

## **Encouraging Conflict Resolution Skills in the Home**

Human beings know a great deal that they choose not to do, usually because of motivational issues. For example, it is much easier to bully a little sibling than to use reason, make deals, wait, and tolerate possible failure. Growing up is difficult!! Here are some things you can do to help your child start to make conflict resolution skills a part of their interpersonal style. The following two options can influence your child's behavior over the course of multiple repetitions.

### **Option 1. Problem-Solving Discussions**

#### **When Conflict Situations Arise or When One Child "Tattles"**

Here we make use of natural situations, challenging the child to think about options. Perhaps there is a toy conflict situation and the children complain to you or start to become emotionally upset with each other. The parent may choose to call one or both children and require them to problem-solve using the following sequence:

Step 1: "Describe the problem" (the conditions that lead to the conflict).

Step 2: "What can you do besides get upset or fight?" (skillful, acceptable options).

Step 3: "OK, those are good ideas; now you kids decide what you're going to do."

Please feel free to add information to the children's responses to step 1 and 2, especially if the children cannot generate accurate descriptions or reasonable options. Natural setting problem-solving like this should:

- Promote consideration and thought by the children
- Encourage independent conflict resolution

Sometimes, however, it seems best to be authoritative; for example, when one child refuses to share a household toy which clearly can be shared. Then you might consider:

### **Option 2. Direct Instructions: Use your Obedience Procedure**

#### **Given Unresolved or Grossly Inequitable Resolutions**

Now you are enforcing standards of conduct consistent with your values and household decisions. For example, "No, That's her toy. She doesn't have to share it". The direct instruction approach does teach social skills, although it might breed reliance on you to "referee" conflicts.

In addition to Options 1 & 2, your own behavior is a constant model for your children. Using good listening skills, asking nicely, using reasons, and tolerating other's rights to say "No" is a critical variable in the development of your children's social skills. Be aware of the example you are setting.