

# HELPING CHILDREN THROUGH CONFLICT

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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. 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 for communication on the conflict.

## **Step Two: Help Children State Their Problems**

- Assure both sides of the conflict that you are there for both of them equally.
- Help children understand that both sides have 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 Brain Storming 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 and intervene when necessary.
- 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 processes, 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 negotiated 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.