

WIN WIN learning to resolve conflicts and COEXIST

Each child is unique and we need to nurture his potential! All educators, teachers parents, counselors are striving for the stated goal. But when we make children come together they fight, they hit , they abuse and a lot more Why? How do we achieve peaceful coexistence where everyone feels he is unique? Our challenge is - How to develop sensitivity in children that each one of them is good and it is not same as being better than the other. Lets go back and see why do children fight, because they disagree and they desire and want to achieve. These are not negative traits, its individual's need and that made me think that what are these children lacking –the realization that we have to coexist, we are different but not necessarily against each other or opposite of each other. We can win but necessarily the other child does not have to loose for me to win!

A series of observation, various case studies gave birth to a workshop simulation where children had to learn to disagree amiably. Objective was to teach children to find solutions to their differences and conflicts without being aggressive. The essence was that we do not need to talk about assertiveness and conflict resolution only to adults; children need to understand it and practice it in much simpler ways. In a series of workshop we taught children to find solutions to their differences and resolve conflicts.

We allowed 10 years old to talk about their differences and two children who were at daggers drawn were made to converse. The rule was that they had to face each other, maintain eye-contact, listen when one person speaks, start a sentence by I agree.... And wait for their turns to speak. Each pair decided on a topic on which they disagreed and they had to convince each other or reach a point acceptable to both. In the controlled workshop situation children discussed the issue of conflict again and again and shared their feelings. They felt respected, they realized the issue can be solved by listening, abusive language, hitting etc was not at all needed as they could communicate effectively with each other. All the pairs reached an acceptable point of view that was shared by them without any resentment or hostility.

Key principles of resolving conflict thus derived in the workshop were as follows:-

STOP . . .LOOK-Other person is different and has an idea so stop before you lose control of your temper and make the conflict worse.

SAY . . .what you feel is the problem. What is causing the disagreement? What do you want?

LISTEN . . .to the other person's ideas and feelings.

THINK . . .of solutions that will satisfy both of you.

If you still can't agree, start again, re-look into the situation but keep on interacting....You will work it out.

The discussions were observed by peers and questions were put across to them to think

What caused the disagreement?

2. How did you feel? What did you say or do?

3. Why do you think they use to get so angry at each other?

4. Did getting angry make things better or worse?

5. Were they listening to each other? What happens when people who disagree don't listen to each other?

7. Do you think blaming e for the conflict? Why?

8. How did Essie feel? How did Groark feel?

9. In the end, did they both get what they wanted? How were they able to do that?

10. Why is it important to settle conflicts They practiced it more in the classroom situation with teacher acting as a facilitator

Competitiveness or Coexistence !School systems have to structure the processes so that child feels good about himself at the same time good about his peers.

Dealing with aggressive , violent behavior has been a very integral part of any school counsellor's job . I have been investing a lot of time over the years to help children control anger and the crux of the matter is each child needs to feel accepted and worthwhile

Skills for Life series compiled by Salony Priya counseling psychologist