



Asset 36: Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Working it Out

Whether it's a spat between sisters over who should take out the trash or an argument between nations over natural resources, disagreements are a part of being human. But no matter how small or large, every dispute can be resolved peacefully if both sides are willing to listen and compromise. Encourage young people to talk it out—and truly listen to one another. Speaking and listening respectfully are key.

Here are the facts

Research shows that young people who resolve conflicts peacefully do better in school, have higher self-esteem, and are less likely to use alcohol and other substances. About 40 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say they seek to resolve conflicts nonviolently, according to Search Institute surveys. It's normal for anyone to feel mad every now and then, but learning to keep cool helps people express anger more effectively.

Tips for building this asset

When you notice two young people arguing, ask them to stop and take a deep breath. Once they're calmer, ask them to think about why they are mad before they start talking. Being calm helps to focus on the problem at hand and not on attacking the other person. Suggest they talk about problems before the problems get too big. This can help keep everyone from blowing things out of proportion.

Also try this

In your home and family: Talk with your child about a conflict you had as a young person. Discuss how you handled the situation then and how you might approach it now.

In your neighborhood and community: Model peaceful conflict resolution in your own life. Remember, when you argue in public, whether it's in a grocery store or on a bus, there's a good chance young people are listening. What do you want them to hear?

In your school or youth program: When a conflict arises between two young people in your school or program, help them through the following steps: Have each person 1. State what he or she wants without blaming others; 2. Listen and try to understand each other; 3. Stay focused on the conflict at hand don't bring up other conflicts; 4. Emphasize creative problem-solving and new solutions; and 5. Negotiate a win-win result.