



Crucial conversations

Did you know that young people say one of their biggest daily challenges is conflicts with peers? Did you also know that a survey of hundreds of children found that problem-solving is a skill both bullies and frequently targeted children lack?

Arguments are a big part of why children can't get along and conflict is also a part of life. One of the most essential skills you can teach your children is how to handle problems that crop up with their friends and peers.

The key point is that not only must your children learn how to solve problems but to do so in a calm and confident way. A win-win is the best way to reduce arguments and restore friendships and relationships. The more children learn about resolving conflicts peacefully, the greater the likelihood they'll develop into self-sufficient and resourceful individuals who are able to deal with any issue on their own.

To manage a conflict situation your children will also need to know how to be assertive which requires being honest about their rights, wants and needs while still considering the rights, wants and needs of others. It is a healthy and respectful way of communicating.

Talk about these techniques with your children. They can help them to communicate clearly and effectively, prevent situations from escalating, and diffuse conflicts.



1
The first step is to stop, take a deep breath and let all the air out!

2
Think something positive – I can do this. I can deal with this. I can get help if I need it.

3
Value yourself and your rights. Understand that your rights, thoughts, feelings, needs and desires are just as important as the other person's, but they are not more important than anyone else's either. Believe you deserve to be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

4
Identify your needs and wants, and ask for your needs to be satisfied. Don't wait for the other person to work out what you need and want – you might be waiting forever. Make sure that you get your needs met without sacrificing the other person's needs in the process.

5
Receive feedback and compliments positively. Listen to what the other person has to say. Accept compliments graciously and accept feedback positively. If you don't agree with the feedback, or see it as criticism, try not to be defensive or angry.

6
Acknowledge that people are responsible for their own behaviour. Don't make the mistake of accepting responsibility for how people react to your assertive statements. You can only control yourself. As long as you are considerate of the other person's needs, you have the right to say or do what you want.

7
Express negative thoughts and feelings in a healthy and positive manner. It's okay to be angry, but always be respectful. Stand up for yourself and confront people who challenge you and/or your rights. Think before you speak and then say what's on your mind but do it in a way that protects the other person's feelings.

8
Learn to say 'no' when you need to. Know that you can't do everything or please everyone and learn to be okay with that.

9
Learn to use 'I' in your assertive responses. Statements that start with 'I' sound strong. They also tell the other person that you know what you want. Say things like – "I want..." "I need..." "I feel strongly about..." in a clear, calm and confident voice.

10
Walking away from the situation is okay. This will give you and the other person some time to calm down and think about the situation. But remember, you will need to go back and sort things out if you want to maintain your friendship or relationship.