

# Lesson Plans

Generously Provided By  
The County of Los Angeles, Department of Community and Senior Services  
Human Relations Branch

## Crossing the Line

**Overview** Conflict is part of all relationships. Many people fear it as a threat. But, Conflict can be a great tool for strengthening relationships.

**Objectives** Participants will:

- recognize four approaches to dealing with Conflict.
- believe that Collaboration is usually more productive than other approaches to dealing with Conflict.
- know what they can do to increase the likelihood that a Conflict situation will lead to a positive outcome.

**Plan** Conduct the “Cross the Line” Activity

- Define Conflict
- Discuss 4 major approaches to Conflict, emphasizing the superior value of Collaboration
- Apply Collaboration to Conflict situations
- Summarize and conclude

### Activity: 10 minutes

1. Explain: We’re going to take a few minutes now to talk about something that all of us deal with every day, but few of us probably feel we do well.
2. Continue: To get started, I want all of you to stand up and come over here to this space. You won’t need to bring anything with you.
3. As the participants come to the space you indicated, line them up in two rows facing each other. In other words, people in each row will be standing beside each other, shoulder-to-shoulder, facing the other row. There must be the same number of people in rows facing each other. If there is an odd number of people in the group, assign the extra person to be a “special observer”.
4. It may be helpful to divide the participants into 2 or 3 groups of about 10 each, made up of two 5-member rows facing each other.



5. Bring the parallel rows together, with a space of only a couple of feet between them.
6. Indicate an imaginary line on the floor between the two rows facing each other.
7. Be sure that each person in each row knows who is the person opposite her or him (i.e. the person in the facing row directly on the other side of the imaginary line).
8. Explain: In a moment I will give you a signal and you will then have 5 seconds to accomplish the task I am about to assign to you. After 5 seconds, I will call out, "freeze". At that point, I want you to freeze in place and not move again until I say you can.
9. Elaborate: There's only one rule for this activity – you cannot harm or injure the person opposite you.
10. Continue: So, when I say "go", you will have 5 seconds to get the person opposite you across the line. Then, when I say "freeze", don't move.
11. Be sure that you do NOT say: "You'll have 5 seconds to get the person opposite you on your side of the line." DO say: "You'll have 5 seconds to get the person opposite you across the line."
12. Immediately, say "go".

### **Transition: 5 minutes**

1. After 5 seconds, call out, "Freeze!" and insist that everyone freeze in place.
2. Take a moment to notice where people are positioned. Some may be in the same place they were in when the activity began. Others may be closer to or on the line. Many probably will now have 2 people on the same side of the line, one of them having crossed over to the other side. And there may be some who switched places so that they now are both on opposite sides of the line from where they started.
3. Walk around, as the participants remain motionless, and comment briefly on some of their positions.
4. After commenting on some of their positions, say: OK. Return to your seats and let's talk about what we just did.

### **Introduction to Topic: 5 minutes**

1. When participants are seated, say: I'm going to show you a word, and, as soon as you see it, I want you to call out the first thing that comes to mind.



2. Elaborate: Don't hesitate. Don't wait for someone else to say something. As soon as you see the word, call out the first thing that you think of.
3. Post the word "Conflict" so everyone can see it, for example on a white board, chart sheet, or projector screen.
4. Coax participants to call out words. As words are called out, write them so all can see them.
5. When the words being called out begin to die down, state that the "Cross the Line" Activity is a simulation of a Conflict situation.
6. Say: the definition of Conflict I want you to use today during our discussion is: "when I think that what you want interferes with what I want".
7. Repeat: Conflict is when I think that what you want interferes with what I want.
8. Point out the three major components of this definition:
  - "what you want...what I want" – Conflict is about our goals, what we want.
  - "interferes with" – Conflict happens when I think that our goals interfere with each other.
  - "I think" – Conflict happens when I think there is interference. Whether or not there "actually" is interference doesn't matter. If I think that what you want interferes with what I want, we have Conflict.
9. Point out: Conflict happens in all relationships. The only people with whom we never have any Conflict are the people to whom we are not connected in any way. In every relationship, sometimes I'm convinced that what you want interferes with what I want.

