



## ***Guiding Young Children's Behavior***

### ***Segment 5: Responding to Behavior Problems and Resolving Conflicts***

#### ***TRANSCRIPT for Objective 4***

#### ***Conflict Resolution***

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**Dr. Carlota Schechter, Saint Joseph College:** When you first see children involved in a conflict, I think it's important to step back and think about what your primary goal is - and your goal is to make this a learning opportunity for the children. So, the goal is not to end the conflict immediately. The goal is not to stop conflicts from happening, but the goal is when children are in a conflict situation, to try and help them learn the skills they need to be able to resolve a conflict independently. It's winter now in our school, and so a big learning goal for us is helping children to get their snow pants and their boots on when they're getting ready to go outside. It would be a lot quicker for us if we as the adults put the children's boots on for them, but then we wouldn't be teaching them anything. It wouldn't be a learning opportunity. The same thing is true with conflicts. If two children are struggling over a marker, it would be a lot easier for us to hand them another marker so they'd have two markers, or to separate the children, or to intervene in some other way. But that would not be a learning opportunity. As children begin to learn to use this conflict resolution procedure, they will begin to find non-aggressive ways to resolve conflicts and aggression will begin to decrease in a classroom. So, it's really important that you institute that procedure. The children who learn those conflict resolution strategies are less likely to be aggressive as they get to be older children. They're less likely to be the children who bully other children, and they're also more likely to stand up for their own rights and not be bullied as they get older.

**Host:** We would like to show you a series of steps that have been found to be successful in dealing with children's conflict. Let's look at the steps one at a time. In the first step you keep all the involved children together. It can be tempting to separate fighting children but keeping them together allows children to work through their problem and learn important problem-solving skills with you as their guide. The only time you would separate the children is if they are extremely angry or if there could be violence. Then you can still bring them back together when they have calmed down. Next, give each child a chance to explain what happened. A good way to do this is to ask one child at a time, "what happened?" and give them a chance to answer. If children are able to share what occurred then that's great. If they can't, you can share your own perceptions of what happened. You might say, "Well it looks like Michael hit Jeffrey and you're both very angry." After both children tell their story or you have shared your perceptions, you restate and clarify the problem. The goal here is to make sure the children

understand clearly the problem to be solved. Then you give each child a chance to suggest a solution. If the children have trouble with this step, you can help them by offering several solutions. The children can decide which one they want to try. This still gives the children a voice in the solution. You might say, "You could take turns or you could do it together. Which would you like to do?" Next the children agree on a solution and try it out while you watch to see how it goes. Later you can check with the children and see how things are going. Now we are going to see the process in action. Let's look at how one teacher uses several of the steps in the conflict resolution process.

**Olivia:** I want to put them away. No, I can do it.

**Teacher:** Excuse me. You have to negotiate.

**Narrator:** Notice how the teacher keeps these arguing children together.

**Teacher:** You want to put it away? Jared, do you want to put it away too?

**Jared:** Yeah. I'll put it away.

**Teacher:** You want to put it away? Okay. Nope, just sit down. And you want to put it away? And you want to put it away too?

**Narrator:** The caregiver has clarified what has happened and has restated the problem. Both children want to put the toy away.

**Teacher:** What should we do? It can only be put away by one person.

**Jared:** How bout me? I'm a...I'm a...

**Olivia:** Me.

**Teacher :** You'll have to talk to Jared.

**Olivia:** I want to carry this.

**Teacher:** You want to carry this too, right Jared? Ok.

**Jared:** How bout the both of us?

**Teacher:** That's a good solution. Why don't you ask Olivia?

**Narrator:** Finally, the caregiver gives each child a chance to suggest a solution. Then the teacher listens patiently as the children themselves come up with ways to resolve their problem.

**Jared:** Is that okay? Why?

**Olivia:** I want to do it by myself.

**Jared:** I'm a good person. Not a bad person.

**Olivia:** I want to do it.

**Jared:** Can I do this Ginny?

**Teacher:** You'll have to ask Olivia. You want to put it away, right? You'll have to negotiate with Olivia.

**Jared:** Please, Olivia. I'm a good boy. I would advise you, because you don't like me, that I put it away.

**Teacher:** Excuse me, hold on. This has to stay here until you both come up with a solution that you think is okay.

**Jared:** It's okay? Why?

**Olivia:** I want to do it.

**Teacher:** It stays right here until you come up with a solution with Olivia.

**Jared:** How bout (unintelligible). Okay, okay.

**Host:** Sometimes children come up with fair and satisfying solutions to conflicts on their own. Sometimes, as in this case, they have trouble coming up with just the right solution. One thing you can do is suggest several ways to resolve things. Children can choose which solution they'd like to try. You might say, "We could carry the toy to the shelf together, or one of you could carry it to the shelf now and the other could carry it to the shelf later. Which of those things do you want to try?" Even though these are teacher suggestions, it still gives the children a choice in how to solve the problem. Now we want you to think about how this conflict resolution process differs from what you currently do. Which steps do you already use? Which new ones will you try?

### **Activity 5C: Conflict Resolution**

**Voiceover:** How is this conflict resolution process different from what you do now? Which steps do you already use? Which new ones will you try?

#### **Did you consider ...?**

**Voiceover:** Some steps of the conflict resolution model that you might try are:

- Keep arguing children together
- Ask each child what happened (share your own observations, if children can't do this)
- Restate/clarify the problem
- Ask each child to suggest a solution (offer them several solutions to pick from, if they can't think of any on their own)
- Check with children later to see how the solution worked