



*Civil Behavior
Getting to the Heart
of the Matter*

Heart-to-Heart

Making Civil Behavior an Accepted and Expected Part of Our Lives



Social Skills and Strategies for Conflict Resolution

Civil Behavior in Action

Peaceful conflict resolution is a skill that is taught in all grades.

Carpenter, Roosevelt, and Emerson Middle Schools use Peer Mediation programs in which students help their peers resolve conflicts, whether they occur in the classroom or on the playground.

Field, Franklin and Roosevelt Schools have Peaceful Playgrounds on their premises. Letters, numbers, maps, and strategy game boundaries are painted on the grounds and provide structured activities that are intended to reduce playground conflicts. Students and staff were taught a variety of games that can be played on the painted surfaces.

Field School uses its Communication Lab to teach students specific skills and strategies about how to solve problems peacefully.

- ... work cooperatively with others
- ... manage conflict peacefully
- ... use skills to solve problems and make decisions

"You're out!"

"No, I'm not!"

"You are, too!"

Words like these are often heard at recess, on ball fields, and in family rooms. So what's a parent to do?

The first step to help children develop social skills and conflict resolution strategies is to give them the opportunity to correctly identify a problem or conflict. Often times on the playing field, one child believes he is "safe" while the other believes he is "out". A conflict followed by a stalemate may arise because of their different perspectives.

Once a problem is identified, children are at a key decision-making juncture. Can they solve the problem alone or do they need help from grown ups? If they are able to solve the problem on their own, children will learn to consider alternatives and decide which choice will work best. They can develop a toolbox of problem solving skills, such as using "rock, paper, scissors" to resolve simple conflicts. Teaching children to use "I" messages, for example, "I am angry because you called me a name," helps to define their feelings with a specific statement, identify the conflict, and move forward to solve it.

Parents can model problem solving behaviors by demonstrating or discussing how they resolve conflicts in their workplace. A simple conversation about how a colleague didn't clean up the office lunchroom when it was his or her turn becomes a real life example of how to peacefully state a concern and work through an issue.

Conflicts don't always have to be big ones! Helping children to develop these skills will enable them to become healthy, productive learners and citizens.

MORE HELP FOR PARENTS

Conflict Resolution Tips for Parents

<http://www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,1-9549,00.html>

Resolving Conflict Constructively and Respectfully

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hygfact/5000/5218.html>

Battles, Hassles, Tantrums & Tears: Coping With Conflict and Creating a Peaceful Home
by Susan Beekman & Jeanne Holmes

Raising a Thinking Child
Raising a Thinking Pre-Teen

both books by Myrna Shure

Dear Advice Lady,

Today after school, my son and his friends were playing football at the field. He was upset because one of the other children was the "captain" again. What are some ways that I can help my child to resolve this ongoing conflict?

Concerned Parent

Dear Concerned Parent,

The good news is that your child asks for adult help when he is unable to resolve a conflict using his own ideas. Although it may seem the best answer is to intervene, it is often better to offer ideas and then allow the child to try them out on his own. You might suggest alternate ways to pick teams (by birthday, size or alphabetically), or to take turns being captain. Sometimes, you may need to counsel your child that a conflict can be best resolved by walking away, cooling off, and coming back later. The problem may not seem so insurmountable later or when cooler heads prevail.

The Advice Lady

Heart-to-Heart is brought to you by School District 64, Park Ridge-Niles, Illinois.