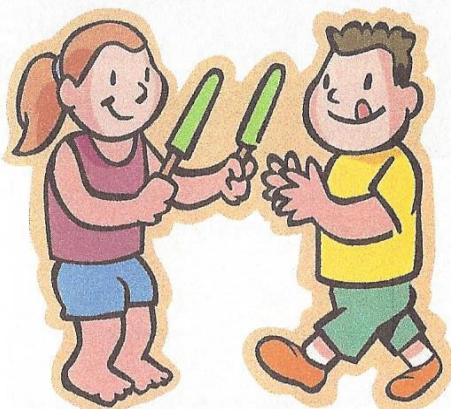


How to encourage your child to solve their own problems and resolve conflicts



"It is our belief that children can learn to resolve conflicts, communicate their needs, listen to other person's points of view, and celebrate rather than fear differences among people. As adults these children will create a more peaceful and just society."

(Information brochure, Franklin Mediation Services, Greenfield, MA 1991).

Conflicts escalate when

'You' statements are used.

"You are so messy, you can't have the paints out again".

Intense body language is shown.

Standing over a child, pointing, wagging a finger....

You make accusations or blame children.

"You were hitting Ben, you're a naughty boy".

You focus on the past.

"You're running indoors again. Last week you broke my vase".

You focus on the person.

"You're so mean!"

You focus on your own position.

"I'm very busy, and need to go shopping, put your toys away"

You make assumptions.

"You always snatch her toys, you've done it again"

Conflicts are avoided when

You use "I" statements.

"I get so discouraged when I see the table all messy, how can we clean the paint up?"

You use gentle body language.

Get down to child's level, eye contact, reassuring touch.

You are specific.

"Hitting hurts, it's not okay to hit Ben. Hit the cushion if it helps or use words".

You focus on present and future.

"Running indoors is not a good idea, now we can decide to stop running, or run outside".

You concentrate on the problem.

"Ben wants to play with the cars too. What can we do?"

You focus on the child's needs.

"You really want to carry on playing. Shall we leave the toys out so you can carry on when we get home?"

You listen carefully to both sides.

"You are very angry Ben, and Laura, you look upset. Ben, tell me what made you angry, and then Laura, you can tell

The 6 point plan to solving problems and resolving conflicts

1. Approach calmly and stop any aggressive behaviour.
2. Acknowledge feelings.
3. Gather information.
4. Restate the problem.
5. Ask for solutions and choose one together. Or if your child is younger suggest 2 solutions for the child to choose one.
6. Be prepared to give follow-up support.

(1988 High/Scope Educational Research Foundation)

References
 High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (2006) www.highscope.org
 Department for Education and Skills (2005) www.dfes.gov.uk/
 Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., Xiang, S., Barnett, W.W., Bellfield, C.R., and Nores, M. (2005) *Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through 40*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
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 Further reading
 Kohn, A. (2005) *Unconditional Parenting*, New York, Atria Books.

Why is it important to encourage my child to solve their own problems and conflicts?

Research has demonstrated that when children receive high quality early care and education as adults they are more likely to have higher earnings, be employed, educated to a high level and commit fewer crimes (Schweinhart et al, 2005).

It has been said that 90% of behavioural problems come from children wanting adults to listen to them. The number one request from suicidal teenagers was also for adults to listen to them (Newton and Wilson, 2006).

Some fundamental principles which underpin high quality care and early education

1. The need for children to form effective and authentic relationships with adults and their peers which are based on trust and mutual respect.
2. Children deepen their understanding by playing, talking, observing, planning, questioning, experimenting, testing, repeating, reflecting and responding to adults and to each other.
3. Learning for young children is a rewarding and enjoyable experience in which they explore, repeat, revise and consolidate their developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes.

What can I do as a parent to help?

Develop your relationship with your child by

1. Helping your child to understand their feelings.
2. Show you are listening by stopping what you are doing and looking at them.
3. Pay attention and acknowledge what they say by using simple words "oh, I see".
4. Name the feeling that your child is demonstrating i.e. anger, sadness "that sounds frustrating".
Accept feelings whilst limiting undesirable actions "I can see how angry you are with James. Tell him what you think with words, not fists".
5. Engage your child's co-operation in a task. This is more effective when a playful voice is used.
Try describing the problem "I see water all over the floor".
Give information "It's better to clear up the water before somebody slips on it".
Describe what you feel "I don't like to see water all over the floor."
6. Instead of admiring your child's painting with a half-hearted 'lovely'. Try describing what you see as this encourages conversation. "I see a boat bobbing up and down on the water" and/or describe what it makes you feel "It makes me want to go on holiday".
7. Instead of saying "well done" for tidying away his toys, sum up the child's good behaviour with a word "You've put all your toys away in their boxes, that's what I call ORGANISATION."
8. Try not to criticise or nag your child. Label what needs to be done "You've put all the play dough and equipment away, all you need to do now is wipe the table".
9. When there is a conflict, help resolve it by re-framing your child's statement as this

helps you to communicate more positively the feelings and needs of your child i.e. the child says "I want that car now, give it to me". Re-frame by saying "Joe, you seem upset because Rory won't give you the car he's playing with and you want to play with it now!"

10. Use 'I' statements. These focus on actions, situations and feelings, rather than people. They avoid blaming, and they state needs and reasons. So, instead of saying "You are hitting and being horrible". Try, "I get upset when I see you hitting. Hitting hurts people. You may hit either the punching bag or the pillow, but not people."

Problem prevention strategies

Provide adequate stimulation for your child, through toys, craft and physical activities and outings.

Establish a consistent and balanced routine.

Support your child's choice and interests.

Plan for outings ie. Leave enough time, have healthy snacks and toys available.

Keep waiting periods short.

Accept behavioural differences.

Respect and acknowledge your child's ideas and feelings.

Set reasonable limits and expectations.