

Conflict Between Friends

Friendships play an important role in both preventing bullying and helping children cope if it occurs. Knowing how to build and keep lasting friendships is important for children. The way friends act toward each other affects how long a friendship lasts and how strong it becomes. Compromising, forgiving, helping each other, appreciating a friend's achievements, and building mutual trust are important elements of lasting friendships.

All friendships experience periods of conflict. In the *Steps to Respect* program, students learn to manage and resolve conflicts with friends respectfully. They practice the following skill steps:

- Respectfully ask your friend what is wrong.
- Listen carefully, and think about your friend's point of view.
- Figure out what to do to make it better.
- Decide whether the solution is working. If it's not working, try something else.

Look for opportunities to try these additional ideas with your child at home:

- Guide your child in using the skill steps listed above when he has a conflict with a friend or family member. Help him take time to calm down before problem solving. And remind him to keep calm when working out conflicts respectfully.

- Discuss ways friends and families build trust. Some examples are: keeping promises, telling the truth, being a good listener, being fair to friends, being cooperative, apologizing sincerely when wrong, praising others, and trying to understand how others feel. Choose one of these behaviors. Have your child tell you about times when she has used—or has seen others use—that behavior. Tell her about times when you have used that behavior in your own friendships. Keep your conversation focused on positive examples. On another day, choose a different trust-building behavior to talk about.
- Watch TV shows or read books with your child. Increase his awareness of how the characters handle conflict. Did the characters use respectful methods for resolving their conflict(s)? Did they listen carefully to others' points of view? How could they have used other skills to solve the disagreement or conflict? Point out when characters use respectful methods.

Thank you for helping your child develop these important friendship skills. When everyone uses these and other *Steps to Respect* skills, we are better able to reach our goal of creating a safe, caring, respectful school.