Activity: The Arm Game

Materials needed: a table and two chairs at the front of the room.

- Now we are going to demonstrate a situation in which two people seem to want different things. I am going to need a volunteer. (Invite your volunteer to the front of the room.)

- Great, you and my co-coach will play the game, and I will give instructions. (One coach plays the game with the volunteer.)

- (To the role-playing coach and girl volunteer): OK, hold onto each other’s hands, with your elbows on the table.
  (The coach playing the game helps the volunteer girl get into position.)

- You earn one point whenever the other person’s hand touches the table. The goal is to get as many points as possible for yourself. You must keep holding your partner’s hand and keep your elbows on the table. Ready?

- (Coach who is holding hands with the girl says to the girl): OK, we have to hold hands like this, and then try to get points. Let’s go. (Fight each other very hard for a minute, get one or two points.)

- (Coach playing teacher says): Okay, stop for a minute. How many points did each of you/us earn? (Wait for their answers.) That is not very many points! Please start over and try again. The goal is to get as many points as possible for yourself. I think you can each earn many more points if you think about the problem a little differently.

- (This time, the coach who is holding hands with the girl should whisper to the other girl and explain to her that they can take turns putting their hands down, then demonstrate going back and forth.) OK, let’s try it. Remember to count your points! (Coach and girl demonstrate until the point has been made, probably just a minute.)

- (Coach playing teacher says): How many points did you each of you earn this time? (Girl coach and volunteer girl report their own points).

(Ask the volunteer to go back to her seat.)

(After the girl has gone back to her seat, ask her: )

- What did you notice about that game?
(Other prompts could be: What did you learn from the game? Or, How could you make the most points?)

✓ It was hard trying to beat the coach
✓ I could earn more points when I also helped the coach earn points

(Ask the rest of the girls:)

➢ What did all of you think of the game? (Let the girls share their reactions.)

➢ This may seem like a somewhat silly example, but we wanted to show you that negotiation is not a competition.

➢ Even though you are trying to get something for yourself—in this case, points—you are not trying to beat the other person. Negotiation is working with another person to solve a problem together, so you can each get what you want.

➢ How do you think the Arm Game would work if you were trying to beat someone stronger than you? (Let the girls respond.)

✓ I would probably lose
✓ The stronger person would win

➢ So the stronger person would probably get more points if you were both trying to beat each other. How would the stronger person do if you were working together?

(Keep taking answers until the students suggest something like the following)

✓ The stronger person would get more points working together, because we could help each other get points more quickly.

➢ This is especially important to remember when you need to negotiate with someone who has more power than you, like a parent or a teacher. If you try to win against them, you probably will lose, because they are stronger.

➢ Sometimes that person might seem like he or she is against you at first, so you might try to compete with him or her. But we are going to teach you ways to get that person to work together with you so you can both get what you want.

➢ The Arm Game gives us lessons for negotiation:

1. Negotiation is not a competition. Working together with the person you are negotiating with can sometimes help both people to get more.

2. Sometimes it seems like we need to fight, but really there is a way for us both to get what we want.
3. At the same time, we need to be sure we don’t try to help the other person so much that we get taken advantage of. What would happen if you were playing the arm game, and you let the other person “win” but they never let you “win?”

✓ The other person would make a lot of points and I would make none

(If the students don’t make this point, you should do so.)

4. Our goal in negotiating is to work with another person so you can get what you want by also helping the other person get what they want.

**Takeaway:** (have students repeat after you)

- Negotiation is a way of working together with another person so that you can get what you want by also helping the other person to get what they want.