



## **Guide to Using Conflict Resolution at Home**

How can we help support our children and ourselves to stop fighting, take responsibility for behaviors, and solve our own problems?

Using a conflict resolution process can help move us toward achieving those goals. Outlined below are some ways family members can use conflict resolution at home.



# Facilitating Conferences

## What is a conference?

A conference is a specific process for dealing with conflict nonviolently. It takes place between two (or a few) people and a facilitator.

## Who can call a conference?

Anyone in the family may call a conference with anyone else.

## What is my role as an adult in the family?

Adults usually act as facilitators in a family conference, helping participants stay calm and guiding the conversation to a productive end using the steps described below.

Children with conflict resolution experience may be able to facilitate as well.

## Conference Steps

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# 1

### Remember and agree to the rules

- Listen carefully
- Take turns speaking
- Speak considerately
- Try to solve the problem

# 2

### Clarify the issue

- Identify behaviors that contributed to the conflict
- Share feelings
- Listen and empathize with each other

# 3

### Make a plan

Help participants focus on repairing the harm that was done when appropriate.

# 4

### Provide closure

Commend participants for their hard work.



# Tips for Having Conferences at Home

## Physical environment

Be aware of times and places that are conducive to communication. The kitchen at dinnertime is probably not a good time or place for a conference. Some families have a “peace corner” or another special place they use for conferences.

### Try to find a place:

- that is quiet
- that is without visual distractions
- where everyone can sit in a circle at the same level.

## Discipline

A conference is not a replacement for discipline. Conferences are tools for making plans for avoiding the issue in the future. At school, when a behavior violates a rule, the consequence for breaking the rule is separate from the conference.

## Authority

Sometimes parents are concerned that the conference process may undermine their authority. If conferences are used as tools for making alternative behavior choices they actually support discipline at home by giving children responsibility and agency by incorporating their input into solutions to problems.



# Group Gatherings

**What is a group gathering?**

A group gathering (or family meeting) is a meeting with the whole family to discuss issues that affect everyone. These could include such things as chores, allowance, or where to have a family vacation.

**Who can call a gathering?**

Anyone in the family may call a group gathering.

**What is my role as an adult in the family?**

- Guide the group gathering by using the steps described below
- Help everyone follow the same rules as used in conferences
- Participate in the discussion

Children with experience participating in group gatherings at school may be able to facilitate as well.

## Group Gathering Steps

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**1**

**Begin with silence.**

**2**

**Remember and agree to the rules**

- Listen carefully
- Take turns speaking
- Speak considerately
- Try to solve the problem

**3**

**Clarify the issue**

State an issue or ask the family if there are issues to discuss.

**4**

**Make a plan**

- Brainstorm possible solutions.
- Choose a practical and fair solution to try.

**5**

**Provide closure**

Commend participants for their hard work.

# Tips for Having Group Gatherings at Home

## Timing

This process works best when families set aside a short period of time weekly, biweekly, or monthly to hold a group gathering or family meeting.

## Choosing

Some families keep a notebook in which families write down issues for discussion. The family decides which issues most need addressing at each meeting.

## Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a great way to include everyone. It is important to treat all ideas as valid when generating a list. Later, discuss whether the plan is workable and fair to eliminate outrageous suggestions without getting anyone involved in a power struggle.

