

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Let's sort it out - conflict resolution

Children inevitably come across conflict when playing alongside and with others. Learning how to manage their own feelings is tricky, let alone trying to manage someone else's as well. Use this activity to help children to develop the skills to recognise, respond to and resolve conflicts.

Learning aims

- Develop healthy friendships
- Learn social skills
- Begin to interact with others with respect
- Learn to recognise when there is a conflict
- Develop problem solving skills.



Resources

- Two puppets
- Access to YouTube (optional).

Activity outline

1. Conflict resolution takes practice and time and is most successful when it is purposefully taught. Recognising when there is a conflict is the first step. Decide in your setting whether you want to label it as a 'conflict' or as a 'problem' and make sure this is used consistently
2. Adults will need to be the role models for younger children and demonstrate how to respond to and resolve conflicts. Have an agreed strategy which everyone follows so that the children get a consistent message
3. There are useful YouTube videos which are a good starting point to share and discuss with older children, for example:
 - a. 'Learn how to resolve conflict with Akili' offers children opportunities to identify how the child is feeling and gives options for how to resolve the conflict, focuses on sharing and taking turns <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQCJEi68VGg>
 - b. 'Helping kids resolve conflicts with Sesame Street' shows an adult supporting Elmo to have a strategy – or plan – for how to join in with others' play https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tw_nQ4x19Eo

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4. Introduce a puppet (e.g. dog) who is having a problem with another puppet (e.g. cat) because Cat took a toy away from Dog when he was enjoying playing with it. Make Dog argue with Cat or snatch the toy back to demonstrate what a 'conflict' or problem looks like. Ask the children to talk about when things happen between friends that they don't like. Help them to recognise that this is a conflict which needs to be responded to
5. Talk about how Dog is feeling, e.g. sad, cross, annoyed. Ask the children to share how it feels when someone does something they don't like. Encourage them to recognise when their tummy gets knotted up or they screw their face up or want to shout. Help them to recognise that everyone feels these emotions, but to respond to a conflict they need to be managed
6. Finally, ask them to suggest ways to respond to the problem. What might resolve the conflict? Think about what Dog might do or say and think about what Cat could do or say. Act out the responding and resolving scenario with Cat and Dog and talk to the children about what worked and why (such as they agreed to take turns or they found another toy and chose to play together)
7. Try developing agreed phrases for the children to use; adults can model using the phrases until children are confident to have a go themselves. Examples include "It makes me sad when you don't let me play", "Can we take turns?"
8. When adults are supporting the children to identify solutions to their conflict, make sure to go back to the children after a short time and check whether their solution worked. They can be reminded of what worked well next time they have a problem.

Extension ideas

- Act out different situations with the puppets which have arisen between the children in the setting for children to suggest their own solutions
- Encourage the children to role play conflict scenarios in small groups to practise ways of responding to and resolving their problems.

NDNA products to support you with this activity

- [Conflict resolution and aggressive behaviour](#) – template policy
- [Positive behaviour in early years](#) – live virtual classroom training
- [Promoting positive behaviour](#) - factsheet
- [Love pedagogy: Love-led practice in the early years](#) – blog post.