

Kelso's Choice - Conflict Management for Children

"It's your choice"

Conflict or disagreement is normal and often happens when children get together. However, hurtful words, gestures, or physical attack are unacceptable ways to deal with conflict and disagreement at school.

Our goal is to teach students several positive ways to deal with these difficult situations. To do this, we are asking students who have minor problems to try at least two of the following ideas:

1. Go to another game or activity.
2. Share and take turns.
3. Respectfully talk it over and listen to each other.
4. Walk away from the problem.
5. Ignore the problem behavior.
6. Tell the person to stop the problem behavior.
7. Apologize.
8. Make a deal or compromise.
9. Wait to cool off.

This process can be done before asking for adult help. When a request for adult help is made, it will include the two areas tried – “Mrs. Jones, Tad is teasing me about my glasses. I tried ignoring him, and I’ve told him it hurts my feelings when he makes fun of me. He’s still calling me names.” The duty supervisor at school will get involved and help solve the problem using our playground discipline plan.

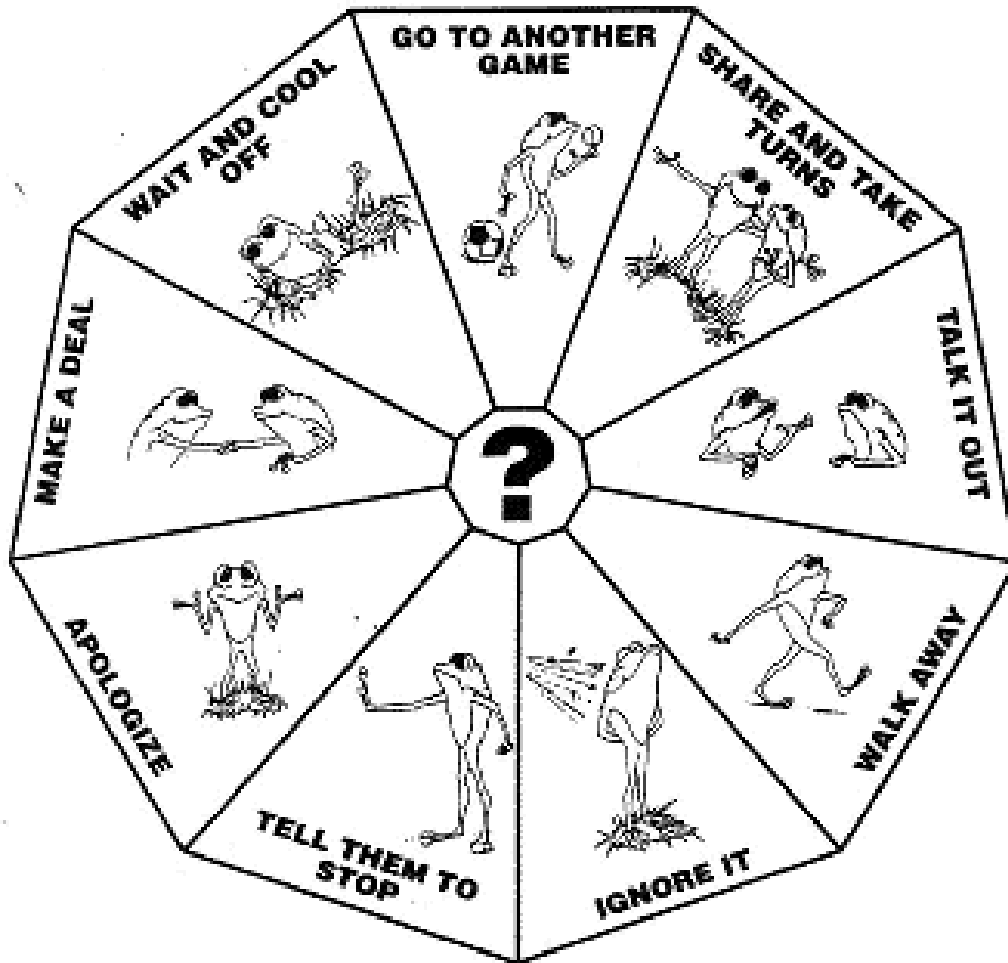
Of course, the duty supervisor will immediately handle any serious conflicts that cause a child to feel threatened or frightened.

By using this plan, we believe that our students will develop effective problem-solving skills that they can use again and again. It will help them to deal with conflict in a positive manner and to make appropriate decisions. Knowing what to do will help students reduce the stress and number of conflicts they have at school and in their neighborhood.

This program is currently used in our school. Colorful charts (similar to the one shown on the reverse side) illustrating ways to deal with conflict are posted so all children will know their choices. We encourage you to become familiar with this program and use it in your home. By working together, we can develop a healthy life skill for young people to use at home and at school.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE!

