Teaching children about conflict resolution

The following steps are useful in helping children find peaceful ways of solving problems with other people. You can change the way you ask the questions depending on the age of the child, but the general steps are the same for all ages.

- Begin by letting children know that it is possible to find a good solution. Parents could say something like: "I'm sure if we all think about this we might find a way of everyone getting what they want".
- Help children identify how they are feeling, and help them to label and express their emotions. (eg 'You're looking cross – I'm wondering if you're feeling cross, but also a bit sad and hurt, that you can't join in their game).
- Help children to work out what they really want by asking them what they would like to have happen. Help them to work out what the underlying need is, (eg 'You say you wish your friend would go away. I'm wondering if you are also wishing that you could help the group build the cubby').
- Help your child to understand the other person's point of view and to learn how to take their perspective. Ask them what they think the other person might be feeling, or how they might feel if they were in the same situation. You could get them to ask the other person to say how they are feeling and what they would like to have happen.
- Together, you could encourage the children to brainstorm different ways that they could solve the problem. Encourage them to come up with several different and interesting ways that they could go about it.
- Help the children to choose the options that they think work best for everyone, and get them to have a go at putting them into practice. Stay around to see how they get on, and help them fine-tune the solution if needed.
- Reading children books that teach conflict resolution skills through stories can also be helpful. (e.g., *Wise Ways to Win* children's story book – see below).

Resources

- Australian Psychological Society. (1995). *Punishment and behaviour change*. Position Paper available from the APS.
- Gershoff, E. T. (2002). Corporal punishment by Parent and Associated Child Behaviours and Experiences: A meta analytic and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin, 128*(4), 539-579.
- Good Australian resources for parents can be found at –
  – www.bullying.com.au
  – Bullying: Spotting it, Stopping it poster from Psychologists for Peace – an interest group of the APS.
  – Conflict resolution posters and *Wise Ways to Win* story book for families and children from Psychologists for Peace – an interest group of the APS.