angry or upset.

The girl on the left starts off very angry. Initially, the girl on the right argues back, but soon the girl on the left chooses to take responsibility for the situation not escalating and then begins to listen.

At the beginning of the film, the girl on the left is showing high levels of anxiety, which could be caused by a combination of frustration, fear and anger. When anxiety is high, rationality is low and it is not possible to have a rational conversation. You will not resolve a confrontation with a person who is highly anxious. Think of this as a seesaw – as anxiety goes up, rationality goes down. **To have a rational conversation, first the anxiety must be brought down.** One of the best ways of achieving this is to listen. This helps others to feel that you are genuinely interested in what they have to say.



Some young people will struggle with listening skills in everyday situations, such as during a conversation with friends. It's not only when in conflict. It therefore helps to practise listening skills in non-confrontational situations in order to prepare them for using the skills in a range of situations.

Activity Two – Back-to-back

This is what is known as a barrier activity – the participants must communicate something from one person to the other but there is a barrier involved. In this case neither partner can see what the other can see – they have to rely on talking alone.

Communication can be described with the simple term ‘sender – message – receiver’. Messages are sent by one person to be received by another. In order to have effective communication, the message which arrives must be the one which was sent. There are many factors, however, which can affect this.

The sender will have an understanding of what they mean to communicate, and will send a message, perhaps both verbally and non-verbally. Firstly the message must arrive intact (they could hear and see it all as it wasn't affected by noise, etc.)

The receiver must then interpret the message exactly. However, their interpretation can be influenced by how they are feeling, their perception of you, what that you have said before – and their culture and customs.

Effective communication is hard and can go wrong easily unless we check that the other person has understood the message in the way it was intended.

The next activity highlights this. The first picture that is drawn, when the ‘listener’ does not say anything, will not be as accurate. The second picture may be perfect, as the listener can check their understanding of what the other person has said.

Some young people will find listening like this difficult. You may find that during the activity, some pairs need some extra support. In the workshop tools, you will find a prompt card with useful questions for young people who find it difficult to formulate questions.

Alternatively, you could demonstrate the activity with a colleague to start off with so the young people know what is expected of them and can hear some examples of appropriate questions.

The young people may find that they ask questions that start with: "Did you mean..." or "What did you mean?" This does not mean the other person is poor at explaining – rather that they are trying to make sure that they understand. By the end of the activity, the young people will be aware that **checking understanding is a key part of listening.**

Activity Three (additional) – Are you listening?

This activity further highlights the importance of checking understanding. It asks the group to recall what they remember from a paragraph after it is read out. Some of the group will make incorrect assumptions and confuse what was said (or not said).

The passage to read out is:

Alex is talking to Pat and says: "I want a word with you. Your brother had another go at me yesterday.

It was dark. I was walking to the shop. I heard shouting and saw him running towards me. I hoped he hadn't seen me. I put my head down and started to walk fast. I hid in the shop. He was waiting outside. I heard him shout 'bitch'. I wasn't sure what to do. A customer went outside and shouted. He then ran off. I waited and then went home. Tell him to keep away from me."

The statements the group are asked to consider are :

Alex is male	We don't know. Alex could be short for Alexander or Alexandra. Pat could also be male or female (Patrick or Patricia). The brother shouts 'bitch' which is usually said to females, but we don't actually know if the brother shouts that at Alex or someone else.
The incident happened at night	We don't know. It was dark, but it could have been early morning.
Alex hid in the shop	True. This was mentioned as a fact in the story.
The brother was alone	We don't know. Alex talks about the brother, but there could have been others.
The brother was going to attack Alex	We don't know. Alex believed that something bad was going to happen. Alex doesn't describe any direct interaction with the brother. He may have been running away from someone else, and not have even noticed Alex.
The brother ran off	We don't know. Alex says "he ran off", but this could refer to the customer or the brother. Also, we don't know whether the customer was male or female, or if they were shouting at Alex or someone else.

Some young people will struggle to remember the details in the passage. This might be because there is a lot of information, it could be that they have low attention spans, they cannot take in information quickly, or that their working memory is poor, and they struggle to recall information.

Take care not to make anyone feel bad about getting some of the answers wrong. The passage of text is deliberately ambiguous to highlight how people can fill in gaps of information and make assumptions.

Consider how the information gaps are filled. Is it based on prejudices, or social norms? Did the story create a picture in your head and were your responses based on that picture? Were the filled gaps based on your own experiences? For example, do you know someone called Alex, and therefore this Alex took the same gender?

It is important to recognise when we fill gaps in. If we fill them in ourselves, we are putting in our own interpretation of the story – but do we really understand it? What are the consequences of getting it wrong?

More strategies for checking understanding include:

- Paraphrasing – that is summarising what you think the other person said and then asking if you got it right. For example: “You said that you saw my brother running towards you. You were scared and so you hid in the shop until he went. Is that right?”
- Asking open questions to keep them talking – these are questions which require more than a one word or ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. For example: “What did you think my brother was going to do?”
- Ask for clarification on specific points – focus in on areas of the story that you don’t understand or that are ambiguous. For example: “You said that he was waiting outside, can you tell me more about that?” or “You said you hoped he hadn’t seen you. How do you know that he did see you?”

Session Five Plan – Are you listening?

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. **Ground rules:** Revisit the ground rules and confirm that the group is happy to work within them.
2. **Recap:** Summarise what happened in the last session and highlight the key learning points.
3. **This session:** Introduce the topic – learning how to listen and to use these skills checking that they understand what the other person has said.

Activity One – The broken phone (15 minutes)

1. Show the film of the two girls arguing about a broken mobile phone once, and then divide the group in to two smaller groups.
2. Show the film again, but this time, ask one of the groups to focus on the girl on the left and the other to focus the girl on the right. Ask them to observe what their behaviours and actions are and what they might be thinking and feeling. Give each group one of the worksheets in tool 17. Discuss the thoughts of the group.
3. Explain the anxiety/rationality seesaw (tool 18) and highlight that when someone is highly anxious, it is hard to have a rational conversation with them. Your priority must be to calm the situation down.

Activity Two – Back-to-back (15 minutes)

1. Organise the group into pairs and sit them back-to-back. Give one person in each pair a copy of the first picture in tool 19. Give the other person a pen and a piece of paper.
2. Ask the people with the picture to describe it to the listener so that the listener can draw it. Tell the listener (drawer) that they cannot say anything – or communicate in any way.
3. Compare the accuracy of the drawings to the original pictures. Discuss what may have made the exercise easier – hopefully someone will suggest asking questions. They may also say things like facing each other, looking at the drawing etc., which are all valid points. Point out that even though they were listening quietly, this does not mean that they fully understood.
4. Repeat the activity, still sitting back-to-back, with the second picture in tool 19, but allow the listeners (drawers) to talk and ask questions. There is a prompt sheet in tool 20 which you can give to them if you think they will struggle to formulate what to say.
5. Ask the listeners (drawers) what they said to improve communication and what difference this made to the accuracy of the drawings. Ask how they felt about the activity – was it less frustrating? Did they feel they understood more?

Activity Three (additional) – Are you listening? (15 minutes)

1. Read out the below story below to the group, but only once.

Alex is talking to Pat and says: "I want a word with you. Your brother had another go at me yesterday. It was dark. I was walking to the shop. I heard shouting and saw him running towards me. I hoped he hadn't seen me. I put my head down and started to walk fast. I hid in the shop. He was waiting outside. I heard him shout 'bitch'. I wasn't sure what to do to. A customer went outside and shouted. He then ran off. I waited and then went home. Tell him to keep away from me."

2. Then give each member of the group a copy of the statements in tool 21 and ask them, on their own, to decide whether the statements are true, not true, or whether they are unsure. They should circle their choice. You could also do this part of the activity by asking for a show of hands, instead of using the worksheets.
3. Discuss the answers with the group (1. Not sure, 2. Not sure, 3. True, 4. Not sure, 5. Not sure, 6. Not sure).
4. Use the story to highlight how paraphrasing (asking open questions and focusing on specific details) can help to check understanding.

Review (10 minutes)

1. **Recap:** Review the session and highlight the notable learning points.
2. **Evaluation form:** Ask the young people to complete the evaluation form.
3. **Feedback:** Ask young people to think about one thing they could try to improve their listening e.g. ask a question, look at the speaker, nod, etc.
4. **What's next:** Briefly introduce the topic for the next session – learning how to keep someone talking in order to better understand their perspective.

Tools for Session Five

Tool		Page	Preparation
Film 4	The broken phone	Online	Download the film from the website.
17	Two volcanoes	95	Print one copy.
18	Rationality/anxiety seesaw	97	Print one copy large enough so that everyone can see the page.
19	Back-to-back picture	98	Print one copy for each pair.
20	Listening prompts	100	Print one copy for each pair.
21	Are you listening statements	101	Print one copy per person.
	Evaluation sheet	57	Print one copy per person.

Session Six – Are you really listening?

The learning outcomes for young people:

- To understand the importance of listening to another person's perspective
- To know how to keep someone else talking

The purpose of this session is to build on the learning from the previous session by gaining a greater understanding of how to listen effectively, and how to listen to the perspective of other people.

Activity One – Spilled drink

This film shows an argument between two girls while out with friends. The girls are talking when one girl playfully knocks her friend's cup. The drink spills over her friend, who reacts very angrily. What are the different perspectives? Some people will make assumptions about what other people are thinking or feeling. This can mean they get into more conflicts than necessary and find it difficult to talk their way out of things.

The aim of this film is to highlight that **sometimes people think and feel different things about the same situation**. For example, the girl on the left believes that the drink was spilled on purpose and therefore is demanding an apology, but the girl on the right thinks that it was an accident and therefore she has nothing to apologise for.

Would using listening skills make any difference? Would anything have been different if they had found out how each other was feeling, or what they were thinking?

Activity Two – What makes you want to talk?

This activity highlights to the group what it feels like when someone is not listening. **When 'listeners' show no interest, 'talkers' are unlikely to want to keep talking.** And we want them to keep talking, as shown in session five.

This activity asks the young people to talk about a topic that they are interested in, while the other person responds in a certain way as instructed on a card they have been given. Some of the behaviours support good listening, and will keep the other person talking – others will stop them from talking. **Being a good**

listener is a skill. If you just keep quiet, you will hear what they say – but you won't necessarily understand what they mean. Good listeners will:

- Face towards the other person with a relaxed, but interested posture.
- Keep a comfortable gap between them and the other person so as not to invade personal space.
- Use good eye-contact – they don't stare or look away.
- Have a neutral or appropriate facial expression – laugh or smile if the other person shares a joke.
- Use an interested tone of voice.
- Use a low and calm volume of voice.
- Use a normal, or a bit slower than normal rate of speech. A fast rate of speech indicates high energy and won't calm a situation.
- Choose their words carefully and avoid swearing, won't say too much and won't accuse or threaten the other person.
- Give positive responses to encourage the other person to keep talking – nodding, using words like "uh huh, hmm, OK, tell me more, etc."
- Ask questions only to understand what the other person has said. Remember that asking questions in a probing way is not helpful. It is likely to distract the person from what they are saying and then you might not get to hear their full perspective.

Activity Three (additional) – Setting a bad example

The purpose of this activity is to give the young people a chance to see listening skills in practice and to comment on someone else's before having a go themselves.

The activity involves you role-playing a conversation with a colleague and inviting the young people to comment on what is going well, and what is not. There is a prompt sheet within the tools for the young people to help them understand what they are looking for.

You might choose to start off with one of you adopting behaviours that will actively make the situation worse, or encourage the other person to stop talking altogether. For example, the young people might see that you being rude, aren't making eye-contact, are interrupting or making inappropriate facial expressions.

Encourage individuals to have a go at using listening skills, and if they do not feel comfortable doing this, then encourage them to take an active role in observing other people using the skills.

Session Six Plan – Are you really listening?

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. **Ground rules:** Revisit the ground rules and confirm that the group is happy to work within them.
2. **Recap:** Summarise what happened in the last session and highlight the key learning points.
3. **This session:** Introduce the topic – learning how to keep someone talking in order to better understand their perspective.

Activity One – Spilled drink (15 minutes)

1. Show the film of the two girls who get into an argument about a spilled drink, (only play it once) and then divide the group into two smaller groups.
2. Show the film again and this time, ask one of the groups to focus on the girl on the left and the other to focus on the girl on the right. Ask them to observe what their behaviours and actions are and what they might be thinking and feeling. Give each group one of the worksheets in tool 22. Discuss the thoughts of the group.
3. Conclude by highlighting that different people can have different perspectives on the same situation. Refer back to the previous activities on listening and ask: What if the girls used their listening skills? Would anything have been different if they had found out each other's perspectives?

Activity Two – What makes you want to talk? (15 minutes)

1. Organise the group into pairs and nominate one member of each pair to be the 'talker' and the other the 'listener'. Give the talker a subject to talk to the listener about (topics of conversation could include: What I would do if I won the lottery, my dream holiday, my favourite sports team, or someone I admire or respect). Give the listener one of the listening instruction cards (tool 23) and ask them to do only what is on that card.
2. Give the pairs a few minutes to have their conversation. Ask how they found it. Those with listeners who gave eye contact, nodded, provided feedback etc., should identify that their listeners were easy to talk to. Ask the other talkers what their listeners were doing and what they think made it harder for them to talk. Did it make them feel comfortable talking, or did they run out of things to say?
3. Give the pairs a chance to swap roles so that they can each have the experience of being the talker with a listener doing something specific.

Activity Three (additional) – Setting a bad example (15 minutes)

1. Tell the group that you are going to role-play a conversation with your colleague.
2. Choose a neutral conversation to start so the group understands the idea.
3. Begin the role play. Invite the young people to indicate what you are doing wrong and how to improve. It is okay for them to interrupt you and explain their thoughts as you go through. Tool 24 can be given to the group as a prompt for good listening behaviours.
4. When appropriate, invite individual young people to come up and take your place to show the group how they would do it. Keep rotating young people until they've all had a go, but be prepared to step back into the role if anyone becomes reluctant.
5. Repeat the exercise, this time use a conflict situation where your colleague is annoyed and you must calm them down using the listening and questioning skills.

Review (10 minutes)

1. **Recap:** Review the session and highlight the notable learning points.
2. **Evaluation form:** Ask the young people to complete the evaluation form.
3. **Feedback:** Go around the room and ask everyone to say something positive about the work of the person three seats to their left, and an area in which they have improved. Acknowledge the work done by everyone in the group, and give examples of things that you and your colleagues have noticed. Make sure not to embarrass anyone.
4. **What's next:** Briefly introduce the topic for the next session – understanding ways to resolve conflict without anyone losing face.

Tools for Session Six

Tool		Page	Preparation
Film 5	Film spilled drink	Online	Download the film from the website.
22	Spilled drink	102	Print one copy.
23	Listening instruction cards	104	Print and cut up enough sets of cards for every person to have one card.
24	A good listener will...	105	Print one copy per person.
	Evaluation sheet	57	Print one copy per person.
	Session five and six Review	62	Print one copy per person.

Session Seven – Can you find a way out?

The learning outcomes for young people:

- To recognise behaviours which help and hinder resolving conflict
- To understand the importance of saving face

Personal image is incredibly important to some people, and the desire to be seen positively by their peers can lead them to make negative decisions, even when they know that they are wrong. In the same way, when in conflict, a feeling of not wanting to back down can lead to escalation.

Activity One – Hanging out

The film clip shows a man who is asking two teenagers to move on from a private car park. When the girls do not move, he becomes more aggressive and neither the man nor the girls appear to listen to each other's perspective.

Speaking to each other disrespectfully and showing a lack of interest in listening to each another can escalate conflicts, make them more complicated, and reduce the chance of resolving them.

There are many points in the film that the situation could have been resolved as the man comes out to talk to the girls a number of times. We can't hear what is said on the CCTV footage, but the tone is apparent through the body language and gestures. Neither party is willing to compromise.

