

Skills Parents Can Teach Kids to Resolve Conflicts

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In the past few years, kids have faced challenges that often bring up difficult social and emotional responses. These could be caused by things like pandemic changes in their learning, bullying from other children, political protests and turmoil on the news.

Education experts point to children struggling with social and mental health challenges after nearly two years of pandemic disruptions in the classroom. Two-thirds of teachers and school district leaders say students are misbehaving more than before the pandemic, according to a recent survey by EdWeek's Research Center.

Conflicts are unpleasant and unavoidable, but learning how to deal with them is an important lesson for kids. For example, because I teach in a virtual classroom, I use smaller breakout rooms for my students so they are more comfortable talking to each other when discussing questions at the end of a lesson. Not only does this help them listen to one another, but it helps them understand their peers' opinions. When students learn how to reduce conflicts, they'll be better able to achieve academic and personal goals, according to the American School Counselor Association.

This is only one way I try to create an environment where children can develop valuable skills to resolve conflicts. Read on to find out other strategies parents can use in their daily lives.

Regulate Reactions

Nothing will get solved when kids are extremely emotional, so the first step is showing them how to calm down. Teach them tools for relaxing like taking deep breaths, playing with a pet, getting a hug, or splashing water on their face.

Help children label what they're feeling so they understand what's go-



Barton

ing on, instead of shutting down when disputes happen. Ask if they're frustrated, embarrassed or angry? Students feel loved and supported when parents demonstrate empathy.

Communication Conflicts

Once emotions have cooled it's easier for parents to communicate with children about the root cause of the conflict.

Using "I" statements is a great way to help children not only label their emotion, but express why they feel the way they do. Try having them practice "I feel ____ when ____." When my son has an issue with a friend, I use this technique so I can understand his perspective. I empathize with him, letting him know I understand why he feels the way he does. I offer some possible explanations for why the friend might have acted the way he did; perhaps they were having a bad day. By considering the other person's point of view, I've found it can help deescalate the problem.

Solve Problems

After the problem is identified it's time to brainstorm solutions. Parents may want to jump in and referee conflicts, but kids need to navigate problem solving for themselves eventually.

Monitoring the conflict resolution process and offering some helpful suggestions is a great approach. Be available for guidance and emotional support. Encourage children to come up with options, which could include compromise. If they are having trouble knowing where to start, activities such as role playing can help children explore different ways to solve their problem.

Make Apologies

In some conflicts, kids need to

worked as a behavioral specialist and community integration coach. Chandler is a physician's assistant in orthopedics.

They moved to their South Salem farmhouse in 2017. Since then, they have opened their spare room to those in need of temporary shelter and shared the bounty of their garden with local homeless shelters.

But they wanted to do more and saw an opportunity after talking with Russ Monk, their neighbor across the street, about his latest project. Monk had been working with the city to design comfortable and secure temporary shelters to meet the needs of unhoused individuals.

Arana and Chandler have a soft spot in their hearts for those struggling with housing security.

"It can happen to anyone, that's what people need to realize," Arana, who experienced homelessness in her mid-20s, said. "They might be interacting with somebody who is sleeping in their car or doesn't know where they'll be sleeping the next night."

She and Chandler were proactive in talking to neighbors about their plan, including those next door and closest to the micro-shelter. Their neighbors include social workers, police officers, educators and medical professionals.

They laid a gravel pad, purchased a Compact Livable Temporary Shelter and connected with a women's shelter run by the local United Way to find a candidate for their first guest.

Micro-shelter has heating and air conditioning

The micro-shelter on Arana and Chandler's property is the prototype de-

signed by Monk and manufactured by Edomo Homes in West Salem.

Monk said he didn't believe the structure, because of its dimensions and portability, was subject to city approval or permits. City officials told the Statesman Journal homeowners should contact the city to determine if the use is allowed and permits are required for their property.

The shelter is made of standard building materials, including sheetrock, insulation and a metal roof. It has heating and air conditioning, three small windows, vinyl plank flooring and 110-volt electric outlets.

Inside there's room for a bed that's smaller than a twin, a table on the opposite side, and a mini-HVAC unit against the back wall.

Monk paid a third of the cost for the micro-shelter, which retails for \$5,900. The price did not include the HVAC unit (about \$400), the bed and the front porch.

The shelter does not have plumbing, which means the guest needs to access Arana and Chandler's home for bathroom and kitchen facilities. The use of those facilities is outlined in the guest agreement.

Guest is thankful for opportunity to save money

Cindel Mikesell and her 20-year-old cat Natty have settled comfortably into their new temporary home.

She was recommended to the property owners by Lynelle Wilcox, program manager for SafeSleep United, where Arana volunteered before the pandemic. Mikesell had been a guest there.

