

Conflict Resolution

Relevant Satellite Accreditation Standards

IV. Supporting Children's Development

C. The provider actively promotes social skills and positive relationships among children.

3. The provider uses naturally occurring events and conflicts to help children talk through their feelings, listen to each other, and learn a variety of ways to interact.



Amy & Kids Co Nature Playschool



Flourish Family Childcare



Scribbles and Giggles Family Child Care

The Basics

Conflicts are a natural part of life and rich learning opportunities for children to advocate for oneself while balancing the needs of others. Children may identify and begin to employ constructive resolution strategies only after they have developed **theory of mind**, or the understanding that others have separate emotional states, intentions, and thoughts. Furthermore, children with a deeper understanding of others' intentions are more willing to balance the needs and desires of others when resolving conflicts (Pieng & Okamoto, 2020).

Why is conflict a learning opportunity? Conflict resolution skills support the development of...

- **empathy** as children recognize and consider others' emotional states, needs, and desires (Kwasniewska-Pasza, 2021).
- **self-advocacy** as children use assertive language to communicate their emotional states, needs, and desires (Marici et al., 2024).
- **self-control** as children consider the implication of one's actions and manage their emotions and behavior accordingly (Gilang, Syakur, & Solikhah 2024).

Children may cry, hit, bite, or disengage in response to conflict. As children recognize that disputes may be resolved with communication and cooperation rather than aggression, educators teach children skills that support healthy interpersonal relationships.

How do I support children through conflict? Children may not always benefit from adult intervention to work through a conflict. Observation is key. Educators use observation to ensure children's safety and

determine their capacity to resolve conflict without adult involvement. Below are strategies for teaching and facilitating conflict resolution among children.

STRATEGIES SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ **Teach expectations.** Communicate expectations that all individuals will be physically and emotionally safe within the program.
- ✓ **Model.** Children observe and repeat adults' patterns of behavior, so ensure to display responsive communication and cooperation.
- ✓ **Role play.** Pretend to go through a conflict scenario with puppets. Ask open-ended questions to explore intention and practice empathy and self-advocacy.
- ✓ **Read and discuss.** Talk through disagreements found in children's literature by discussing emotions and possible solutions.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

- ✓ **Stop unsafe behavior.** Ensure children remain physically and emotionally safe within the program.
- ✓ **Use visual aids.** Provide common, generalized solutions to conflicts with visual aids that depict options in written and pictorial form. Core word visual boards and sign language further support children with limited verbal language skills.
- ✓ **Acknowledge emotions.** Emotion-affirming language supports the development of theory of mind which is crucial to effective conflict resolution. For example, "You are angry Haley took your doll."
- ✓ **Provide words.** Remind children of respectful and effective language to use when acknowledging their needs in a conflict. For example, "Tell her, 'I do not like when you take toys from me. You can ask for a turn.'"
- ✓ **Offer solutions.** Brainstorm with children about potential solutions to conflicts. For example, "What could we do? Could we share the magnetic blocks, or would it feel better to take turns?"

I want to learn more!

- [A Three-Step Approach to Help Children Navigate Conflict](#) (Article)
- [Teaching Kids How to Deal With Conflict](#) (Article)
- [Young Children Can Learn How to Resolve Conflicts With Adult Guidance and Support](#) (Article)
- [Conflict Management Strategies for Early Childhood Educators](#) (Research article)

Books available through Satellite's lending library:

(for Satellite participating programs only)

- *Before Push Comes to Shove: Building Conflict Resolution Skills with Children* (Carlsson-Paige, 1998)
- *That's Not Fair! A Teacher's Guide to Activism with Young Children* (Pelo, 2000)
- *Class Meetings: Young Children Solving Problems Together* (Vance, 2002)