

After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

From *What's the Buzz?* for Early Learners: A complete social skills foundation course



Lesson 6: Making it better

After the Buzz presents ideas for parents, guardians and educators to encourage children to generalise the social thinking generated in the lesson. Children rely on our commitment to consolidate these skills. We urge parents, guardians and teachers to use the session topics and ideas as continuing themes each week. Here are a few practical thoughts to teach children how-to deal with disagreements using a range of friendly options.

Be the best role model you can

Firstly, be the best role model you can. We can't expect kids to work towards resolving conflicts appropriately if we choose to regularly blow up, scream or sulk in front of them at home when we're confronted with a difference of opinion. Make no mistake; children learn how-to handle social situations through observing us. We are their primary teachers.

See tricky moments as learning opportunities

If you have a history of stepping into the role of referee to sort out your children's squabbles, take a deep breath, and try to change this approach. From now on try to see each and every disagreement that comes your child's way as a chance for them to practice their emerging conflict resolution skills. See the inevitable hiccups that arise between children as wonderful learning opportunities and teachable moments.

Our resolve will help theirs

Keep in mind that children learn how to resolve conflicts appropriately over a long, long time. It doesn't occur without consistent guidance and explicit coaching. Realistically, because of disability, immaturity or reactive temperament some children will take longer to master these skills.

Set a standard and stick with it

Communicate your expectations early and clearly to your children. Let them know that you will not accept ongoing squabbling when they disagree because it is always possible to find a positive solution. Provide natural, logical consequences when your child, or children, choose to fight first! Make sure your children know that persistent arguing will automatically produce a negative consequence for each. For example, if your kids are fighting over the iPad, the game gets turned off, the iPad is taken away and they both miss out. It is best to give both a consequence because it takes two to fight.

Practical steps to lead children towards positive conflict resolution solutions

1. Coach your child to identify how they are feeling. Assist them to name the feelings they are experiencing over the conflict. To prompt them you might say, "Oh, you're looking cross – are you feeling cross and a bit sad as well?"
2. Guide them to work out what they really want. Actually ask them, "What do you want to happen?" Help them to discover their basic need so they are able to begin the resolution process.
3. Help develop empathic awareness by showing them how to understand the other person's point of view. Gently lead them to see what the other person may be feeling and what they want. Ask, "How do you think



she is feeling?" "What do you think they want?" The next step is to get them to ask the other person how they are feeling and what they would like to have happen.

4. Would teaching your child how to calm down be beneficial? When someone reacts impulsively and emotionally, regretful behaviours often occur. Teach your child to take some deep breaths, to walk away or to ask for help rather than exploding. Actively help them to increase their chances to resolve every problem that come their way.
5. Together, brainstorm different ways to problem solve. Always choose options that work best for everyone – these are friendly options. Encourage them to come up with a way they could go about it. Role-play this option so they feel more confident about doing it or repeating it in the future.
6. "Sorry" used honestly is a brilliant little word that can rescue many a tricky situation. So, have fun role-playing situations where "sorry" might be helpful. Try sorry with a smile, a gesture, a wink, a handshake, a rub on someone's arm or a hug. Help your children to see that "sorry" is a peace-making gesture to ease resentment and heal relationships.
7. Once they're ready to resolve the dispute, stay nearby so if needed you can gently coach both through the resolution process. Young children are reliant on our clever guidance.
8. Praise is priceless. It gives children the idea that we know they can meet expectations. It also lets them know that we're paying attention and are interested. So, provide positive feedback when your child attempts to use their developing conflict resolution skills. Let them know that you are watching and value the effort they are making to get along. Praise, praise and then more praise works wonders in helping to build positive behaviours.

Read stories

Make a point of reading children's books that teach conflict resolution skills. Such stories can be very helpful as they embed wise ways to deal with disagreements. Make a point of reading;

The Story of Ferdinand by Leaf and Lawson, 1963

The Sun and the Wind: An Aesop Fable, Retold by Cornelia Lehn Faith, 1983

Making Friends by Rogers, 1987

Wise Ways to Win by Ireland and Phillips, 1997

Raising a thinking child workbook: Teaching young children how to resolve everyday conflicts and get along with others by Shure, 2000

You Can't Come to My Birthday Party! Conflict Resolution With Young Children by Evans, 2002

Woolly ways to resolve conflict

Finally, we just have to share the way in which one of our clients helps her children to resolve their spats and re-establishes harmony at home. This is not a recommendation, but it is creative, humorous and works beautifully in her family with her children. Once a dispute has occurred and there's a grumpy standoff between her two boys Meg brings them very close together. They face each other with their noses virtually touching and she slides a big, loose woolly jumper over both of them and they remain together until their hearts soften and the relationship is restored. As they begin to smile, giggle or offer an apology she slides the jumper off of them. When the boy's tempers are particularly frayed she climbs into the woolly jumper as well. Meg swears that it only ever takes a few moments before they're chuckling and ready to start problem solving!

Photocopiable and Online Resources

These resources can also be downloaded from www.whatsthebuzz.net.au