

Teaching Your Child How to Resolve Personal Conflicts

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Nearly every child has trouble with social relationships at some point in his or her life. Some children find it awkward to work in group settings. Others struggle with resolving conflicts or find themselves the target of bullies. Coaching from parents can make it possible for children to feel more capable, comfortable, and confident with friends and in a variety of social settings.

Children first learn about relationships from their parents. The development of a child's social competency relies on having a warm, supportive, and encouraging relationship with his or her parents.

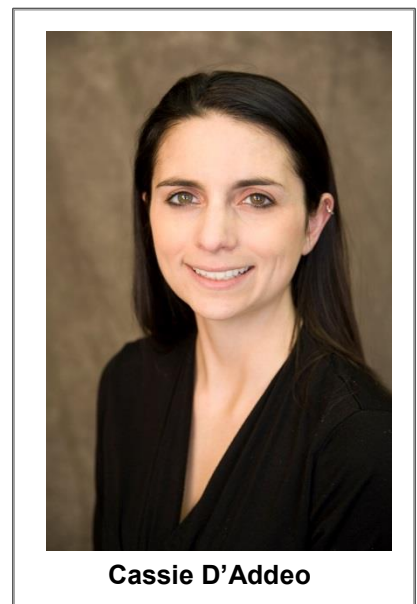
The security of this attachment allows young children to seek companionship with others. Babies as young as three months old enjoy

the company of other babies. As children develop socially and emotionally, they begin to learn the traits that build or destroy relationships, such as warmth versus hostility, trust versus mistrust,

and friendliness versus anger. Typically, by the time they are 5 or 6 years old, children become increasingly peer-oriented and decreasingly family-oriented. At this stage, friendships are frequently broken, mended, and changed, and sometimes some or all of these changes occur within the span of a few hours. When conflict occurs at this stage, children can be very dramatic when expressing their distress.

At this developmental stage, school-age children have not had many opportunities to practice using their conflict resolution skills to resolve personal conflicts. Therefore, children seek help from parents, teachers and school social workers. Most of the time, children have the expectation that complaining or whining about the conflict will have immediate results in their favor. This irrational thinking pattern can cause the conflict to linger. Parents can teach their children some basic skills to help them learn how to resolve personal conflicts.

One technique is for the parent to validate how the child is feeling. Validation creates an opportunity for the child to be open and honest when expressing his or her feelings and allows the child to feel like he or



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she is being heard or understood. Parents also can role-play conflict cycles with their children. Acting out conflict cycles helps the child identify irrational thought patterns, stressors, and behaviors that lead to continued conflict. In addition, exploring the conflict from different points of view helps children learn and understand empathy. Finally, teaching a child how to compromise, how to admit personal mistakes, and how to form apologies are all essential conflict resolution skills that parents can practice with their children.

Learning to get along with others is a lifelong process. As children grow socially and emotionally, their relationships will change and evolve. Helping your child understand conflict cycles and how to successfully resolve conflicts are important ways to guide them toward maintaining healthy relationships.

If you have any questions regarding peer relations and conflict cycles, please contact me at 847-367-5991 ext. 26.