



# BASIC NEEDS ARE AT THE ROOT OF CONFLICT

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## OBJECTIVES:

To understand some of the underlying causes of conflict.

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## MATERIALS:

- Drawing of a tree on butcher or chart paper
  - Handouts - "Skit" and "Basic Needs Activity"
  - Magic marker
  - Post-its
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## PROCEDURE:

**Lead-In:** *"Most of us can live peacefully with our own faults, but the faults of others get on our nerves."*

*Banking*

1. On the wall or chart stand, place a drawing of a large tree with long branches and spreading roots.

2. Divide students into groups of 4-6. Ask each group to take two minutes (a) to decide what are the five most common conflicts and (2) to write each one on a separate Post-it. (Examples: name-calling, rumors, different expectations, assumption, resources, time, money, position, space, material goods, property, values, unmet needs.)

3. Tell students that most conflicts happen because one or more of the 5 basic needs are not being met. Each of the 5 main categories of "Needs" (words below in bold) is printed on a separate card. Descriptive words are written on the back of cards.

- **Belonging:** [loving, sharing, co-operating, "fitting in" w/others]
- **Power:** [feeling important, being respected]
- **Freedom:** [making choices]
- **Fun:** [laughing, playing, finding joy in life]
- **Security:** [feeling safe from put-downs, ridicule]

4. Five students are asked to volunteer. Each is to face the group and hold up one of the "5 Basic Needs" cards. They are to identify the "need" on their individual card and read the explanation which is on the back of the card. (Students are teaching their peers.)

Understanding this concept can help us to avoid taking the negative behavior of others so personally. It also helps us not to automatically "blame" the other person or think he/she is just a "jerk." Instead, this person can be seen as someone who is, like the rest of us, trying to get his/her needs met, and perhaps this is the only way he/she knows how to act at this time.

**5. Skit to illustrate the concept and to check understanding:**  
Have several students prepare ahead to act out a short skit showing a conflict situation. (Example of skit follows.) After watching the skit, students analyze the unmet needs (root of the conflict) of those involved.

**6.** Refer back to several of the conflicts on the branches and have students identify some possible unmet needs.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Processing:** *Why is the identification of need so important in resolving a conflict?*

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#### **PROCEDURE:**

(Continued)

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#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

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#### **NOTES:**

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## SKIT FOR "WHAT'S AT THE ROOT OF CONFLICT?"

Cut on lines in order to give each of the three actors the following skit description.)



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Rasha and Tim are talking in the cafeteria.

Christy walks by and Rasha starts trying to get Tim to put ice down Christy's back, just to see if they can "get her going!" Tim doesn't want to do it but Rasha keeps pressuring him. Tim lets Rasha talk him into it.

Tim walks over to Christy, puts ice down her back, and runs. It catches Christy off-guard - she drops her tray - is real embarrassed (everybody in the cafeteria is looking.) She is furious, runs after Tim - doesn't catch him, and has to go back and clean up the mess she made dropping her tray. Some of the students standing around are roaring with laughter.

Teacher stops the role play at this point by saying "Cut!" Audience analyzes the "unmet needs" of each characters.

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**ACTIVITY: WHAT'S AT THE ROOT OF CONFLICT?**

**Basic Needs** - Cut out words and glue onto card. Glue description of each need onto the back of the card.

BELONGING

POWER

FREEDOM

FUN

SECURITY

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**ACTIVITY: WHAT'S AT THE ROOT OF CONFLICT?**

**Basic Needs** -Glue description on to the back of "Basic Needs" card.

**Belonging:**

**Loving, sharing, co-operating with others**

**Power:  
(Feeling important)**

**Achieving, being respected**

**Freedom:**

**Making choices**

**Fun:**

**Laughing, playing, finding joy in life.**

**Security:**

**Feeling safe from put-downs, ridicule.**

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