

CATHLEEN A. COWIN, ESQ.

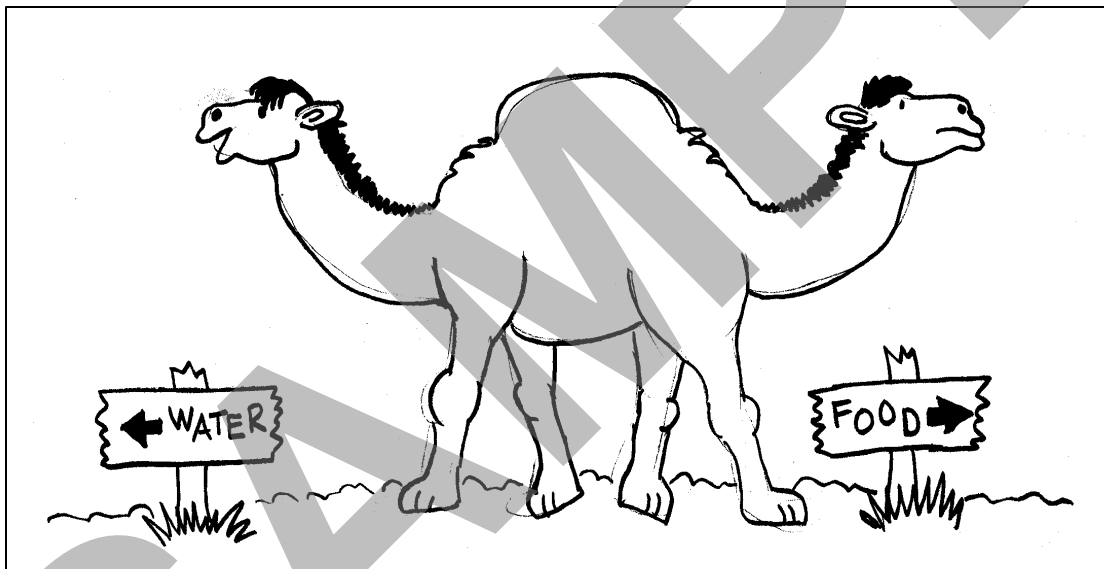
Conflict Resolution Lifeskills Series



**PEACEMAKING
FOR CHRISTIAN
STUDENTS**

What Is Conflict?

Conflict is when our goals don't line up with the goals of others. Considering conflict in this way, we experience conflict every single day of our lives. This is why conflict is such an important subject to spend some time to better understand. Everyone experiences conflict.



SOME EXAMPLES OF CONFLICT:

What comes to mind when you think of conflict? Do you have a mental picture? Perhaps you visualize a tug-of-war. If you're a parent, maybe you think of what goes on in your house in the morning, trying to get everyone ready for school and out the door. If you're a businessman, industry competition might be brought to mind. A lawyer may envision the courtroom. Conflicts can take on many dimensions. If you're a parent of more than one child, the term "sibling rivalry" is


Sometimes conflicts don't have to involve more than one person. You can have a conflict inside yourself!

- **INNER CONFLICT:** Josh asked Jennifer out to the Jazz Concert in the Park for Friday Night. Jennifer had been hoping that Josh would invite her out for months. She was elated until she remembered that Aunt Emilie's 90th birthday party was also this Friday night. It had been on her calendar for weeks. On one hand, if Jennifer didn't accept Josh's invitation, he might not invite her out again. On the other hand, Aunt Emilie was getting very old and might not have another birthday party and she was family. Jennifer found herself arguing against herself in her mind.



There are two parts to every conflict

There are two parts to every conflict. We can call these two components "People" and "Things". There are lots of different labels that we could use. Behavioral scientists call the "People" component "Relationship" and the "Thing" component "Task". In negotiation, they call them cooperation and competition. Regardless of the labels, they mean basically the same things.



SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT...

**There are two parts to every conflict:
PEOPLE & THINGS.**

**What's more important?
People or Things?**

PEOPLE

The “People” part of a conflict has to do with the relationship of the people in the conflict. Behaviors relating to “people” includes the extent to which we engage in two-way communication. Thus, it includes listening and responding to the information provided. It includes encouraging, supporting, and clarifying. It also refers to how we feel about the situation and how accurately we perceive the feelings of others.

What are some word and phrases that we could use to explain what the “people” part of a conflict is all about?

- Talking
- Explaining
- Listening
- Hearing
- Interpersonal Relationship
- Feelings
- Emotions
- Empathy
- Understanding



THINGS

The “thing” part of the conflict is what the people are said to be in conflict about. This is what the people are doing that causes conflict. This could mean actions... or inaction. This is usually the part of the conflict we can see.

We often feel most comfortable defining conflicts in relation to the “thing” part of the problem. For example, we characterize a dispute in court as being about monetary demands or a family law case about being about the custody agreement. In reality, however, this is just one aspect of the whole conflict. We cannot fully understand the conflict if we only look at the “thing” part of the problem apart from the perceptions (viewpoints) and feelings of the people.