### **Discussion: 20 minutes**

1. Say: The "Cross the Line" Activity is a simulation of Conflict all of us experience in all relationships.
2. Ask: What was the goal you were assigned in this Activity?
3. The answer to the question is that the goal was to get the person opposite across the line. Listen closely, though, to how participants answer the question. Some, if not all, of them likely will say that the goal was to get the person on "my side" of the line. You can comment on this a little later in the discussion.
4. Ask: What are some examples of goals in our relationships that may seem to interfere with one another? (e.g. what to do with free time, how to solve a problem, how to spend money, where to go to eat)
5. Point out: Different people deal with Conflict in different ways.



6. Refer to the participants who ended the "Cross the Line" Activity in the same place they started, still on opposite sides of the line, and those who ended the Activity with both of them on the same side of the line. Ask these participants to describe what they tried to do to accomplish the goal of getting the other person across the line.
7. Explain that these participants were using the most common way that people usually deal with Conflict: Competition.
8. Elaborate: Competition is defined as a Win/Lose approach to Conflict. And it is not only what we do with Conflict most of the time. It actually is the way we usually think about Conflict.
9. If any of the participants responded to your previous question about the goal by saying that they were assigned to get the other person to their side of the line, point out that what you actually said was that they were to get the other person across the line. However, because we most often think of Conflict as a Competition, we think of the goals in Win/Lose terms. When we come to a Conflict situation, most of us, most of the time, think of it as a Competition that will have a Winner and a Loser.
10. Continue: Most of us do not like to Lose. So, if we find that we frequently Lose Competitions over Conflict in a particular relationship, we are not likely to want to continue in that relationship. Competition, as a continuing pattern in a relationship, makes that relationship weaker, not stronger.
11. Refer again to the participants who ended up on the same side of the line. Ask those who crossed to the opposing person's side how that happened.
12. Explain: A second approach we use in dealing with Conflict is Concession. Concession means conceding, or surrendering, or yielding to the other person. And many of us think of this as Losing. And, of course, if we're thinking Lose/Win, we're still thinking Competition.
13. Point out: Concession is not always a loss, though. I can choose to yield to what the other person wants. If the issue is not very important, and the relationship is, in fact, I might easily choose to concede to what you want. This would not be Lose/Win because what I want has changed. A relationship in which the same person is always conceding to the other will grow weaker, however, not stronger.
14. Explain: Another approach we use to deal with Conflict is Compromise. Compromise means you get some of what you want and the other person does, too. But you both give up something as well.



15. Likely, no one used the Compromise approach in the “Cross the Line” activity, but, if so, discuss it. Otherwise, explain that a Compromise in that activity would have meant that each of the two people stood on the line, straddling the line, with one foot on each side of the line, or perhaps one would have crossed to the other side for a while, and then both of them would have crossed to stand on the opposite side of the line.
16. Ask participants to share examples of how they have seen Compromise used to settle Conflict.
17. Point out: Many people are convinced that Compromise is the very best they can do in resolving Conflict. It isn’t the best way to resolve Conflict. It is the second best way. In some situations, though, it is the best alternative available.
18. Elaborate: Compromise is often defined as Lose-Win/Lose-Win. And, as soon as we think of it this way, we realize that Compromise also comes from a Competition mindset.
19. Point out that, long term, Compromise does not strengthen relationships, though it may prevent them from weakening as quickly as the Competition or Concession approaches. The greatest deficiency of Compromise is that it may settle a specific disagreement, but it often does little to resolve deeper differences or to strengthen a relationship.
20. Say: There is another way to resolve Conflict – Collaboration. Collaboration has been described as Win/Win.
21. If any participants discovered a Win/Win solution in the “Cross the Line” activity, wait until now to ask for the description of their solution. If no one discovered a Win/Win solution, illustrate by asking one of the participants to stand opposite you, and then, on your signal, to step across the line. As the person opposite you steps across the line, you do the same, so that both of you stand looking at each other, having traded places.
22. Be sure that all the participants recognize that, since the goal was to get the person opposite you across the line, then both of you got everything you wanted.
23. Point out: This solution is only possible when you work to find a way that everyone wins rather than thinking of the situation as a Competition.
24. Emphasize that the Competition view of the situation prevents us from thinking of options for Collaboration solutions.
25. Transition by saying that success in using Collaboration in Conflict situations requires that we take the time to identify what the other



