



You Can't Come to my Birthday Party! Helping Children Navigate Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving



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Objectives:

- Discuss how to support positive limits setting with children
- Identify the steps for supporting children in resolving conflicts
- Practices support strategies to help children resolve conflicts.



Children's Emotional Expressions: What to Expect

- Noises-loud screams, grunting, shouts, or crying
- Physical actions-hurtful or expressive
- Words-appropriate or hurtful
- Withdrawal-silent, or with quiet

tears



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Responding to Children's Emotional Outburst

- Remain calm and neutral
- Accept children's feelings rather than punishing their actions
- Acknowledge Strong Feelings
- Delay problem-solving if the child is too upset to begin to problem-solve. If the child is ready but the adult is feeling overwhelmed.



Strategies for Acknowledging Strong Feelings

- **State feelings concretely**

“You are feeling upset,” or “I can see you are really angry.”

- **Reframe children’s hurtful words as you acknowledge feelings**

“You are feeling very angry (or frustrated, sad, or upset) with Joe.”

- **If necessary, state a limit as part of the acknowledgment**

“Mary, the hitting needs to stop. You are feeling very angry because David has the truck, and you want it. I know you are very angry.”



Strategies for Acknowledging Strong Feelings

- **Let children know that you need to hold the object in dispute**
"I'm going to hold this while we figure out the problem."
- **If necessary, acknowledge feelings many times until the child begins to calm.**
- **Watch for signs that children have fully expressed their feelings, and their thinking ability has returned**

For example, children's bodies relax, crying stops, voices soften, and children's actions or words change. When this happens, move on to *"What's the problem?"*



Strategies

Use words and phrases that de-escalate

- I wonder if...
- Let's try...
- It seems like...

If conflicts arise, use The Six steps to conflict resolution



6-step
mediation
process

50+ stories of how
adults support children
in resolving disputes
plus a special section
on preventing bullying

You Can't
Come to My
Birthday
Party!

Conflict Resolution
With Young Children

Second Edition

Betsy Evans

 HIGHSCOPE.

Strategies

- Use a calm, neutral voice
- Acknowledge children's feelings
- Bring in sensory objects such as weighted socks, play dough, stress balls, and other objects children can manipulate with their hands



Executive function: skills for life and learning

- **Working Memory** governs our ability to retain and manipulate distinct pieces of information.
- **Mental Flexibility** helps us to sustain or shift attention in response to different demands or to apply different rules in different settings.
- **Inhibitory Control** enables us to set priorities and resist impulsive actions or responses.

Children aren't born with these skills -- they are born with the potential to develop them.



Inhibitory Control

Inhibitory control keeps us from acting impulsively, doing whatever comes into our minds (i.e., it allows us to think before we act).



Examples of when adults rely on Inhibitory Control during the day

Staying off our phones when we need to do a chore or another non-preferred task

Biting our tongue when we feel the urge to say something rude

Controlling our emotions when we are angry or upset



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Examples of when children rely on Inhibitory Control during the day

Waiting your turn

Stopping yourself from yelling or hitting another child who has offended you

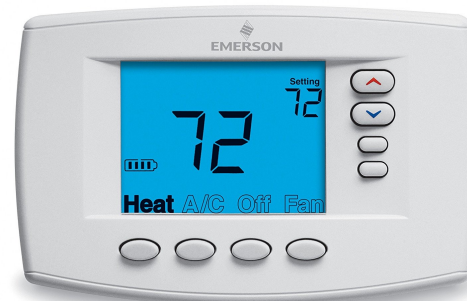
Ignoring distractions and staying on task while using materials



Self-regulation

Self-regulation is like an internal thermostat that gives us the ability to:

- Control impulses
- Manage emotions
- Exercise self-control



It is an ESSENTIAL life skill and an accurate predictor of academic success!



With self-regulation children learn to...



Pause

Think

Respond
Appropriately



6 steps for problem-solving

- Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful action.
- Acknowledge children's feelings.
- Gather information.
- Restate the problem.
- Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.
- Be prepared to give follow-up support.

Steps in Resolving Conflicts

- 1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.**
 - ▶ Place yourself between the children, on their level.
 - ▶ Use a calm voice and gentle touch.
 - ▶ Remain neutral rather than take sides.
- 2. Acknowledge children's feelings.**
 - ▶ "You look really upset."
 - ▶ Let children know you need to hold any object in question.
- 3. Gather information.**
 - ▶ "What's the problem?"
- 4. Restate the problem.**
 - ▶ "So the problem is . . ."
- 5. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.**
 - ▶ "What can we do to solve this problem?"
 - ▶ Encourage children to think of a solution.
- 6. Be prepared to give follow-up support.**
 - ▶ "You solved the problem!"
 - ▶ Stay near the children.

