RESOLVING CONFLICT

LIFE SKILL

resolving conflict

Why learn to resolve conflict?
Conflict is a normal part of family life, but it isn't always pleasant. With a little effort, family members can learn special skills to resolve conflict. Remember, each family member's input is important.

What do we need?
blank sheets of paper; markers, crayons, or pencils

How long will it take?
45 minutes

What do we do?
Give each person a blank sheet of paper and something to draw or write with. Read the following directions, allowing time after each step for family members to draw or write.

Remember these things as you begin to resolve conflicts.
- Stay calm! When you're angry with someone, you may feel like yelling or even hitting. But hitting or yelling will not solve the problem. On your sheet of paper, draw, write, or talk about how you would feel if someone yelled at you or hit you when she was angry.
- Listen! Be willing to listen to what the other person has to say. Listening will help you understand the conflict. It also shows that you care about the other person. Draw, write, or talk about how you feel when someone takes the time to listen to you.
- Think, "It takes two." Can you have an argument by yourself? No! It takes two people. Resolving a conflict also takes at least two people. Work together to find a solution you and the other person(s) can be happy with. Draw, write, or talk about how it feels to work with a family member and resolve a conflict.
Guide to Resolving a Family Conflict

1. Write the conflict down. Stay calm.
2. Write or talk about how you feel or what made you angry. Listen to the other person’s side.
3. Think, “It takes two.” Think of ways that you and the other person can resolve the conflict and be satisfied with the solution. Keep thinking up ideas until one works.
4. If you can’t agree, take some time away from one another to “cool off” and think. Maybe you can talk it out with someone else and find new alternatives.
5. Come to an agreement and follow through with the decision made by the group.

Practice applying the skills you just learned by using the “Guide for Resolving a Family Conflict.” Pretend your family has to resolve one of the following conflicts:

Sample conflict: You are watching TV. Without saying a word, your brother walks up and changes the channel to another station.

Sample conflict: Mom asks you why the living room isn’t dusted. You tell her that it’s not your turn to dust. The person who should dust isn’t home, and Mom needs it done right away. She asks you to dust, but you don’t think it’s fair.

Sample conflict: Your sister has borrowed something of yours without asking. You want it back, and you don’t want her to do something like that again.

Sample conflict for Mom and Dad: It’s Friday night. Mom wants to stay home, watch TV, and rest. Dad wants to go to a movie.

Options.

1. Have two family members “play act” the sample conflicts.
2. Have the family discuss the following questions:
   - How did you feel while you played out the conflicts? Did your feelings change as you resolved the conflicts?
   - What do you like about resolving conflicts this way?
   - What can you do differently the next time you get angry or disagree with someone in your family?
3. Post the “Guide for Resolving a Family Conflict” in a conspicuous place (like on the refrigerator) so your family can use it when problems come up.

What happened?

- What happened during this activity?
- How did you and other family members feel while you were doing it?

What did you learn?

- What could you do if you were so angry with someone that you couldn’t even agree on what the conflict was?
- Why is it important not to hit or yell when you’re angry at someone?
- Why is listening to each other so important in a family?
- Why is it important to involve the person you’re angry with when you’re trying to resolve a conflict?

Why was this activity important?

- What steps should you take to resolve a conflict?

What’s next?

- Can you think of a family conflict you can try to resolve?
- What ideas from this activity will you apply? How?
- How could you practice your new skills for resolving conflict?