



## **Strategies for Solving Behavior Problems in the Classroom**

1. Establish positive relationships with each child
2. Plan to prevent problems with toys and materials, schedule, group times and space
3. Act in consistent positive ways with children
  - a. Create a secure feeling
  - b. Support families and cultures
  - c. Help children become friendly and cooperative
  - d. Solve problems with a positive approach
  - e. Teach children to identify feelings and express them appropriately
4. Help children with particularly challenging behaviors to acquire social skills and self-regulation

### **Steps for Effective Problem Solving**

1. **Stop and calm down.** Do whatever it takes to get yourself feeling neutral. Take a few deep breaths. Relax; count to 10. Get a drink of water. Remove yourself from the group and close your eyes for a minute. ***Remember, no one can use thinking skills to solve problems or conflict when they are feeling angry, upset or hurt.***
2. **Get together to figure out the cause of the problem. What is the problem about?** You may want to take turns describing the problem and sharing your feelings, wants and opinions related to the problem. Listen without interrupting. Don't talk about **solutions** until you agree on **what the problem is about.**
3. **Brainstorm ideas for solving the problem.** Make a list of all the possible solutions – practical and impractical. Don't judge yet.
4. **Evaluate the ideas for solving the problem.** Choose the best idea(s) and use them to **plan** a course of action.
5. **Put your plan into action.** Decide on a time and place to check your progress – how is your plan working? Do you need anything else?



## **Checklist of Common Causes of Conflicts in Pre-School Programs**

*Use this checklist to identify possible causes of conflicts in your program:*

- Inappropriate or poorly planned program activities for the age of the children
- Inappropriate use or lack of suitable space, equipment or supplies
- Poor handling of transition times – too much waiting between activities
- Failure to spot or anticipate problems about to happen
- Lack of understanding of children’s needs, resulting in a mismatch between the children’s capabilities and the expectations of the program
- Personality or temperament clashes among children or between staff and children
- Overly competitive atmosphere
- Intolerant/unfriendly atmosphere
- Poor communication (by children and/or adults who can’t or don’t express needs appropriately, can’t observe, don’t know how to listen)
- Misuse of power by staff – expectations too high, too authoritarian or controlling
- Too many unreasonable rules – failure to involve children in shaping rules
- Absence of problem-solving skills
- Lack of clarity about what the expectations are, how things are organized, what the limits and boundaries are



## Techniques Staff can use to Diffuse or Reduce Conflict Situations

- **Get your own feelings under control.** Act with firmness and authority if needed. But never vent your own anger towards the children.
- **Ignore the behavior.** Assume it won't get worse and don't fuel it with your attention.
- **Intervene immediately if children are in danger or hurting each other.** Help them find ways to use words to talk through their issues.
- **Redirect children.** Help children get involved in a different activity. Invite them to help you with a chore. Help them start a new game.
- **Help children withdraw temporarily if they are out of control.** Help them think of ways to cool off and "get themselves together". This is especially helpful when children are very angry, crying or having a temper tantrum.
- **Use special signals.** Use eye contact or gestures to alert a child of the need for self-control. This is most effective if you and a child have agreed on the special signal in advance.
- **Move closely to children when you see signs they may be losing control.**
- **Show interest.** If children look bored, sad, upset or angry, engage the child in conversation. Let them know you are interested in their problems, concerns, fears, ideas, etc.
- **Use humor.** Make a joke to ease the tension. Be sure to use humor with sensitivity. Never use humor to make fun of children.
- **Give assistance.** Offer help and support when children might not understand directions or feel frustrated.
- **Change the routine.** Break the tension with a change of pace if an inappropriate activity or schedule seems to be causing the problem.
- **Remove objects that cause problems.** Put away or move objects that seem to bring out negative behavior and provoke conflicts.