person's goals are, as well as our own. And then we must take the time to explore together options for accomplishing all our goals. If, after investing time, energy, and imagination, we're unable to find a Collaborative solution, our second option can be to discover Compromise that accomplishes as much as possible of everyone's goals.

### **Application: 15 minutes**

1. Refer to one or more Conflict situations with which the participants are familiar. These could be situations from history, or from literature, or current events. An alternative would be to ask the participants to think of a Conflict situation from their own experiences.
2. Divide the participants into teams of 2 or 3 each. Either assign a Conflict situation to each team, or ask each team to choose one on which they will focus for this activity. All the teams can work on the same situation, each team can work on a different situation, or some groups of teams can work on a certain situation while others work on different situations.
3. Instruct the teams to do two things:
  - 1) Identify what the people involved in the assigned Conflict situation want. Encourage the participants to consider the possibility that the people involved may have underlying goals that are less obvious.
  - 2) Brainstorm ways the people involved in the assigned situation might resolve the Conflict by accomplishing all the goals.
4. After the participants have discussed their assigned situations, bring the participants back together to share the results of their discussions.

### **Summary and Conclusion: 5 minutes**

1. Ask: How did we define Conflict? (Answer: Conflict is when I think that what you want interferes with what I want.)
2. Say: Conflict happens in all relationships. Conflict isn't bad or good. It just is. It's how we deal with it that determines whether it makes relationships weaker or stronger.
3. Ask: What are the four ways we've talked about that people deal with Conflict? (Answer: Competition, Win/Lose; Concession, Lose/Win; Compromise, Lose-Win/Lose-Win; Collaboration, Win/Win)
4. Emphasize: Competition, Concession, and Compromise all come from a Competition mind-set.
5. Close: Collaboration is possible when we do the work to identify goals and find ways to accomplish them. This isn't always easy to do. But, we get better at it with practice.



# How Did We Get Here?

**Overview** Conflict is a normal part of relationships. It is not a sign of failure. It does represent an opportunity to build a stronger relationship by working to build peace.

**Objectives** Participants will:

- acknowledge that conflict is a normal experience in relationships.
- recognize conflict as an opportunity to improve a relationship and to build stronger peace.
- recognize sources of conflict.

**Materials** Sources of Conflict handout, Source cards

**Plan** Review expressions of conflict in popular culture.

- Discuss the frequency and opportunity of conflict.
- Discuss sources of conflict.
- Apply understanding of sources of conflict to personal situations.
- Discuss how understanding of conflict can help in dealing with it.

## Introduction to the Topic: 5 minutes

1. Say: Maybe you've heard this song from the soundtrack of the movie, "Twilight".

"Decode"

How can I decide what's right? When you're clouding up my mind  
I can't win your losing fight, all the time  
How can I ever own what's mine? When you're always taking sides  
But you won't take away my pride, no, not this time, not this time

How did we get here? Well, I used to know you so well  
How did we get here? Well, I think I know

The truth is hiding in your eyes, and it's hanging on your tongue  
Just boiling in my blood  
But you think that I can't see what kind of man that you are  
If you're a man at all  
Well, I will figure this one out on my own, on my own

How did we get here? Well, I used to know you so well  
How did we get here? Well, I think I know

Do you see what we've done?



