

Bringing Animal Issues Into the Classroom

Conflict Resolution Activity Sheet

Have you ever heard the saying “You can’t judge a book by its cover”? Do you know what that means? It means that you can’t tell what kind of character people have just by looking at them. People dress differently, speak other languages, and have many different customs throughout the world—even in our own country—but we all experience feelings such as happiness, fear, hunger, and pain in the same way. Although nonhuman animals—from a blue whale to a tiny mouse—may look entirely different from us, they, too, have the ability to experience feelings.



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Getting to Know Your Neighbors: Humans and Other Animals

Pair up with a classmate. You may need to ask your partner questions in order to complete the following activity.

1. List some things about your partner that make him or her unique (such as hairstyle, clothing style, athletic ability, birthplace, etc.):

2. List some things about yourself that you have in common with with your partner (such as playing on the same sports team, living in the same neighborhood, having a large family, etc.):

3. List some needs that you and your partner share with nonhuman animals (such as the need for shelter, etc.):

4. List some feelings that you and your partner share with nonhuman animals (such as fear, happiness, the desire to be with friends and family, etc.)—think about animals familiar to you, such as dogs and cats in your family, as well as those less familiar, such as elephants, chimpanzees, and cows:

5. Discuss your lists with the class. Humans are different from other animals in many ways, but if you think about needs and feelings, you'll find that we are very much alike in many ways. Evaluate the things you have in common both with your partner and with other animals. How does this information change the way you think and/or feel about other animals?



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6. Respond to the following questions independently. Arun Gandhi—a grandson of Mohandas K. Gandhi, who led the nonviolent campaign to liberate India from British rule—was interviewed on the topic of conflict resolution. He said, “We have to discover where conflicts start, get to the root of them, and show how to avoid conflict.” Why do you think people sometimes hurt each other or animals? What are some of the reasons for our conflicts with each other? Take a few moments to write your answers to these questions below:

7. Arun Gandhi also said, “I found from Grandfather’s writings and my father’s experiences that ideal relationships must be built on the four principles of respect, understanding, acceptance, and appreciation. We have to respect ourselves, each other, and our connection with all of creation.” How do you think these principles can help us in our relationships with our friends? Take a few moments to write your answer below:

8. Gary Kowalski, a minister, wrote, “No longer can we discount the lives of sensitive and intelligent creatures merely because they assume non-human form.” What do you think he meant by this? Write your answer below:
