



Tips for Tots



Tip #4:

Help Young Children with Conflict Resolution

Strategies

Did you know?

Infant/Toddler:

Infants and Toddlers learn through experience. Children learn through trial and error. It is important to provide young children with opportunities to work on their problem solving skills and to offer gentle guidance and encouragement when they are struggling. Jumping in too soon to solve the problem does not allow the child to discover the various skills needed as they grow.

Preschool:

An important skill for successful social interaction during the preschool years is being able to resolve conflicts. When teachers and parents nurture the development of conflict resolution skills, they are providing the child with the ability to resolve situations before they spin out of control. These skills are essential for developing and maintaining relationships with others. How well these skills are learned during childhood will influence the type and quality of the relationships that the child forms throughout his/her life. Steps in problem solving include: controlling emotions, identifying the problem, working out a solution or solutions and then trying the solutions out.

Infant/Toddler:

- Let children know through your calm approach that conflicts are okay and that they can be resolved with help.
- Describe each child's facial expressions and make the same expression yourself. This can help toddlers feel more understood.
- Name feelings and talk them through the conflict. Calm them with gentle touches and a soft voice. Tell them what you think has happened if they are not able to express it. Listen to them if they can explain.
- Teach one word or a sign that each child can practice saying to each other. EG: "Mine" or "please".
- Remember that redirecting a very young child to a different activity is often an appropriate response.
- Hold an object if it is the cause of the conflict. Remember if you just remove it, you lose an opportunity to teach problem solving. Talk children through problem solving strategies, providing them with choices to the solution, acknowledge when they solve the problem. "You found another toy to play with while you waited for your turn. You solved the problem."

Preschool:

- When conflict arises, approach the situation quickly and calmly, stopping any hurtful behavior or language. It is important to remain calm so that the situation does not escalate. Use a calm, soft voice and position yourself at eye level with children.
- Listen to all sides of a conflict. Rather than solving the problem for children, help generate ideas of how they might solve the problem. When a solution is determined, confirm the plan they have agreed to, repeating it back to them. Then encourage the children to try the solutions. They will learn as much from failure as success.
- Encourage children to be problem solvers. When children come to a teacher for help, ask them to put on their problem solving cap & work with them on possible solutions. Have children use their imaginations and pretend play on how to figure the problem out.
- Teach problem solving skills as a part of the curriculum. Use this consistently to help children learn to resolve conflicts on their own.
- Provide classroom materials that facilitate problem-solving & conflict resolution skills: problem-solving steps; Solution Kit; be by myself space; peace table; Have children discuss the problem, while guiding them towards solutions.

Resources:

<http://www.highscopepress.org/>
<http://tc.columbia.edu/news>

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