



Conflict Summary

Why Conflict?

There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship and growing your child's skills to manage conflict provides a perfect opportunity.

Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- *"What gets you really upset or mad at a friend, a relative?"*
- *"What feelings do you experience?"* (Name the multiple feelings that occur.)
- *"How does your body feel when you're upset?"* (Name the ways that your child physically experiences being upset whether it's a red hot face or a racing heartbeat.)
- *"Have you hurt another person's feelings when you've argued? How did that feel?"*
- *"How might you have argued differently to express your needs but not harm the other person?"*

Discuss challenges. In Step 2, plan to teach what they can do instead.

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

Hang up a picture of a traffic light to teach constructive conflict management skills as a game. Role play and make it fun.

- Red Light - Stop and calm down.
 - Parent: Stand at one end of the room or yard and turn your back to the players. Have your children call out one common problem they face, and then they can start running toward you.
 - Flip around to face them and say, "Stop!" with your hand held out flat.
 - Now, ask everyone to breathe slowly, deeply to practice calming down.
- Yellow Light - Feel, communicate, and think.
 - Walk and move toward you in slow motion.
 - Feel. Children say the problem and how they feel about it. Parents can respond by rephrasing what their children said into an "I-message" such as, *"I feel frustrated when you take my school supplies because I need to use them."*
 - Communicate. Set a positive goal together such as, *"We want to make sure everyone has the school supplies needed at homework time."*
 - Think of lots of solutions. Make sure all players get to contribute an idea for solving the problem. Then, think of the outcomes or consequences of various choices. Ask, *"What might happen if we try....?"*

- Green Light - Go, try, and reflect.
 - Players can run toward you, tap you, and then pick a solution or idea most, if not all, liked. Go try it out.
 - Be sure to reflect on it later: *“How did it go? Would you change anything?”*

Tip If children struggle giving you a feeling word, then offer them options and ask which ones fit their true emotions. This helps expand their emotional vocabulary.

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills, Confidence, and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me…” statements like *“Show me you can work out your argument with your sister.”*
- Recognize effort: *“I noticed how you talked to your sister about how you were feeling and then worked with her on a way to come to an agreement - that’s excellent!”*
- Proactively remind: *“Remember how you talked to your sister yesterday? You can use that same strategy with your friend today.”*
- Actively reflect: *“How are you feeling about your free time at school?”* Offering a chance to talk about lunch and recess gives insight into your child’s social challenges.

Tip The best way to turnaround a misbehavior is by recognizing when and how your child makes good choices and acts positively in similar circumstances. Children need to learn what to do as well as what not to do.

Trap Don’t move on or nag. Children often need more time to perform tasks that challenge them even if we believe they are simple and don’t require much time. Be sure to wait long enough for your child to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they are able to do what you need them to do.

Step 4. **Support** Your Child’s Development and Success

- Ask key questions: *“Do you need a little help with how to talk with your sister?”*
- Reflect on outcomes: *“Seems like you fought with your sister and you two are not talking. What happened? Could you use the stop light game to help?”*
- Stay engaged: Ask yourself if you need to reteach or make changes.
- Engage in further practice. Role play or rehearse when needed.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair harm when needed.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes: *“I noticed how you talked to your sister about how you were feeling and then worked with her on a way to come to an agreement. That’s excellent!”*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Consider a hug when the routine is accomplished.

Tip Be specific. “Good job” seems not to carry much meaning. However, a specific compliment about a pointed behavior - *“You put your game away when you were finished. Love seeing that!”* - can promote more of the same.

Trap If you focus only on outcomes - *“You got out of the door on time”* - you miss the chance to influence the process. Better to say - *“You were able to brush teeth, make your bed, and come downstairs right on time.”*

Trap Avoid stickers, gifts, or other physical rewards for performance. These actually have a demotivating effect on children. When you remove the candy, for example, have they internalized the skills and also the sense of responsibility for performing them? There’s less of a chance if you’ve offered a “bribe.” Focus on your attention as the best reward.

Celebrate yourself for making it your parenting priority to work on cultivating the social and emotional skills that are most critical for your child’s success today and in their future!

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