We've gone and made such fools of ourselves  
Do you see what we've done?  
We've gone and made such fools of ourselves

How did we get here? Well, I used to know you so well  
How did we get here? Well, I used to know you so well

I think I know, I think I know

Ooh, there is something I see in you  
It might kill me; I want it to be true

Words and music by Hayley Williams, Josh Farro, and Taylor York  
Recorded and released in 2008  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYInqKsHOsc>

2. Continue: Has something like this ever happened in one of your relationships: you thought you knew the person and understood the relationship, and then everything changed, and it left you confused and unbalanced?
3. Elaborate: Maybe you know what it's like for things to go wrong in a relationship, and you know you want to try to get things right again, and you know that you can't get back to the way things were unless you can figure out how you got to where you are now.
4. Point out: If you've ever felt like this, or you're feeling like this now, then you already know that conflict is a normal part of relationships, a natural part of life. But conflict is not automatically a sign of failure. It does mean that there's something that needs attention. And it means that there is an opportunity to build a stronger relationship by working together to resolve the conflict. This is one of the best things we do to build peace.

### **Explanation: 15 minutes**

1. Explain: So, if you're involved in a conflict, or you want to help someone who's involved in a conflict, one of the first things you can do is begin to figure out how the relationship got to that place.
2. Ask: What are some of the possibilities? Where do conflicts come from?
3. Record and post responses as they are shared.
4. Summarize: What we're saying is that conflicts come from when people want the same thing and when they don't want the same thing. [Categorize the shared responses by these two possibilities.] Maybe that's why conflict is so common.





5. Illustrate:
  - When you and I both want the same spot on the stairs, we run into each other, and there's conflict.
  - When you just want to hang out and I want to go to the movie, we go in different directions, and there's conflict.
6. Explain: We sometimes call what we want our "goals". And, what we're saying is that when we think our goals compete against each other because we both want the same thing and there's not enough for both of us, or we think our goals interfere with each other because we want different things and if one of us gets what she or he wants it means the other one won't, there's conflict.
7. Point out: Notice that conflict happens when we think our goals compete with each other. The perception produces the conflict.
8. Elaborate: Whether or not the goals "really" compete with each other is irrelevant. In fact, one of the ways to work with conflict to build peace is by helping people become aware that their differences can actually work together rather than work against each other.
9. Continue: Of course, a perception that goals are incompatible only happens with people with whom we're involved in some kind of relationship, people with whom we're connected in some way.
10. Ask: Can you think of a conflict that could happen between two people who aren't connected to each other in any way?
11. Emphasize: If there's no connection, there's no conflict. If what happens to you affects me, and/or what happens to me affects you, we're connected. (You may need to review some of their suggested situations to convince participants of the truth of this fact.)

**Activity: 30 minutes**

1. Distribute Sources of Conflict handout.
2. State: Our goals, what we want, can be categorized into four groups: Relationship, Resources, Values, and Power.
3. Review handout with participants.
4. Continue: Let's take a few minutes to think about how this actually happens in real life.
5. Divide the participants into groups of 3 or 4 each, instruct each group to stand around a table, and give each group a stack of blank index cards.



6. Request: Think, now, about what people have conflicts about. You might think about people in your family, in your school, in your communities, in the US, and in the world. Think of at least three things people have conflicts about, and write them on the index cards, one thing on each card. I want each person in the group to complete at least 3 cards.
7. Monitor activity of participants and proceed when each one has completed 3 cards.
8. Instruct: When everyone in your group has completed 3 cards each, take turns sharing what you wrote on each card with the others in your group. As you read each card, place it on the table. Group the cards with similar ideas in columns, placing those that are different from each other in different columns. When it's your turn, add your cards to the columns that already are on the table.
9. Give a set of 4 "Sources of Conflict" cards to each group.
10. Continue instruction: Put these cards on the table in a row, creating columns, with one of the cards at the top of each column. Now, look again at the "Sources of Conflict" handout. I want each participant to take 3 of the index cards on your group's table and place them in the columns under the Sources of Conflict cards they relate to. You don't have to categorize the 3 cards you wrote during this part of the activity.
11. State: As you place each index card in its column, explain why you are putting the card in that location.
12. After all the index cards are placed in columns, proceed.
13. Instruct: Now each one of you, one at a time, needs to take one of the index cards and place it in a different column, and explain why you want to move it.
14. When this part of the activity is finished, proceed.
15. Direct: Remain in your groups at your tables, and give me your attention.

