



Conflict Summary

Why Conflict?

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

Tip These steps are done best when you and your child/teen are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and actively building a healthy parenting relationship will support these steps.

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

- *"What are some ways you can tell you are having a conflict with someone?"*
- *"What are common issues that cause conflict for you?"*
- *"How do you feel when you are having a conflict with someone?"* (Name the multiple feelings that occur.)
- *"What do you notice is going on in your body?"* (Name the ways that your child/teen physically experiences conflict whether it's a red, hot face or a racing heartbeat.)
- *"What are examples of negative impacts you have had on others that maybe you didn't mean?"*
- *"How might you have engaged differently so as to reduce the negative impact?"*

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

Teach constructive conflict management to your child/teen using the following model:

- Step 1 - Stop. This is the most important step and requires you to pause. Explain to your child/teen that when they are in a conflict, it is easy for their reactive/emotional part of the brain to take over. Unfortunately, this might result in saying unkind things and doing things they regret when functioning in this part of their brain. In order to get the thinking brain connected, it is important to pause. There are many ways to help take a pause including taking a breath, visualizing a stop sign, or simply imagining hitting a pause button.
- Step 2 - Check in. The second step has three parts to it and requires them to check in with their body, their feelings, and their needs. The following questions will help:
 - *"What sensations do you feel in your body?"* (heart racing, palms sweaty)
 - *"What are you feeling?"* (angry, hurt)
 - *"What do you need?"* (to be heard, to feel like my opinion matters)

- Step 3 - Communicate. Encourage your child/teen to then communicate the feeling, need, and request, which might sound like: *"I feel upset, and I need my opinion to matter. Could you listen to me first without interrupting?"*

Teach your child/teen to repair harm when they've caused it.

Tip If your child/teen struggles giving you a feeling word, then offer them options and ask which one or couple of them fit their true feeling. This helps expand their feelings vocabulary.

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

- Allow your child/teen the chance to take steps to meet their big challenges, taking responsibility for their own relationships -- even when you know you could do it faster and better.
- Be sure to consider how you can create the conditions to support their success (like offering coaching or guided open-ended questions to prompt thinking) so that your child/teen learns to become their own best problem solver.
- Follow through on repairing harm. When your child/teen has caused harm, they need your guidance, encouragement, and support in following through to repair it.
- Initially, practice may require more teaching, but avoid offering direct solutions, going directly to the other in the conflict, or solving a problem for your child/teen.

Step 4. **Support** Your Child's/Teen's Development and Success

- Use "Show me..." or "I'd love to see..." statements and ask them to demonstrate how they can work to resolve a problem. You could say, *"I'd love to see how you use some of the skills we just talked about in this argument with your sister."*
- Use "I notice..." statements like, *"I notice you were so clear about what your feelings were and what you needed from your sister. Great work asking her for exactly what you needed. That's excellent!"*
- On days with extra challenges, say, *"Yesterday, when you stopped and took a breath before reacting to your sister, you were able to stay in control and get the outcome you wanted. It may not feel like that today, but that ability is still in you."*
- Actively reflect on how your child/teen is feeling when approaching challenges. You can ask questions like:
 - *"How are things going with your friends? Who are you hanging out with during lunch?"* Offering a chance to talk about lunch and recess gives insight into your child's/teen's social challenges.
 - *"I can tell you are still upset about what happened with your friend. What do you think might be helpful?"*
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair harm when needed.

Trap Don't move on or nag. Children/Teens often need more time to deal with their feelings and approach someone with whom they are upset. Be sure to wait long enough for your child/teen to show you they can address their problems on their own with your support. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they are able to work through their problems.

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

- Notice even small successes. *“I noticed you paused and got really clear about what you needed. Yes! Excellent.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Include hugs, high fives, and fist bumps in your repertoire of ways to appreciate one another.

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