



ACTING IN FAVOR OF OUR SOCIETY

1. TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

▼ This activity will allow you to apply active listening and assertive communication to understand different perspectives regarding community problems. Learning to see the way others see a problem that is affecting everyone will help you get a deeper understanding not only of the problem itself, but also of the people who are giving their opinion. In order to find a solution to a problem, you need to have effective communication, which requires you to listen first and understand the point of view of the other person so you can later give your own opinion and find a solution together.

Materials

- Printed handout
- Pen

STEP BY STEP

- 1 If possible, print the handout on the next page or copy it on your notebook so you can work on it.
- 2 In pairs, brainstorm problems that you find in your community, maybe at school, or in your neighborhood. Each student chooses a different problem.

- 3 Create a short debate about the problem you chose. You have to find a solution for the problem. Choose roles. Decide who is going to speak first. *Student A*, present your problem and then your proposal. *Student B*, listen attentively. If necessary, take notes using the space on the handout. *Student B*, before giving your opinion and proposal, repeat in your own words what *Student A* proposed. *Student B*, you can only give your opinion and proposal on *Student A*'s problem after *Student A* makes sure that you paraphrased correctly what he / she said. *Student A*, you can only give permission to *Student B* to proceed once you are sure that *Student B* understood what you said. *Student B*, present your proposal and opinion on *Student A*'s proposal.



The problem I chose is...
I think that...

You said that the problem you chose is...
You said that you think that...



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- 4 Now, *Student B* presents his or her problem and *Student A* does what *Student B* did before.
- 5 Discuss as a class:
 - a How fast did you find the best solution for your problem? Why?
 - b Do you think you would have found a better solution by yourself? Why?
 - c Why do you think it is important to make sure you understand what others are saying?



If you want to learn more about active listening, go to:
<http://www.edutics.mx/iVP>

Student A:

Student B:



ACTING IN FAVOR OF OUR SOCIETY 2. FINDING A WAY

When we're in the midst of identifying a problem and giving a solution, we find different perspectives that come from the people involved. This activity will help you to identify your own emotions when facing opinions that are different from yours, and how these emotions can affect your behavior. Always try to remember that each person has his / her own thoughts, and those are valuable and deserve respect as much as yours. Don't try to force a change of mind, but be open to new ideas. We have the capacity to place ourselves into another's position, thus we are able to solve conflicts by considering the other party stance, not only ours.

Materials

- *Guide to Resolving Conflicts*
- Pen

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Work in pairs. Make a list of the problems that global warming has caused in your community.



A large pink rectangular area containing ten horizontal lines for writing, with a vertical blue line on the left side and a series of light green circles along the left edge.



ACTING IN FAVOR OF OUR SOCIETY 2. FINDING A WAY

- 2 Discuss with your partner which problem can be ranked as the most important one.

I think that using products packaged in plastic is the most important issue to solve.

But I consider drying out of soil as the most relevant one.

- 3 Take some time to discuss your answers and get to an agreement on the ranking of problems. Identify your emotions while exposing your points of view, especially when your opinions are different from your classmate's. Then find a solution to each problem you listed.
- 4 After listening attentively to your partner's opinions, reflect on the conflicts that may have arisen from the discussion, and use the guide on the next page to solve them.
- 5 As a class, discuss the following questions:
- Did any conflict arise when you were trying to prioritize the main problem? Did you come to an agreement?
 - Did you expose your points of view to your partner? Did your partner listen attentively to your arguments?
 - When you were listening to a different opinion from yours, how did you feel? Do you think you tried to understand your partner's thinking from his / her point of view?
 - Reflect on the way you behaved when you exposed your point of view. Do you think your emotions affected your behavior? Did you try to fiercely change your partner's mind? Why or why not?



If you want to learn more about conflict resolution, go to: <http://www.edutics.mx/iVm>, or check out: <http://www.edutics.mx/iVs> to learn what emotional intelligence is and how it could be useful to you when solving problems.



ACTING IN FAVOR OF OUR SOCIETY 2. FINDING A WAY

Guide to Resolving Conflicts

Identify the problem

Describe the problem. Ask your partner how he / she is feeling about it. Discuss what you both consider has caused the situation.

Find a solution together

Think of ideas to solve the conflict and choose one. Each person is responsible for his / her own behavior and has the ability to change it. Resolving conflicts is not about changing another person's perspective, but to understand it.

Take responsibility

Once you have shared your perspective about the conflict, think about how you may have contributed to the conflict. Ask yourself what you could have done differently, and what you will do different from now on.

