



Conflict Resolution Skills

Building the Skills That Can Turn Conflicts into Opportunities

Conflict is a normal part of healthy relationships. After all, two people can't be expected to agree on everything at all times. Learning how to deal with conflict – rather than avoiding it – is crucial. When conflict is mismanaged, it harms the relationship, but when handled in a respectful, positive way, conflict provides an opportunity for growth, ultimately strengthening the bond between two people. By learning these skills for conflict resolution, you can keep your personal and professional relationships strong and growing.

Conflict 101

- **A conflict is more than just a disagreement.** It is a situation in which one or both parties perceive a threat (whether or not the threat is real).
- **Conflicts continue to fester when ignored.** Because conflicts involve perceived threats to our well-being and survival, they stay with us until we face and resolve them.
- **We respond to conflicts based on our perceptions** of the situation, not necessarily to an objective review of the facts. Our perceptions are influenced by our life experiences, culture, values, and beliefs.
- **Conflicts trigger strong emotions.** If you aren't comfortable with your emotions or able to manage them in times of stress, you won't be able to resolve conflict successfully.
- **Conflicts are an opportunity for growth.** When you're able to resolve conflict in a relationship, it builds trust. You can feel secure, knowing your relationship can survive challenges and disagreements.



Healthy and unhealthy ways of managing and resolving conflict

Unhealthy responses to conflict:

An inability to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person

Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions

The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment

An inability to compromise or see the other person's side

The fear and avoidance of conflict; the expectation of bad outcomes

Healthy responses to conflict

The capacity to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person

Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reactions

A readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentments or anger

The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing

A belief that facing conflict head is the best thing for both sides

How about in Class???

Teach Conflict Resolution Skills

Why should I do it:

- Many students lack basic skills necessary for solving and resolving daily conflicts with other students, adults, authority figures, etc
- Enables and empowers students to be more independent and highly functioning
- Reduces teacher's time "putting out fires"
- Increases instructional time
- Promotes maturity
- Improves self confidence
- Reduces tattling, bickering, and disruptions

When should I do it:

- Conflict resolution skills are good to teach all kids in your classes at the beginning of the year and then again once a month to keep the strategies fresh in kids minds
- When students bicker, argue, and fight a lot
- When you lose time due to student conflicts and disagreements
- When a student is being suspended a lot due to fighting and conflicts with students and adults
- When students have trouble compromising, taking turns, sharing, etc

How do I do it:

- There are many skills and strategies for teaching kids conflict resolution, many of which can be found and explored below under support & resources
- These lessons and ideas for teaching the skills, found below, can be done with individual students, a small group, or the whole class
- Conflict resolution skills should be taught and revisited on a regular basis and should include role playing to practice the skills
- When students fail to use the taught skills, have them reflect on how they could have handled the situation or conflict and role play it with them
- Model proper conflict resolution skills for your kids with any opportunity you get, and point out to the students afterward how you used the skills

References:

www.mindtools.com
www.stress.about.com
www.helpguide.org
www.healthteacher.com