The conflict might have been resolved if:

- The man had found out why the girls were there and how long they intended to stick around.
- The man asked them politely to move on and gave them a reason as to why it was important to him – perhaps he was worried that their skateboard would hit his car.
- The man explained that it is private property – the girls may not have known this or understood what it meant.
- The girls had taken time to understand why the man was asking them to leave.
- The girls and the man agreed when they would be going – and perhaps agreed to some terms for reasonable behaviour. For example, sitting and chatting is fine – but please skateboard elsewhere.

The man went outside to move the girls on as he thought it would make him feel better if they weren't there. By the end of the clip, he doesn't feel better at all, and neither do the girls. The only thing he has managed to achieve is to make new enemies.

The key point to take away from this film is that **it becomes much more difficult to walk away once a conflict escalates into a confrontation.**

Think back to the defusing approach – decide how you want the situation to play out, and then focus on the things you need to do to make that happen – this might mean backing down on some things yourself.

Activity Two (additional) – Helping or hindering

This activity asks the group to sort actions in to those which might help or hinder resolving a conflict. Some of these will have come up in previous sessions, others might be new. This activity aims to promote ways of resolving a conflict without escalation, and that often means finding face-saving ways out.

The key learning points for each of the cards in the activity are:

- **Get the other person to trust you (help)** – Trust is important. If they don't trust you, they won't want to talk to you.
- **Be aggressive to force the other person to do what you want (hinder)** – Your attitude affects the other person's behaviour. If you are aggressive, they are likely to be aggressive back.
- **Decide what you want out of the situation (help)** – Think about what you want and then adopt the actions that will achieve it (and avoid everything else). If you want someone to understand your point of view, check that they have understood you correctly and avoid getting angry.
- **Show respect (help)** – Respect shows that you believe the other person is worthy of your time or interest, not showing respect says the opposite and is likely to offend. Some ways to show respect include using good manners, acknowledging the other person's opinion, refraining from interrupting, and treating people equally.
- **Walk away (help or hinder)** – Walking away is not a sign of weakness – especially if you are choosing to back down in order to help to defuse a situation. Just be careful that your walking away is not seen as being disrespectful.
- **Apologise (help)** – If you are wrong, admit it – and quickly. This will show the other person that you are trying to address the conflict, rather than win an argument.
- **Show the other person how you are feeling (hinder)** – Manage your emotions, don't let them control your behaviours.

- **Embarrass them until they do what you want (hinder)** – Never embarrass someone, as this may threaten them and make the situation worse.

Activity Three – Face-saving

Face-saving is a way of resolving a conflict without causing embarrassment or making anyone look bad.

For some people, backing down (losing the argument or being told what to do) will cause great embarrassment (losing face). They may know that they are in the wrong, but refuse to comply with reasonable requests so that they don't look bad in front of others (or so they don't damage their own self-image). Some people will risk violence, severe injury or even death before doing something which will cause them to lose face.

The tools contain six scenarios on face-saving. This activity involves looking at the decisions those in the scenarios have to make, the consequences of their actions, and then looking for ways to resolve the situation that might keep everyone happy.

It is useful to keep in mind that people are more likely to do what you want if they think they are going to look good. Ideally then, the aim for resolving a conflict is to find a way out which helps you *both* look good. Face-saving methods of defusing conflict include:

- Think, what are they worried about?
- Allow the other person to back down gradually without having to admit that they are wrong.
- Back down a little yourself to encourage them to do the same.
- Find a way to end the conflict where they look good (or at least don't look bad).

Session Seven Plan – Can you find a way out?

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. **Ground rules:** Revisit the ground rules and confirm that the group is happy to work within them.
2. **Recap:** Summarise what happened in the last session and highlight the key learning points.
3. **This session:** Introduce the topic as – understanding ways to resolve conflict without anyone losing face.

Activity One – Hanging out (15 minutes)

1. Show the film clip of two teenagers hanging out in a private car park and being asked to move on. In the film, the situation escalates when the teenagers do not leave and are confronted by the man. Discuss what happened with the group. Why did the situation get out of hand?
2. Play the film clip again, but this time stop after each time the man has spoken to the girls. Ask the group to suggest how those involved could have found a suitable way to resolve the situation at each of the points. How easy would that have been? Explain that it gets harder to find a way to resolve the situation if it is allowed to escalate.

Activity Two (additional) – Helping and hindering (15 minutes)

1. Organise the group into smaller groups and give each the helping or hindering cards (tool 25).
2. Ask each small group to sort the cards into three piles.
 - Responses that help to resolve a conflict
 - Responses that hinder resolving a conflict
 - Responses that could either help or hinder.
3. Once they have arranged the cards accordingly, discuss the group's ideas.

Activity Three – Face saving (15 minutes)

1. Ask the group to suggest what they think 'face-saving' is, and note the key points on a flipchart.
2. Introduce one of the face-saving scenarios (tool 26) to the group and ask:
 - What decisions does the main person in the scenario have to make? (Stay or go, fight or defuse, be angry or be calm, etc.)
 - What would the consequences be if they allowed this conflict to become a confrontation?
 - How could one of the people in the scenario find way out that makes both sides happy?

Review (10 minutes)

1. **Re-cap:** Review the session and highlight the notable learning points.
2. **Evaluation form:** Ask the young people to complete the evaluation form.
3. **Feedback:** Ask the group to stand up and place themselves along a line – at one end is “Completely confident I could defuse a confrontational situation”, and at the other is “Not at all sure I could defuse a conflict without losing my temper or annoying someone else”. Ask what they think they need to do to move further along the line.
4. **What's next:** Briefly introduce the topic for the next session – the next session is the last one. It will look at different elements of the Defusing Conflict programme and how they can be used in real-life situations.

Tools for Session Seven

Tool		Page	Preparation
Film 6	Film – Hanging out	Online	Download the film from the website.
25	Helping or hindering?	106	Print out and cut up one set of cards for each small group.
26	Face-saving scenarios	107	Print one copy.
	Evaluation sheet	57	Print one copy per person.

Session Eight – What have you learnt?

The learning outcomes for young people:

- To reinforce the learning outcomes from the previous sessions
- To identify their personal progress against their learning objective set in session one

This session aims to recap on the key learning points from the previous sessions and to provide young people with an opportunity to rehearse new techniques.

Activity One – Take that tree down!

The first film clip shows a man confronting his neighbour about their tree which is causing him a problem.

There appears to be some history between the two men, as it is mentioned that the tree has been an issue for two years. However, something has happened today to push the man to a point where his feels a confrontation is necessary. It is likely that the trigger was nothing to do with the tree – instead something else has made him angry and this has increased his level of emotion about the tree.

The man's approach is aggressive and confrontational. He has not thought through his plan to get what he wants, and because of his bad opening line, he leaves himself with no option to back down without looking bad.

The man's approach means that this conversation will only get worse. And it does, quickly. The man orders his neighbour to take the tree down. (Remember: People don't like being told what to do). He threatens his neighbour to take his tree down. And because people don't like being threatened, this leads to counter threats.

It is possible that the man only wanted to have an argument, to make himself feel better by putting someone in their place. If he actually did want the tree to come down, then his aggressive approach has probably hindered this considerably, as his neighbour is likely to be stubborn about it now. This situation could continue to get worse over the coming months and could potentially lead to some very bad consequences for both.

The second clip shows the same situation, but the man adopts a completely different approach. This time, the man knocking on the door has his emotions under control and is not aggressive. He is friendly and

polite and shows respect by asking how the neighbour is. When the neighbour explains that he is not doing well, the man listens, reacts appropriately, and uses open questions to keep the man talking, such as: "And how are you feeling?" He checks his understanding by asking questions, for example: "She went to hospital and the children – were they here?"

He also shows that he is listening and displays empathy: "I'm not going through what you are going through, but I know what children can be like, it must be really hard." He acknowledges how difficult it is for the neighbour to take down the tree at this busy time.

This time, he avoided telling the neighbour what to do. Instead, he made sure that the problem was shared. It was no longer a case of, "Your tree is causing me a problem", it became: "That tree which is causing us *both* a problem." Once the problem is shared, it is easier to find a solution that they are both happy with. Once the neighbour agrees to take the tree down, he pushes for a date and time.

By using this approach, the man maximised his chances of getting what he wanted. He was responsive to the situation and the emotions of his neighbour, but didn't forget what he wanted and avoided doing anything to reduce his chances of getting that.

Whilst this approach may appear to take longer, you are more likely to get what you want without damaging relationships and getting negative consequences in the future.

Activity Two – Quiz

The purpose of the quiz is to initiate a conversation about what the group remembers from the previous session of the course. The key learning point from the previous seven sessions are summarised below and provide answers to the quiz questions, and more:

- Conflict occurs when two or more people disagree, want different things or misunderstand each other. Some conflicts are based on perception, where two people have a different understanding of the same situation.
- Disagreements are part of everyday life, but how things progress is up to those involved. Disagreements can be resolved peacefully and positively, or be allowed to become confrontational, which often benefits no-one. Winning a confrontation with aggression and force may appear to make the problem go away, but may not resolve the problem.
- It doesn't matter why a situation has started or who was in the wrong, what matters is how the situation is managed. There are often no winners when conflict is allowed to escalate – and often

there are serious consequences. Think about the possible consequences and ask yourself – do I really want that?

- A disagreement becomes confrontational when one person does something which angers or threatens another person; such as being disrespectful, dismissive or rude; making it personal; causing embarrassment; making threats, or being aggressive.
- Everything you do – or don't do – sends a message to other people. The words you choose to use; the way you put those words across, the position of your body and your gestures all communicate messages. Messages can be sent accidentally – or people may perceive an action in a way it wasn't meant.
- Words, tone, body posture and gestures can make a situation worse. But they can also be used to make a situation better.
- Stress caused by conflict can cause adrenalin to be released into the body, which increases the heart rate and can make thinking and hand co-ordination difficult. It is not possible to eliminate the effects of anger altogether, but they can be reduced.
- Remember the Dfuse approach for defusing conflict:
 - Don't react without thinking.
 - Get your head in the right place.
 - Think about what's going on.
 - Decide how you want it to play out and then focus on achieving that.
 - Avoid doing anything that will reduce your chances of getting what you want.
 - Whatever you do, keep yourself safe.
- Behaviours are often affected when people are in a bad mood, are tired or stressed. This is not to provide an excuse for aggressive behaviour – you are entirely responsible for your own responses to any situation, no matter how bad you are feeling or how much you are provoked.
- By recognising the links between the thoughts, feelings, words and actions of others you can understand, and therefore compensate for, their behaviours. By recognising the links between your own thoughts, feelings, words and actions you can choose when to enter into a conflict and when to avoid it – so as not to escalate the situation.
- Communication can be described as 'sender – message – receiver'. Messages are sent by one person to be received by another. In order to engage in effective communication, the message which arrives must be the one which has been sent.
- Tone of voice and the words we stress in a sentence can change its meaning entirely.
- Effective communication is hard, and can go easily wrong unless we check that the other person has understood the message in the way it was intended.

- A good listener will be able to keep the other person talking. This is helpful, as the more they talk, the more you can understand their point of view. If they are angry, then letting them vent by keeping them talking will help to calm them down – it uses a lot of energy to maintain a high level of aggression, so when people are encouraged to talk, aggression dissipates.
- When ‘listeners’ show no interest, ‘talkers’ are unlikely to want to keep talking. Being a good listener is a skill. If you just keep quiet, you will hear what they say, but you won’t necessarily understand what they mean.
- Checking understanding is a key part of listening, as sometimes people think and feel different things about the same situation.
- Personal image is incredibly important to some people and the desire to be seen positively by their peers can lead them to making negative decisions, even when they know that they are wrong. It becomes much more difficult to walk away once a conflict escalates into a confrontation.
- For some people, backing down (losing the argument or being told what to do) will cause great embarrassment (losing face). They may know that they are in the wrong, but refuse to comply with reasonable requests so that they don’t look bad in front of others (or so they don’t damage their own self-image). Some people will risk violence, severe injury or even death before doing something which will cause them to lose face.

Activity Three – Recap scenarios

This activity provides four scenarios which escalate over three stages. These can be used to recap and practice applying the learning from the previous seven sessions.

The scenarios follow a similar format of asking the young people to identify what could make a conflict situation worse, then once it has got worse, addressing what might make it better. Finally, once the situation has reached a confrontational position, the young people are asked to suggest a good way out (i.e. without consequences. A solution that both will be happy enough with).

You might wish to extend the scenarios by also asking how the situations could have been prevented from escalating at the beginning. What are those involved thinking and feeling, and what are their behaviours and actions?

Scenarios three and four may also highlight the need to get external help with a situation, as they involve an assault and intimidation. At which point should you call the police?

Review

The review is an opportunity to go back to the beginning and look at the learning goals the young people set for themselves at the start of the programme, and to see whether they have been achieved. Record what comes out of this activity as this information is vital for us to evaluate the programme with.

Celebration and certificates

A certificate is provided for young people who have completed this programme. You might want to give these out at the end of the last session, or prefer to hold another event with the sole purpose of celebrating the achievement of the young people and awarding their certificates.

Session Eight Plan – What have you learnt?

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. **Ground rules:** Revisit the ground rules and confirm that the group is happy to work within them.
2. **Recap:** Summarise what happened in the last session and highlight the key learning points.
3. **This session:** Introduce the topic – looking at different elements of the Defusing Conflict programme and how they can be used in real-life situations.

Activity One – Take that tree down! (15 minutes)

1. Show the film featuring two neighbours arguing over a tree which one neighbour believes is causing him trouble. There are many bad behaviours in the clip. Ask the group to identify what the men could do to improve their actions in order to defuse the situation (refer back to the Dfuse approach).
2. Show the second clip of the two men, now discussing the tree using many of the techniques from this programme. Ask the group to identify what they are doing well and discuss their thoughts, linking back to earlier parts of the programme. Alternately, use tool 27 as a prompt for positive behaviours and encourage young people to call out when they see any one of the nine behaviours on the sheet.

Activity Two (additional) - Quiz (15 minutes)

1. Give each young person a copy of the quiz (tool 28) and either ask them to look at the questions individually, or go through it one question at a time as a group discussion.
2. Discuss the responses and clarify learning points where necessary.

Activity Three (additional) - Recap scenarios (15 minutes)

1. Choose one of the four scenarios in tool 29. Show each card in turn, explain the situation and ask the group to answers the questions.
2. Discuss the responses and clarify learning points where necessary.

Review (15 minutes)

1. **Revisit:** Show the group the flipchart produced in session one which recorded what the young people wanted to get out of the programme. If each young person identified a personal learning goal, then give these back to the young people. Ask the group to individually think about whether they have

achieved that learning goal and then to explain to the rest of the group a little about why they think they have or have not achieved it.

2. **Feedback:** Make a note of what the young people say they have achieved on a flipchart. Allow others to make supportive comments.
3. **Evaluation form:** Ask the young people to complete the evaluation form.

Celebration and certificates (10 minutes)

1. Leave time to have a short celebration and certificate presentation ceremony. (There is a space on the certificate for the trainers to sign).

Tools for Session Eight

Tool		Page	Preparation
Film 7	Film - Tree argument (1)	Online	Download the film from the website.
Film 8	Film - Tree argument (2)	Online	Download the film from the website.
27	Film - Tree argument – take two!	108	Print one copy per person.
28	Defusing conflict quiz	109	Print one copy per person (or print one).
29	Recap scenarios	110	Print one copy.
	Final evaluation sheet	57	
30	Certificate	114	Print one copy per person and write their name, programme location and from/to dates. Then you and a co-trainer need to sign them.
	Session seven and eight review	63	Print one copy per person.
	End of programme review	64	Print one copy per person.
	Incident de-brief	65	Print one copy per person as and when incidents occur.

