

PARENT TIP SHEET: MANAGING DISAGREEMENT

Introduction

Children's friendships contribute to their wellbeing and development in many ways. They enable children to have fun, provide a sense of belonging and support and create opportunities to practise important social skills. Experiencing quality friendships at school also helps children to prepare for later adult friendships, work-based relationships and romantic relationships.

This tip sheet complements the information Life Education shares with your children in their school program and offers simple ideas to teach your children how to manage disagreements.



The way in which you manage disagreements in your family will influence how your child will manage disagreement. Consider agreeing as a family that it is unacceptable for anyone to use physical aggression or nasty verbal insults as part of managing a disagreement.

Stress that nobody can successfully deal with a disagreement with another person unless they first get their angry or hurt feelings under control so that they can think clearly about what is best way to deal with the situation. Remind them to make sure that they have checked the facts that are part of the disagreement.



BEHAVIOURS TO AVOID

Ignoring This occurs when one or more of the people involved in the disagreement pretends that there isn't really a problem

Forcing Being physically or verbally aggressive towards the other person(s) with whom you are in disagreement

POSITIVE SOCIAL SKILLS TO USE FOR MANAGING DISAGREEMENT

Teach discuss and, where appropriate, model the use of positive social skills for dealing with a disagreement. The best skill to use will depend a lot on the nature of the disagreement. Here are some of the most important skills.

Talking it out and using I-messages

Each person uses I-messages to explain how they see the situation, how they feel about it and what they would like to see as an outcome. I-messages are statements that start with 'I' such as:

- I think that... · I am annoyed that... because...
- I feel that.... · I want you to stop.... because...

Active Listening

This skill involves summarising in your own words what you think the other person has said in order to check for understanding e.g.

So you didn't realise that it had been lost... is that what you meant?

Respectful Disagreeing

This skill involves first stating your points of agreement before stating your points of disagreement. e.g.
I agree with you about... but I disagree with you about...

Negotiating

This skill requires both people to discuss the problem and then decide on a solution to the disagreement which is acceptable to both of them.

Apologising

Apologising means sincerely saying you are sorry for your contribution to the disagreement and, if appropriate, making amends by making the situation better in some way.

Asking an adult to help you sort it out

Sometimes a disagreement is more likely to be successfully managed when a parent or adult offers to help the child sort things out either by offering suggestions or by speaking with some of the people involved. Ask your child:

"Is this a situation that you feel you can sort out by yourself or do you want me to help in some way?"

Remember to:

- Teach & model a variety of positive social skills to use when managing disagreements.
- Reinforce not using physical aggression or nasty putdowns as part of managing a disagreement.