### **Discussion: 15 minutes**

1. Lead discussion of the following two questions:
  - Was there any disagreement in your group about where the index cards should be placed?
  - Is it possible for a conflict to come from more than one source?
2. Gather the participants around one of the tables.
3. Choose one of the conflicts described on an index card, and talk about how each of the four sources could be part of creating that conflict.



### 9:15 Conclusion: 5 minutes

1. Conclude: Dealing with conflict can be challenging and sometimes it may appear that there is no solution.
2. Identifying the different sources, and the goals that are being frustrated, divides the conflict into smaller parts, which can make it easier to resolve as you deal with each part, one at a time.
3. When you are working to make peace by resolving conflict, it's often a good idea to tackle the easiest issues first. The early success in resolving the easier issues builds confidence and hope for tackling the more difficult issues.

### Notes to Leader

Instead of using the lyrics to “Decode” to introduce the topic, other expressions of Conflict in popular culture are available. For example, following are the lyrics to Young Jeezy’s song, “Trapped”, released Dec 15 2011, that describe him trying to figure out how life got so bad:

Even though we had a will, we ain't have a way, (way)  
They just told us how to live, we ain't have a say, (say)  
All I know is the other side got some cuffs for ya, (for ya)  
Fresh khaki suit, n\* that's enough for ya, (yeah)  
Got ya spendin' all ya money on lawyer fees, (fees)  
Judge throwin' numbers at you like he speakin' Japanese, (oo-wahh)  
All cause a n\* out here playin' bakery, (bakery)  
I'm out here tryna get this bread, somebody pray for me, (haha)  
I'm always on the block so I rarely go to church, (church)  
Didn't wanna hear it from the preacher, cause the truth hurts  
And right now I'm so high, I should be scared of heights, (heights)  
A Town n\* I be on that kryptonite, (yeah)  
I got deadlines n\* no bedtime, (time)  
The only thing promised to ya is some fed time, (time)  
And how did I get here in the first place

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBK\\_esXygAg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBK_esXygAg)

Another example are the lyrics to “You be Tails, I’ll be Sonic”, by A Day to Remember:

I still wish you the best of luck, baby  
And don't go thinking this was a waste of time  
I couldn't forget you if I tried

You killed what was left of the good in me



I'm tired so let me be broken  
Look down at the mess that's in front of me  
No other words need be spoken  
And I've got nobody else to blame though I tried  
Kept all of our past mistakes held inside  
I'll live with regret for my whole life

All the things you love are all the things I hate  
How did we get here in the first place?

from "What Separates Me from You", released November, 2010  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOM4WWCh7GQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOM4WWCh7GQ)

