



Discussion Guide for

CHOKER

Objectives

- To teach the concepts of conflict escalation and conflict de-escalation.
- To dramatize the “augmented spiral conflict paradigm,” an important model in understanding conflict resolution.
- To demonstrate specific techniques the student can use to avoid conflict escalation.
- To portray the concept of “conflict avoidance,” simply walking away from a potentially volatile situation.
- To present a pro-health model that clearly and effectively advocates non-violent solutions to conflict.

Synopsis

Escalating conflicts among adolescents too often lead to violence. Morbidity statistics as a result of violence are alarming. *Choke!* dramatizes this issue and teaches pro-health conflict resolution skills which can be employed to de-escalate a situation that may seem to be out of control. Danny, a talented freshman soccer player, “chokes” on a free kick in a key game, causing his team to lose. Other team players are deeply resentful, and make disparaging remarks to Danny. One of them, Spider, ridicules Danny the most for missing an almost open net. Spider and Danny get into an “escalating conflict spiral,” putting each other down in a more and more intense and potentially violent way. The tension rises, and verbal put downs lead to

physical threats, and finally to a challenge of a physical fight. Latoya, a member of the girls' soccer team, hears about the coming confrontation, and explains how to de-escalate conflict without losing “face.” She gets through to some of her team members, but Danny is only out for Spider's blood. Another player who has something to hide does hear Latoya, and we find out the real reason Danny “choked” on the free kick.

Questions To Ask Before Viewing

1. When someone puts you down, how do you feel?
2. How do you feel if this put down is in front of your friends?
3. Can a verbal put down lead to actual physical violence? Explain.
4. How can you avoid a conflict by walking away, and yet save “face” with your friends?
5. What is a “free kick” in soccer?
6. Someone calls your friend a “dork” and he or she is annoyed, angry, and ready to fight. What might you say to help him or her calm down?
7. How could your friend answer the peer who called him or her a dork, and reduce the tension between them?
8. If you de-escalate a conflict, what might you lose socially, and what might you gain?

'Time Out' Exploring Possibilities

Latoya: “No, you're cool. You decide. But you do have a choice. I'm sorry, I promised. I'm done. But if you need someone to talk to, I'll be there.” 1.

What are some options for Danny at this point?

2. What are some of the positive and negative consequences of each option?
3. Given what you know about Danny and his situation, what do you think he will do? Why?

Questions To Ask After Viewing

1. If Danny and Spider had fought, what might have happened? (There is no right or wrong answer. So many fights end in serious violence. Others might jump into the fight. Danny and Spider are ready to go at it, and if the conflict had continued to escalate, the outcome would have been serious.)
2. Spider hit Danny in the groin with a basketball. Danny brought up the sensitive subject of Spider's family. Which was most hurtful? Explain. (Both are painful. However, often one can recover better from physical pain than from psychological pain. If Danny's comments hurt and humiliated Spider, it might take him a long time to recover.)

3. How do the negative feelings between Danny and Spider escalate? Have you ever been in or seen a similar confrontation? Explain. (The negative feelings get worse because the conflict escalates. It goes from negative comments to name calling and shoving, to physical and then psychological pain, and finally to threats of serious violence.)

4. Did Danny really “choke” on the free kick? Why or why not? (No, Danny did not choke. He was in such physical pain from being spiked on the instep that he couldn't function. It was really his friend, Peter, who choked, both in stepping on Danny, and also in letting him cover UP.)

5. Do any of the girls on the girls' soccer team listen to and respect what Latoya was saying? Explain. (This is a difficult question. Latoya is clear on her position, but may come across as a bit heavy-handed. The fact that some of the girls laughed and kidded good-naturedly after Latoya talked to them is a good sign that at least some of what she said was heard.)

6. Why doesn't Peter tell the truth about the soccer game? Why does he finally come clean? (The other players on the team don't like Peter, and only accepted him on the team because Danny convinced them. Peter is afraid of being even further disliked.)



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7. Do you think Danny is a chicken for not following through on a threat? Explain. (subjective. However, you have to give him credit for listening to another position, and having the courage to change his mind knowing some of the others would put him down for it.)

8. When is Spider the most angry at Danny? (Spider is furious when Danny brings up the issue of the police and his family)

9. Why doesn't Spider insist on going through with the fight at the end? (Spider seems to be impressed that Danny would take the heat for a friend, right or wrong. He values loyalty.)

Additional inquiry

- How do countries, rather than just individuals, escalate or de-escalate conflicts?
- How do your friends feel if, rather than being put down, they hear some positive things said about them? Explain.
- You can either escalate or de-escalate a conflict. What are some examples of when you should escalate a conflict?
- When is it better to de-escalate? Explain.

Programs Details

Length:

12 minutes

Subject Areas:

Health & Guidance

Audience Levels:

Junior-Senior High

Order Number:

1-9108SG

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