Worker tools

- Defusing Conflict Programme – SLCN briefing 53
- Defusing Conflict programme notice 55

Defusing Conflict Programme – SLCN briefing

Some of the young people in this setting are undertaking the Defusing Conflict programme.

Please take a moment to read through this briefing.

The Defusing Conflict programme explores:

- What conflict is and the difference between a disagreement and a confrontation.
- How individuals respond to conflict situations with friends, people they live with, people in authority and strangers.
- Behaviours which make a conflict worse and the consequences of allowing a situation to escalate.
- Spontaneous responses to conflict and how to manage the physical effects of conflict.
- The Dfuse defusing approach, a model for approaching any conflict situation.
- How personal feelings can affect an individual's approach to conflict.
- How to listen effectively to other people.
- Finding face-saving ways out of situations.

The ability to manage conflict is important for all young people, but especially so for those with communication difficulties as the frustration of not being able to understand, or to be understood, can escalate conflict into aggression.

Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) describe any sort of difficulty with any form of communication such as: listening, expressing yourself clearly, understanding what others are saying, or social interaction skills. These difficulties can be part of a particular disorder such as autism,

specific language impairment, dyslexia, learning difficulties or ADHD. For a number of people, the cause of their SLCN remains unknown .

What does SLCN look like?

It may be obvious that someone is struggling with communication: they may struggle to find the right words, say “um”, or “er” and use the word “thingy” a lot. They may repeat themselves or seem to be talking in circles. They may get their words mixed up so that their sentences don’t make sense. They may also struggle to understand and use new words. They may look confused or forget what you have said. They may also have unusual social skills, such as odd eye contact, difficulty starting or finishing a conversation, or not knowing how to take turns in a conversation.

It may not be obvious that someone has a communication difficulty. They may appear withdrawn, or they may become aggressive when asked lots of questions, or when they are in conflict. They may appear to not listen, or appear to be rude. They may appear confused or a bit strange, or as if they have a mental health difficulty. They may nod along and pretend to understand everything you’re saying, but then not follow through with instructions.

There is no one simple description for what someone with communication difficulties looks like, because the difficulties can show themselves in many different ways and people with SLCN can become experts at masking them.

How common is SLCN?

About 7-10% of the general population have difficulties with communication. This means that about three students in every class of 30 in a mainstream school would benefit from specialist help. In some populations, SLCN is more common. Areas of social deprivation have significantly higher numbers of children with SLCN.

Young people with behavioural difficulties are far more likely (about 60% of them) to present with communication problems. Very often these difficulties are not noticed by schools because their behaviours have been masking them. They may act out to avoid difficult learning situations and then spend so much time out of the classroom that they fall even further behind.

In Pupil Referral Units, there are at least six times as many children with significant language and communication difficulties as there are in a mainstream school.

As behaviours escalate, these same young people may later become known to Youth Offending Teams. In secure settings, between 60-90% of young people struggle with understanding spoken language or expressing themselves.

To help young people communicate here are some things you can try:

- Always start by using a young person's name so that they know you are talking to them.
- Use simple language in short chunks.
- Speak slower than you normally do.
- Ask the young person to repeat back in their own words what you have said.
- Give pointers for what they should listen to ("It's important you remember X from what I am going to tell you").
- Give an overview first (summarise before you go into detail).
- Give extra time for the young person to listen and think.
- Use visual aids to support understanding.
- Give reminders of appointments and tasks.
- Give a variety of tasks to maintain interest.
- Give positive messages ("It's OK to say if you don't understand").
- Give positive feedback (But be sensitive as some people find praise difficult to accept).
- Ask them what would help them.
- Say when you have not understood what they have said.
- Make written materials simple and clear.

Where can I find out more?

<http://www.sentencetrouble.info/>

<http://www.rcslt.org/>

Defusing Conflict programme notice

A Defusing Conflict programme is currently being delivered to help young people develop positive approaches for managing conflict and dealing with difficult situations without escalation.

These young people are taking part in the course:

The Defusing Conflict programme has eight sessions:

Date:	Purpose of session:	How you can help:
1.	To look at how conflict becomes confrontation and identify what they want to get out of the programme.	Remind the young people that conflict does not need to become confrontational.
2.	To explore how conflict can be made worse and look at techniques for managing conflict.	Encourage the young people to avoid behaviours which will make a situation worse.
3.	To look at the effects of conflict on the body, how these can be managed and an approach for managing conflict.	Remind the young people to not make assumptions about other people's behaviours.
4.	To understand how personal feelings can affect responses to conflict and how to manage them.	Encourage the young people to think and manage their feelings before going into conflict situations.
5.	To learn how to listen and use these skills to check that they understand what the other person has said.	Encourage young people to listen to other people and check that they have understood properly.
6.	To learn how to keep someone talking in order to better understand their perspective.	Remind the young people that listening to others could help them to resolve a conflict more easily.
7.	To understand ways to resolve conflict without anyone losing face.	Encourage the young people to focus on resolving conflict without aggression, even when provoked.
8.	To look at different elements of the Defusing Conflict programme and how they can be used in real-life situations.	Talk to the young people about what changes they have made to how they manage conflict.

Evaluation tools

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• Pre - and post-behaviour evaluation	59
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Defusing Conflict - end of session evaluation

Please fill in this evaluation form. There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to know what you think about the session.

Your name: _____ Session: _____

What did you learn in the session today?

What was the best part of this session today?

What was the worst part of this session today?

What will you do differently when in conflict in the future?

Please circle the statements below that you agree with:

The session today was
interesting

The session today was boring

I learnt new skills today

I will change the way I deal
with conflict

I can manage my emotions
when in conflict

I find it hard not to get angry
when in conflict

This course is a waste of time

This course is really good

I want to know more about
how to manage conflict

Defusing Conflict - worker observations

The Defusing Conflict programme aims to help young people to develop positive approaches for managing conflict and deal with difficult situations without escalation. Please complete this form to record your observations of any impact the programme may have had on the young person.

Your name: _____ Your role: _____

Young person's name: _____

When speaking to the young person about the programme, what comments did they make?

Since completing the programme, have you noticed changes in the young person's attitude?
(If 'yes' then what have you noticed?)

Since completing the programme, have you noticed changes in the young person's behaviour?
(If 'yes' then what have you noticed?)

Do you think that additional programmes or tools are required to reinforce or build upon the learning for the young person? (if 'yes' then what?)

Pre - and post-behaviour evaluation

An important way to measure the impact the programme has had on young people is to look at its influence on behaviour. Use this form to record the data you have collected and to describe behaviour, for example: the number of violent or aggressive incidents involving the young person, both before and after the programme.

Your name: _____ Your role: _____

What data did you use to measure behaviour?

How is this data captured?

Young person's name	Pre-training value	Post-training value
	Date recorded:	Date recorded:

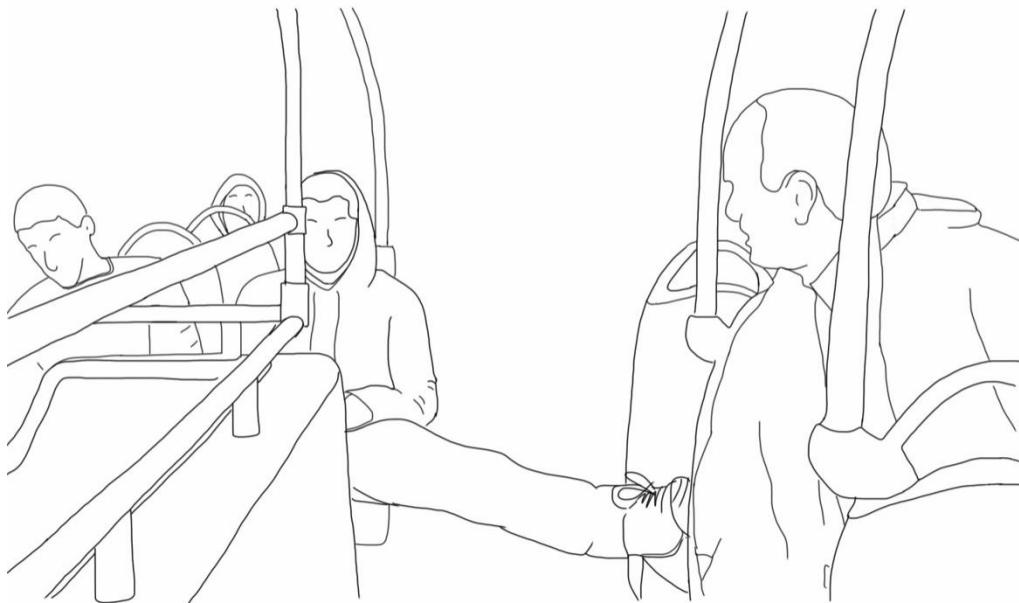
Any comments?

Session one and two review

Young person's name: _____

Worker's name: _____

Jack and his friends are on the bus. They are talking loudly and laughing. Eric, aged 67, turns around and says “Can you lot keep the noise down?”



1. What could Jack and his friends do to make this situation worse?

2. What might the consequences be if the situation was allowed to get worse?

3. What could Jack and his friends do to avoid a confrontation?

Session three and four review

Young person's name: _____

Worker's name: _____

It's a snowy winter's day and Derek is complaining to the Council that the snow has not been cleared from his road. He cannot get his car out to go to work. If he is late for work his pay will be docked – and he needs the money.



What might Derek be thinking and feeling?

What might Derek's behaviours and actions be?

Draw lines to show which thoughts and feelings might be causing the actions and behaviours.

Session five and six review

Young person's name: _____

Worker's name: _____

Ali has a job in a café. Her boss calls her into the office and says:

“Ali, you’re a hard worker, but you are just not getting it right. Customers have been complaining and that’s not good for business. I need to you to do better otherwise I am going to have to let you go.”



Why does Ali need to use listening skills here?

What might the consequences be if she doesn't?

Session seven and eight review

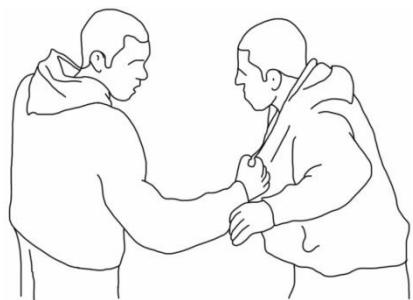
Young person's name: _____

Worker's name: _____

Ben and Darren are listening to music. Darren says: "This is rubbish," and goes to turn it off.



This annoys Ben, who grabs Darren by his jacket, pulls him away from the stereo and says: "Don't touch that."



Darren shoves Ben away and says: "Come on then, you prick." They then grab each other and start to fight.



What made this situation worse?

What might make this situation better?

What might be a face-saving way out of this situation?

End of programme review

Young person's name: _____

Worker's name: _____

1. What do you think of the defusing conflict programme?

2. What was good?

3. What was bad?

4. What was useful?
Why?

5. What did you learn on the programme?

6. What will you do differently in the future?

Incident de-brief

Young person's name: _____

Worker's name: _____

1. What happened?

2. How did you feel during the incident?

3. How do you feel about the incident now?

4. What made the situation worse?

5. What made the situation better?

6. What would you do differently in the future if a similar situation happened?

Workshop tools

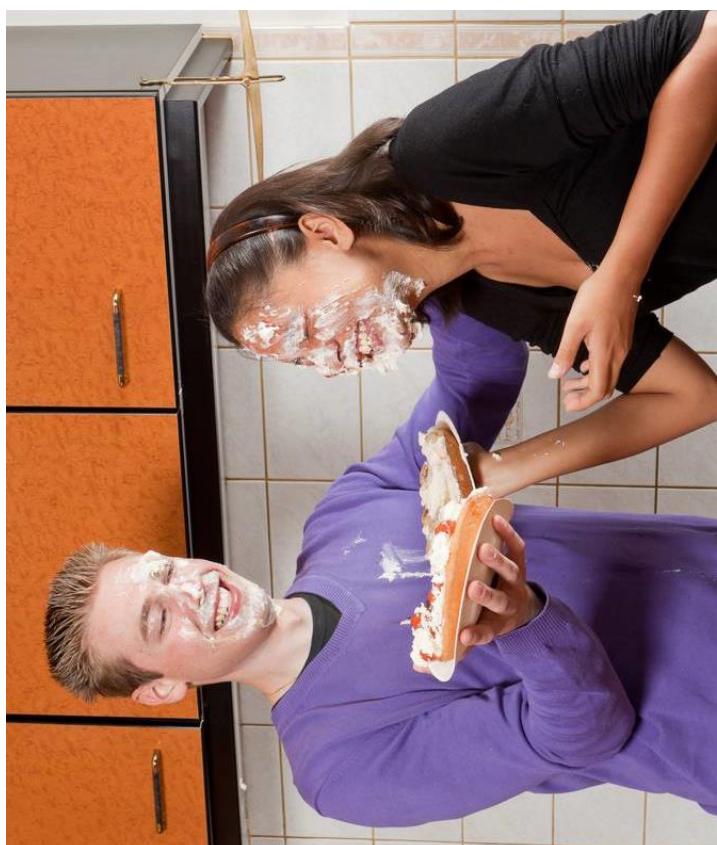
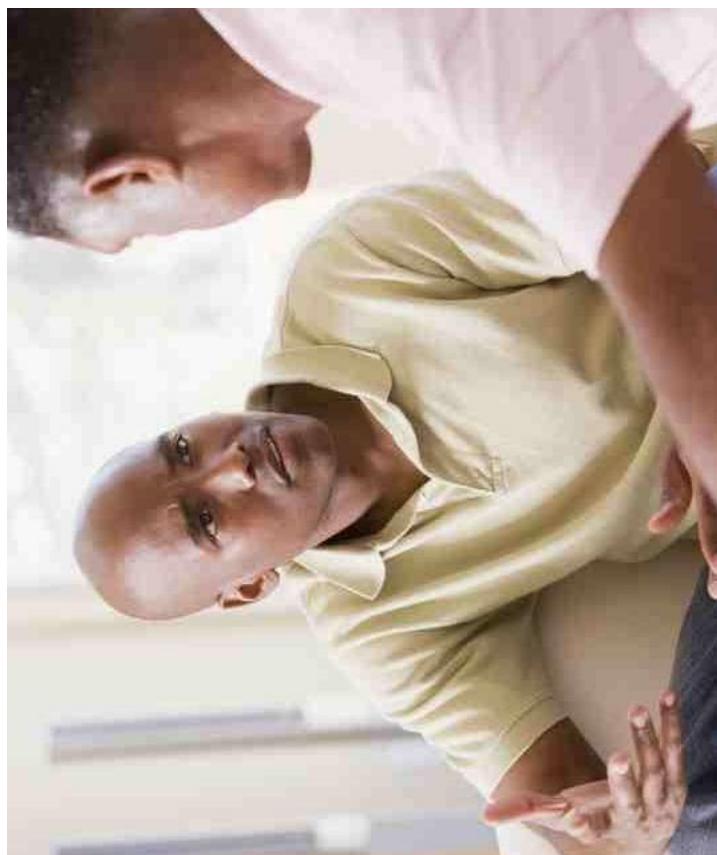
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Tool 1: Suggested ground rules

