

HELPING CHILDREN THROUGH CONFLICT

Conflict is an inevitable part of children's lives. Providing the amount and type of conflict is moderate and balanced, children can develop socially to be pro-active peacemakers. Different situations can give children opportunities to learn how to become better problem solvers and communicators. The following steps are helpful ideas in helping children work through conflict.

Step One: Prepare Children for Conflict Resolution

- Comfort children who are upset.
- Keep children in the conflict together with you.
- Check to make sure both children are ready to communicate.

Step Two: Help Children State Their Problems

- Assure both sides of the conflict that you are there for both of them.
- Help children understand that each one has a share in the problem.
- State any ground rules that will help the children in speaking to each other (i.e. no name calling or interrupting).
- Help each side share their story. (Make sure they include the details of the effects of the conflict on themselves and their motivations for why they did what they did.)
- Be sure children are listening to each other as they state their problems.

Step Three: Assist the Children in Brainstorming Solutions

- Encourage both sides of the conflict to suggest solutions to the problem. (Consideration must be given to the age of children involved – the younger the children, the more intervention and coaching is needed to help with this step.)
- Be proactive and directive with children when needed.
- Be a *cheerleader* for the children, encouraging them that they can find a solution. Stay positive.
- If the children are *hitting a wall* in their thought process, help them around it by making suggestions or taking a break.

Step Four: Monitor the Outcomes

- Make sure that both children feel comfortable with the solution.
- Check on children to assure that they follow through on the things they've agreed to.
- Keep an eye on future interactions between the specific children involved in the conflict.