



. Refreshing Recess Week #3

Resolving Conflict: 6 Steps (for students)

Peace is our goal!

Everyone feels better when we and the people around us get along. Creating a peaceful environment is everyone's responsibility.



Conflict is a reality

However, at times, we all experience conflict with family or friends. How we respond to conflict can make a big difference in how long the conflict lasts and how tense the interaction is.

Respond to conflict in a mature and peaceful manner. When conflict occurs, our goal is to respond in a calm and peaceful manner so that we don't say or do things to hurt the other person or ourselves.

What to do when you are experiencing conflict with another person?

6 Steps to Conflict Resolution ^{1,2,3}

Step 1: Cool off & calm down. Breathe and regain focus in order to choose a good response.

Sometimes conflicts lead to intense emotions (e.g. feeling angry) making it difficult to solve the problem. At this point, it's best to take a step back, breathe deeply, and gain some emotional distance before trying to talk about the issue. Think about 10 things you can do to make you feel better (e.g. deep breathing, walk around by yourself, write in a journal, count to 10, color your feelings). Make sure you take 5 deep breaths before you go to step 2.



Step 2: Talk about what's bothering you using 'I messages'.

Use 'I messages' to express how you feel about the situation. Example: *'I feel hurt when you talk to other people at lunch and turn away from me.'* *'I felt left out and hurt when you didn't let me play the game.'*

Suggestions:

- speak softly and slowly
- be aware of body language: uncross your arms, sit or stand at eye level, look them in the eyes with a relaxed face
- use words that don't make things worse – like, 'sometimes it seems', 'I wonder if', 'what if' – instead of 'you never', 'you shouldn't'





Step 3: Each person restates that the other person said and shares how they felt.

This requires good listening skills and encourages empathy. State what the other person said, ‘You said that you were having fun getting to know Kristen and didn’t realize you were leaving me out.’

Step 4: Take responsibility. Give a sincere apology.

Generally, both people involved in a conflict have some degree of responsibility. Think about how you may have contributed to the conflict. ‘Maybe sometimes I expect Sarah to only play with me. That’s not fair to Sarah. She would like to play with other people too.’

A sincere apology starts with, ‘I’m sorry...’ and states what you did wrong ‘for leaving you out of the game’.



Step 5: Brainstorm solutions and agree on one.

Example: ‘When I play with other friends, I can make a point of including Lucy so she doesn’t feel left out.’

Step 6: ‘Make up’ – Affirm, forgive or thank.

Give closure to the agreement with a handshake, hug or kind word. At the end, ask for forgiveness, ‘will you forgive me?’ Forgiveness provides closure and promotes a sense of peace. Say ‘thank you for working this out with me’. This sends a message to the other person that you respect them and value your relationship.



Adapted from:

¹ Drew, N. (2002). [Six steps for resolving conflict.](#)

² Monke, A. (2021). [5 Steps to help kids resolve conflicts.](#) Sunshine Parenting.

³ Creative Response to Conflict. [De-escalating conflict or possible violence.](#)