

Resolving Conflicts - 6 Steps

1. Approach calmly

It is impossible to mediate if you are feeling upset yourself. Make sure you are calm before you approach the children having the conflict.

Use a calm voice and gentle touch.

2. Acknowledge feelings

“You look very upset.”

This is the key step to successful problem solving with young children. If children aren't able to express their feelings about the situation fully then they will find it hard to think through the problem rationally.

3. Find out what the problem is

“What's the problem.”

Gather information so you can get as full a picture as possible about what the problem is. Bear in mind the developmental stages of the children involved in the conflict. Some will be able to give you a lot of details, some may just be able to point at what they want.

4. State clearly what the problem is

“So the problem is

Say clearly what the problem is so that children know exactly what they need to think about.

5. Ask / help the children to agree a solution

“What can we do to solve this problem?”

Give children the time to do this. It's easy as an adult to come up with lots of ideas and jump in and tell children what to do. When this happens all the joy and excitement and the experience of successful problem-solving is taken from the children.

6. Offer follow-up support

“You did it! You've solved the problem.”

This approach does take a little time to begin with, but as it is used consistently with children over time they learn to feel safe with the process, their self-esteem is supported, they learn that it is ok to have wants and needs and that other children sometimes have the same wants and needs. They learn that problems can be talked about and solved. They learn that the adults are supportive and will help them to figure out their own solutions to the problems. This leads to new learning and understanding and builds relationships between children. More importantly, in the longer term children become independent problem – solvers and an adult mediator isn't even required.