

# Conflict Resolution Steps

## **1. Observe.**

*Don't step in unless needed and step out whenever possible*

## **2. Name It! – “Looks like there is a conflict here.”**

*Create visuals, use touch, talking stick, sound, etc.*

## **3. Neutralize.**

*Neutralize any objects (“I’ll hold this while we work this out”, encourage breathing, allow space/time for cooling off.*

## **4. Identify the problem/players/feelings.**

*Children do this, adult facilitates and helps non-verbal children express in other ways. Ask more, talk less. Consider using a variety of strategies: drawing, clay, dictation, etc. Use feelings cards/books. Remember developmental level of child.*

## **5. Identify an appropriate place to work on the issue.**

*Children need to feel safe. provide a variety of tools to help kids practice conflict resolution skills (i.e. conflict caddy, peace table, etc. Don't draw negative attention to the players (though others may wish to observe)*

## **6. Restate the original problem.**

*Have players do this if possible or adult help give the words. Bathe children in an emotional vocabulary.*

## **7. Generate solutions.**

*Children do this when possible. Adult can give some options (hmm looks like you are stuck...this has worked for others in the past..want to try?) Great time to call on local experts! (other children, peacekeeper, kid facilitators, a neutral adult, a character from a book)*

## **8. Agree upon solutions.**

*Or at least agree upon the compromise and actions that will take place. Allow children to fail (unless a safety issue). Ask if it is a win/win, a lose/win, or a lose/lose solution.*

## **9. Players carry out solutions.**

*When possible encourage the solution to be something the children can be in charge of themselves. (ex, If they say “you can have it in 9 minutes” how will the child know when the time is up. Make it concrete and real for them, like 9 times around the circle...something they can count themselves.)*

## **10. Evaluate solutions.**

*In large and small groups through story telling, class meetings, making books to read to others. Avoid praise and focus on how the actions affected the different players.*

### Other thoughts to keep in mind:

- Think of problems to be solved rather than infractions to be punished.
- Empower and focus on the victims.
- Design some conflict resolution curriculum in your classroom and stock the environment with tools that children can use on their own.
- Refer players to their past experiences or experiences of other children or yourself.
- You may need to help speak for the non-verbal child. Consider alternative strategies for expression.
- Remember Alfie Kohn's 3 C's...Caring Community, Choices, and Curriculum. Examine how you support this in your program.
- People's experiences/age/learning style will influence how they respond to conflict.
- Young children are egocentric! Continue to refer players to others feelings and thoughts to help build empathy. It takes time and lots of practice.
- Keep it short and simple and focused on the observable with young toddlers.
- Avoid rescuing children from conflict. Try to see it as an opportunity instead of a disruption.