

Teaching Your Child Good Conflict Skills

Conflict is a part of life, from our early days through adulthood. It exists in every relationship because of differences, and knowing healthy ways to handle conflict is essential to productively navigating relationships at school, home, with peers and later in the workplace. This tip sheet discusses some ways to teach your child good resolution skills as he or she encounters conflict in his or her life.

Role Model. Role Model. Role Model. Children learn much behavior by observing those closest to them. Simply put, use behavior you want to see in your child.

Timing is everything. Working with your child on a conflict when emotions are heated will likely not result in productive results. If possible, allow time for “cooling off” before offering any guidance.

Use clarifying questions to understand the problem.

Example: *Are you saying that you want _____?*

Coach emotional intelligence. Asking questions about your child’s feelings during and after a conflict helps them to express and handle emotions in future conflict. Importantly in conflict, helping them think about the needs/feelings of everyone involved will help them see another point of view and develop empathy.

Example: *How do you feel right now? How do you think he feels?*

Teach how to “use your words”. Help your child to verbalize his or her thoughts by calmly offering them words to use in your own conflicts with him or her.

Example: *“You may have a turn after I’m done spinning.” “I don’t like it when you take my toy without asking.”*

Use “I” Statements. It is important to show that you can express your own needs instead of attacking or judging other people.

Example: *“I feel frustrated because I have asked three times for help picking toys up, but the toys are still on the floor. Please come in with me now to help put toys away.”*

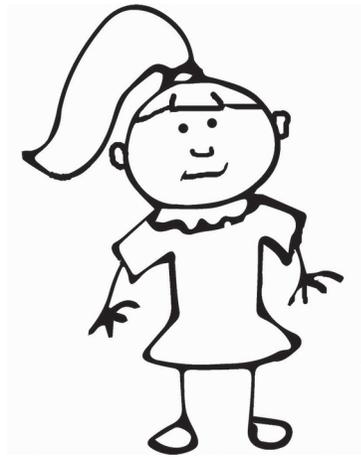
Promote Solution-Finding. Brainstorm solutions and give your child a voice in decision making. Ask open-ended questions to promote creative thinking about ways to address the conflict.

Example: *What could have happened differently? What are some other ways to fix this problem? Good, what else? What would that look like?*

Teaching Your Child Good Conflict Skills *(continued)*

What does an Orange have to do with Conflict Resolution?

A mom saw her two children fighting over an orange. They were pushing and shoving each other and trying to grab the orange from the other's hands. They were upset and yelling:

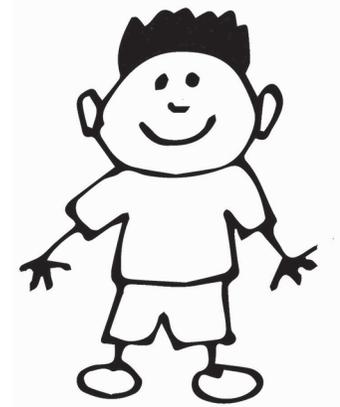


"It's mine!"

"You can't have it!"

"I want it!"

"But I saw it first!"



To address the issue, the mom took the orange from the children, cut it in half and gave one piece to each child. For the moment things were calm, but then she noticed one child peeling off the rind and eating the fruit while the other peeled the rind and threw away the fruit. She continued to watch as this child then brought out a cook book and cut the rind into pieces for a recipe she was using. It was at this point that the mom realized that she could have done things differently and created a better outcome.

What could this mom have done to teach her children conflict resolution skills in this situation? What would it have looked like?

Mom might have taken the orange and provided some time for the children to cool down. Then she might have asked the question, "why do each of you want the orange?". This would have allowed an opportunity for the children to clarify what they wanted or needed the orange for. Though this is a simple story, it can be helpful to think about the orange when talking about conflict resolution and "win-win" solutions.

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