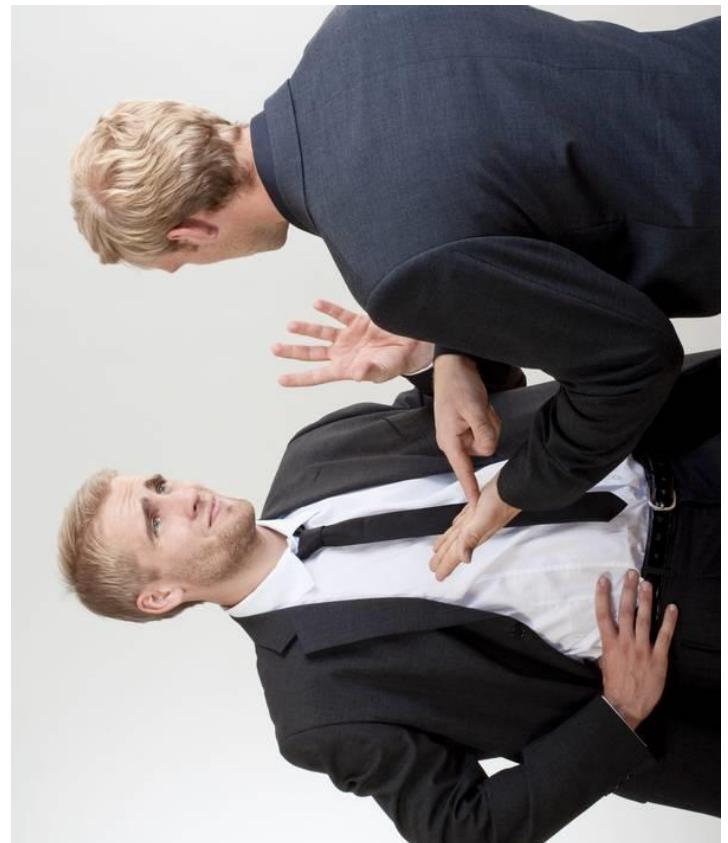
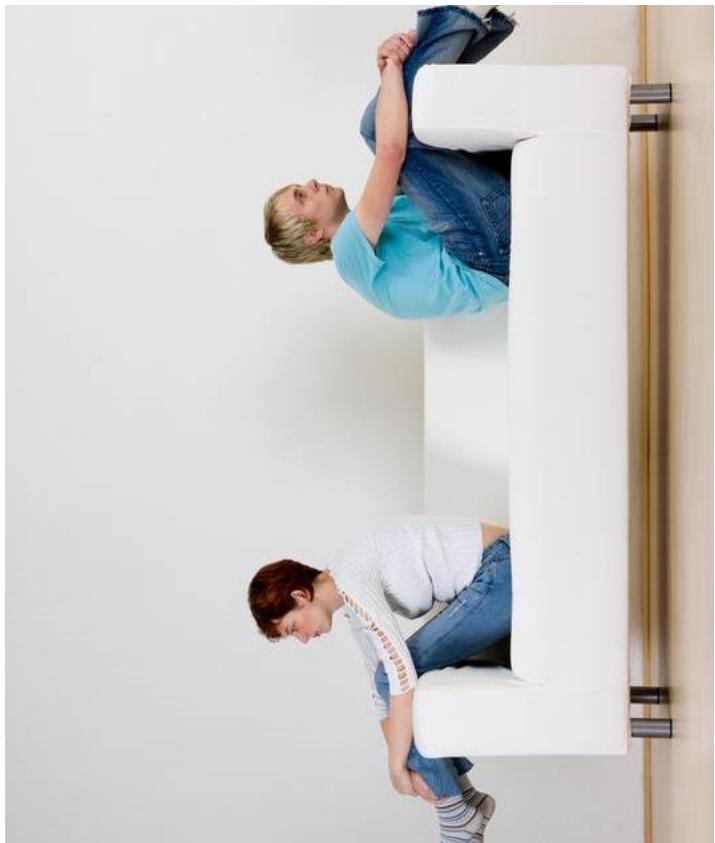
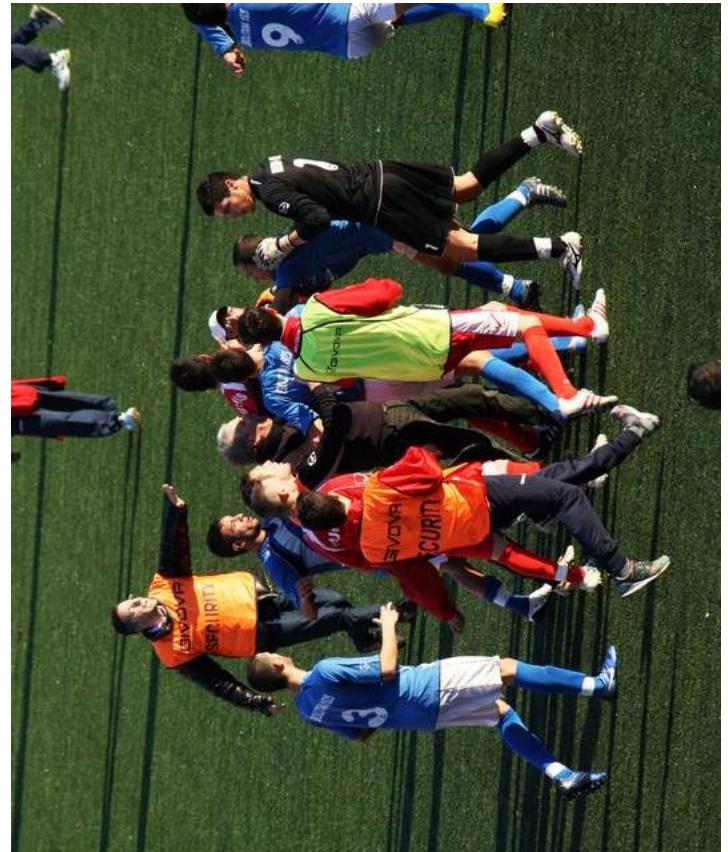
Ground rules

- 1. Respect each another**
- 2. Give people the chance to speak**
- 3. Remember that everyone has different opinions and experiences**
- 4. Don't talk about what other people have said (confidential)**
- 5. No swearing**
- 6. No aggression**
- 7. No laughing at other**
- 8. If you need a short break, ask your trainer**

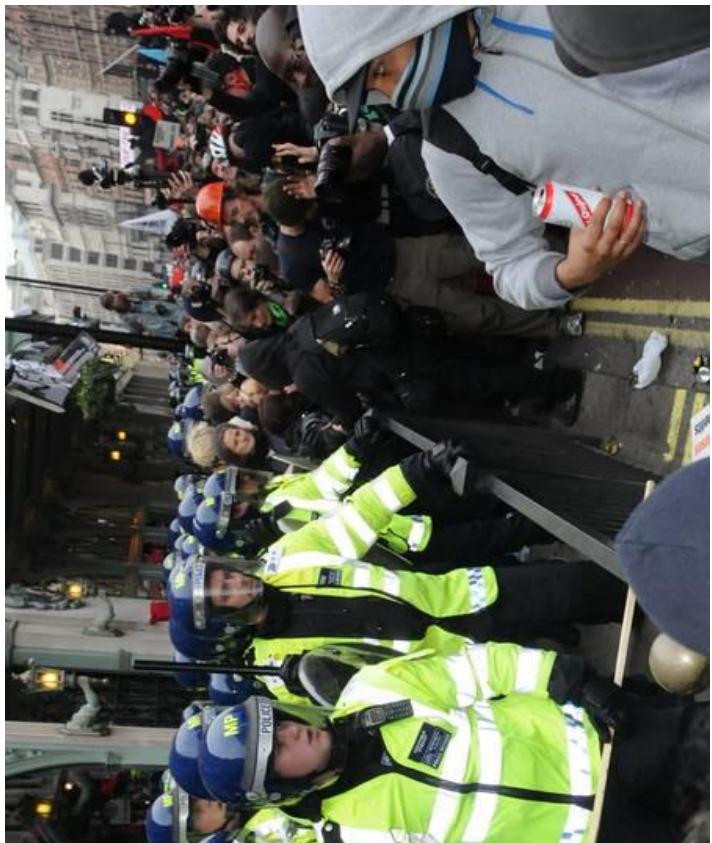
Tool 2: Images of conflict cards (1 to 4)



Tool 2: Images of conflict cards (5 to 8)



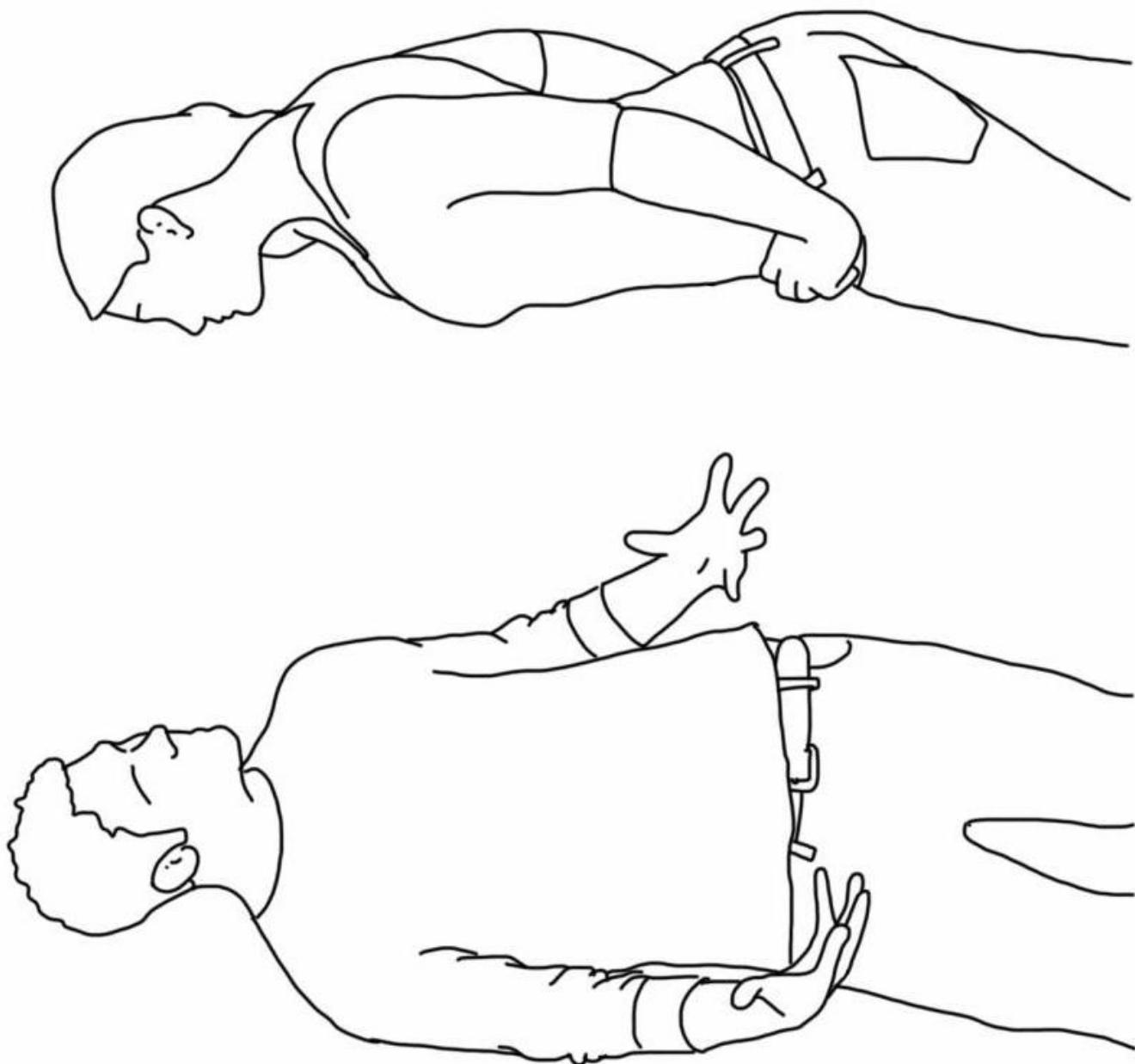
Tool 2: Images of conflict cards (9 to 12)



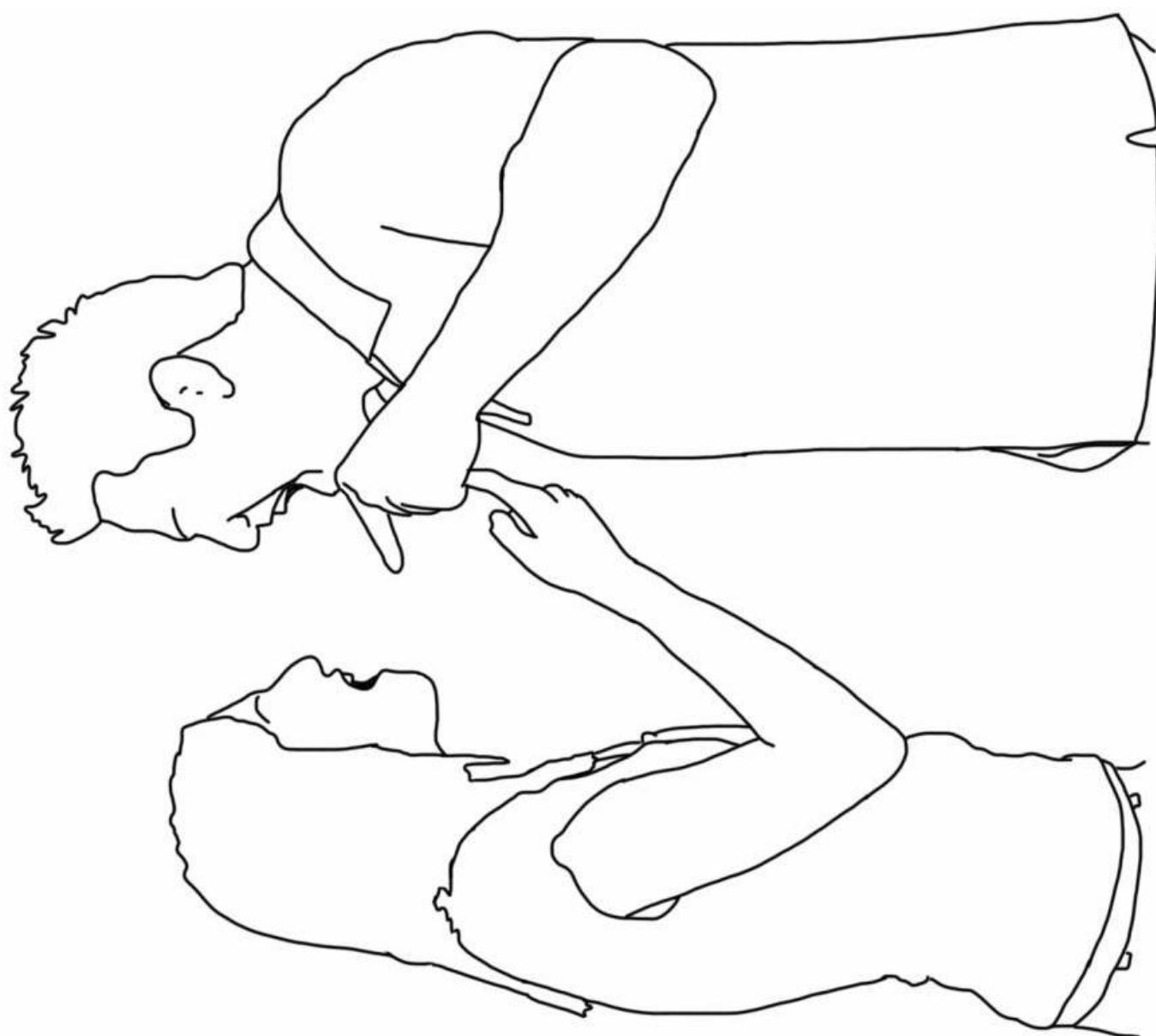
Tool 2: Images of conflict cards (13 to 16)



Tool 3: Disagreement or confrontation poster (1)



Tool 3: Disagreement or confrontation poster (2)



Tool 4: Disagreement or confrontation cards

Two friends are having a discussion about whose football team is the best.

A man is annoyed because someone stepped on his foot in a busy shop.

A boy is angry that his girlfriend went out last night with her friends instead of with him.

A teacher asks a pupil to “stop messing around and sit down”.