DO YOU HAVE A SMALL PROBLEM?
TRY 2 OF KELSO'S CHOICES:



**IF YOU HAVE A BIG PROBLEM,
TELL AN ADULT YOU TRUST.**

Emphasize to students that not all choices work in all situations. *Example: "Would you ignore someone who was pulling your hair?" Would you walk away if someone had your pencil?"*

Practice: State a small problem common to a particular age group. Have students come up to the poster and state the two choices they would try. Discuss other options.

Ask students which choices they are already really good at doing and which ones they want to improve in. This helps students to internalize the choice options.

GO TO ANOTHER GAME

- Ask: “What games / activities are popular at school? What do you usually play at recess? At home? Do any of you play the same game every day?”
- List by words or illustration all the things students can do at recess.
- Tell students of a time when your favorite game wasn’t as much fun because of someone cheating or the rules kept changing.
- Discuss how students get stuck in the habit of doing something even if it is not fun. When there are too many small problems, it’s time to switch games. Tell them that “You are not a quitter; it just means you are smart and want to have fun!”

SHARE AND TAKE TURNS

- Ask a student to go get something in the room that has to be shared (globe, ball, books, etc.) Discuss all the objects at school that must be shared.
- Model how to politely ask to use the articles.
- Ask for volunteers to model asking to use the articles.
- Tell students to watch for a classmate who is silently waiting for a turn (swings, using markers, etc.).
- Model how to offer to take turns when a classmate is waiting.
- Ask for volunteers to model offering an article.
- Discuss how important it is to share and consequences of not sharing.

TALK IT OUT

- Tell students to look at the poster. Each person needs to explain their side while the other listens. They need to switch. This choice will only work if the two friends are willing to listen to each other. *Example: A student gets feelings hurt when a friend jokingly calls them a name.*
- Ask students to use “I” messages when explaining how they feel: “When you _____, I felt _____.”
- Have students practice “I” messages.
- State that the “I” message is even more powerful if the child has good eye contact and uses the name of the person to gain their attention.

WALK AWAY

- Tell students: “This choice often goes with ignoring. You need to move away from someone who is teasing you.”
- Explain to students: “This doesn’t mean you’re ‘chicken’; it just means you’re smart enough to walk off and that you are in control.”
- Model inappropriate stomping away.
- Model appropriate “walk away” by slowly fading away.
- Ask for volunteers to model “walk away.”

IGNORE IT

- Tell students to look at the chart. “The frog in the illustration is ignoring a problem by not looking and not listening.”
- Ask students to list times to ignore (teasing, name calling).

IGNORE IT (continued)

- Tell students: “Ignoring is very hard to do. You have to do it for several days before the person stops bothering you. This choice is not a quick way to solve the problem, but it will eventually work.”
- Discuss the idea that misbehavior can accelerate when ignored, but will eventually lessen. “The teasing may get worse before it gets better!”
- Model inappropriate ignoring (huffing sounds, angry look, arms crossed).
- Model appropriate ignoring (calm face, relaxed body).
- Have students practice calmly ignoring a sound, a disturbance, or a conversation with another child.

MAKE A DEAL

- Tell students: “‘Make a deal’ means you lose a little, but you gain a lot. It’s like making a bargain or a compromise.” *Example: Two girls want to play different games at recess. They will lose a little when making a deal (cannot play their game the entire recess), but they will gain a lot (fun and friendship).*
- Ask students to give an example of when they would need to make a deal. How could they strike a bargain? *Example: Both students want a certain game, or both students want to sit by a third friend on the bus but only two allowed per seat, etc.*
- Games such as “Rock, Scissors, Paper”, picking a number between one and ten, and flipping a coin for heads or tails can also be taught.

WAIT AND COOL OFF

- Tell students: “If all else fails and a small problem has gotten you really upset, wait and cool off. Go to a quiet spot and think about how you are going to solve this problem.”
- Discuss areas at school, home, or in the neighborhood where students can go to get calmed down (library, a fort, etc.).

TELL THEM TO STOP

- Tell students: “You may have tried to ignore someone and it just isn’t working. Telling them to stop will work if you do it right.”
- Model inappropriate “STOP IT” (whining and aggressive voice).
- Discuss with students: “If you really want someone to stop, you must tell them in a polite, assertive way. Listen to this ... “ *Example: Get close to the person, look him or her in the eye, and say, in a quiet but firm voice, “Please stop”*
- Ask for volunteers to model.

APOLOGIZE

- Tell students the apology has to be sincere, and the other person must be able to forgive. (Mention that students sometimes have to wait a day or two for things to cool down.)
- Model inappropriate “sorry” (sounds caustic, flippant).
- Model appropriate “I am sorry.”
- Ask students for additional phrases they use when they apologize: “I didn’t mean it, ““Excuse me,” “I apologize.”