**Teaching Kids to Resolve Conflicts Peacefully**

*“Violence, in any form, is a tragic expression of our unmet needs.” – Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD, founder of the Center for Nonviolent Communication.*

Violence in any form is a tragic expression of our unmet needs.”—Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD, founder for the Center for Nonviolent Communication.

Anger can take many forms. Physical violence is the worst extreme of anger, which will always make a conflict worse. Conversely, the words and actions we choose when dealing with conflict have the power to resolve conflict and improve our interpersonal relationships in the long run. It’s important to help our kids learn the key skills they need for dealing with anger, which includes choosing positive words and actions for peaceful conflict resolution.

Marshall Rosenberg, the author of Nonviolent Communication suggests four key principles for peaceful conflict resolution: **1. Observe instead of judging or evaluating; 2. Identify and express your feelings; 3. Ask for things that enrich life; 4. Listen with empathy.** Strive to incorporate these principles, along with the following tips, in your daily parenting, and start teaching your kids the right way to resolve conflicts.

**TIPS FOR ALL PARENTS**

* Be clear that you want your kids to grow up in ways where they can stand up for themselves, stand up for what they believe, and resolve conflicts peacefully and well.
* The major way kids resolve conflicts is by fighting. Find out more about how to help kids stop fighting and start becoming more productive with peaceful conflict resolution.
* Help kids get out of the blame game. Blaming others only makes the conflict worse, not better.
* Teach kids how to calm down. It’s hard to resolve conflicts well when you’re upset. This is true for both adults and for kids.
* Talk with your kids about what they need. Usually conflicts arise when someone feels slighted, not heard, or has had his or her boundaries invaded.

**PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGES BIRTH TO FIVE**

* Don’t yell when young children upset you. Model how you want them to act. Set and enforce boundaries, but do so in a way that’s peaceful.
* Take a break when wyou’re upset by your child’s behavior. Explain that everyone needs a separate cooling off time before working things through together.
* Young children can get aggressive. They can bite, hit, scream, and throw tantrums. This is normal. What’s not normal is to allow them to keep acting in these ways. Be clear that these are not acceptable behaviors. Instead, teach kids how to calm down and express their feelings.

**PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGES SIX TO NINE**

* Help kids identify what they’re feeling. As kids become older, they can understand more complete feelings such as frustration, irritation, and worry.
* Don’t be surprised if kids at this age can slip up and hit someone occasionally. Continue to be clear that fighting, or any type of aggressive behavior, is not acceptable.
* Teach kids how to use, “I messages.” For example, instead of your child saying, “You make me mad,” encourage your child to say, “I feel mad.” Then hillp him/her articulate why he/she is mad.

**PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGES TEN TO FIFTEEN**

* As kids go through puberty, they can become aggressive. Some slam doors. Others scream and swear. Explain that these are not acceptable behaviors.
* Help your teens learn how to calm down. With puberty, some kids feel like their feelings are overwhelming. Help them to slug a pillow, jog around the block, or do the boxing portion of Wii Fit to help channel the angry energy.
* Notice when your kids “push your buttons.”Young teenagers can really make their parents angry. Count to 10 and figure out ways to cool down before you respond. Remember your young teenager is always watching how you handle frustration and anger.

**PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGES SIXTEEN TO EIGHTEEN**

* Talk about news stories where people resolve conflicts in positive ways. Happy News often has inspiring stories of how people are helping each other instead of hurting each other.
* At this age, older teenagers can seriously hurt someone if they haven’t learned how to control their aggressive impulses. If your older teenager still acts aggressively, get professional help so that he or she can learn practical ways to diffuse anger in appropriate ways.
* Discuss small conflicts, tensions, and situations with your teenager before they become big. This teaches your teenager how to pay attention to the small nudges that lead to deep-seated anger. When they notice these small nudges, they can take care of them more easily.

**SOURCES**

**Information from the Search Institute “Everyday Parenting Ideas” September 14, 2011**

[www.parentfurther.com/resources/enewsletter/teaching-kids-resolve-conflicts-peacefully](http://www.parentfurther.com/resources/enewsletter/teaching-kids-resolve-conflicts-peacefully)

[www.parentfurher.com/discipline-values/conflict](http://www.parentfurher.com/discipline-values/conflict)

[www.happynews.com](http://www.happynews.com)