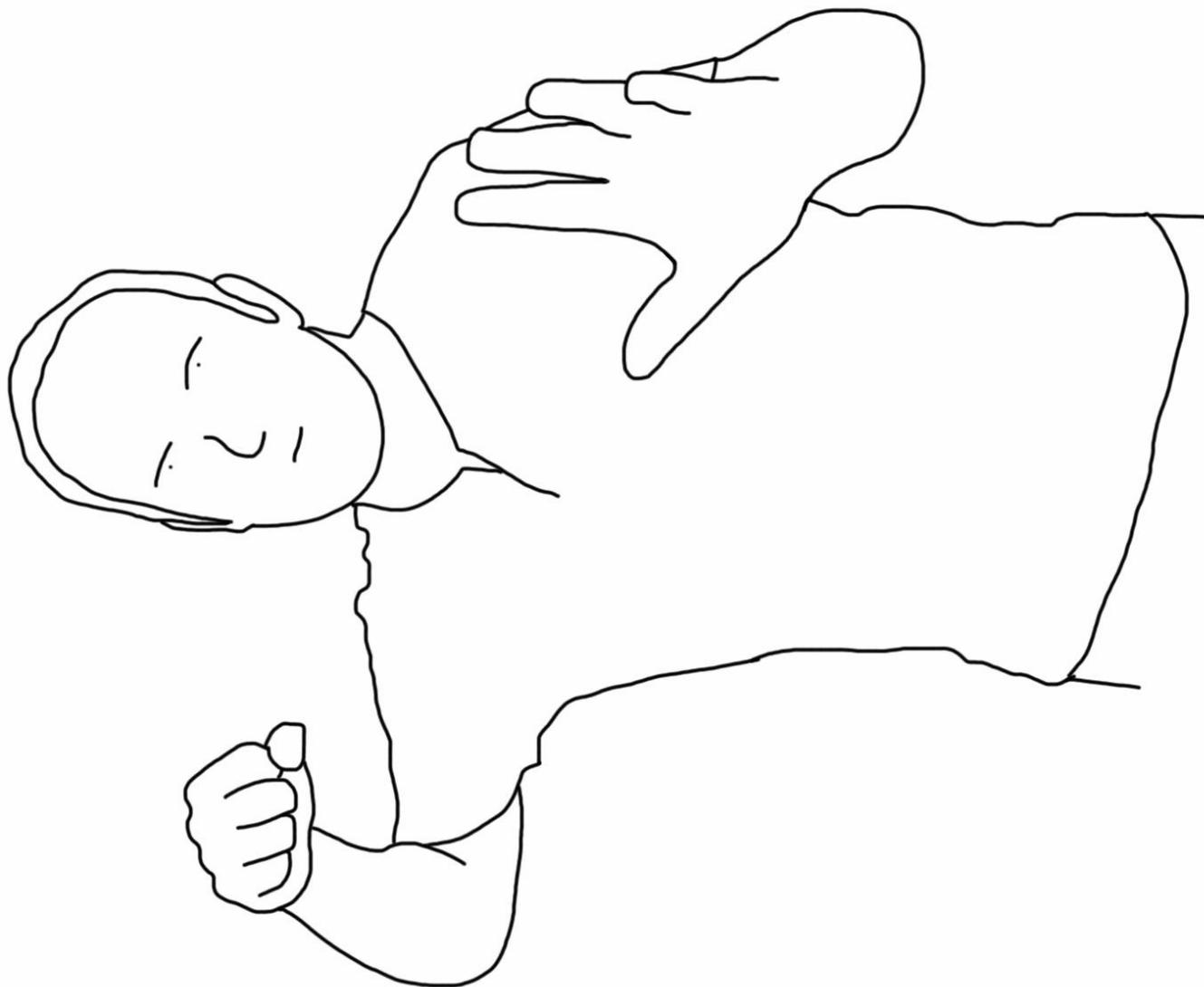
A girl is ignoring her friend, as she was rude to her yesterday.

A bar tender tells a drunk man to “go home and sleep it off”.

A girl is trying to get her friend to steal alcohol from a supermarket.

Two men are squaring up after an argument.

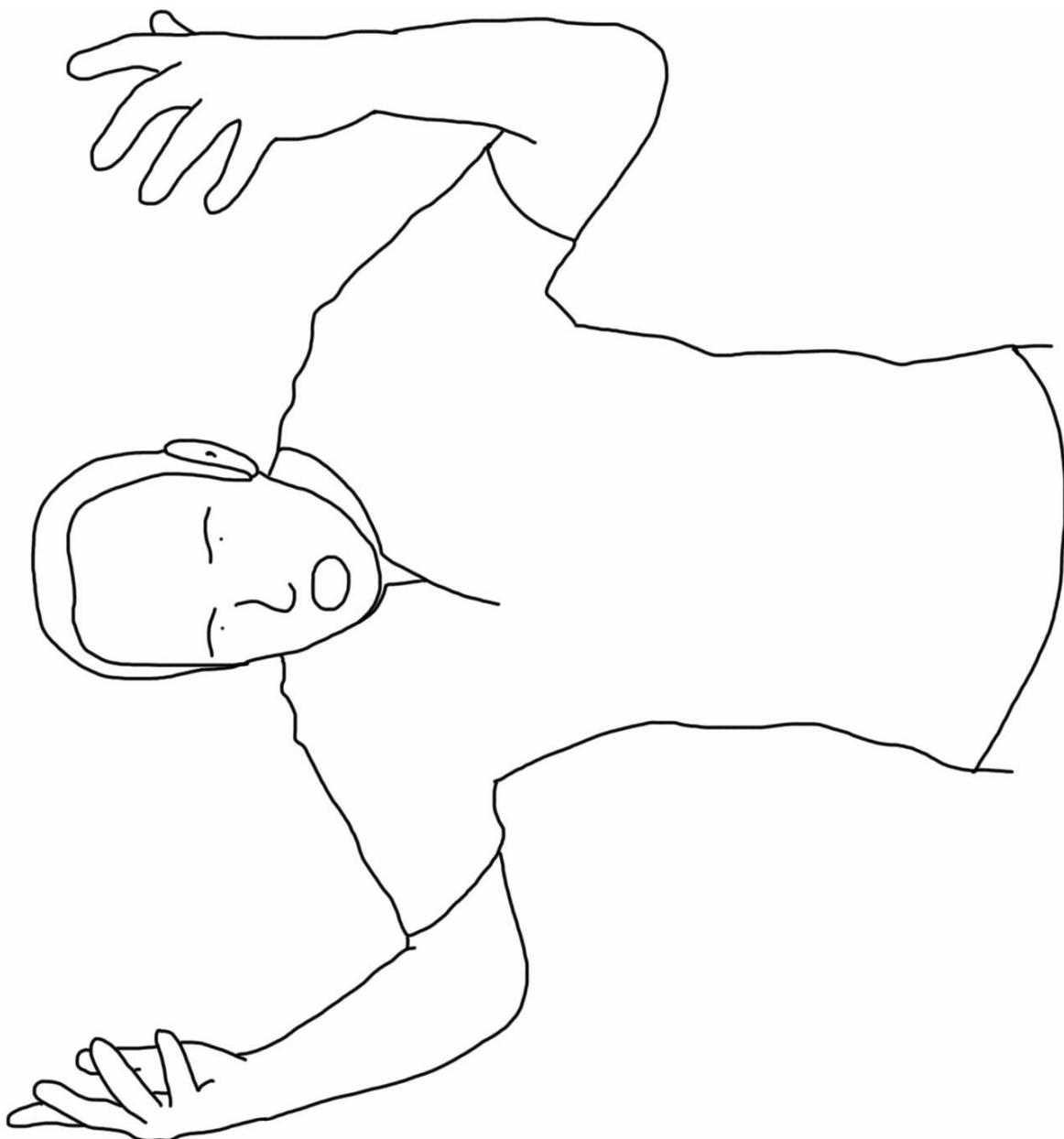
Tool 5: When in conflict with poster (1)



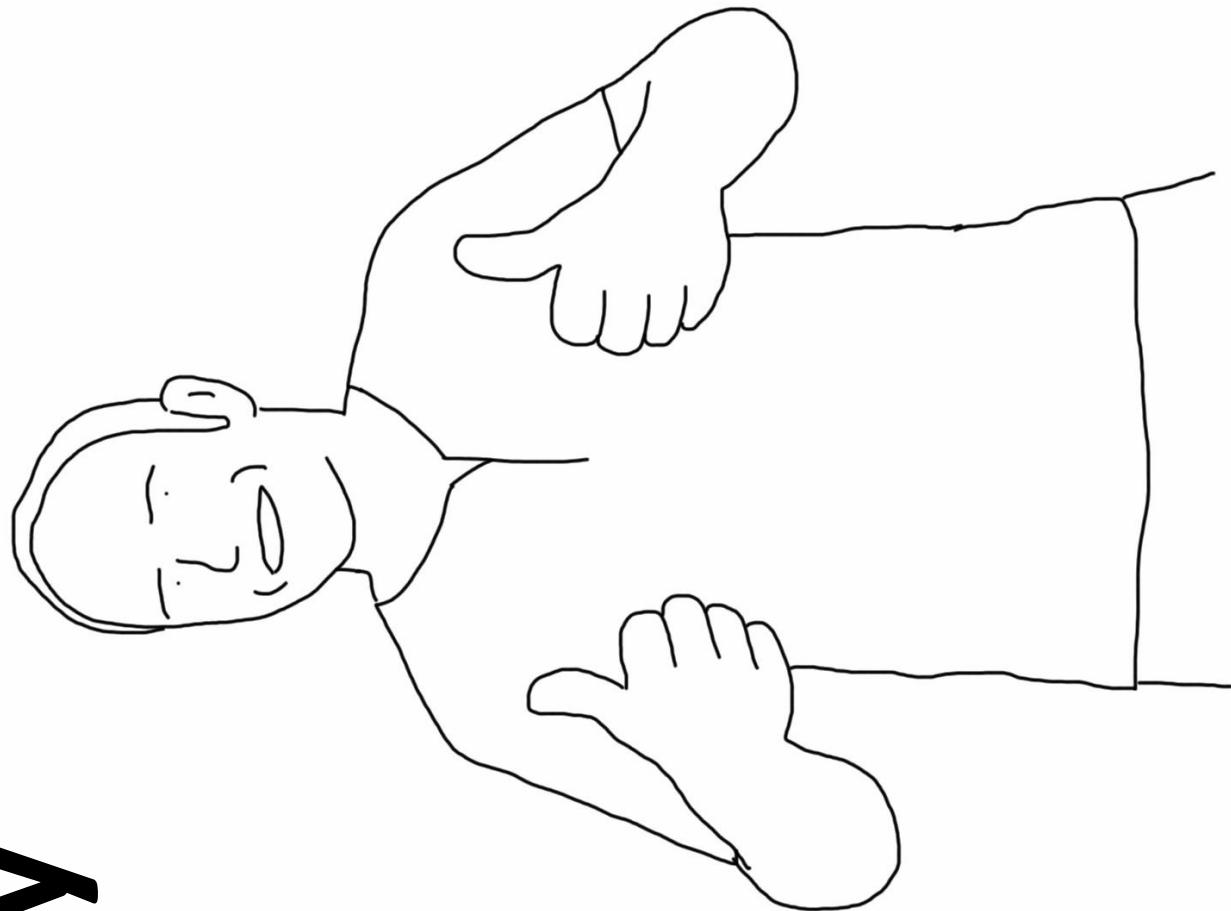
Fight

Tool 5: When in conflict with poster (2)

Argument

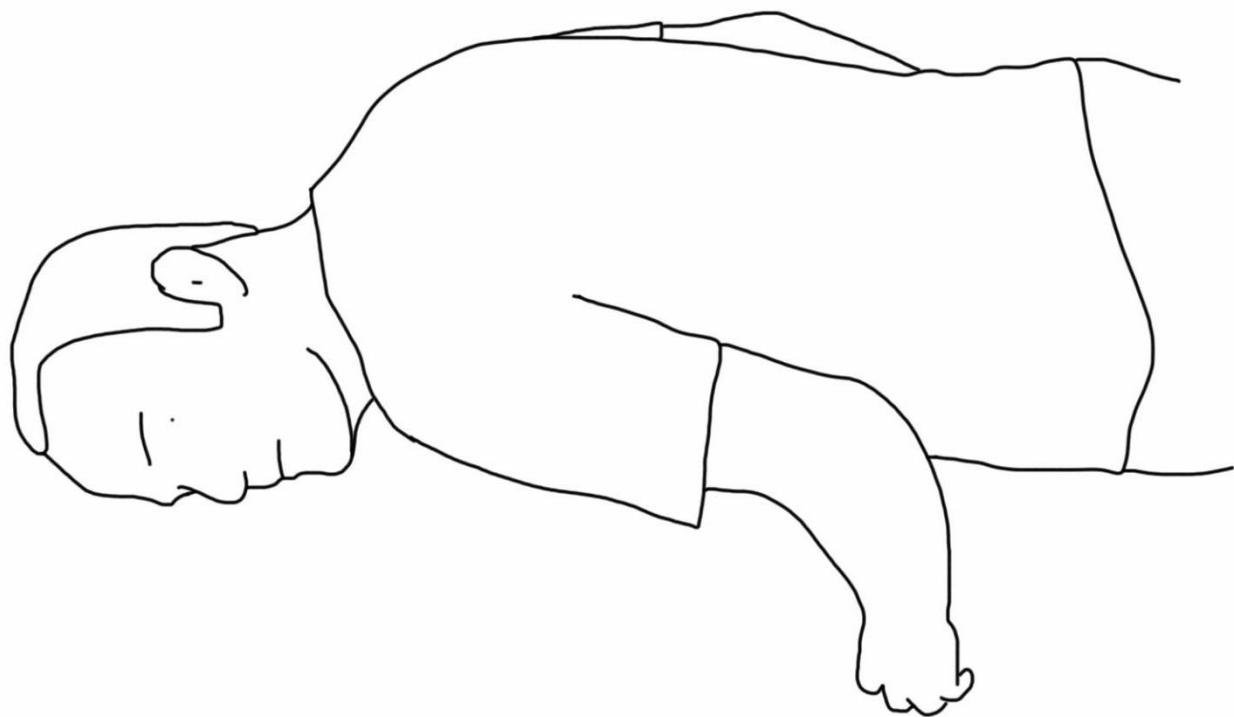


Tool 5: When in conflict with poster (3)



All happy

Tool 5: When in conflict with poster (4)



Walk away

Tool 5: When in conflict with poster (5)

None of these

Tool 6: When in conflict with worksheet

1. When in conflict with friends, how does it usually end?



Fight



Walk away



All happy



Argument

None
of
these

2. When in conflict with people in authority, how does it usually end?



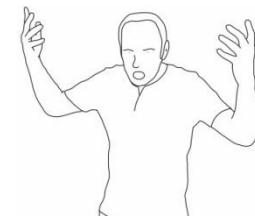
Fight



Walk away



All happy



Argument

None
of
these

3. When in conflict with strangers, how does it usually end?



Fight



Walk away



All happy



Argument

None
of
these

4. When in conflict with people you live with, how does it usually end?



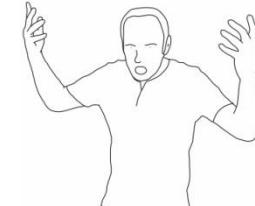
Fight



Walk away



All happy



Argument

None
of
these

5. Is there anything you want to change?

Tool 7: Worse or better cards (1 to 10)

Swearing at the other person

Insulting the other person

Taking a step back

Pointing at the other person

Smiling at the other person

Shouting at the other person

Pay attention to what the other person is saying

Showing the palms of your hands

Saying “calm down”

Making threats

Tool 7: Worse or better cards (11 to 20)

Leaning forwards

Frowning at the other person

Staring at the other person

Having a neutral face

Looking uninterested

Turning away

Saying “whatever”

Saying “sorry”

Using a sarcastic tone of voice

Using a calm tone of voice

Tool 8: Consequences scenarios

Peter, aged 65, notices litter on his lawn and three teenagers sitting on his wall. He storms and shouts: "Don't throw your litter in my garden, bugger off!" The teenagers are annoyed as the litter is not theirs.



