

The Conflict Cycle (adopted from the work of Nick Long, Mary Wood and Frank Fecser)

Learning how to deal with troubled children can become a way of life not a bag of tricks. That way of life recognizes fair play, goodness, concern, respect for others and property, and a sense that I can help a child grow.

How the Conflict Cycle works (see diagram below)

1. A stressful event registers in the brain's amygdala. (A teacher publicly criticizes a student.)
2. The logical brain evaluates the challenge. (The student thinks "She is disrespecting me".)
3. The brain triggers emotions to motivate action. (The student becomes angry at the teacher.)
4. Behavior occurs based on logic and emotions. (The student insults the teacher.)
5. Others' reactions lead to coping or conflict. (If the adult responds with calmness and empathy, the student is soothed and supported. The conflict ends and the youth's ability to cope is strengthened. If the adult mirrors an angry student, conflict escalates.)

Five strategies to turn conflict into coping.

- Know the child; be aware of their emotions.
- Know yourself. Be in touch with your own feelings.
- Allow time for cooling down.
- Never take anger personally.
- Model a generous spirit. Small acts of kindness have restorative effects.
- Know that adults are the ones who should take the responsibility to disengage.
- Know something about defense mechanisms.
- Get help when needed.