Grrrrrr!!!

UNWANTED BEHAVIOR
Almost always comes from
UNMET NEEDS

... and it comes back if the need
remains unmet!



Proactive VS Reactive

- Reactive behavior often refers to an immediate response to feelings about an uncontrollable situation, a problem, or other issues.
- Proactive behavior addresses future conditions, circumstances, or crises.

Being proactive revolves around anticipating problems or issues and designing plans that avoid negative outcomes or prepare for positive results.



Proactive VS Reactive

Think about the source of the conflict

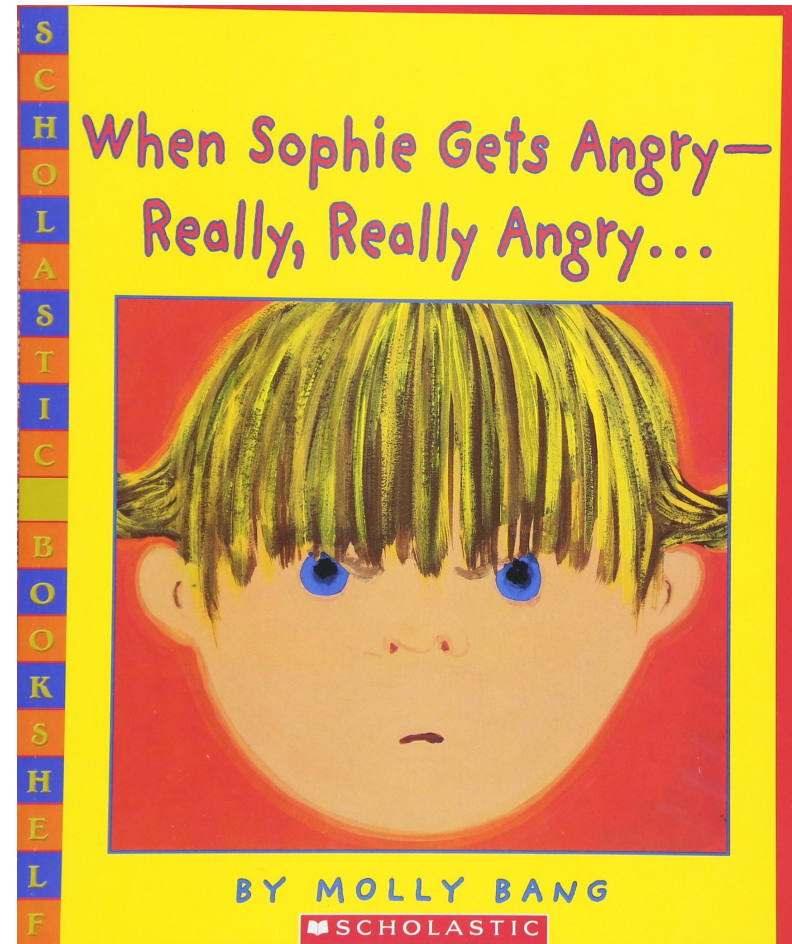
- Materials
- Space
- Privilege



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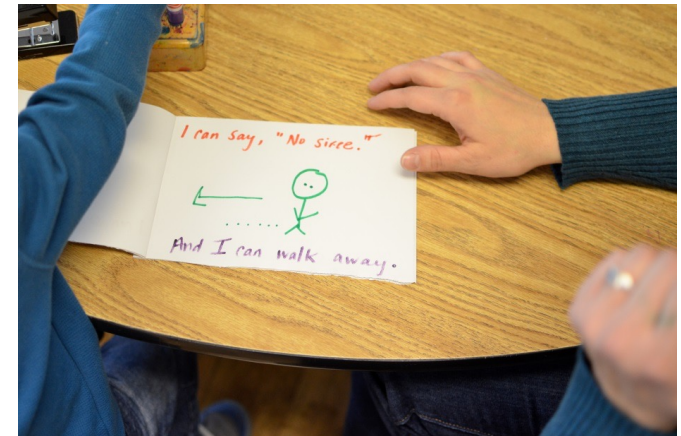
Strategies

- Calming places
- Do yoga and deep breathing
- Read books about emotions
- Have a predictable daily routine
- Incorporate Social Stories into classroom discussions



What Is a Social Story?

A Social Story is a simple description of a situation, concept, or social skill. It is individualized for each child and features the child as the main character. Social stories help explain situations that children find challenging.



Strategies

- Use a calm, neutral voice
- Offer children choices
- Acknowledge children's feelings
- Bring in sensory objects such as weighted socks, play dough, stress balls, and other objects children can manipulate with their hands



Remember to check your own communication

Communication breakdown

55% is body language

38% is tone of voice

7% is the words we use

Keep a calm and relaxed posture. Remember to breathe slowly and remain neutral.



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