Martha is having a party in her flat with four of her friends. It is nearly midnight and one her neighbours comes to complain about the noise. Martha dismisses her by saying: "Oh no girl, you do not give me attitude. You are not ruining my party." This makes Martha's neighbour really angry.



Darren is waiting outside a shop for a friend. A police officer asks him to move on. Darren asks why and is told: "Because you're intimidating the customers." This makes Darren angry as he doesn't believe he was doing anything wrong.

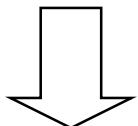


Syed and his flatmate have been drinking all afternoon when he decides to order pizza. His flatmate, Sarah, notices that her pizza has pepperoni on it, which she hates. Sarah gets really angry and says: "You useless fucking prick, you always do this to me. You do it on purpose."

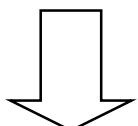


Tool 9: Consequences worksheet

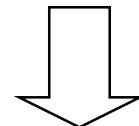
Event:



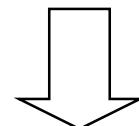
Possible reaction 1:



Possible consequences 1:



Possible reaction 2:

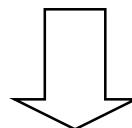
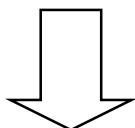


Possible consequences 2:

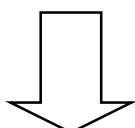
Tool 9: Consequences worksheet (example)

Event:

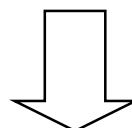
Peter, aged 65, notices litter on his lawn and three teenagers sitting on his wall. He storms off and shouts: "Don't throw your litter in my garden, buggar off!" The teenagers are annoyed as the litter is not theirs.

**Possible reaction 1:**

Swear at him and tell him to sod off.

**Possible reaction 2:**

Calmly step away from his wall, wait for him to stop shouting and explain your point of view.

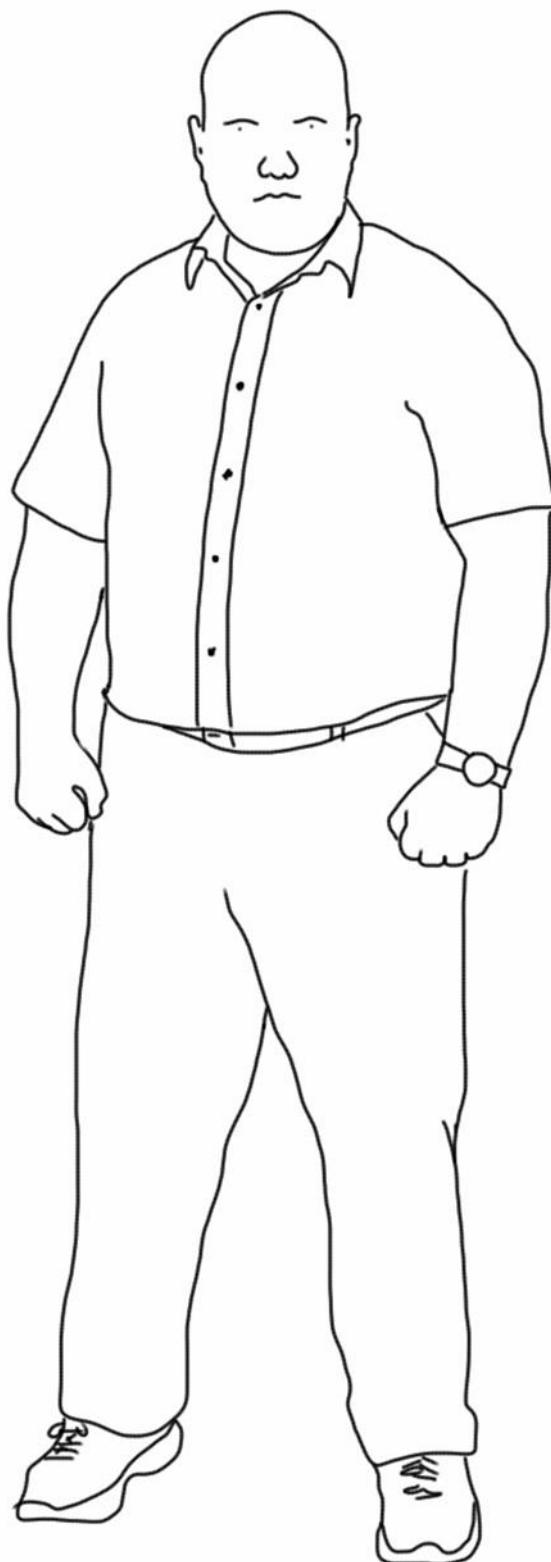
**Possible consequences 1:**

1. He gets angry and tries to hit one of the group.
2. Other people get involved and become confrontational.
3. The teenagers are convinced they are right, so refuse to back down.

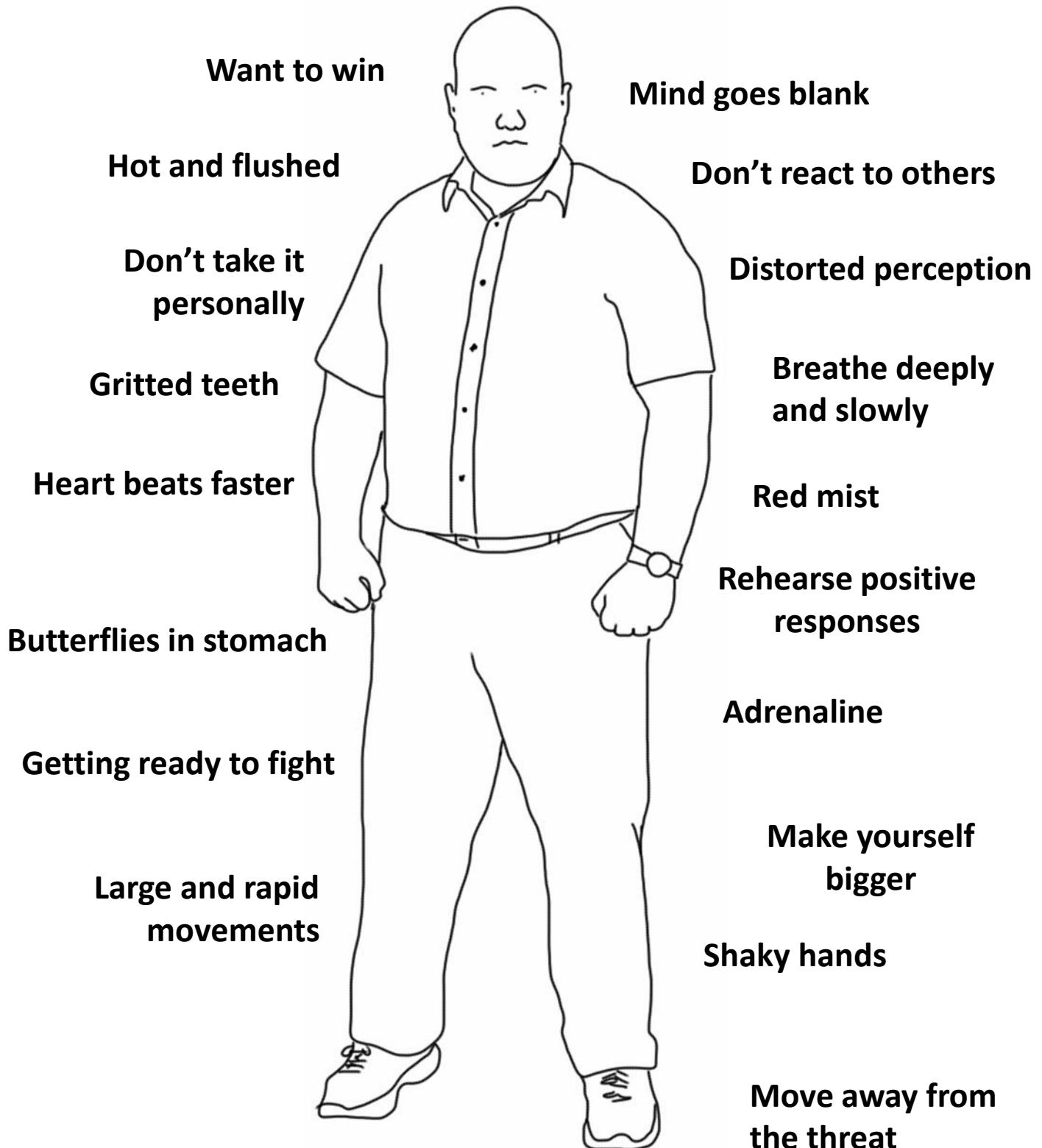
Possible consequences 2:

1. He realises he was too quick to blame, and calms down.
2. He might still be angry, but the confrontation is avoided and the group can carry on with their evening.

Tool 10: Physical effects of conflict



Tool 10: Physical effects of conflict (example)



Tool 11: It keeps getting worse...



1.



2.

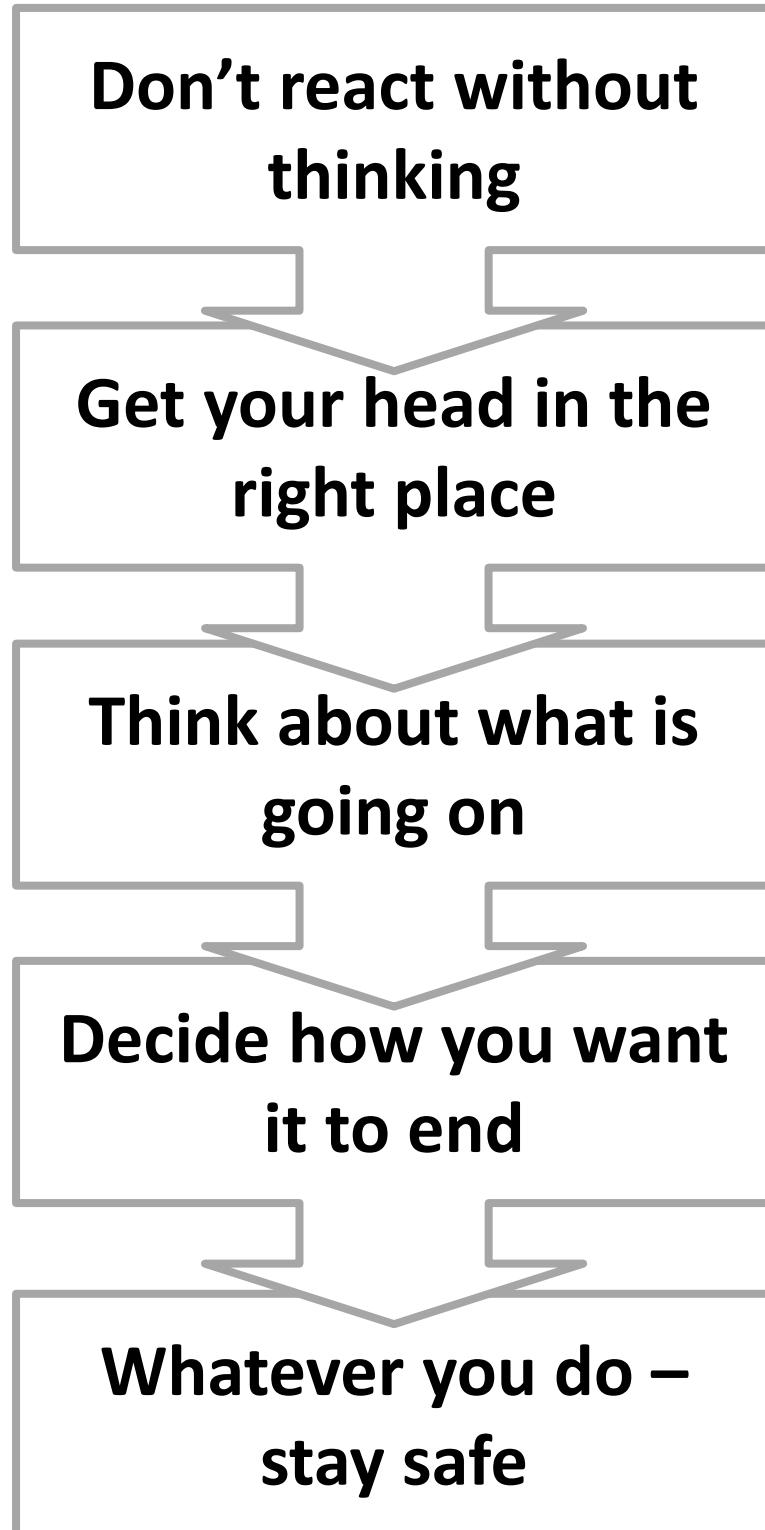


3.

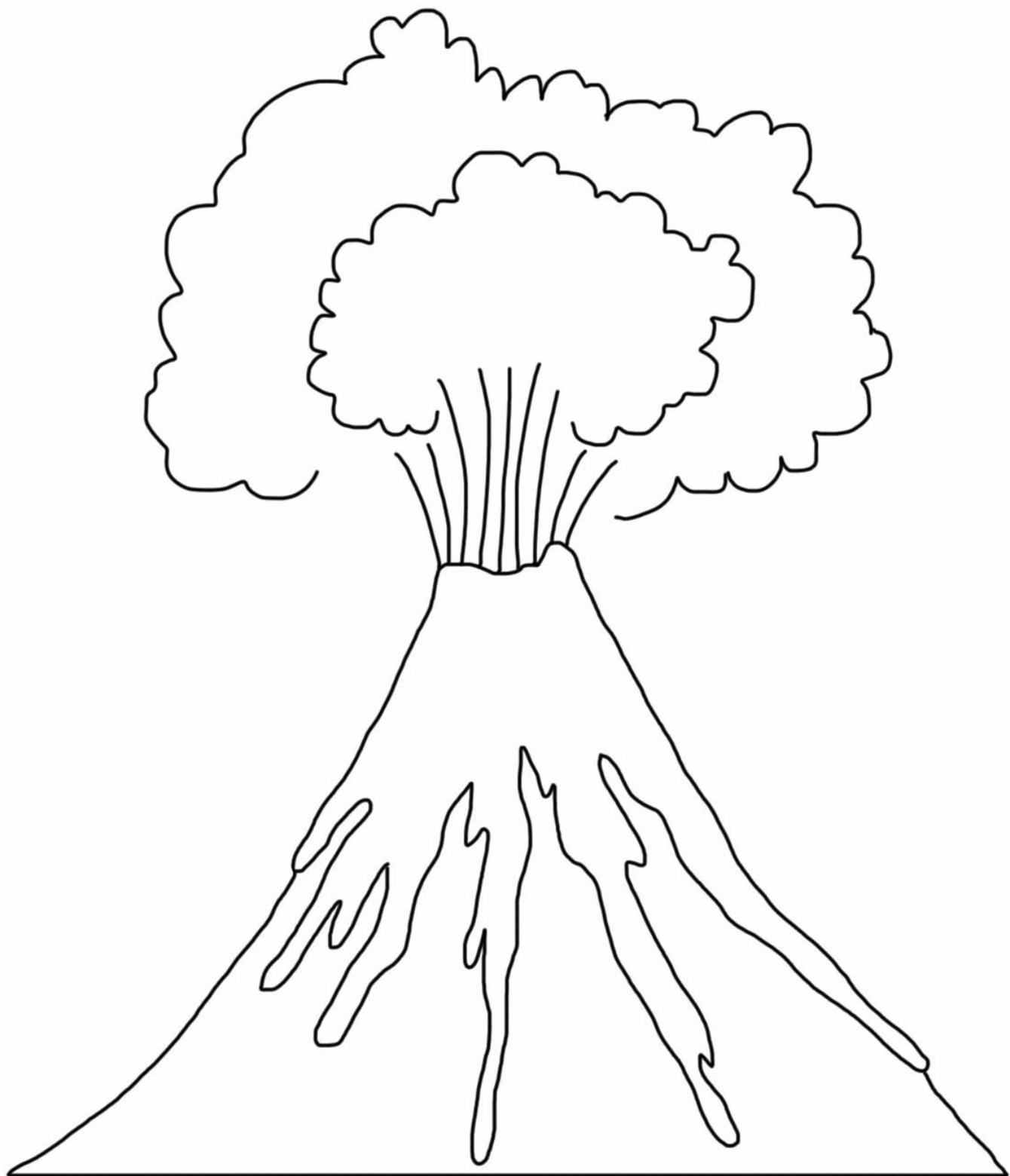


4.