Come to an end

It is suggested to end the conflict with a kind word. Remember to be thankful to your partner for being open with you, and express confidence that your relationship will be better for having talked the problem out and not to hold resentments for any past conflicts.



ACTING IN FAVOR OF OUR SOCIETY

3. A STORY OF SOLIDARITY

Sometimes understanding others is the most important way to create solidarity. Rather than running out to help someone in need before we understand the nature of their problem, it's better to listen and understand so we can truly be of use to the other person. Sometimes when we have not walked in someone else's shoes first, we might do more harm to the afflicted person. When we listen and understand, we can create a community with a strong sense of comradeship and solidarity. Listen, understand, and then help to make your community better.

Material
• Printed handout

STEP BY STEP

- 1 If possible, print or photocopy the handout on the next page so you can work on it.
- 2 Work in groups. Sit down in a circle. One student chooses one of the characters and their story from the next page. Then, that same student goes into the center of the circle and tells the rest of the group the problem the character has. Make it fun! Role-play it!
- 3 Taking turns, each classmate offers help to the student in the middle. Whenever there is someone presenting a problem, the rest must listen attentively and be as empathetic as possible. Once everyone has offered a solution, as a group, decide which would be the best solution for the character's problem. Give reasons why that solution is the most helpful and kind. Choose another student to move to the center of the circle.
- 4 Repeat the exercise of choosing a character and suggesting a solution to their problem until everyone has had a turn.
- 5 Discuss in groups:
 - a How did you feel when you were the character in trouble? Why?
 - b Do you think your classmates understood your situation and offered help accordingly? Why?
 - c What do you think is important when helping others?
 - d Who was the person that gave the best solutions? Why?



To learn more about solidarity, go to: <http://www.edutics.mx/iVe>, or check out: <http://www.edutics.mx/iVh>



ACTING IN FAVOR OF OUR SOCIETY

3. A STORY OF SOLIDARITY

Mariana



Today I was planning a recycling campaign, but no one was interested in doing one, so I ended up by myself and I can't do everything for the campaign alone.

Alex



Today in school I lost my favorite football. I don't have another one to practice with, and I told my teammate that we would meet tomorrow to practice for the local tournament.

Claudia



Lately, there has been a water shortage. We have already run out of water at my house and we are not sure when the water service will be turned back on.

Bruno



Today I lost my dog. My mother accidentally opened the door, and he ran out. I can't find him, I'm really worried.

Lorena



Last month there was a terrible earthquake, and many buildings were damaged. There are some buildings that haven't been repaired yet, among them the one I live in.

Alfonso



My favorite place to go on the weekends is a nearby park, perfect to hang out with family and friends. But the last time I went, there was a group of people from a company who wanted to buy half the park to build a mall.



ACTING IN FAVOR OF OUR SOCIETY 4. UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

Experiences and backgrounds make people different from each other, and those differences cause them to see things differently from us. This activity will allow you to explore the differences between the background of different people so you can try to understand how others think and different perspectives. In this way you can also discover how the diversity of perspectives can benefit a community.

Materials

- Printed handout
- Pen

STEP BY STEP

- 1 If possible, print or photocopy the handout on the next page so you can work on it.
- 2 Work in groups of five. You are going to role-play a situation in which, as a group, you will have to decide the fate of a nature reserve. Choose a character from the next page and read the details of the problem.
- 3 Once you all have understood the problem and the character you chose, write your character's argument in favor of or against the situation. Don't forget to give reasons for your argument.

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- 4 Take turns presenting your arguments. Present your perspective clearly and respectfully. The other participants should listen attentively. When it is your turn to talk, you can add comments to what your classmates said.
- 5 Discuss as a class:
 - a Was it hard to reach an agreement? Why?
 - b Did everyone respect each other's perspective?
 - c Do you think the decision would have been the same if the committee was formed only by ecologists or merchants? Why?
 - d Is diversity important to help a community grow? Why?



IT If you want to learn more about diversity in perspectives, go to: <http://www.edutics.mx/iVM>



ACTING IN FAVOR OF OUR SOCIETY

4. UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

You are part of the governing committee of a small town. You have to decide if you are going to allow an important national company to build a fancy hotel with spa near a river and a nature reserve.

Governing Committee:



1 A local merchant who makes beautiful crafts for a living.



2 An ecologist who studies the plants and animals of the nature reserve.



3 A farmer, head of family, who has to travel to the capital to sell his products.



4 A cook who makes some of the best traditional dishes of the region.



5 The local governor, who is trying to prevent water shortages.