

Pocket Reference

Managing Conflict: Keeping Your Cool and Making It a Teachable Moment

The first step in managing your emotions is to know yourself and to have a toolbox of techniques that help you keep your cool under stress.

- Know your limits. What is your “boiling point”? What emotional triggers affect you?
- Make a plan in advance of any difficult conversation or confrontation; know what you want to accomplish. Include a way to take a “time-out” if things are getting over-heated.
- Pay attention to your own emotional temperature; if you’re getting tense, take a breath, count to 10, and use positive coping thoughts.

Lay the foundation for making a difficult conversation productive

- Give warnings before loaded conversations; make sure your child knows the consequences of their actions.
- Use active listening techniques: “I” statements, restate what someone says, ask open-ended questions
- Let the person know they are being heard; remember, validation does not equal agreement, but it can diffuse a tense situation and open the door for communication
- Have a plan for your next steps; know where you want to end up at the end of the conversation.

Emotional Reset

Learn to recognize when emotions are too high to have a stressful, emotional conversation. Take a time out and agree to come back to the issue when everyone is “cooler.” [How to Install Your "Emotional Reset Button"](#) discusses how you can give yourself a cue to step back from intense emotional upset.

Mindfulness skills

- Glitter jar – watch thoughts settle
- Watching thoughts pass like clouds or leaves on a stream
- Observe, describe, don’t judge
- Pay attention to your breath

Calm down skills for kids

- Pizza breathing
- Jumping jacks or jump rope
- Blow bubbles
- Watch fish
- Go for a walk
- Bear hug (person or stuffed animal)
- Ask your kids to help come up with their own personal list

Solving Conflict

- Identify the specific conflict to be solve -- ONE issue to talk about (toys are not picked up v. general messiness)
- Brainstorm solutions together; all ideas are welcome
- Work out pros and cons
- Choose one solution that both sides can live with (room must be cleaned before company comes, other times parent will tolerate door being kept closed)
- Agree to try it: make a contract, including length of time and consequences; make sure everyone understands these; set a date to review progress

Emotional Thermometer

We've created a template for you to fill out with your child to label what they are feeling. You can use this with older children as well, using age appropriate language. This will help your child (and yourself) begin to manage those emotions in a way that keeps feelings from exploding. (separate handout)

How to Make a Glitter Jar (<http://www.pbs.org/parents/crafts-for-kids/time-out-timer/>)

This is a jar filled with water, clear gel glue, and ultra-fine glitter. You shake it and the glitter settles slowly, which is very relaxing to watch, providing something to focus on in order to relax.

Materials:

- A clean empty water bottle, with label removed, that will fit in your child's hands
- Clear gel glue
- Super glue
- Glitter
- Hot water

Directions:

- **Fill the bottle** about 3/4 of the way with hot water, then add a bottle of glitter glue and a small tube of glitter.
- **Screw on the cap** and play with the mixture until it takes about five minutes (our standard time out time!) for the glitter to settle at the bottom of the bottle. Add more clear gel glue to make it go slower or more water to make it settle faster.
- **Super glue the cap** onto the water bottle so it can't come off in your child's hands.

Looking to Learn More?

Mindfulness: What it is and How to Explain it to Kids and Adults

(<http://blissfulkids.com/what-is-mindfulness-and-how-to-explain-it-to-kids>)

Helping to Resolve Conflict: Suggestions for Families

(<https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/mental-health-matters/social-and-emotional-learning/resolving-conflict>)

Helpful books:

Ages 2 to 6 years old: Parenting the Strong-willed Child by Rex Forehand and Nicholas Long

Ages 5 to 12: Your Defiant Child: 8 Steps to Better Behavior by Russell Barkley and Christine Benton

Ages 12 and up: Your Defiant Teen by Russell Barkley

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Farber and Elaine Mazlish

Keeping things in perspective and maintaining a sense of humor:

It's a Magical World: 7 Essential Parenting Lessons From 'Calvin and Hobbes'

(<https://www.parentmap.com/article/parenting-lessons-inspired-by-calvin-hobbes>)

Find the PowerPoint from today's workshop, Pocket Reference and our article *Emotional Regulation: A User's Guide* as well as links to additional resources at <http://www.supportingparentsessexnj.org/>.