Tool 12: Dfuse model of defusing conflict



Tool 13: The exploding volcano



Tool 14: Thoughts and feelings

Upset

Lonely

Frustrated

Confused

Tired

Scared

Angry

Bored

Disrespected

Embarrassed

Tool 14: Behaviours and actions

Swearing

Invading personal space

Pushing

Being rude

Squaring up

Walking away

Muttering

Sarcasm

Making threats

Shouting

Tool 15: When volcanos collide - scenarios



This man has had his mobile phone cut off as the phone company says that he has not paid his bill. He did pay his bill, two weeks ago. He is trying to talk to someone at the company but their records say that the bill has not been paid.

How do you think he is feeling?

The woman at the phone company is new to the job, and doesn't like being shouted at.

How do you think she is feeling?



This teacher is talking one of his students about their work, as it wasn't very good.

The student just laughs at the teacher and says: "I don't care. I don't like this subject anyway. It's stupid. You are stupid. You're the worst teacher I've ever had."

How do you think the student is feeling?

How do you think the teacher is feeling?



A man is trying to chat up a woman in a bar.

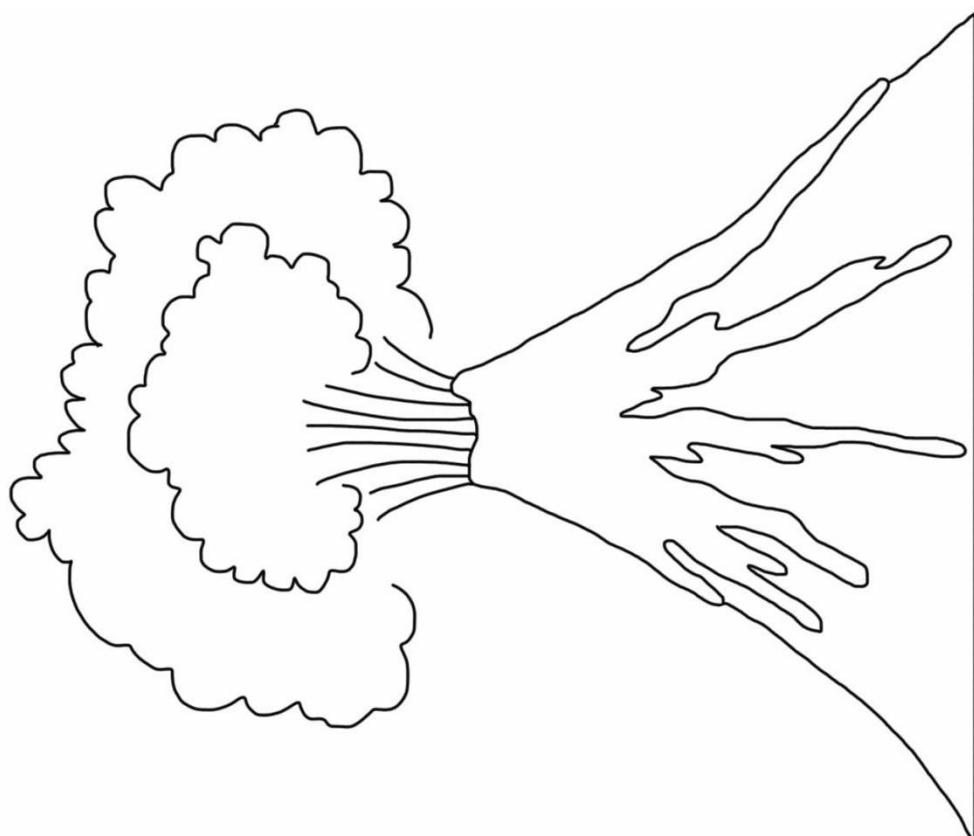
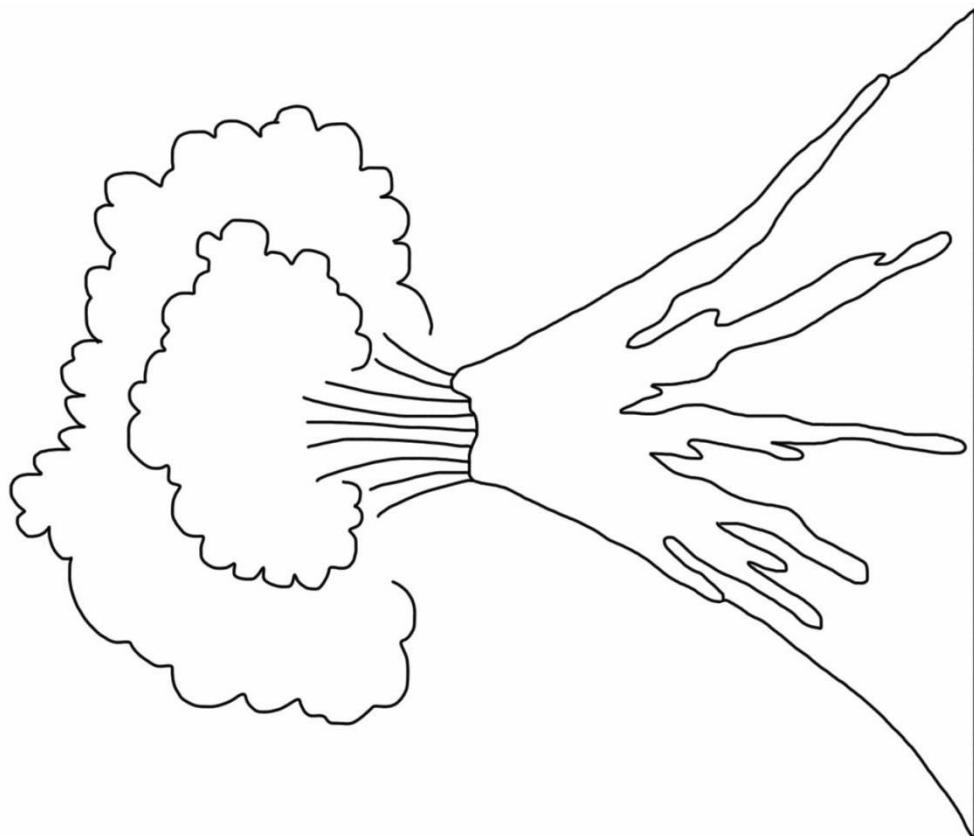
She says: "Look, I don't know you. I don't want to know you. I am out with my friends and I don't want to be hit on. Just sod off."

As the woman is talking, she accidentally spills her drink on to the man's shirt

How do you think the woman is feeling?

How do you think the man is feeling?

Tool 16: Two volcanoes



Tool 17: Two volcanoes – film (1)



What are this girl's
behaviours and actions

What might this girl be
thinking and feeling?

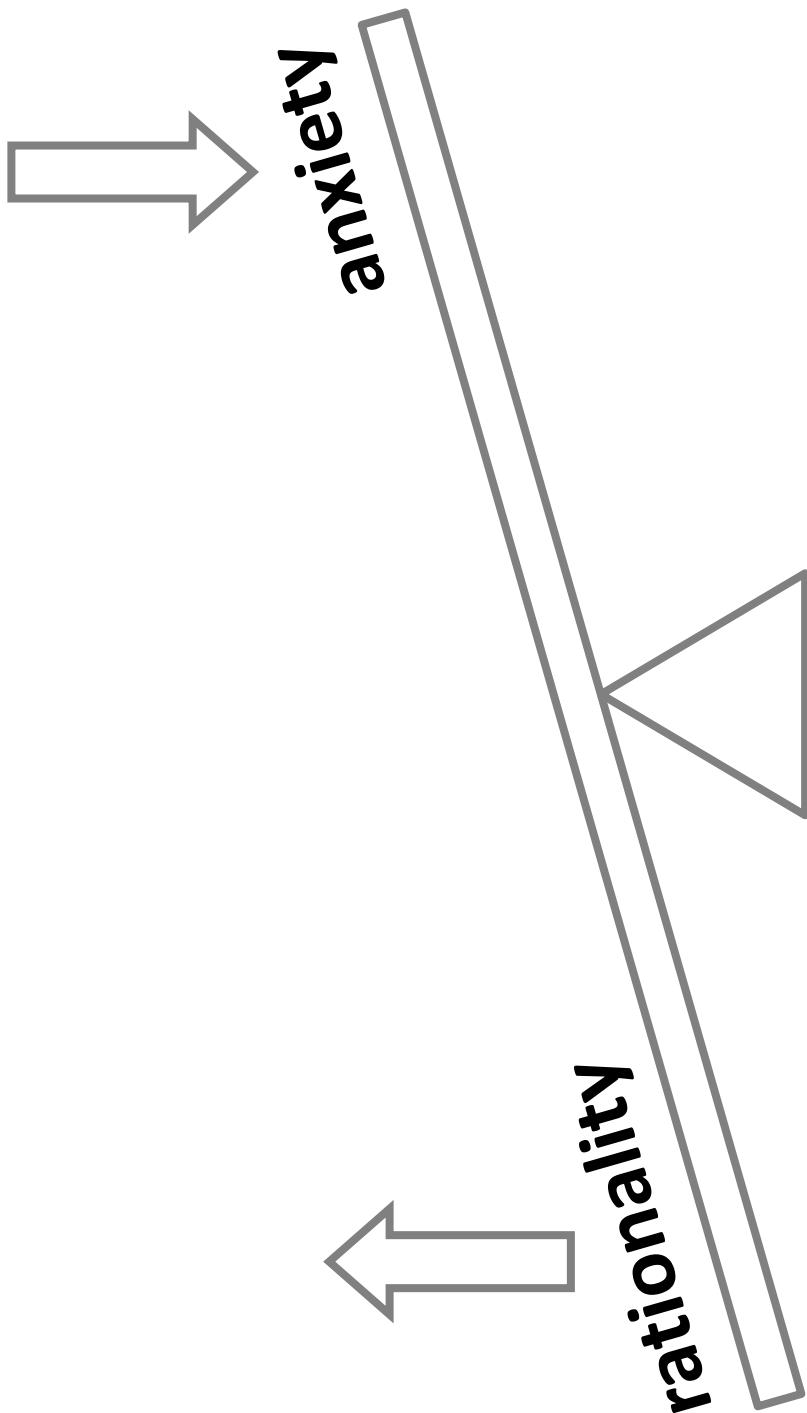
Tool 17: Two volcanoes - film (2)



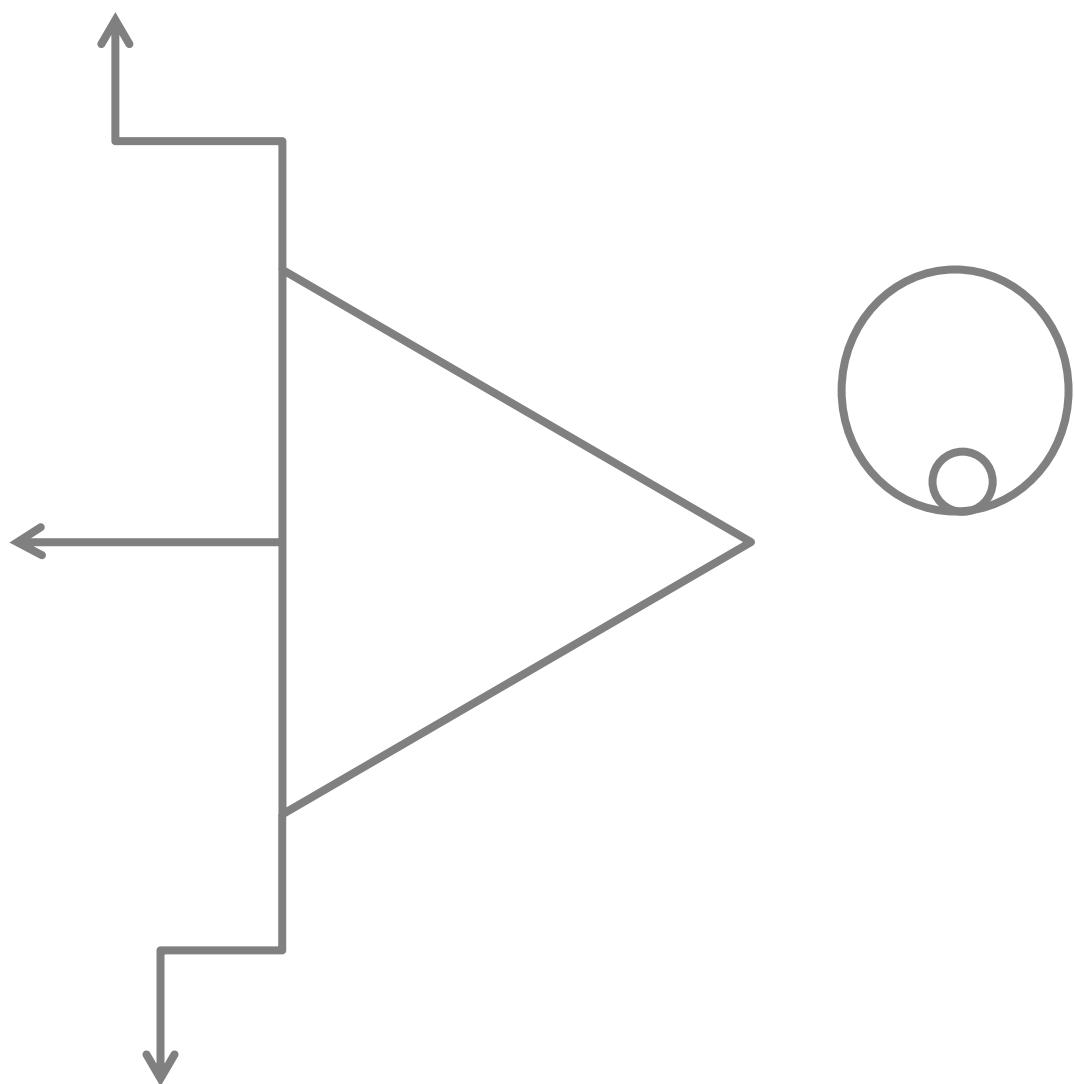
What are this girl's
behaviours and actions

What might this girl be
thinking and feeling?