"When Lisa told me about this pro-

ject and their wish to shelter someone, Cindel came to mind because she has some similar interests and values as the homeowners," Wilcox said. "All three of them love gardening and cats; they each are vegetarians, interested in frugality, growing much of their own food, and ecologically friendly living."

Having access to the property owners' garden will help Mikesell eat healthier and control her Type 2 diabetes.

She had been discouraged about not being able to afford a place to live, even after getting a full-time job and what she called the best pay of her life.

She is thankful for an opportunity that allows her to live rent-free and save money, and she couldn't ask for more hospitable hosts.

"They're kind and they're encouraging," Mikesell said. "It's like having a family. They've really embraced me."

Arana and Chandler designated a couple of barrel planters, already filled with dirt, for Mikesell to grow whatever she likes. A \$500 gift card was donated to give Mikesell as a welcome gift.

The guest agreement indicates the micro-shelter arrangement will be reviewed on a month-to-month basis for up to one year. It is a free will arrangement, meaning the guest may leave or be asked to leave at any time for any reason.

"For Cindel, for ourselves and for our neighbors, we hope we have success," Chandler said. "We hope it will inspire other neighborhoods to do the same."

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Micro-shelters

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guest.

Family, friends and neighbors donated more than \$2,800 to help the couple pay for the 9x8 foot structure, like the ones placed in designated villages to house the homeless on northeast Portland Road and southeast Turner Road.

The city's commitment to establishing managed micro-shelter villages throughout the city has floundered, despite significant public fundraising. The City Council received pushback over proposed locations last fall from a northwest neighborhood and this spring from a northeast apartment complex owner.

Arana and Chandler understand the apprehension because of negative stereotypes about the homeless. They are cautious, too, which is why they sought help vetting someone to participate in the pilot project.

Their first guest is Cindel Mikesell, a 42-year-old woman who has a full-time job but can't afford housing.

Mikesell moved in a couple weeks ago after signing a guest agreement defining the arrangement and outlining expectations. She can reside in the micro-shelter free for up to 12 months, giving her time to gain financial stability and housing security.

Hosts are passionate about housing security

Arana and Chandler have been together for 20 years and married for 10. Arana is retired and disabled and once

Crafters

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anticipates the 120-foot-by-300-foot market area should easily fill up on this year's May 6 opening evening alongside the city's First Friday event.

"Some vendors won't be coming to the opening weekend or will have sporadic schedules," she said, "while some want to come every weekend, and still others just wanting to come on Fridays or Saturdays."

"Though we have 42 spaces, there's room to wiggle and put in a few more, maybe," she said. Purchasing an Oregon Crafters Market membership can help alleviate the scheduling frenzy for dedicated vendors, she noted.

"The first year we were open (the summer of 2020) it was really scary for me," Ewing said. "My anxiety level was

up to here just trying to start something new."

In the second year, she said she felt the market could have been busier, but attributed that to vendor and pedestrian absences due to the ongoing pandemic.

"I know that this year's opening weekend will be full," she said, "but things are ever-changing as far as commitments from people since we have an ongoing open-to-apply plan. We're always accepting new vendors."

Longtime OCM vendor and member Ruth Patching sells tie-dye items such as dresses, baby clothes, shirts — and the shoelaces — at her booth, called Soap and Stitches.

She said the event is "really enjoyable; it's long hours but it's a welcoming environment and there is a great mixture of people, which is fun."

Brent Rutter and Patty Tatum are Albany residents who have made the pilgrimage to the Oregon Crafters Market

for the past two years to sell their eclectic wares. Rutter's booth is called Rutter's Rustic Creations, which peddles wood carvings, "Funky Fish" art and other items.

He said the Oregon Crafter's Market was "the only game in the state" that functioned well during the pandemic, since it was "open-air and outside."

Oregon Crafters Market owner Glen Damewood also owns the iconic 1890's-era Mac's Place, as well as two Wooden Nickel eateries. He purchased the market lot from a friend who had had experience in working the longtime Portland Saturday Market, where Ewing was once a vendor.

The lot houses a small building that Damewood has converted into a kitchen area. A two-story addition will feature an open-air restaurant on the bottom floor and a second-floor adults-only lounge called the Rong Bar. The entire structure — situated as it is at the inter-

section of High and Water streets and fronting Silver Creek — will be known as the High Water Grill.

A street-level family outdoor dining area hugs the Water Street sidewalk and the existing Rong Stage hosts live music during the First Friday events each month as well as the Saturday/Sunday market days each weekend through October 30.

All proceeds from the market, Ewing said, go to the Silver Fox Foundation, which disburses funds back into the community by allowing local students, youth sports and clubs to fundraise at the market.

Weekend dates and event and vendor information can be found at www.oregoncraftersmarket.com.

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