

# Friendships & Social Skills: Handling Conflict



# Understanding Peer Conflict



## Why It Feels High-Stakes

Group dynamics grow more complex between ages 9–14. Kids care deeply about fairness, belonging, and friendship – so when something goes wrong, it can feel very personal.



## What You Might Hear

"They left me out," "They're being fake," or "That's not fair." Even if they say they're "fine," they're likely still feeling overwhelmed.



## Reframe the Moment

These moments are NOT failures. They're normal, and they're opportunities to practice emotional regulation, perspective-taking, and assertive communication.

# Help Them Cool Down First



## Let the Wave Pass

Help your child pause and ride their emotion wave before diving into validation and solutions.



## Validate First

Say: "That felt hurtful. It makes sense you reacted the way you did," or "You were honest, and when that wasn't acknowledged, it stung."



## Offer a Choice

Ask: "Since this clearly hit a nerve – do you want to talk about it, or take a break first?"



## Coping Tools

Offer realistic options: taking a walk, texting a different friend, listening to music, or writing in a journal – or whatever already works for your child.

# Dig Deeper & Build Perspective



## Find the Real Issue

What looks like an overreaction may really be about feeling replaced, excluded, or judged.

Ask: "Was it just what they said – or how it made you feel underneath?"



## Build Perspective

Ask: "What do you think your friend would say if we asked them what happened?" or "Do you think they meant to hurt you, or didn't realize how it landed?" You're not excusing behavior – you're stretching their thinking.



## Coach Problem-Solving

Ask: "What's your goal here – to fix it, to be heard, or just to move on?" Help them plan what to say or text, or role-play if they're open to it.



## Reinforce the Effort

Say: "You paused instead of snapping back – that takes a lot," or "Even if it didn't go perfectly, you were honest and kind." Reinforce attempts, not just outcomes.



## Know When to Step In

Step in if there's repeated exclusion, bullying, school avoidance, physical signs of stress (stomachaches, sleep changes), or ongoing social tension flagged by teachers.

# Your Role as a Parent



## Reflect Back

Your job is to reflect feelings back without judgment – helping your child see themselves and the situation more clearly.



## Build Self-Awareness

Guiding them to name the real issue builds insight and helps them respond more intentionally the next time something happens.



## Give Them Tools

Your presence and coaching is often enough. The goal is to help them handle conflict with confidence and kindness – not to fix every conflict.



## Reach Out for Support

Reach out to your Ollie team if you want to talk more about this topic, and check out the content that goes along with this video for more information and examples.

# References

- References: American Academy of Pediatrics, Boston Children's Hospital, Child Mind Institute, Children's Hospital Colorado, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, University of Michigan Health / C.S. Mott Children's Hospital.