Conflict is perceived as what appears nightly on the TV. People do not realize that conflict can be either socially useful (functional) or harmful (dysfunctional).

Through systematic study conflict might be demystified. Educational programs can delineate methods that aid the functional resolution of conflict. We need to:

—accept conflict as a natural and normal aspect of life;
—realize that conflict can be avoided, but at the risk of ignoring underlying tensions and frustrations;
—understand that, while violence may have served certain functions throughout history, modern weaponry and global interdependence make resorting to violence increasingly dysfunctional;
—understand that violence can lead to social change, but that this does not make it the best way or the only way;
—recognize that our basic social institutions while far from perfect, offer countless ways of expressing and resolving conflicts.

Education may provide a vehicle for individuals to realize that conflict is related to, but not synonymous with violence and aggression; in fact, most human conflicts are resolved without violence.

REFERENCES

1. Daniel Dulany, “Considerations upon the Rights of the British Colonists to the Privileges of British Subjects” (New York, 1766) p. 47.
4. According to a special KPIX-TV San Francisco May 10–12, 1975 report, the average child witnesses an estimated 18,000 TV deaths a year.

The following is a suggested list of starter books containing specific exercises or information related to the development of a better understanding of conflict resolution.

Conflict and Communication, by John Burton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) details an experiment carried out between two warring states (Indonesia and Malaysia) using controlled communication as one technique for dispute settlement.