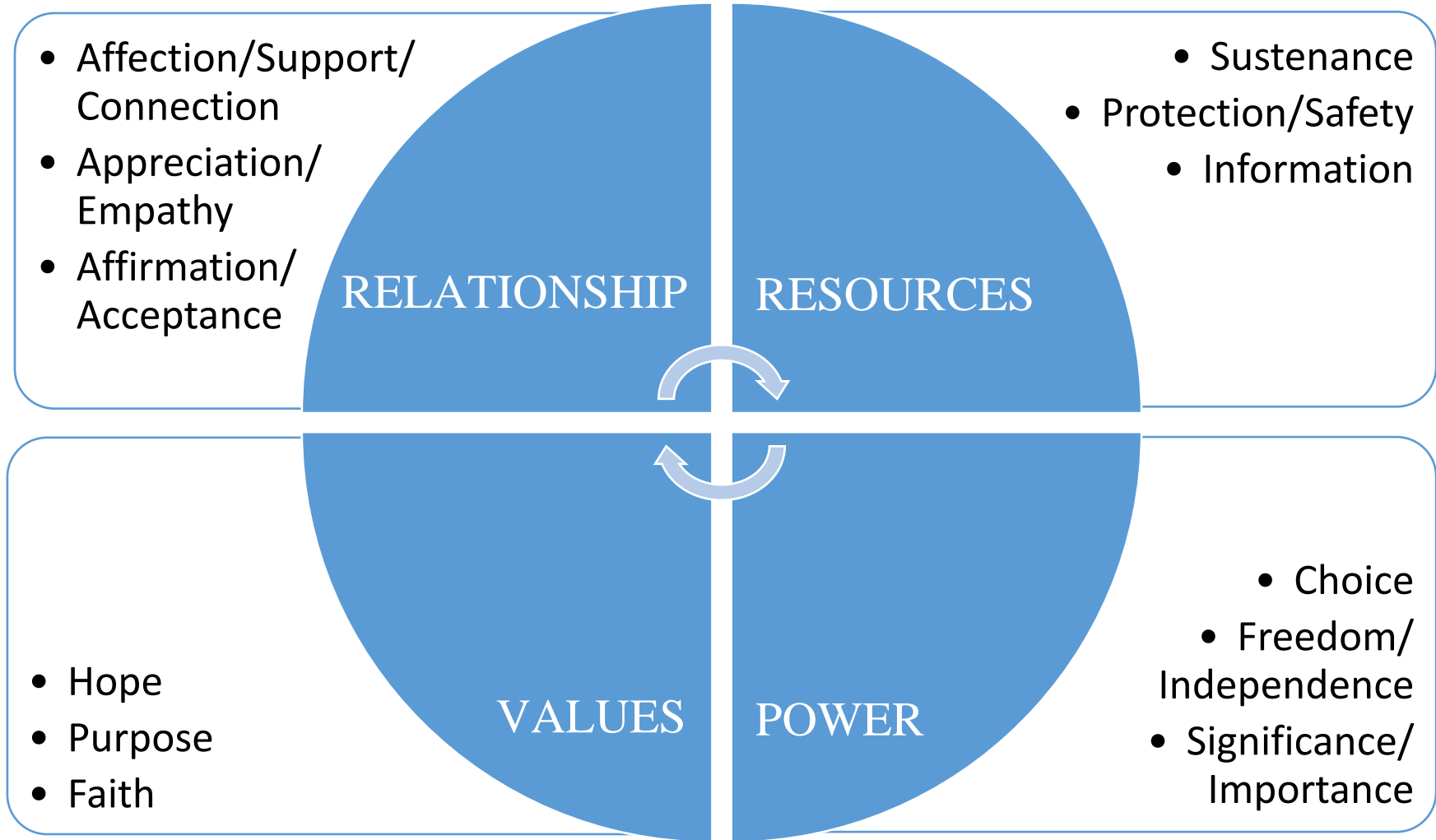
Many schools and other youth-serving organizations have established Peer Conflict Mediation programs in which youth are trained and supervised for mediating conflicts between other youth. One source of materials, training, and support for establishing Peer Conflict Mediation programs is the Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center. This organization can be contacted at [www.apadrc.org](http://www.apadrc.org) and 213.250.8190. They provide useful materials that can be accessed at [www.PeerMediators.org](http://www.PeerMediators.org).

based on material developed and distributed by Western Justice Center; and on the work of Joyce L. Hocker and William L. Wilmot: *Interpersonal Conflict*



# SOURCES OF CONFLICT

When goals for Relationship, Resources, Values, or Power compete or interfere with each other, there may be conflict.





**RELATIONSHIP**

Affection/Support/Connection  
Appreciation/Empathy  
Affirmation/Acceptance

**RESOURCES**

Sustenance  
Protection/Safety  
Information

**VALUES**

Hope  
Purpose  
Faith

**POWER**

Choice  
Freedom/Independence  
Significance/Importance

**RELATIONSHIP**

Affection/Support/Connection  
Appreciation/Empathy  
Affirmation/Acceptance

**RESOURCES**

Sustenance  
Protection/Safety  
Information

**VALUES**

Hope  
Purpose  
Faith

**POWER**

Choice  
Freedom/Independence  
Significance/Importance

