

Conflict and Compromise

Interrupted Instruments

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Time Needed: 20-30 minutes

Arts Focus: Music

Age Range: 4-8

Mini-Lesson Description:

In this lesson, learners will use instruments (or everyday objects that make interesting sounds) to musically act out different ways we might respond to having a favorite activity interrupted. Through play and music, this activity supports communicating with others with kindness.

Key Concepts:

Playing an instrument; Expressing feelings; Inventing sounds; Interruptions; Listening; Reflecting.

Materials Needed/Prep:

- An instrument (e.g., shaker, drum, keyboard, ukulele, etc.) for each person
- *Or* playable everyday objects (e.g., bucket and spoon, water glass and pencil, sturdy book you can thump, etc.) for each person

Step-by-Step:

1. Share this challenge: How many sounds can your instrument make, and how many ways can you play it? Give one minute for the learner(s) to individually explore the “voices” of their instruments.
2. Imagine together that the instruments are like characters. For each instrument, share a sound it would make if it were doing something it really loved and was feeling happy.
3. Continue imagining the instruments as characters and have the learner(s) demonstrate how their instruments would sound if they were showing two new feelings: angry and sad.
4. Help the learner(s) describe some of the changes they made to show their instrument’s emotions (e.g., playing faster or slower, louder or softer, smooth or rough, high or low, lots of long notes or quick moving ones, etc.)
5. Imagine a tiny story using the instruments: the learner(s) instrument is playing and feeling happy when all of a sudden, it’s interrupted by your instrument.
6. Ask the learner(s) to think of how their instrument might respond to being interrupted. How would it feel—angry, sad, or maybe a different emotion? How would that sound?
7. Use the instruments to act out a musical story with different emotional responses: the learner(s) instrument is happy, your instrument interrupts, their instrument responds with a new feeling.
8. Propose an additional way of responding to an instrument interruption: pause, listen, join back in. Challenge the learner(s) to find a way to join back in that feels like it fits together with what they noticed during the pause and listen (e.g., the instrument interruption was really loud and shaky, so the learner’s instrument could create a rhythm with a shaky sound, too, etc.)
9. Act out the musical interruption story with the pause, listen, join back in response.
10. Help the learner(s) describe their instrument’s sound in this final response, and how it was similar or different to how they played for happy, angry, or sad. If it sounds new and different enough, give this way of playing its own emotion name!

Variations and Next Steps:

- Learners unable to use instruments can “coach” an adult with an instrument on how to show different emotions musically.
- The response of pause, listen, join back in can be modeled first by the adult with their instrument before asking the learner(s) to try it on their own. Learners can branch out from the three suggested emotions into ones that are authentic to their own experiences (e.g., excited, shy, confused, etc.).

Watch a video of this Creative Start Mini-Lesson and find more at: <https://www.arts.wa.gov/creative-start/>