

## Conflict resolution with friends

November, 2017

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Beginning in elementary school, children are challenged to appear confident, competent, reasonable, and calm. They are also challenged to think logically, look at situations from multiple perspectives, and develop many adaptive strategies of self-regulation.

Research indicates that parental involvement in a child's social and emotional development is a strong determinant in a child's sense of self. It also suggests that consistent, open dialogue between parents and their children will improve communication and help children cope with various social issues.

**Model conflict resolution through example:** It is important for parents to teach their children ways to both manage their feelings and resolve their conflicts peacefully through example, guidance and instruction.

**Assertive not aggressive:** As parents, we can set a model by resolving conflicts between our own friends assertively, but without aggression. This requires us to first demonstrate that we understand the wishes and needs of our friends, then recognize our own wishes and needs, and finally communicate as respectfully as possible.

**Encourage conversation that reflects on a conflict with friends:** We can also help our children resolve conflicts through open dialogue and role-playing. These methods help our children understand the importance of evaluating their conflicts among friends and coming up with their own solutions in a safe environment. We can ask our child, "What brought the conflict about? Could a similar conflict be prevented in the future? How can the conflict be solved?" When we allow our children to present their own ideas, listen to their own reasoning, and work to arrive at their own solution, they learn how to independently reach cooperative solutions centered on kindness and fairness.

**Empathy takes time and practice to develop:** It takes time to help children empathize with the feelings and actions of others, while still recognizing their own feelings. If we can help our children communicate both assertively and peacefully, they can be trusted to handle communications of their own, and they can always count on us for support and guidance.

Useful resources:

-*A Family Guidebook on Bullies, Self-Esteem and Hidden Hurts!* By Elizabeth Barnes, 2008.

-*Kids are worth it!: Giving Your Child the Gift of Inner Disciplines* by Barbara Coloroso, 2002

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