

Dealing with Conflict

Skill # 1 **DEFINE EXPECTATIONS**

Be sure to let your children know what you expect of them. If you do, everything will run smoother. It also prevents a lot of conflict.

Clearly and firmly say what you expect. For example, tell your children they must first finish their homework, then they can go outside and play. Also let your children know what they can expect from you: “Whenever you need to talk, I’ll stop what I’m doing and listen to you.”

Setting up a few household rules is a good way to define expectations. Put the list of rules on the refrigerator door. Help your child stick to the rules, and be consistent. Reward positive behavior with a hug, smile, thank you, or words of encouragement.

Skill # 2 **RESOLVE PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY GROW**

Not every conflict is worth fighting. Choose which problems need your attention and which ones can be ignored. By catching conflicts when they are small, you can keep them from growing into big ones.

Don’t put off handling a problem, unless you are too stressed out to deal with it. Encourage your children to come up with solutions to their own conflicts. Set a good example by keeping a positive attitude. And when it feels right, be big enough to say, “I’m sorry” or “I like your idea.”

One good way to work out conflicts is by brainstorming. To do this, state the problem you are trying to resolve. Next, jot down as many possible solutions as you can think of. Then pick the best solution and give it a try.

Skill # 3 **DON'T TOLERATE INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

You are in charge of what happens in your home. It is your responsibility to enforce any rules you have. Letting your child know this gives him a sense of security. It also allows you to set limits and lovingly guide his behavior.

Instead of punishing your children, discipline them by teaching them how you want them to behave. Teach your child by your own actions, too. For example, if you don’t want your daughter to scream, don’t yell at her or anyone else.

If your child’s behavior doesn’t seem quite right, talk with his teacher or school counselor. A friend or the yellow pages can also assist you. Having the courage to get help is part of being a good parent.

ACTION PLAN

Focus on one of the above skills. How could you apply this skill in your life? Choose one small but important change you really want to make in the next few days. Think positive. See yourself carrying out your goal. **Write your action plan in the space below:**

