

Healthy Response to Conflict

“How was your day?” “Terrible! Nobody likes me.” Do you sometimes worry about how to help your child get along with her classmates? Some kids have an easier time socially, but everyone has to face conflict sometimes, and it can feel pretty rotten.

Help your child develop emotionally healthy habits for responding to conflict.

- **Model.** Your child is watching how you respond. Try not to REACT with emotions, but to RESPOND in a mature, confident way.
- **Acknowledge his feelings briefly.** Be sympathetic, but don't dwell on the negative feelings.
- **Think positively.** Model assuming the best intentions on the part of the other person.
- **Try to let go.** Help her see if it's a small annoyance that can be let go. Help her find a distraction until her feelings cool down.
- **Communicate.** IF the incident continues to bother your child, encourage him to talk to the other child. Help him practice how to be honest about his feelings in a non-threatening way. (Don't criticize the other person – just tell how you felt when he did/said what he did.)
- **LET IT GO.** Now your child really must let it go – for her own emotional benefit. MODEL THIS RESPONSE. “You stood up for yourself by expressing your feelings in an appropriate way. Now you can move forward and enjoy life.” (Note: Do this regardless of the other child's reaction. Your child needs to learn that she is in charge of her OWN thoughts, feelings, and actions – not anyone else's.)

Repeated meanness by one student to another particular student is harassment. Model how to respond to harassment:

- **Be confident.** Miramonte takes harassment very seriously. Assure your child that the issue can and will be resolved. DON'T model anger or helplessness.
- **Involve the appropriate authority.** We will address the issue, and do what it takes to stop the harassment. Your child's job is to help us be aware of it. FIRST contact the adult in charge at the time of the harassment: Classroom teacher, P.E. teacher, playground supervisor, After School Care supervisor....
- **Communicate.** Give the authority the opportunity to resolve the problem. At the first communication, give specific examples of previous incidents if needed, but then communicate IMMEDIATELY after each incident.
- **Give appropriate help.** Don't dredge up old incidents any more. Address today's incident TODAY. This is what will bring a change in the child's behavior.