



Tips on

Preventing Conflicts

We often make decisions and solve problems for our children to prevent them from making mistakes. But an important part of helping your children make good decisions is letting them make reasonable choices during your daily routine.

Here are some things you can do.

1

Involve children in rule making & problem solving.

Let them practice their own solutions to see what works, e.g., "You were waving your sword and Max got hurt. What could we do so that doesn't happen again?" Children are more likely to follow rules when they have had a part in making them. Even very young children have a strong sense of fairness. Use this as a foundation.

You may want to use The Guide to Getting Along (on the next page) as a starting point. Keep in mind that the younger the children, the more specific your language should be. For example, the Guide to Getting Along includes the rule "We are kind to each other." A preschooler might need some help thinking of what specific things they could do to "be kind."

2

Limit the use of TV-related toys.

Children use these toys based on what they have seen it do on TV (for example, popular cartoon action heroes doing karate moves). If the toy's only use is violent it will encourage violent play. Have children play with "generic" toys (e.g., blocks or stuffed animals that aren't based on a TV or computer character). These kinds of toys help children use their imagination.

3

Assume that children never understand what not to do; they only understand what to do. Give them a few choices.

"It is not all right to shoot at Maria when she doesn't want you to. You can shoot at the monster by the tree or you can find someone who is willing to play with you this way" (example from Nancy Carlsson Paige, & Diane Levin, The War Play Dilemma)

4

Help children learn to recognize feelings and use words to express them.

When you read stories or watch videos, ask, "How do you think ___ feels?" Give examples of good words to use; asking a child to use words rather than fists doesn't help if they don't know which words to use!

5

Help children learn to listen.

Provide opportunities for children to listen to other children as well as to adults. Use video to practice listening skills; rewind the video to see if children listened to what was said. Play games such as "telephone" that make listening fun.

6

Provide outlets for tension and energy.

Make sure children have a chance to move, make noise, and express themselves physically through nonviolent activities such as dance, games, or sports.

7

Teach children about a variety of cultures and show them that there can be more than one "right" way to do the same thing.

The more children know about how people do the same things differently the less chance they will have misunderstandings that lead to conflict and the more likely they will be to see that there are a variety of ways – especially nonviolent ways – that they could solve problems.

8

Model respect—Children learn from you.

Nothing influences children more than what the adults around them do. If we stay calm, use clear and gentle language, and resolve our own problems with respect, children will follow our lead.

Guide to Getting Along

1. We think every person is important in many different ways.
2. We are kind to each other.
3. We practice sharing and playing together.
4. When we like someone, we let them know.
5. We don't act in ways that are hurtful to others just to get what we want.
6. We do not make fun of, hurt, or dislike another person because of how they look.
7. We work hard to do the best we can.
8. We respect other people and their feelings.
9. We stand up for what we believe.
10. We are responsible for upholding all the rules.

To learn more, watch *A Place of Our Own* on your local public television station and visit the website at www.aplaceofourown.org



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