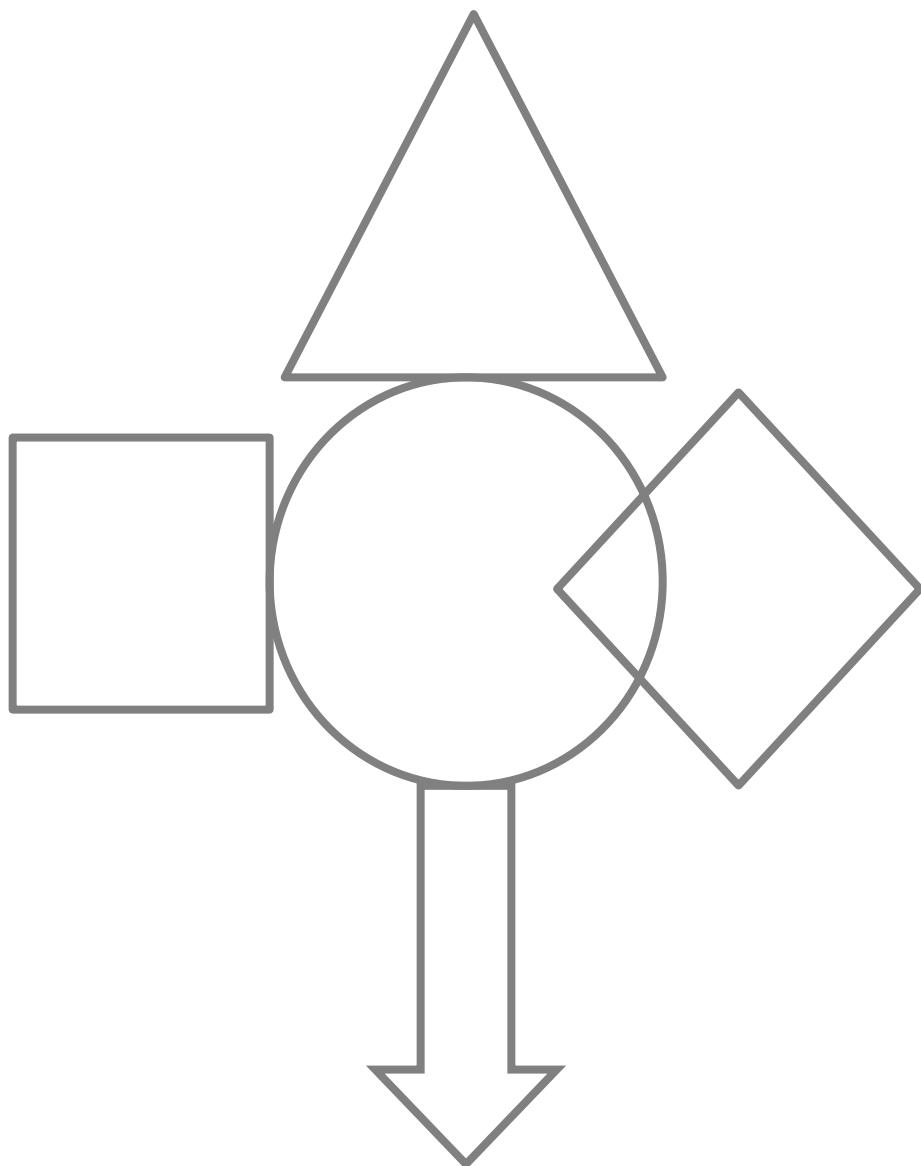
Tool 18: Anxiety/ rationality seesaw



Tool 19: Back-to-back picture (1)



Tool 19: Back-to-back picture (2)



Tool 20: Listening prompts

Use these questions and statements to help you to check your understanding

- Can you say the last bit again, please?
- Can you say the last bit again but in smaller sentences, please?
- Can you say the last bit again but more slowly, please?
- Can you say the last bit again but louder, please?
- Hold on please, I need to think.
- I think you mean... ...is that correct?
- Did you mean... ...?
- I have drawn... ...does that sound right?
- Could you explain that in a different way please?
- I think I need more information before I can draw that.

Tool 21: Are you listening statements

Here are six statements about the story you just heard.

Do you think they are true, not true, or are you unsure?

1. Alex is male	True	Not true	Not sure
2. The incident happened at night	True	Not true	Not sure
3. Alex hid in the shop	True	Not true	Not sure
4. The brother was alone	True	Not true	Not sure
5. The brother was going to attack Alex	True	Not true	Not sure
6. The brother ran off	True	Not true	Not sure

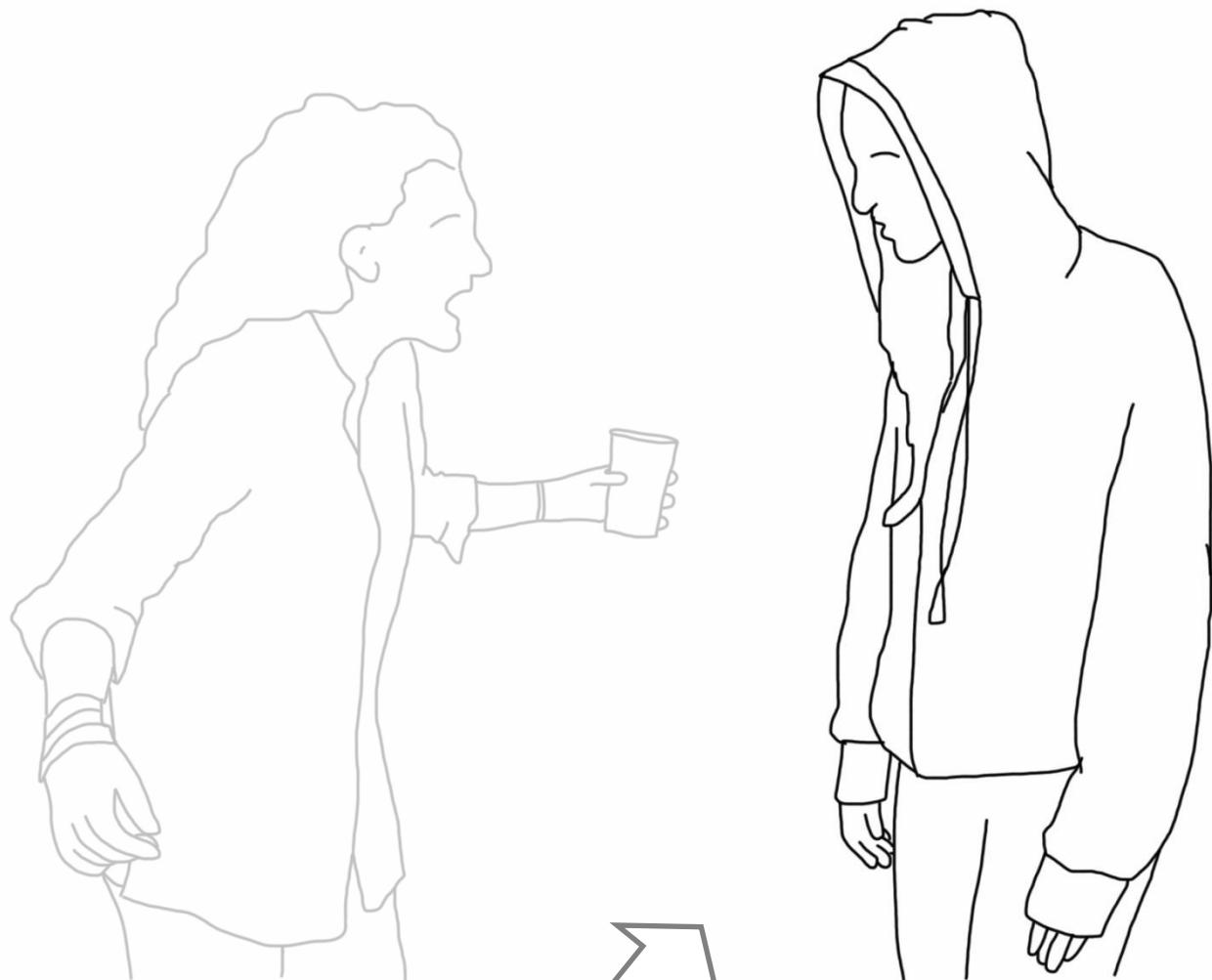
Tool 22: Spilled drink – film (1)



What are this girl's
behaviours and actions

What might this girl be
thinking and feeling?

Tool 22: Spilled drink - film (2)



What are this girl's
behaviours and actions

What might this girl be
thinking and feeling?

Tool 23: Listening instruction cards

Look away, do not respond to anything they are saying

Look away, do not respond to anything they are saying

Ask lots of questions

Ask lots of questions

Don't say anything, but look interested. Nod and smile occasionally

Don't say anything, but look interested. Nod and smile occasionally

Only say use short positive words such as "OK, uh-huh, go on, really"

Only say use short positive words such as "OK, uh-huh, go on, really"

Summarise what they say and ask: "Did I get that right?"

Summarise what they say and ask: "Did I get that right?"

Tool 24: A good listener will...

- Face towards the other person.
- Display a relaxed, but interested, posture.
- Use good eye-contact.
- Display a neutral facial expression.
- Adopt an interested tone of voice.
- Speak quietly and calmly.
- Speak a bit slower than normal.
- Ask questions to understand what the other person has said.
- Choose their words carefully.
- Not say too much.
- Be non-threatening.
- Keep a comfortable gap between them and the other person.
- Encourage the other person to keep talking.
- Summarise what the other person has said.
- Check understanding.

Tool 25: Helping or hindering?

Get the other person to trust you

Be aggressive to force the other person to do what you want

Decide what you want out of the situation

Show respect

Walk away

Apologise

Show the other person how you are feeling

Embarrass them until they do what you want

Tool 26: Face-saving scenarios

Two friends are watching TV but both want to watch different programmes. One friend grabs the remote and tells the other to: "Shut up and stop complaining." They then start to argue and fight over the remote.

A teenager is in a shop with a group of friends. They are encouraging him to steal some clothes while they distract the shop staff.

A member of staff drops a cup during dinner, spilling drink down their trousers. They get annoyed. One boy starts to laugh and points it out to other people, who also start to laugh. The member of staff gets angry and tells the boy: "You are in real trouble now."

A man is in a queue and a stranger pushes in front of him. When the man challenges the other person, they tell him to: "Piss off and mind your own business." This makes the man angry.

A boy is playing pool with a friend. Another boy, who he doesn't like, is sitting on the other side of the room staring at him. They then begin to make rude gestures and deliberately try to put the boy off his shot.

A teenager, who is tall and big, is picking on a smaller boy. The teenager is standing in front of the boy pushing him backwards and saying: "Come on then, do you want to take me on?" The boy is getting really angry.

Tool 27: Tree agreement – take two!

He talks with a friendly tone

He has a non-threatening body position

He manages his emotions

He is polite

He shows respect

He listens to the other man

He keeps the other man talking

He checks his understanding of what the other man is saying

He finds a way to resolve the situation that they are both happy with

Tool 28: Defusing conflict quiz

1. What is the difference between a disagreement and a confrontation?

2. Give three actions or behaviours which can make a disagreement worse.

3. Give three actions or behaviours which can make a confrontation better.

4. What affect does being in a conflict have on the body?

5. Why is it important to listen to the people we are in conflict with?

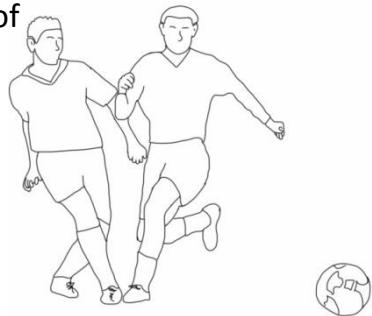
6. Why is it important to find a face-saving way out of a conflict situation?

Tool 29: Scenario one (football)

Football (1)

Ali is playing football in the park when he notices that one of the other players keeps barging him, instead of trying for the ball.

What could make this situation worse?



Football (2)

At one point, Ali has the ball and is heading towards the goal when the other player slides in and hits Ali's legs so hard that he goes flying.

What could make this situation better?

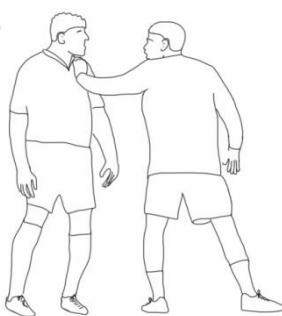


Football (3)

When Ali gets up, he is angry and walks over to the other player. Before anyone else can stop them, they have squared up to each other.

What could be a good way out of this situation?

What options does Ali have?



Tool 29: Scenario two (remote control)

Remote control (1)

Jenny and Mark are watching TV when Jenny decides that she wants to change the channel. She asks for the remote control, but Mark says "no". They start to argue about what to watch.



What could make this situation worse?

Remote control (2)

The argument is getting heated. Jenny grabs for the remote control and they begin to fight over it while shouting at each other. Jenny hits Mark and he gets angry.



What could make this situation better?

Remote control (3)

Jenny snatches the remote control and changes the channel. Mark then leans forward and turns off the TV.



What could be a good way out of this situation?

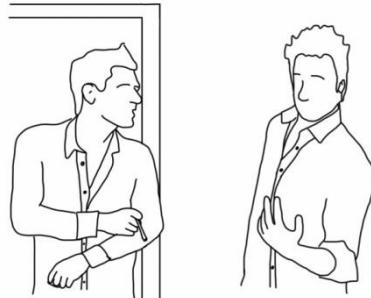
What options do Jenny and Mark have?

Tool 29: Scenario three (noise)

Noise (1)

Ahmed is having a noisy party when Gary (a neighbour) knocks on his door and asks him to keep the noise down.

What could make this situation worse?



Noise (2)

Ahmed tells Gary to “fuck off” and slams the door. Gary is angry and bangs on the door loudly until Ahmed comes back.

What could make this situation better?



Noise (3)

Gary refuses to leave until Ahmed has turned the music down. Ahmed gets angry and punches Gary in the face.

What could be a good way out of this situation?



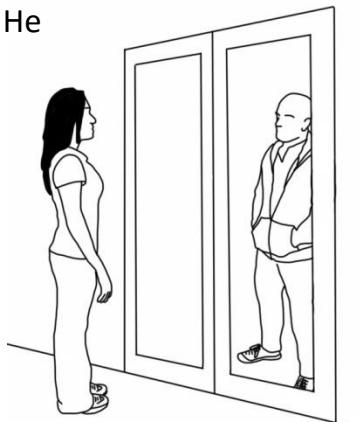
What options do Ahmed and Gary have?

Tool 29: Scenario four (unwelcome visitor)

Unwelcome Visitor (1)

Shanaz is just about to leave her block when she notices a dodgy-looking man on the other side of the front door. He says: "Let me in bitch, I'm looking for Ben, he owes me money."

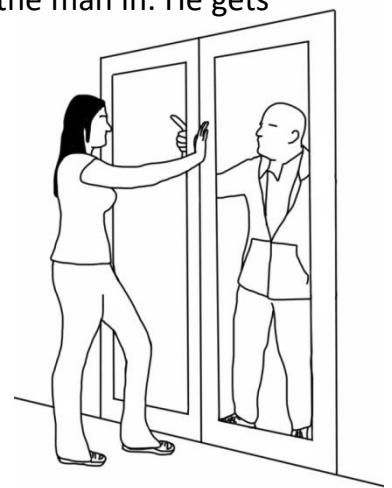
What could make this situation worse?



Unwelcome Visitor (2)

Shanaz refuses to let the man in. He gets aggressive, verbally abusive and makes racist comments towards Shanaz.

What could make this situation better?



Unwelcome Visitor (3)

Another resident hears the shouting and comes to see what's going on. The man shouts: "Open this door, or I'll smash it in."

What could be a good way out of this situation?

What options does Shanaz have?



Defusing Conflict

Certificate of completion



____ has participated in
and successfully completed the Defusing Conflict
programme at _____ between
_____ and _____.

Trainer

Trainer

Learning outcomes of the Defusing Conflict programme:

- Understanding what conflict is and the difference between a disagreement and a confrontation.
- Identifying personal responses to conflict.
- Understanding how conflict situations can be made worse.
- Being aware of techniques for managing conflict without making situations worse.
- Recognising spontaneous responses to conflict.
- Being aware that responses to conflict can be managed.
- Recognising how personal feelings affect reactions to conflict.
- Identifying ways to make conflict situations better.
- Understanding how tone of voice can affect the meaning of what is said.
- Understanding the importance of listening.
- Knowing how to check understanding.
- Understanding the importance of listening to the other person's perspective.
- Knowing how to keep someone talking.
- Recognising behaviours which help and hinder resolving conflict.
- Understanding the importance of saving face.

Notes

