



Conflict Reduction and Resolution

Adults are instrumental in creating environments that reduce conflict and in teaching children skills for resolving conflict. Below are helpful ideas for parents and professionals to use across a variety of environments.

- 1. Create an Environment that Reduces Conflicts** - Rules and routines avoid many conflicts because they set expectations for children. There will always be toys and activities that allow only one or two children to participate at a time. By using rules and routines to create a system that allows children to share resources, you reduce conflicts. For example, allow children to use the computer for 10 minutes when it is their turn on the schedule or let Bobby pick the family television show every other night.
- 2. Take Time to Calm Down** - Children need to learn to resolve some conflicts on their own. When children have different opinions or are upset, a break from the situation may be necessary. Teach children to remove themselves from the situation and discuss things when both parties are calm.
- 3. Use 'I' in Conversations** - Teach children to use phrases that help other children understand their point of view rather than blaming the other person. Often children do not realize why another child is upset or what they could do to make the situation better. For example, if a child is pushed by another child encourage them to use phrases like, "I was sad when you pushed me" or "I fell into the wall and I have a bump." These phrases explain what happened and why it was upsetting to the child better than phrases like, "You hurt me." When children use "I" phrases they talk about how they feel which is hard for another child to dispute.
- 4. Take the Time to Problem Solve** - If children have a difficult conflict to resolve, give them examples of solutions or help them think of alternatives. For example, if two children argue about who gets to use the water fountain first, suggest letting one of them go first for the water fountain and the other one be the line leader (or go first next time for the water fountain). Younger children may need examples of alternatives while older children may be able to create their own alternatives. Explain to children that compromise involves give and take and learning to find creative alternatives that satisfy both people.
- 5. Put Things in Writing** – Whether making a list of possible solutions, creating a schedule of chores, or outlining rules for a game, seeing expectations on paper reminds children and adults how to approach different situations. Parents and children both can easily forget whose turn it is for chores and other household activities. An easy to read schedule in a convenient location can reduce disputes about many roles and routines. If there is a dispute, work with the children to brainstorm a list of possible resolutions. Then choose the best solution for all parties. This is a calming activity that teaches children problem solving and compromise.
- 6. Teach Children to Recognize When to Seek an Adult's Help** - Often children are unable to resolve conflicts on their own and an adult must be a mediator. Let children know an adult should be informed immediately when safety is a concern, for example when a child is being bullied. Children also should know they need an adult when they are unable to settle a reoccurring dispute. Simple ground rules or changes to the environment imposed by an adult often can save children from stressful and unproductive attempts at resolving a conflict. For example, if children repeatedly argue over a board game's rules, an adult can post the 'house' rules or the game's instructions.

To receive a **free customizable children's book** on waiting, visit our website: