

An Eye for an Eye Leaves Everyone Blind

Teaching young children to settle conflicts without violence

Sue Finch



Save the Children

Save the Children is the UK's leading international children's charity, working to create a better world for children. We are a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, which is active in more than 100 countries worldwide, including the UK.

Drawing on this practical experience, Save the Children also seeks to influence policy and practice to achieve lasting benefits for children within their communities. In all its work, Save the Children endeavours to make children's right a reality.

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Contents

Introduction 5

Section 1 What do we mean by violence? 6

How children are affected by violence.

Section 2 The development of conflict in the early years 8

How children become violent.

Section 3 Planning the environment 10

How the organisation of children in buildings and space can encourage or discourage conflict, and the equipment needed to engage children in problem solving.

Section 4 Agreeing a policy 14

Using a checklist to develop a policy for non-violence.

Section 5 Teaching negotiating skills 16

Planning children's learning to enable co-operation and negotiating skills.

Section 6 Strategies and activities 18

Practical strategies and activities which have been tested in early years settings.

Section 7 Effective adult intervention 35

Effective (and ineffective) ways for adults to intervene when conflicts arise.

Section 8 Monitoring and review 38

How successful are the conflict resolution strategies?

Section 9 Partnership with parents 41

How to involve and consult parents in developing a policy and good practice on non-violence.

Section 10 Training suggestions 42

Suggestions for training sessions which can be used with groups of staff and/or parents to explore the main issues, and to review progress.

The old law

19 Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.

20 And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.

21 And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Deuteronomy, Chapter 19, Old Testament

Introduction

The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everyone blind. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.

Martin Luther King Jnr

This handbook for early years workers and parents brings together tried and tested strategies for helping children to resolve conflicts without violence. In the process, it looks at how the environment we create, and what we do as adults, can lead to or reduce conflict. It is intended as a practical guide for anyone working with young children in pre-school, out-of-school clubs, school or at home.

The strategies were tested out by staff and children in three Save the Children centres during 1997, and the results monitored by children and adults. This work was made possible by a grant from Children in Need, and co-ordinated by a steering group of representatives from the three children's centres, the National Early Years Network and Save the Children.

Staff found that looking at conflict resolution made them review every aspect of their work – how far the day was structured to meet children's needs, and whether potential sources of conflict could be prevented or avoided by simple changes. Some centres found that this review produced dramatic results; others felt that it gave them the opportunity to reflect on, and take further, the work they were already doing with children.

The centres found that many of the conflicts between children came from competition – over who should have a favourite toy, who should come first, or for adult time and attention. This led them to

rethink the whole curriculum to look at whether activities and games encouraged competition or co-operation.

Some of the strategies in this handbook were developed by staff in the three Save the Children centres, while some came from books and training manuals, including several from the USA. In particular, *Early Violence Prevention – Tools For Teachers of Young Children*, produced by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in Washington DC, provided a model for this handbook. This is available from the National Early Years Network.

The initial work for this project was presented to a conference on 'Violence and Human Co-existence' in Dublin in 1997, which brought together people undertaking work on education for non-violence from across the world, and suggested many new ideas and strategies.

This handbook is not about 'behaviour management', and does not offer a solution to every problem. It combines suggestions for practical strategies for non-violent conflict resolution with children with an analysis of how we can create an environment which discourages violence. Early years workers and parents can dip in and out of the handbook at will, and use it as a tool for reviewing and changing policies and practice in early years settings.

The parents' leaflet which is published with this handbook is intended to support discussion about how parents and early years workers can work together to help children to find consistent alternatives to violence.

Section 1

What do we mean by violence?

Violence: treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom.
Oxford English Dictionary

Violence means different things to different people: to some people, shouting is a form of violence, to others violence means killing and guns. In this handbook, we have used the Oxford Dictionary definition of violence as treatment which causes injury or forcibly interferes with personal freedom.

There are many people who think that violence is sometimes justified. This handbook does not explore the use of violence in pursuit of justice, or as a last resort when all other means seem closed to an individual or community. It looks at alternative ways for children – and therefore adults – to resolve conflicts.

Violence against children

A Commission on Children and Violence, funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation, published a report in 1995 with recommendations for reducing and preventing all forms of interpersonal violence involving children. The Commission found that children are victims of violence far more often than they are perpetrators of violence.¹

Most children in the UK are smacked at home as punishment, and the majority of parents believe this is right. In surveys, 84-97% of parents say they use physical punishment and over 90% of children say they are regularly smacked.²

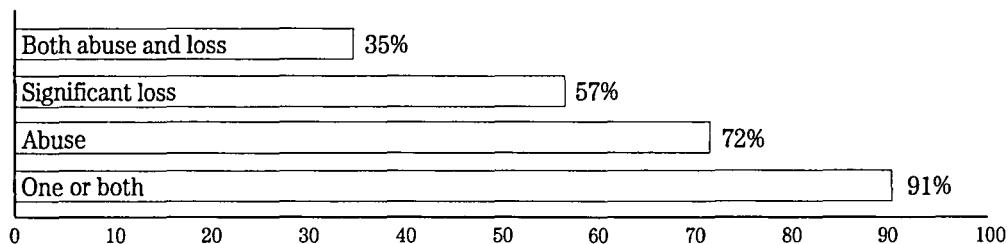
It is still legal to hit children in the UK, even though it is illegal to hit adults. Six other European countries now prohibit all physical punishment of children (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Austria and Cyprus).

The Guidance to the Children Act 1989 states that 'corporal punishment (smacking, slapping or shaking) is illegal in maintained schools and should not be used by any other parties within the scope of the guidance'.³ But when this was challenged in court by a childminder, the magistrate ruled that a childminder could smack children with their parent's permission.⁴

The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights in the UK may eventually outlaw the physical punishment of children. The European Commission has already found that the caning of a 12-year-old boy by his stepfather in the UK was 'degrading' and violated Article 3 of the Convention.⁵ Children who are treated with violence in the home tend to become bullies of other children in

Background of serious child offenders in the UK

A recent review of the backgrounds of a large sample of children who have killed or committed other grave (usually violent) crimes in the United Kingdom found that 72% had experienced abuse, and 57% significant loss (death or loss of contact with someone important); 35% had experienced both phenomena, and a total of 91% had experienced one or both (see the chart). The report emphasises that 'Not all children who experience these phenomena become violent offenders, and not all violent offenders have suffered these traumata. However, the frequency is sufficiently high to make the pattern worthy of some attention and to ask how it can be avoided.'



pre-school and at school.⁶ The high levels of bullying in UK schools have led to escalating levels of violence, sometimes resulting in serious injury and even death.

Adults who have experienced violence themselves are more likely to respond violently to children, or to see violence as justified and necessary, although this cycle can be broken.⁷

Children with special needs (including those with physical disabilities) are most at risk from bullying, and other forms of violence including sexual assaults and rape.

Violence surrounding children

Children in some parts of the world – for example, in Northern Ireland, Somalia, or Rwanda – experience and witness violent conflict daily in their community.

Many children in the UK watch violent videos and films on TV. Some have been deeply affected by domestic violence, and others have been traumatised by violence in their communities and schools, as they were in Dunblane (where a man came into the primary school and shot a class of children and their teacher).

Violence and gender

The Commission on Children and Violence found that 'Violence is overwhelmingly a male problem, and the roots for this appear to be primarily social rather than biological, highlighting the inadequacies of current socialisation of male children, and the promotion of macho male attitudes and models in society.'⁸

There has been a long tradition in this country (and in many others) of seeing violence and aggression as more natural for men and boys than for women, and in some way instinctively 'manly'. For example, 'It is highly probable that the undoubted superiority of the male sex in intellectual and creative achievement is related to their greater

endowment of aggression'.⁹

Certainly, in many cultures boys establish their place in hierarchies through fighting. Violence, however, is not 'inborn' in boys or girls but can be encouraged – or discouraged – by circumstances and teaching. The aim of this handbook is to explore ways of creating environments which discourage, rather than lead to, violence. Encouraging girls and boys to express their feelings equally, adopt positive role models, respect each other, and take part in a full range of activities regardless of gender will help them to develop self-esteem and find ways of resolving conflicts without violence.

Racist violence

Racism is one of the root causes of violence – between individuals, or between cultures and communities. The Commission on Children and Violence found that 'some ethnic groups are particularly at risk' of violence. Creating an 'anti-bias curriculum' and respect for cultural diversity is therefore a necessary part of non-violent conflict resolution.¹⁰

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The principles that underpin this handbook are based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the UK in 1991), which requires states to protect children from 'all forms of physical and mental violence' and insists on the rights of children to express their views freely and to be consulted about decisions which affect them.

Our challenge is to help children to find non-violent ways of resolving conflicts, even though they are growing up surrounded by violence. If we can find a way to help children to achieve this without violence, perhaps as they grow up there will be some hope for the many communities and nations which have found no other way to resolve conflicts.

Section 2

The development of conflict in the early years

Emerging independence

During the first two years of life children learn faster than at any other time in their lives – a child's brain doubles in weight during this time. When mobility is achieved – first crawling, then walking – children are able to assert their physical independence for the first time, and to begin to use their power in relation to adults. Yet even while running as fast as they can to get out of reach, children are still dependent on those same adults for survival.

This emerging independence creates a complex response in adults: delight and praise (for the child's first steps) at the same time as anxiety and frustration (in case the child runs into danger) and understandable fears about letting go. For adults, this can be a challenging experience, combining opportunities for pleasure and pride in a child's growing autonomy, with the exasperation and anxiety which this autonomy can create, and feelings of loss – particularly at the stage sometimes known as the 'terrible twos'.

Control is developed gradually as the child develops language, but is fragile; in order to deal with danger to the child, adults have to deal with challenges to their own power. This interplay of opposites begins to be played out during the second year of life, and we can see clear parallels during adolescence.

It seems likely that the negotiating arrangements between adult and child are recorded in a child's brain during their second year of life. As the child grows, the pattern established then will be used whenever conflicts arise. If the pattern is based for the most part on a model of negotiation (no-one can do it all the time!), instead of 'because I say so' or a smack, harmonious solutions can be achieved at the time and the child will have a negotiating model that works for the future. When this first model for negotiations is interrupted by the absence of – or damage to – that primary relationship, this can create a serious risk of violence in later life.

There is some evidence that violence can be linked to loss, and in particular to a breakdown in the important first relationship a child develops, that with their primary care-giver. What these different

studies appear to show is a strong correlation between loss, as a form of deprivation and trauma, and violent behaviour.¹¹

This makes it particularly important to aim for consistency and a 'bridge of trust' between the adults who relate to a child, for example between the key person in daycare and the child's parents. Secure relationships between parents and children, and, in group daycare, between key workers and their key children, are therefore crucial to developing ways of resolving conflicts without violence.

Nurture or nature?

If we see violence as the result of nature, then adults cannot do anything to prevent it from happening and can intervene only to restrain and punish. For instance, the detective inspector investigating the murder of a toddler described the two ten-year-old boys convicted of his murder as 'evil' by nature, and their trial led to a lowering of the age of criminal responsibility in the UK to ten years of age – the youngest in Europe.

If, on the other hand, we understand violence as being caused by nurture, we can see that children are not born violent, but may become violent because they have:

- experienced violence themselves;
- experienced a breakdown in the relationship with their primary care-giver,
- witnessed powerful role models who are violent;
- been rewarded for aggression;
- been affected by TV or computer game violence;
- a lack of hearing, language, or social skills;
- been abused; or
- been traumatised by loss.

Perhaps this understanding may help us to prevent violence.¹² Taking this view would mean, for example, that it is particularly important for children to develop a close and consistent relationship with a key person – in daycare as well as at home. It would also mean that effective intervention by adults at an early age can help to prevent children from becoming, or staying, violent.

No research has ever shown that punishment

works as a strategy for dealing with violence, so this handbook looks at violence in the context of understanding, prevention, and the development of alternative ways of resolving conflicts.

The consequences of *not* developing the skills needed to resolve conflicts without violence can be seen in the increasingly violent context that children live in – including bullying at school, racist violence, and violence on TV, in films and in computer games, as well as between communities world-wide.

Language development

Language development is an essential skill in conflict resolution – so that children can learn to *say* what is making them angry or hurt, rather than using their fists and feet.

Children need language skills to analyse the alternatives. Critical thinking skills are essential elements of the ability to stop, think of alternatives, analyse them, and select a non-violent course of action.

One teacher was working to develop 'tool' words in a mixed-age infant class where children tended either to hit each other or walk away from conflict. She explained to them that using the right words could sometimes help to solve their problems. "Then one bright spark suddenly asked, "What's a problem?" Eureka! If they don't know what a problem is, each time they come against something, it's a particular event, not an example of something."¹³

So learning 'tool words' can contribute to violence prevention – and, at the same time, violence prevention work enables children to develop their language skills.

Non-violent communication

A primary school in Israel developed a programme for violence prevention, out of concern about rising levels of verbal and physical abuse, weak vocabulary skills, and lack of tolerance.¹⁴ The headteacher,

working with the Israeli Centre for Non-violent Communication, outlined the three principles on which the programme is based.

- Violence is the result of unmet needs.
- Violence results from communication breakdown, lack of awareness and low self-esteem.
- The individual's ability to express facts, feelings, needs and requests, and to receive messages from the environment, can improve through study and practice.

The programme took three years to implement and has three parts:

- developing the ability to observe and describe facts;
- developing the ability to express honestly feelings, values, needs and requests;
- developing the ability to listen empathetically to others' feelings, needs and requests.

In the first year, a trainer worked with staff and parents on adopting the programme and developing non-violent communication skills.

During the second year, children who wished to become 'peace-seekers' were trained by the teachers.

In the third year, the 'peace-seekers' became the children to whom others turned when they needed help in conflict resolution, or had problems.

The programme has now been implemented with Palestinian and Israeli children.

Growth of self-esteem

Studies from several countries show that some of the most positive effects of early years education are the benefits to self-esteem – one of the essential prerequisites for non-violent conflict resolution. In the High/Scope study, which tracked the progress of a group of American children for over 20 years, every dollar spent on pre-school education saved an estimated seven dollars by helping the group to stay out of prison and off state benefits in later life.¹⁵

Section 3

Planning the environment

- How does the organisation of the building or room you work in create conflicts or help to resolve them?
- Can children move from room to room without adult help?
- Can they help themselves to the equipment they need?
- What can be done to change potential conflict-points like waiting for meal-times and access to toilets?

A well-designed environment decreases the chances of conflict occurring. Review how the building and the outdoor play area affect children's choices. Look at the points in the building – and times of day – when conflicts arise most frequently.

Staff often find it helpful to keep a conflict diary, where they note down the times and places that arguments, both between children, and between adults and children, take place. This can be reviewed in a staff meeting, or in a training day, or at home. In a nursery, school or out-of-school scheme, staff and children in each room can observe conflict-points over a week, then discuss them together.

Crowding large groups of children into small spaces can cause conflict. Equally, a small number of children in a large open space can generate accidents and violence. Small groups working in activity-based areas offer the best opportunities for co-operative learning.

Minimise crowding

Some early years workers explain to children that only a certain number (perhaps four or five) can work well together in each area, and children are asked to make sure that no more than this number are in, say, the water or mark-making area at a time.

This can be done in a number of ways. At the start of the session in some High/Scope settings, children choose which area they are going to begin working in and place a number on a hook next to the activity to show their preference. When the agreed number are on the hook, a child will know that they have to choose another area for the time being, until there is a space.

Clearly define activity areas and pathways

Careful room arrangement offering a variety of choices for activities will reduce conflicts over space and equipment. When designing a space, it is important to consider the travel pathways between activities, and how children access different areas. A construction area, for example, should be shielded from pathways to prevent children from accidentally upsetting each other's buildings. Large, open pathways may lead to running and chasing that can easily escalate into conflict. Using barriers, such as low storage cupboards, can break up the pathways and create activity areas where children can concentrate on what they are doing.

Young children need quiet areas with soft furnishings where they can look at a book on their own or with others, a mark-making area, a creative area to paint or work with clay, a sand and water area, mathematics area, construction area, imaginative play area, and science area as well as tables for working with puzzles and playing group, games – and areas for sleeping and eating.

Meal-times and snack areas

Meal and snack times can be a focus for conflict – both between children, and between children and adults. This may be because children have to wait for long periods for food and drinks to arrive, but can also be due to the room layout and size of tables and chairs: if children are sitting in large numbers, or at tables so high that they could rest their chins on them, then fights are likely to occur because they are feeling uncomfortable and frustrated. Children of all heights should be able to sit on chairs with their feet resting on the ground, and the table at waist level, so that they can comfortably see and reach the food they are eating.

In many settings, meals will be brought on a trolley from the kitchen. It is important, however, for children to serve themselves from serving dishes on the table as soon as they are able – so everything needed for the meal (including replacement knives, forks and so on for those that end up on the floor) should be ready on the trolley within reach of the

table, to avoid anyone having to get up or down during the meal.

Small groups work best: to develop the best opportunities for social interaction, children should sit with their key person in as small a group as possible.

It is worth spending some time making the meal area attractive. The area often has to double up as a play area, and may even be a thoroughfare as well. Screening off any 'traffic' of people going through can help, and washable table-cloths and bowls of flowers on the table will help to transform the area, and create an atmosphere which prevents conflicts.¹⁶

When meals take place in well-planned, pleasant areas, and offer children the opportunity to make choices in serving themselves and to develop social interactions, they can be transformed from opportunities for conflict to peaceful and enjoyable occasions.

Drink-times are sometimes sources of conflict – both between adults and children, and between children. Children may not want to interrupt what they are doing to stop for drinks time, and

sometimes have to sit and wait while adults prepare or get the drinks/snacks, which may result in arguments. If children can serve themselves and help with the preparations, this potential source of conflict can be avoided. To do this, they will need cups labelled with their names, or with pictures (according to age).

In many groups, coming together for circle time is an important and sociable part of the day. The 'self-service snack bar' for drinks simply separates the sharing and singing part of circle time from the waiting for drinks and snacks. Some groups keep a tray of drinks and fruit out on a side table between meals, and find this offers children choice and prevents conflict – as well as catering for thirst and hunger. Initially, children may spill drinks – but they soon learn to pour, and can be encouraged to clear up spills themselves by keeping a cloth or paper towels next to the drinks tray. Children can be asked to put their name/symbol on a board or in a box to show that they have had a drink, and are not going thirsty.

Drinks and fruit should be accessible to children once they are able to pour for themselves, or within view until that time, at all times of the day.

How does the environment create or discourage conflict?

Staff at one centre identified a range of 'conflict-points' during the day, some of which related to the difficulties of the building – a 24-place nursery for 2- to 5- year-olds and a 40-place playcentre for 5- to 11-year-olds on the first floor of a converted school. There was access for the playcentre to an outdoor play area which was also a car park, and for the nursery to a tiny enclosed yard. All the internal doors had handles out of pre-school children's reach, so younger children could not go to the toilet, or move from room to room, without adult help. Children came from a small, low-income catchment area, and were collected by minibus from local schools for the after-school and holiday playcentre.

Conflict-points

Pre-school

- early morning (when children first come in between 8 and 10 a.m.)
- milk-time
- queuing for the toilets
- story-time (for 24 children at once)
- lunch-time (especially waiting for lunch)

- moving from room to room
- access to outdoor area
- children bringing in toys from home

Out-of-school

General

- exclusion of individuals from group activities and games by other children
- 'telling tales' to get other children into trouble

Specific situations

- waiting for the minibus
- in the minibus
- arrival at the centre
- competing for favourite toys and games
- lining up for the toilets
- meal-times (lining up and fighting about who sits where)

Each member of staff chose a time of conflict to look at, and to work with the children to come up with solutions. The solutions were then tested and – if successful – written up into an induction pack for new staff. They included a self-service snack-bar and a 'Can't Say Can't Play' policy (see page 31).

Toilet areas

Toilets can be sites for conflict in group daycare, and focus points for bullying in schools. If at all possible, children should have independent access to toilets to avoid conflict-generating queues, and the need to wait for an adult to take a group at a time. Toilets should have at least half-height partitions for privacy, although privacy needs to be balanced with safety (can children unlock the doors themselves?), and adult support to prevent bullying.

Outdoor play area

Access to an outdoor play area can reduce the potential for conflict, by enabling children to let off steam – but may increase the likelihood of fights, for example over a particular bike. In some pre-school settings, children have the freedom to go in and out as they choose, for much of the day. This has the advantage of avoiding potential flash points for conflict, such as lining up, but has staffing and curriculum implications which have to be carefully thought through (to make sure that all areas of the curriculum can be safely supervised, and offered outdoors as well as indoors, in all weathers).

Gender can also be an issue in outdoor areas: boys on bikes can dominate space in pre-schools, and boys playing ball games can similarly occupy the centre of school playgrounds. Once again, careful planning and a whole setting/school approach is needed to ensure that the outdoor area meets the needs of all the children using it, and that everyone has a turn on favourite equipment (see Activity 1, page 21 for suggested Timed Turns).

Outdoor areas can, however, also provide the space for some of the most rewarding co-operative activities such as gardening (Activity 6, page 24).

Selecting equipment for non-violence

- Review the equipment that is available – is there enough stimulating play equipment for all?
- Can the equipment have a variety of uses?
- Can it be reached without adult help?
- Do materials show positive models of conflict resolution?
- Are there sufficient resources for co-operative activities?

Equipment that encourages co-operation

The amount and type of resources available can affect whether children will share or compete.

Children are more likely to engage in conflict over materials when the number of toys available is limited. Conflict is also more likely to increase when one or two new and desirable items are added to the equipment collection, particularly when these can be played with by only one child at a time.

Conflict will usually diminish if there is:

- enough equipment for every child to find something interesting to do;
- a clear system for sharing.

Children tend to argue over individual swings, for example, but can co-operate on swings that hold several children, like those made out of old tyres.

Equipment that encourages non-violent self-expression

Certain toys lend themselves to role-playing in dramatic play or in activities which build social skills. Dramatic play props invite children to engage in complex social interactions, and provide opportunities for self-expression. Children who can act out violence they have experienced or witnessed – using puppets, for example – can sometimes begin to learn to deal with feelings of anger and grief in this way.

Refugee children may have seen and experienced terrible violence, and some children may be affected by ongoing violence in the home. It is important to create a safe environment, with a wide range of equipment which offers opportunities for acting out feelings, with sensitive adult support to ensure safety.

Toy guns?

'I think it was a good idea that we weren't allowed guns at nursery – you shouldn't learn about violence so young, or you might become a serial killer'
(Kit McClaren, aged 9)

One piece of equipment has been the source of continuing differences of opinion in group daycare: toy guns. Some adults – staff and parents – think that toy guns should not be allowed in nurseries and schools because they encourage violence and fighting, and make real guns seem acceptable. Others feel that children should be allowed to express themselves in whatever way they choose, and to fantasise about being powerful. For many children – in particular, boys – toy guns may be their preferred form of fantasy for a while.

This is a difficult issue, and more research would be needed before it could be proved that allowing children toy guns leads to violence. Where

pre-schools and schools have taken the view that toy guns are not allowed, many have found that children make their own guns out of Lego or other materials. In the meantime, it is important to discuss the issue and for all the adults and the children concerned to agree on a consistent approach.

Equipment that provides positive role models

Books which offer positive models of non-violent conflict resolution can be difficult to find, particularly books about real children, instead of animals and insects.

Materials that portray individuals with special needs (*eg* a child in a wheelchair), or members of different cultural groups involved together in common activities, help children to empathise with, and accept, each other.

Equally, resources which show positive gender role models (posters and books showing girls/women and boys/men in non-traditional jobs, for example) help to prevent conflicts based on inequality.

Suggestions for conflict-solving resources

Resources which support non-violent conflict resolution do not have to be expensive. There are many materials which encourage open-ended, exploratory and co-operative play, rather than competition.

■ *Prop-boxes*

Create 'thematic prop boxes' that suggest helping, co-operative roles for children of both sexes (*eg* a 'hospital' box with doctors' and nurses' dressing-up clothes, bandages etc.)

■ *Puppets and dolls*

Provide materials that promote discussion and role-playing to engage children's skills in problem-

solving. Puppets and dolls acting out stories which include a conflict to be solved help children to increase their repertoire of non-violent problem-solving skills, and encourage them to express their feelings in non-violent ways.

■ *Books and pictures*

Choose books and stories that support non-violent conflict resolution and materials that celebrate diversity. Make sure that the children and adults represented in books and pictures reflect the many cultures in society, positive role models for girls and boys, and children with a range of abilities.

■ *'Treasure basket'*

For the youngest children (6 to 9 months), a 'treasure basket' of collected items such as fir cones, large pebbles, bunches of keys, lemons, brushes and so forth can offer interest to every sense: touch, smell, taste, sound and sight.¹⁷ The rich variety of materials offers children such a range of experiences that they do not need to compete with each other, as they may with more limited resources.

■ *Discovery – or 'heuristic' play*

Once they can walk (12 to 20 months), exploratory play with a wide range of objects can help young children to experience the sense that they have endless possibilities. They learn that there is always 'another way of doing it'. It is important to provide a good collection of tins (with smoothed edges) for this 'heuristic' – or discovery – play, as well as boxes, ping-pong balls, cotton reels, pegs, large buttons, seashells etc. with at least 50 of each item. 'Because the material is abundant and is kept well spaced out, conflicts between children are rare.'¹⁸

Section 4

Agreeing a policy

Punishment which hurts, frightens or humiliates children is unacceptable, as well as being ineffective. Smacking, shoving and 'naughty' chairs or corners only assert the adult's power over children, without helping them to improve.¹⁹

Each of us has different feelings about the best way to resolve conflicts; these often depend on our own upbringing, culture, and individual experiences of violence. It helps to agree a policy on non-violent conflict resolution so that everyone is working towards the same goals. It is important to involve all concerned in the process of developing a policy – staff, children and parents – so that a consistent approach can be developed.

In the past, the policies produced by many pre-school groups were primarily about managing children's behaviour, and often focused on sanctions for 'bad' behaviour. Although the days of sitting children on a 'naughty' chair or in the corner are hopefully gone, some groups still use 'time out' as a way of dealing with difficult behaviour.

Focusing on sanctions ignores the question of why children are behaving in a particular way, such as fighting with, or hurting, other children. There can be many reasons for aggressive behaviour. A child may be experiencing or witnessing violence at home, the organisation of the pre-school or out-of-school club may include a number of conflict-points, or there may be other reasons which need to be discovered.

For example, one child bit and scratched her way through the children at the pre-school until her mother eventually realised that she could not hear properly and arranged for her to have a hearing test. Her behaviour was her way of expressing frustration at her lack of hearing and when she received medical help the biting and scratching stopped.

Of course, most children are not hearing-impaired, but all have complex reasons for their behaviour. This solution could not have been found by using 'time out' or other sanctions, however consistently they were applied.

'Discipline' or behaviour-management policies which rely on sanctions like 'time out' do not deal

with the causes of aggression and violence – so they cannot help adults to work towards finding non-violent solutions with children. They may, however, give the adult concerned an opportunity to calm down.

A non-violent conflict resolution policy should start with children's rights, and respect for the individual, in keeping with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The aim of the policy should be to create a climate of non-violence where sanctions are not needed. In addition, the policy has to satisfy various inspection requirements.

OFSTED requirements

OFSTED (Office For Standards in Education) inspectors are required to look at the nursery/school behaviour policy as part of their inspection process. The OFSTED schedule relating to **Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development** states that judgements should be based on the extent to which pupils *'behave well . . . show respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. Inspectors also look for evidence of any inappropriate behaviour, including harassment or bullying by or towards particular groups of pupils.'* (S.4.2)

Children of four years old are also expected to reach 'desirable outcomes for learning' in personal and social development, including:

- taking turns;
- being sensitive to the needs and feelings of others; and
- working as part of a group.²⁰

Home-school contracts

Some nurseries and schools have developed home-school contracts, which are usually an agreement between the school or nursery and parents and child about acceptable behaviour, rights and responsibilities. The 1998 Education Act requires all schools to introduce home-school contracts which outline expected standards of behaviour.

Checklist for working towards a non-violent society ²¹

The Commission on Children and Violence recommends that a commitment to non-violence should be of a similar standing to existing commitments to equal opportunities. It offers a checklist for working towards a non-violent society that can be adopted, developed and used by all those involved in pre-school provision. The checklist is based on four principles:

- *Principle 1* Expectations of, and demands made on, children should realistically reflect their maturity and development.
- *Principle 2* All discipline should be positive and children should be taught pro-social values and behaviour including, in particular, non-violent conflict resolution.
- *Principle 3* Non-violence should be clearly and consistently preferred and promoted.
- *Principle 4* Adults should take responsibility, not only for protecting children from violence done to them, but also for preventing violence done by them.

Using the checklist

A policy on non-violent conflict resolution could be based on this checklist.

- Discuss it at a staff meeting, write a draft, and then discuss it with parents and children (see page 43 for a suggested outline for a training session on developing a policy on non-violent conflict resolution).
- The policy should then form part of the parents' handbook and the induction pack for staff.
- Review the policy regularly to evaluate its effectiveness and to ensure that it continues to be agreed and used by everyone concerned (see Appendix for an example of good practice guidelines developed by the Patmore Children's Centre).

Section 5

Teaching negotiating skills



A group of children are playing musical chairs. Each time the music stops, a chair is taken away by an adult, and one child is 'out' of the game – until only one child is left who is the 'winner'.

What messages does this give to the children ?

Games like musical chairs give children the message that the one who can push hardest, or run the fastest, is the one that wins the prize. The game often ends in conflict about who sat on the chair first. It teaches children to be competitive, because the strongest or fastest individual succeeds.

Everyone loses – especially children who look out for those who are smaller or weaker than themselves.

Staff and parents who took part in the project that led to this handbook identified competition between children as one of the main sources of violent conflict. Competition, or the 'survival of the fittest', is seen as necessary to success in many cultures. However, children who are encouraged to play exclusively competitive games are more likely to behave aggressively during free play – and competition over resources and status is the source

of much violence between communities and nations in later life.

Children who are taught to think about the group, and to engage in co-operative activities (*eg* group painting), learn negotiating skills that they can then use throughout life.

Co-operation

Co-operative activities teach children to negotiate, add their own ideas, co-ordinate their efforts, and contribute to the structure and direction of the activity.²²

Increasing the opportunities for co-operation is an important part of teaching negotiating skills and reducing violence. When children learn a variety of co-operative social skills that allow them increased options in relating to others, they are less likely to resort to violence.

When children can say 'look what *we* did' rather than 'look what *I* did' they experience the pleasure of working together and are more likely to continue co-operating from choice.

Encourage voluntary sharing

Many of the conflicts between children in early childhood settings involve children fighting for possession of an object or a toy. This may in part reflect the influence of living in a possession-orientated and highly competitive society. Children are often told to 'share' – but how many adults would share favourite clothes or books? There is a double standard for sharing: many adults tell children to do it, but would not be willing to share their own possessions.

One study showed that when mothers intervened in a conflict between two toddlers, 90% of the time it was to tell their own child to let the other child have the toy, regardless of who it belonged to.²³ Giving up a toy was typically described as 'sharing' even if it was done under duress!

There are different expectations here of girls and boys. Girls tend to receive greater adult encouragement towards submission than boys. For example, in the toddler study cited above, mothers told daughters to give up a toy to another child three times as often as they told their sons.

It is difficult for any of us to share – how would we feel if we were in the middle of writing with a pen and someone took it away from us and told us that we had to share it?

Ideally, there will be enough pens for everyone to have one. But it is not always possible to have enough of all the favourite games and equipment children want to use. Using a timer can be a useful

way to help children to take turns – as well as introducing the concept of time and number to younger children.

Timed turns

For sharing to be meaningful, children should have the freedom to choose not to share. If a child knows that they can say 'No' when asked to give up a toy, and that the choice is under their own control, they are more likely to develop a willingness to share. The child's right to say 'No' to giving up a toy immediately deserves to be respected. It would not, however, be reasonable for the other child to have to wait for ever. The adult can help by intervening to suggest timed turns (see Activity 1, page 21): 'Jo isn't ready to give you the bike yet. But you can have a turn in five minutes, when the big hand of the clock reaches the number 6' (or set the timer).

When this approach is used consistently, the child possessing the toy will often volunteer to give it to the one who asked for it, even before the time is up. When children learn that they will have a chance to get the toy, they are usually more willing to take turns. If the system is fair and predictable, children will generally accept it.

Adults sometimes settle children's conflicts over objects by providing each child with a similar object, telling them: 'Now you both have one, so you don't need to fight.' This strategy, although sometimes effective, does not develop negotiating skills and may discourage voluntary sharing and problem-solving. Also, resources may be limited in real life.

Section 6

Strategies and activities

'The very action of putting on the puppets created a breathing space, and stopped the conflict immediately. The process was slow, but we all got to the bottom of what had happened'

Curriculum planning

OFSTED inspectors are asked to assess whether *'Children are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and show respect for people of other cultures and beliefs. They take turns and share fairly ...'*²⁴

The curriculum should include activities which foster negotiating skills (see, for example, Activity 16, page 34 – Nurture Negotiating Skills). Good planning, adapted to each stage of development, is essential to ensure that all aspects of learning – including conflict resolution – are covered in a curriculum which includes the full range of experiences, opportunities, and activities to promote learning.

Many of the activities designed to teach conflict resolution skills also create opportunities for learning in other areas of the curriculum. Group cooking, for example, can be recorded as a scientific experiment (extending knowledge and understanding of the world), children can count and weigh the ingredients (mathematics) and vocabulary is extended through discussion of the processes involved (developing language and literacy skills).

Children can be introduced to important skills and concepts during adult-led small-group activities. However, open-ended activities with supporting guidance provide opportunities for children to choose their own activities and to negotiate with others. Potential sources of conflict between adults and children are reduced by offering children a range of choices, instead of structuring the curriculum so that for most of the day they are being told what to do. The High/Scope curriculum, for example, encourages children to 'plan, do and review' the activities they choose, so that adult intervention can focus on extending learning opportunities. A balance between structured and unstructured play opportunities is therefore needed.

A co-operative, anti-bias curriculum which includes the teaching of negotiating skills should be

planned by the staff group, discussed with parents and children, and written up in the parents' handbook. Model co-operation by working in this way with children. Demonstrate respect for their perspectives, goals and decisions, and include children in the planning process.

Review progress regularly with children, staff and parents.

Anti-bias curriculum

A recent survey found that three-quarters of black children in schools in one area of Liverpool had been victims of racial harassment.²⁵ Developing an anti-bias curriculum which values diversity is a necessary part of dealing with violence – to help to prevent the racism, sexism and bullying that can lead to conflict and violence.

Teaching conflict resolution – results of the trials

During 1997, staff, parents and children in three Save the Children centres in the UK tested some of the strategies for non-violent conflict resolution put forward in this handbook, and were often amazed by the results.

Staff at one centre found that trying out strategies for conflict resolution led them to reinforce positive behaviour, and resulted in a dramatic decrease in the use of 'time out' for disruptive behaviour.

One worker felt that 'it was the most positive piece of work we have ever done'.

Each of the centres was in an inner-city area with high levels of social need. Two were in London:

- Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre in Camden, with a nursery, crèche, after-school and holiday playscheme; and
- Patmore, a 25-place community nursery in Wandsworth.

One was in Liverpool:

- Park Children's Centre, with a 24-place nursery and 40-place after-school and holiday playscheme. Hopscotch and Park were in old, converted buildings used as community centres; Patmore was in a purpose-built nursery with a lovely outdoor play area in the middle of a large council housing estate. All three were in culturally diverse areas, and Park

was in the middle of an area of high unemployment (Toxteth) where there had recently been riots.

An initial meeting was held with staff at each centre to look at sources of conflict, and the way conflicts between children – and between adults and children – were currently resolved.

Staff agreed to try out some new strategies over a six-month period, and to evaluate how well they worked. We designed an evaluation sheet for children, with a separate sheet for staff, and the researcher came back to talk to staff and observe children at regular intervals.

Two of the centres also arranged meetings with parents, to talk about their views of the best way to help children negotiate and resolve conflicts.

Each of the centres had guidelines for conflict resolution, under different names: 'managing children's behaviour', 'good practice guidelines', 'behaviour and sanctions policy' and 'children's code of conduct'. Two of the centres had a 'time out' policy as a sanction for breaking rules, or 'bad behaviour'. In one centre, the code of conduct was an additional contract to be signed by parents (and children, if old enough), as a gesture of support for the behaviour and sanctions policy.

Each of the centres agreed to begin by reviewing the way their building and the organisation of the day prevented or led to conflict, trying out some new conflict resolution strategies, and reviewing their policies at the end of six months.

Several insights came out of this work in the centres – not least, that much of the conflict between children came from competition. Staff developed ways of anticipating and avoiding conflict-points. For example, staff used to tell the children to 'line up' to go into lunch, and there was a lot of pushing to try to be first or avoid being last. Instead, they started to say 'stand by the wall' – so that no-one would be first or last. This small difference reduced conflict.

In one after-school club, children fighting on minibus journeys proved the most difficult problem to sort out, and staff struggled to find a balance between children's need to play and let off steam as soon as they got out of school, and the safety of passengers.

Expressing feelings

Staff found that it is important for children to have opportunities to express their feelings – to paint, act, dress up, use puppets, draw, work with clay and wood and other materials – so that they have other ways of expressing anger or grief than fighting.

In one after-school club, staff tested out feelings

masks, encouraged the group to write poems together, timed turns with equipment, and made a poster with children which said 'can't say you can't play'. There had been some bullying in this group, from children who were learning karate elsewhere, and staff felt that the conflict resolution work defused the situation and 'made a big difference'.

Evaluating activities

Staff also took time to develop ways of evaluating activities with children, to make sure that children could express choices and/or frustration in constructive ways. The evaluation sheets for children and adults in this handbook (page 35) grew out of this work, and staff found they could be used for any activity.

Children were asked to draw faces to show how an activity made them feel – for example, happy, angry, sad. But staff found that they also had to ask children how they felt, since the drawing was sometimes hard to identify (a mouth line drawn by a two-year-old might look sad to the adult but be meant to look happy!).

Staff pointed out that children should be asked separately about how an activity made them feel, so that they are not influenced by other children (when one child said that fighting made them happy, several others repeated this). They found that it was much easier for children to say *how* they felt than *why* they felt a certain way – but that the process of putting feelings into words or pictures was itself an important part of finding alternatives to violence in resolving conflicts.

Different approaches

One of the interesting findings of the work with the three children's centres was that there were markedly different levels of conflict between children in each centre, which could not entirely be explained by differences in buildings, or policy.

In one centre – an Asian Women's Centre – for example, there was virtually no conflict between children, either in the crèche or the out-of-school club – and this seemed to result primarily from the way children were treated by the adults.

In this centre, children's needs were not only anticipated, but the day was organised around them. The centre was well-equipped, and had a high staff:child ratio. Pre-school children came for either the morning or afternoon, while their mothers attended training courses. The day was structured, and very peaceful: staff followed children from activity to activity, indoors and out, suggesting

activities they might like to do, and helping them to find the equipment they needed – all of which was kept at the children's level. Each child was treated as the centre of the universe – and with complete respect.

The same picture was repeated in the out-of-school club. Here, the children came in after school and sat at a big table doing activities set by the teacher in charge. When they had finished their work, they could choose from a variety of games, which they played with adult help as needed. Again, there seemed to be no conflict between children – although the teacher reported that arguments sometimes happened on the way home. Staff had found a solution to the children's fighting on the way home, which was to walk them to their doors.

The excellent resources in this centre – high staff:child ratio, plentiful play and learning equipment – helped to create the right environment, but overall the absence of conflict in the centre seemed to stem mainly from staff attitudes.

Activities for learning how to settle conflicts

This section brings together a selection of activities and strategies for encouraging non-violent conflict resolution. The strategies and activities suggested in this section can be tried separately, or taken as a whole would provide the core of a curriculum for non-violent conflict resolution.

Children can learn to co-operate with each other through laying the tables (learning counting and one-to-one correlation at the same time), clearing away after meals and all activities, passing each other food, and helping with activities like watering plants, washing paint-pots etc.

Setting up free-play activities can encourage co-operative behaviour and provide opportunities for children to practise helping, sharing and working together. Select and develop co-operative, non-competitive games. Structure group activities in which children work together to accomplish a common goal – cooking activities, group art and construction projects work well.

If children have the use of an outdoor area, they can learn a lot from co-operative gardening, and through turn-taking on bikes and other equipment.

All the strategies have been tested out in pre-schools, schools, or after-school clubs, and – where relevant – comments from staff about these trials are included.

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 1 Timed turns

Number of children Any

Age range 3+

Aims

- to encourage children to take turns
- to offer children a way of resolving conflicts without violence

Materials

Large 5-minute egg-timer. A clock will work for older children who can tell the time.

Method

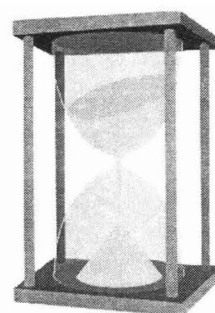
- Ask the children to agree that if there is a conflict over use of a piece of equipment or area then each child will have a turn.
- Explain that the turns will be timed so that they are fair to all, and agree a standard time.
- A large egg-timer is easier than a clock for pre-school children, and can be used by the children without adult help, once the solution has been agreed.
- Adult help will be needed at first to ensure that turns are accurately timed and fairly taken.

The role of the adult is to facilitate an agreed solution to conflicts, and ensure that it is implemented.

From: The Patmore Children's Centre – a community childcare and training project

Timed turns

Two children at one centre were arguing over a string of large 'poppit' beads, the favourite imaginative play resource of the moment. A member of staff suggested that the child who was currently holding them should keep them for another five minutes, then

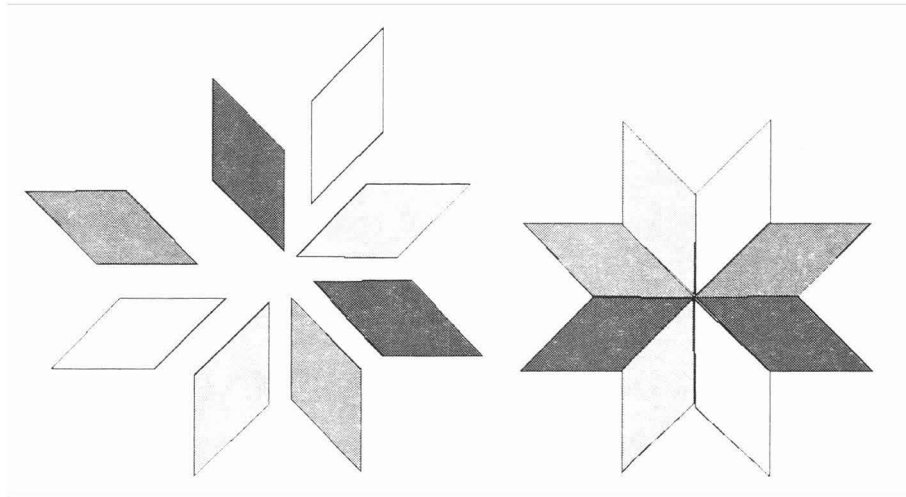


give them to the child who was fighting him for possession. She showed both children the clock, and told them that five minutes would be up when the big hand reached the number 5; she also suggested that they come back to her if this did not happen. Both children agreed – but the one with the poppits forgot to look at the clock. After five minutes, the other child went back to the member of staff, who pointed out the time to the child with the beads – and he peacefully handed them over.

There were a lot of arguments over equipment in one of the after-school clubs, particularly about things that children did not have at home. Children sometimes came in full of aggression, and wanted to play Power Rangers and practise karate on each other. Introducing timed turns worked perfectly to defuse the situation. Staff felt that children did not want to be 'preached at' ('you have to share!'), but could agree a personal solution ('you have the ball for five minutes and then I will have it for five minutes') – and that is what made it work. One member of staff commented that 'little things make a huge difference': timed turn-taking was a little thing to do, but had a big effect. He added that it worked best when it was consistent and reinforced with positive attitudes and language.

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 2 Lone Star²⁶



Number of children Up to 3

Age range 2–4

Aims

- to complete a co-operative task
- to improve communication skills

Materials

Coloured/silver paper, scissors, glue, lone star pattern, (material scraps – optional).

Method

The name of this pattern is 'lone star', and it is a traditional quilt pattern made from elongated diamond shapes.

- Children can work in pairs or trios.
- Show them the completed pattern.
- Each team has the job of figuring out how to put together the 'puzzle' of the pattern with cut-out coloured/silver paper or material shapes.
- Encourage children to figure out how to put it together before they begin to glue.

This can be a difficult task, and you will want to take account of the skill level of the children in the group, and perhaps simplify or make the pattern more difficult (perhaps by using fewer/more diamonds) if needed. Remember, though, in order for children to engage in co-operative problem-solving, the task must have sufficient challenge to be a problem.

The role of the adult is to facilitate communication, and to help the team come to an agreement about how to complete the task.

Lone Star

This activity worked beautifully with a small group of 2–4 year olds. Staff suggested children who often fought with each other work together to cut out diamond shapes, cover them in tinfoil, then stick them into a star shape. The finished results were proudly displayed with the title: 'Teja, Luke and Darieel worked together to make this star'.

Park Children's Centre

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 3 Balancing the bean bag

Number of children Up to 10

Age range 4

Aim

- to encourage co-operation

Materials

- bean bags (small)
- music (taped or live)

Method

- Everyone dances in a circle trying to balance their bean bags on their heads.
- If your bean bag falls off your head you have to freeze until someone picks up your bean bag (without dropping their own) and puts it back on your head for you.
- Vary the tempo of the music to liven things up.

From: The Hope Project

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 4 Hide the giant's keys

Number of children from four to 16

Age range 4+

Aim

- to develop listening skills

Materials

- a large set of keys
- material to make a blindfold

Method

- Ask the children to sit in a circle.
- Ask for a volunteer to be the giant and sit in the centre of the circle.
- Put a bunch of keys next to the giant.

- Explain that whoever you point at must creep up to the giant as quietly as possible and take the keys and then go back to where they were sitting, making as little noise as possible.
- Blindfold the 'giant'.
- Point to someone in the circle – they take the keys as quietly as possible and sit down.
- Everyone else must be quiet too.
- When the person who has taken the keys sits down, take the blindfold off the giant.
- The giant tries to guess who took the keys – by having listened very hard.
- The person who took the keys becomes the giant.

From: The Hope Project

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 5 Music

Number of children Up to 8

Age range 2+ for playing, 3+ for making instruments

Aims

- to help children to express feelings
- to co-operate together to make rhythms and music

Materials

A variety of tins with smooth edges, dry beans and rice of different sizes, papier maché, paint, varnish.

Method

- 1 Make the instruments: ask children to fill tins with different size beans, rice, etc. (listen to different sounds they make). Seal tins, cover in papier maché, paint, allow to dry, and varnish.

- 2 When dry, use the instruments to make rhythm together: one child can 'lead' a simple rhythm at first – then each taking a turn.
- 3 Join with other musical instruments if they are available (add in bells, triangles, xylophone etc.) to make an 'orchestra' of sound.
- 4 Listen together to music (on tape) and pick out the different instruments, and how each contributes to the whole.

The role of the adult is to facilitate children to work co-operatively in making a set of instruments, then to use these to work together rhythmically and make a harmonious whole.

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 6 Co-operative gardening

Number of children Up to 10

Age range 2+

Aims

- to work together co-operatively
- to provide therapeutic outlet for feelings

Materials

Seeds/beans/bulbs/cress, potatoes, plant cuttings, jam jars/grow-bags, saucers, seed trays, plant pots, window boxes or gardens, blotting paper, earth, small spades/forks, water and light.

Method

Gardening can be undertaken in any number of ways:

- 1 If there is a garden, children can work together to clear a space and then plant bulbs/cuttings/seeds and water them and watch them grow.
- 2 In addition, or if there is no garden, children can sprinkle cress seeds on damp cotton wool, put beans inside blotting paper in jam jars or grow

sunflower seeds, tomato plants or bulbs in plant pots/window boxes.

- 3 Ask the children the best way to ensure that the plants are watered every day – eg through a rota – and help them to remember!
- 4 Share the cress or fruit grown between all the children.

The role of the adult is to help children to look for co-operative solutions, and to experience the effects of working together.

Gardening can be therapeutic for children who are feeling angry, as well as increasing their knowledge and understanding of the world. The community gardens movement in the USA has shown that gardening together can offer an alternative to violence and crime – at the same time as producing food for the homeless, or people living with HIV and Aids.

A traditional story, *The Great, Big, Enormous Turnip*, illustrates the strengths of gardening together perfectly. See page 26.

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 7 Co-operative cooking

Number of children Up to 6

Age range 2+

Aims

- for children to co-operate in making something for the whole group
- learning to take turns

Materials

Depends on what you want to make! Children can work together to prepare salads, bake bread or cakes, make gingerbread and so on.

Method

- 1 Make sure everything needed is close to hand (vegetables for salad, flour, yeast, water for bread, mixing bowls, spoons etc.).
- 2 Follow a recipe so that children can take turns in undertaking each step of the process.
- 3 Cook if necessary – and share with the whole group.

The role of the adult is to facilitate turn-taking, and to co-ordinate the activities of every member of the group to create a delicious outcome – then to make sure it is shared!

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 8 Group painting²⁷

Number of children Up to 4

Age range 3+

Aim

- to encourage co-operation

Materials

Large pieces of paper, paints.

Method

- 1 Suggest that children might like to work together.
- 2 Provide large piece of paper plus a variety of paints.
- 3 Support children to develop negotiating skills as needed.

The adult role is to create space for the activity, and ask children to discuss their group painting at class meetings or circle time, to help them to see that their efforts at working together are valued.

Group painting

Staff at one centre encouraged group painting with four-year-olds by sticking together two sheets of sugar paper. The activity worked well ('together was more exciting'), but needed adult support initially as children were more used to painting separately. The paintings also took longer than usual – 30 to 45 minutes – because children needed time to talk about

what they were doing and who painted where, developing useful negotiation skills in the process.

One teacher of four-year-olds re-organised the painting area when she saw two boys create a 'give-and-take' game for painting shared pictures at the easel. When the children finished their co-operative painting, the teacher quickly made more room available around the easel, so that other pairs of children could work at it together. Over the next several days, the easel was constantly in use by children developing variations on the 'give and take' game, including:

- colour – ('Now I'm putting black on yours.' 'Now I'm putting blue on yours.')
- brush strokes – ('Now here goes a dot.' 'Now here goes a circle.')
- representation of real objects ('Now here goes an eye on the face.' 'Now here goes a mouth on the face.')

Group painting was also tried in the after-school club, and staff found that school-aged children (5 to 10 years) worked well together and co-operated to make it 'an enjoyable and productive activity with very positive results'.

Park Children's Centre

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 9 Storytelling²⁸

Number of children Up to 12

Age range 3+

Aims

- to rehearse non-violent solutions to conflicts
- to acknowledge and identify with other points of view and feelings

Materials

A story in which there are two groups with conflicting interests will be needed for this activity. Some people enjoy making up and telling stories; children often like to tell stories themselves, write them down with adult help, and draw pictures. Alternatively, there are a few books on the market about dealing with conflicts.²⁹ The story could be based on a real incident which has happened in the group earlier, or may have happened to one of the children (for example, a story about bullying at school might be told at an after-school club). Alternatively, a familiar story like *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* or *The Billy Goats Gruff* can be re-told, stopping in the middle to ask children how else the conflict of interest could be sorted out.

Method

- 1 Tell the story about a conflict, giving the children the opportunity to identify with each group in turn.
- 2 Stop the story at a point where the conflict of interests is evident and ask the children to think of ways in which each side might deal with it (eg how else could the Billy Goats Gruff have dealt with the troll?).
- 3 Discuss the suggestions. The children can divide into groups and act out some of the – non-violent! – suggestions made.

The adult role is to help children to think about, act out, and discuss non-violent solutions to conflict. Storytelling always works better as an optional activity.

Storytelling

Staff at one of the children's centres tested out some books about different ways of resolving conflicts, but found that most of them were too complicated for the two- to five-year-olds, and did not relate to their experience. In particular, the few books available which dealt with these issues tended to use animals or insects to make their point – but the children

related better to stories based on the experiences of children like themselves.

It was difficult to find relevant stories about conflict resolution, pitched at the right level for the age group, which showed positive images of children from diverse cultures and both girls and boys. So staff used familiar stories and made new scenarios out of them, to create opportunities for children to talk about non-violent conflict resolution.

One member of staff told a group of children the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, stopped the story at the point where the three bears discover Goldilocks asleep in their bed after she has eaten their porridge and broken their chair, and asked what the three bears should do to Goldilocks. One child said 'give her a smack', and this opened up a discussion on how conflict was resolved at home, and with older brothers and sisters. The discussion was taken on to a parents' meeting later.

Patmore Children's Centre

Two traditional stories

(adapted from versions told by the Hope Project)

The Great, Big, Enormous Turnip

(a traditional Russian folktale)

One weekend Grandfather Lev and Grandmother Natalya had their granddaughter Natasha to stay with them for a visit. Supper time was getting close and Grandfather Lev went out to the garden and found a turnip, the only one left, and tried to pull it up. But no matter how hard he tried, it simply wouldn't budge.

So he went back to the kitchen and asked Grandmother Natalya if she would help in the pulling, as it seemed this was the biggest turnip in the world. Grandmother Natalya said yes, she would certainly help him. In fact she was someone of real might, but even pulling together, their strength wasn't enough. That stubborn turnip stayed locked in the ground.

They agreed that this was truly the best rooted and biggest turnip since the Volga River was first wet, and that they ought to ask Natasha to help. She was reluctant at first, because she had been naughty all day and was tired of being scolded. She could feel the sweet taste of the word 'no' in her mouth, but she

could also imagine the taste of the turnip, cooked and mashed and with butter on top. So she said 'yes' instead. But even the three of them were powerless against this mountainous turnip.

Natasha had the remarkable idea that the dog might help, and she went to find him – the same dog she had hit with a stick that very day. But dogs are more forgiving than people, and he was eager to help. Nonetheless, the turnip refused to move.

So the dog went to the cat. You can imagine how he hated having to ask the cat for help instead of chasing him, but the proud cat agreed to help. Still, even with this added force, the turnip only trembled in the ground.

So the cat turned to the one member of the household still not in the garden, the mouse who lived behind the stove! Well, the mouse was profoundly nervous at being approached by the cat, for this was the very cat who had eaten her husband and so many of their children, and the mouse had only just survived the cat herself. But she too agreed to help.

So there they were in the garden all pulling on that vast turnip as if their lives depended on it. But it was not until the tiny mouse added her efforts to the others that the turnip at last came out of the earth.

Great was their feast that night! Without fear of the cat, the mouse too shared in the banquet. Not a cross word was spoken, even when Natasha broke a dish she was drying up. And did they live happily ever after? Perhaps they did. They had learned a great lesson that day.

The story of the rainbow

Once upon a time, all the colours of the world started to quarrel: each claimed that they were the best, the most important, the most useful, the favourite.

Green said: 'Clearly I am the most important. I am the sign of life and hope. I was chosen for grass, trees, leaves ... without me all the animals would die. Look out over the countryside and you will see that I am everywhere.'

Blue interrupted: 'You only think about the earth, but consider the sky and the sea. It is water that is the basis of life and this is drawn up by the clouds from the blue sea. The sky gives space and peace and

serenity. Without my peace you would all be nothing but busybodies.'

Yellow chuckled: 'You are all so serious. I bring laughter and gaiety and warmth into the world. The sun is yellow, the moon is yellow, the stars are yellow. Every time you look at a sunflower the whole world starts to smile. Without me there would be no fun.'

Orange started next to blow *her* trumpet: 'I am the colour of health and strength. I may be scarce, but I am precious for I serve the inner needs of human life. I carry all the most important vitamins. Think of carrots and pumpkins, oranges, mangoes and pawpaws. I don't hang around all the time, but when I fill the sky at sunrise or sunset, my beauty is so striking that no-one gives another thought to any of you.'

Red could stand it no longer. He shouted out: 'I'm the ruler of all of you ... blood, life's blood. I am the colour of danger and of bravery. I am willing to fight for a cause. I bring fire in the blood. Without me the earth would be as empty as the moon. I am the colour of passion and of love; the red rose, poinsettia and poppy.'

Purple rose up to this full height. He was very tall and spoke with great pomp: 'I am the colour of royalty and power. Kings, Chiefs and Bishops have always chosen me for I am a sign of authority and wisdom. People do not question me ... they just listen and obey.'

Indigo spoke much more quietly than the others, but just as determinedly: 'Think of me...I am the colour of silence. You hardly notice me, but, without me, you become superficial. I represent thought and reflection, twilight and deep waters. You need me for balance and contrast, for prayer and inner peace.

And so the colours went on boasting, each convinced that they were the best. Their quarrelling became louder and louder. Suddenly there was a startling flash of brilliant white lightening; thunder rolled and boomed. Rain started to pour down relentlessly. The colours all crouched down in fear, drawing close to one another for comfort.

Then **Rain** spoke: 'You foolish colours, fighting among yourselves, each saying you are better than the rest. Don't you know that we need you all equally. It is only when you are all there side by side peacefully together – each of you different from one another – that we have a lovely rainbow in the sky.'

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 10 Puppets³⁰

Number of children Up to 8

Age range 3+

Aims

- to acknowledge and understand each other's point of view
- to find a non-violent solution to a dispute

Materials

Making the puppets can be a great co-operative activity in itself, and if the children have made their own puppets, they may particularly identify with them. Try sticking or sewing felt or material eyes, nose and mouth on old woolly socks, or make papier mache heads on sticks and attach clothes – everyone will have their favourite method of making puppets. You will need at least two puppets – bought or made by the children.

Method

If children are arguing about, for instance, 'who started it':

- 1 Ask the children to tell you what happened and re-enact the scene with the puppets.
- 2 Hearing the puppets 'repeat' their words gives the children a chance to listen to the other child's point of view more calmly.
- 3 Ask the children to help the puppets find a way to settle the dispute that both puppets will feel is fair, and in which neither is the loser.
- 4 Use the puppets to try out each suggested solution, if practicable.

The role of the adult is to help children to use the puppets to find a peaceful solution to a conflict of interests. Once this method has been modelled by the adult several times, children who were not involved in the original dispute may be able to use the puppets to help their friends to find a solution.

Using puppets

The children each brought in a sock, and over the course of a week stuck on eyes and mouths and hair to make puppets; they then used the puppets to help resolve arguments. For example, a girl came to a member of staff in tears and said that a boy had hit her; the staff member suggested that both children put on their puppets and tell each other – and her – what had happened. They found that 'the very action of putting on the puppets created a breathing space, and stopped the conflict immediately. The process was slow, but we all got to the bottom of what had happened.' It turned out that the boy had been pushed over by another child, but had wanted to get up from the floor himself; the girl had tried to help him, and he had lashed out because he was shocked, upset and embarrassed.

The adult asked the children how the puppets could help to make it better; the boy said he was sorry, and the adult suggested the puppets hugged each other, which they both did. Staff felt that using the puppets helped the children to understand each other better, and created a breathing space which defused conflict. It gave everyone a chance to go back to the root causes, including asking why one boy had pushed the other over in the first place.

Park Children's Centre

One school in Israel, working with the Center for Nonviolent Communication, has developed a peace programme using two puppets – a giraffe and a jackal. The giraffe can see a long way, and is kind and considerate to others; the jackal thrives on conflict, is short-sighted, and only out for himself. When problems arise, the children bring out the puppets and look at the solutions that the giraffe and the jackal might provide.

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 11 Drama

Number of children Up to 8

Age range 3+

Aims

- to help children to express their feelings in non-violent ways
- to develop empathy (to see things from another person's point of view)

Materials

Dressing-up clothes, props – eg puppets (optional)

Method

Many traditional stories are deeply satisfying, and offer children ways of dealing with terrors and sadness. However, looking at alternative endings from time to time can open up discussion and a fresh view.

- 1 Read the children a familiar story about conflict (such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*) and ask half to act it out while the others are the audience.
- 2 Stop the play in the middle (eg before the troll and the biggest Billy Goat Gruff fight), and ask the audience and cast to come up with an alternative, non-violent solution (for example, another way for the goats to get across the bridge to eat the grass on the other side).
- 3 Ask the audience to finish the play with a non-violent outcome.
- 4 Alternatively, ask a local theatre group to come and perform a play about conflict, and to involve the children in finding non-violent resolutions.

The role of the adults is to help children to express their feelings, to empathise with others and to find non-violent ways of resolving conflicts.

The London Bubble Theatre has created a play for pre-school children called *Dealing With Feelings* which explores a range of feelings, including anger, and conflict resolution. Contact the London Bubble Theatre on 0171 237 4434 for details – funding may be needed.

Drama

The Challenging Attitudes to Violence project is a drama initiative with a focus on violence prevention which is currently being piloted in 21 Liverpool schools (eight primary and one secondary), with Single Regeneration Budget funding. The project aims to:

- *focus on the prevention of violence before it happens by attempting to alter attitudes, values and behaviour;*
- *help students learn the skills that build healthy relationships, based on sharing as opposed to exerting power over others.*

The project progress report states:

'Drama is only one way of dealing with the issue but it is an extremely powerful, safe and effective mechanism ... Children are encouraged to reflect on recognisable scenarios in ways which are risk-free and non-threatening and to come up with strategies for dealing with situations.

Starting with the children's own concepts of violence, a framework for exploring those and then for developing a story about a fictional situation is provided. The children analyse the causes and effects of violence and suggest alternatives to this form of behaviour.'

The project is managed by the Assistant Education Officer, Equal Opportunities, and is overseen by a working group consisting of :

- *Liverpool Education Directorate Drama Adviser*
- *Drama consultant*
- *Child protection adviser*
- *Outreach worker*
- *Liverpool Domestic Violence Forum.*

One of the project's aims is for the promotion of Violence Prevention Education in schools to become a statutory responsibility.

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 12 Group poems/stories

Number of children 3–8

Age range 5+

Aims

- to co-operate in creating a poem or story

Materials

Children create a poem or story together, written down with adult help.

Method

- 1 Invite children to sit in a circle.
- 2 Talk about poetry as a way of expressing feelings.
- 3 Read some poems together.
- 4 Agree a subject.
- 5 Children contribute lines – either in turn, or as they feel – which the adult, or a child who is confident in writing, records.

The role of the adult is to help children to share feelings and co-operate to create a poem/story together.

From: Park Children's Centre

Group poem

*In the centre we can
Paint lovely pictures,
See them on the walls
In the centre we can
Draw lots of pictures
More and more
We play all day we have
Lots of fun
When the day is done
We go home to dad
and/or mum*

(written by four children aged 5 to 10 at Park Children's Centre)

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 13 Feelings masks

Number of children Up to 8

Age range 3+

Aims

- to acknowledge feelings which can lead to conflict

Materials

Card or paper plates, one showing a happy face and the other a sad face.

Method

- 1 Children make masks by drawing, painting or sticking onto circles of card.
- 2 Each child makes a happy mask, a sad mask, and a mask for any other feeling they choose (eg angry).
- 3 Invite children to sit in a circle.
- 4 Call out a scenario that you want to find out about eg How do you feel about fighting? About a particular activity?
- 5 Ask children to put on the mask that expresses how they feel.

- 6 Discuss their choices.

The role of the adult is to help children to share feelings and communicate so that conflicts can be resolved.

Feelings masks

A group of five children aged 5 to 10 made masks to show their feelings, sticking wool, seeds, feathers, pipe-cleaners and broad beans onto paper plates to make happy/angry/sad faces, then sat in a circle with a member of staff who asked them how they felt about fighting. Using the masks, they showed how they felt. Some children said that fighting made them feel happy – and this led on to a discussion about bravado, and talking about other ways of dealing with feelings.

Non-violent conflict resolution

ACTIVITY 14 You can't say you can't play³¹

Number of children All

Age range 4+

Aims

- to encourage co-operation
- to avoid scenes of conflict

Materials

A sign saying 'You can't say you can't play!'

Method

A nursery teacher who found that much of the conflict between children in her class resulted from attempts to exclude some children from group games, and that this caused great pain and unhappiness, suggested to the children that they adopt a policy of 'You can't say you can't play'. At first, most of the children felt that this would be unfair, and unworkable – except for the children who were most often excluded. Eventually, after a consultation process which involved magical storytelling, the rule was introduced – and worked well.

The role of the adult is to help children to resolve conflicts – and sometimes to suggest rules which will help that process.

You can't say you can't play

Eight children (5-10 years) worked together on a huge wall poster which said '**can't say can't play**', creating both a group painting and an opportunity for discussion. They drew a life-size boy and girl with the words between them, then discussed how they would feel if someone said to them 'you can't play'. All the answers were recorded on the poster:

*'I would feel **hurt**'*

*'I would feel **upset**'*

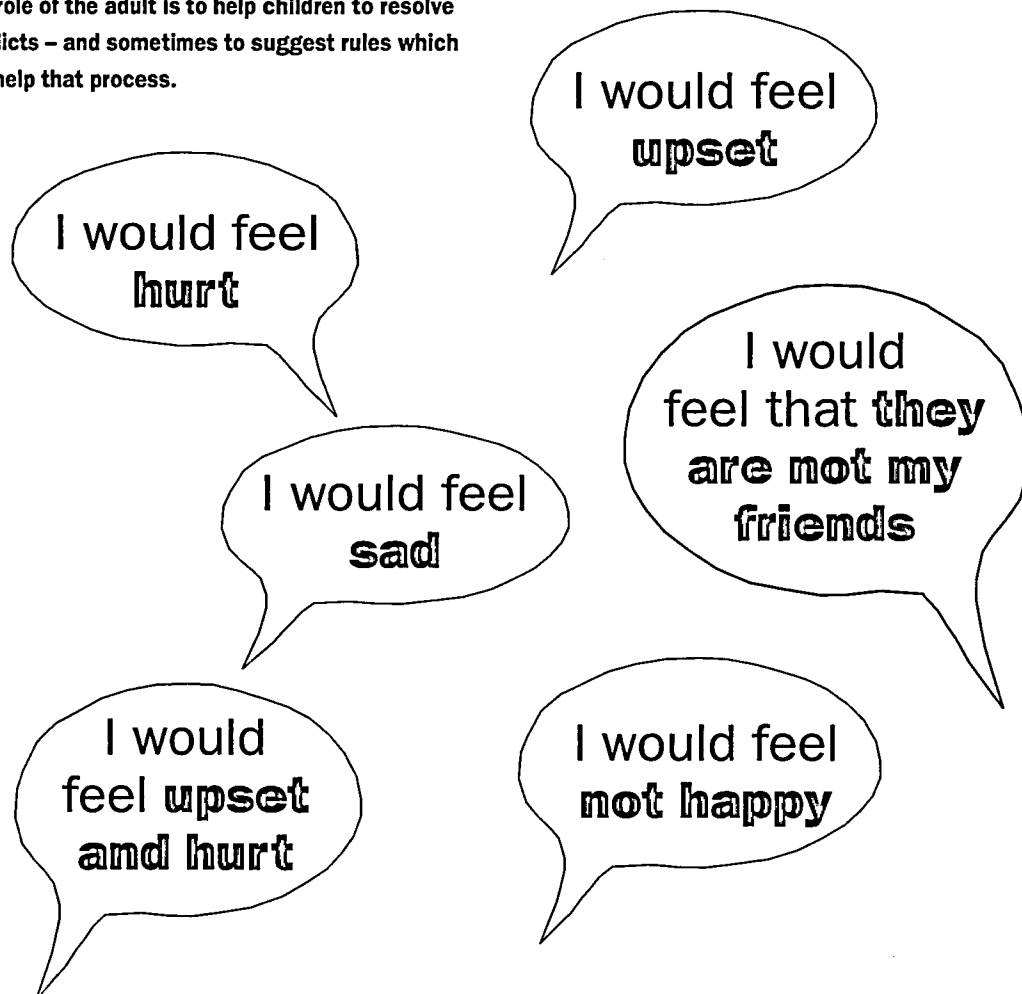
*'I would feel **upset and hurt**'*

*'I would feel **sad**'*

*'I would feel **not happy**'*

*'I would feel that **they are not my friends**'*

The children agreed that from then on 'you can't say you can't play' would be the rule at the centre – and staff noticed that conflicts between children were significantly reduced.



Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 15 The two donkeys

Number of children Up to 16

Age range 4-7

Aim

to solve a conflict by co-operation

Materials

- a rope/long scarves;
- something nice to eat that can be shared in two bowls eg currants/sultanas;
- two sets of homemade donkey ears (optional);
- copies of the donkey story cartoon cut up into strips.

Method

- Ask for two volunteer donkeys.
- Tell the group that you are worried the donkeys will stray so you're going to tie them together.
- Tie the two children together around the waist back to back with several feet of rope/ scarf connecting them.
- Stand the donkeys back to back and show each of them the food to eat on opposite sides of the room but out of reach.
- Invariably a tug-of-war develops – but before the stronger child reaches her or his food stop the tug-of-war and say to the group 'It looks as if Ella

will get dinner and Bashir won't – what can they do to solve their problem?'

- Take suggestions from the group
- Continue to collect suggestions until someone suggests a solution as follows.
- Let the donkeys go to one side of the room together and collect the food and then to the other.
- Share the two bowls of food with the whole group.
- Show the group the two donkey picture and take them through the story again.

Have an interval in which the children do a different activity.

Revision activity (15 minutes later)

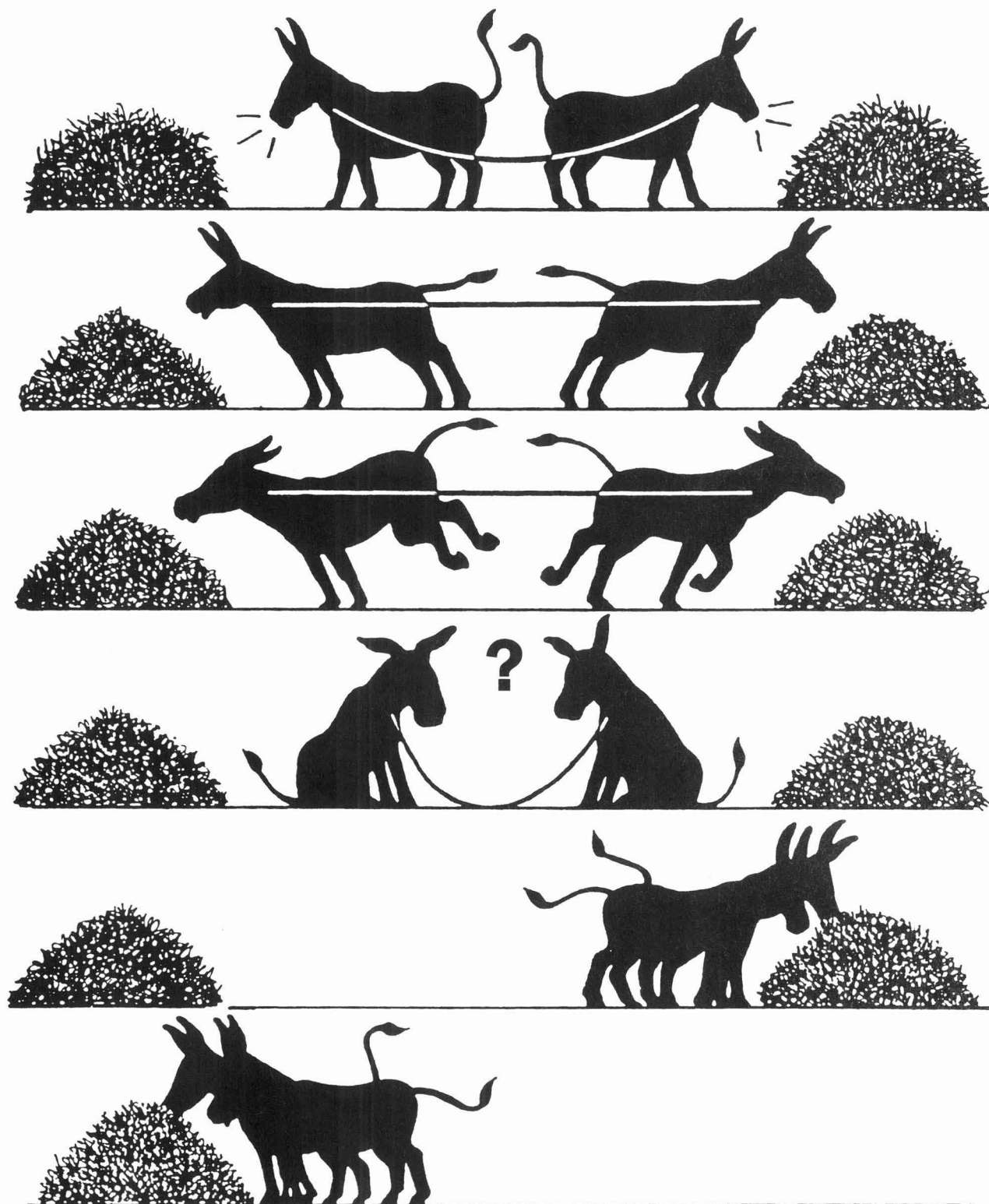
- Organise children into groups of three to six.
- Distribute ready-cut copies of the donkey story.
- Ask them to put the strips into the right order.
- Help and discuss with any group having difficulties

From: The Hope Project

The two donkeys

Diana and John Lampen of the Hope Project have tried this activity many times all over the world. There is always a tug-of-war and someone always comes up with a co-operative solution.

The two donkeys



*This picture is reproduced with permission from Quaker Peace and Service (see Resources, page 45).
You may photocopy this page to use for the revision activity given opposite.*

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 16 Nurture negotiating skills

Number of children Up to 8

Age range 3+

Aims

- to solve problems through negotiation

Materials

None

Method

- 1 Invite children to solve a problem that arises, for instance when five children want to play a game for four players.
- 2 Create space/set aside time for children to negotiate a solution.
- 3 Discuss their choices and how such conflict might be prevented in future.

The role of the adult is to facilitate and nurture negotiating skills.

From: Patmore Children's Centre

Nurture negotiating skills

A member of staff took problem-solving one step further by asking children to choose the games they wanted to play; when a group of five children chose to play Ludo, a game for only four players, she asked them 'how are you going to resolve this problem?' The group spent some time considering possible solutions (eg some children working in pairs), and decided in the end to choose another game. The process developed negotiation skills – facilitated by an adult – which are crucial to non-violent conflict resolution.

Learning to settle conflicts without violence

ACTIVITY 17 Mediation³²

Number of children All

Age range 7+

Aims

- for children to help each other to find non-violent ways of resolving conflicts

Resources

Training in peer mediation skills from an experienced organisation (eg Catalyst)

Method

- 1 A facilitator trains volunteer children in peer mediation skills (this may take several days over a period of time).
- 2 Introductions : explain mediator's role to group at 'Circle time' and agree ground rules.
- 3 Problems and feelings: mediator hears each child in turn when there is conflict, using open reflective listening and non-judgmental questioning.
- 4 Conciliation: disputants helped to see both sides, acknowledge the other's feelings and identify main issues.

5 Choices: a brainstorm of suggestions, offers and requests, including negotiation and compromise.

6 Agreement: a mutually acceptable way forward.

The role of the adult is to support children to help each other to resolve conflicts by training and supporting some children to become mediators.

Mediation

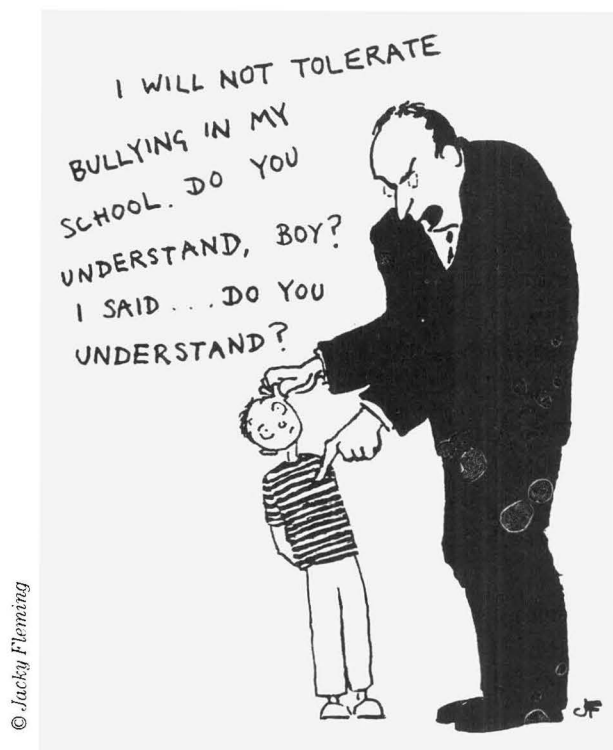
This technique has been widely used in primary schools as part of a 'whole school' approach to bullying, eg by Catalyst with the Saltley Plus Consortium of schools in Birmingham, and has also been successfully used in nursery schools and classes. Catalyst produce a Teachers' Guide to peer mediation called 'Let's Mediate' (see Useful Organisations, page 45 for details).

Section 7

Effective adult intervention

- What are the effects of violence in your group or family?
- Do children succeed in getting toys by grabbing them from other children?
- Do the adults give attention to the aggressor?
- What is the adult reaction to the victim?

As adults, we provide important role models for conflict resolution for children, so the development of effective ways of intervening has to include looking at the ways we resolve conflict between ourselves as adults, and between adults and children.



© Jacky Fleming

Children who are offered a range of choices, listened to, and treated with respect are likely to learn to negotiate rather than use violence – eventually. In the meantime, we have to make decisions about dealing with violence:

- when and how to intervene in conflicts between children;
- how to help the children who are most violent;
- what outcomes intervention will have.

An act of violence can result in a victim surrendering an object, crying, or running away. When this happens, the aggressor is more likely to launch an

attack against the same child again. Other children who observe successful aggression, or who are victims, are likely to begin initiating attacks themselves. If violence is allowed to continue, it is likely to increase and spread.

With a single aggressive act, a child may gain a toy; cause other children to cry; make adults move quickly and talk loudly; or make an object fly through the air and break. Even if a child receives no tangible benefit from a violent act, causing a pronounced disturbance can be rewarding in itself for a child who needs the accompanying attention.

Sometimes an adult will try to reason with a child who has hurt another, or lecture them. The attention, even though negative, may actually increase the likelihood that the violence will recur. On the other hand, ignoring aggression may convey tacit approval. Physical aggression against other children simply cannot be ignored; safety considerations and the rights of all children to protection from harm require adult intervention.

How can we intervene in a way that minimises the potentially rewarding effects of any attention, helps to reduce the chance of future aggression, and encourages children to use alternative, non-violent solutions to meet their needs or resolve conflicts?

Several strategies are commonly used by adults, with varying effects:

■ Say sorry

Adults often ask children who have hurt another child to 'say sorry'. This may offer some comfort to the hurt child, but can give the idea that it is acceptable to hurt someone and then say sorry afterwards.

It can also end up in a battle between the adult and a child who does not want to say sorry.

■ Rewards

Some daycare settings/schools and parents use rewards for good behaviour such as stickers or sweets. While this may motivate some children, the children who are most likely to be violent are the least likely to have achieved the self-control needed to get the reward. Children who have been abused, suffered loss, or witnessed terrible violence, are less likely to get their sticker for good behaviour at the end of the day than children who

have luckier lives – and this may in turn reinforce their view of themselves as hopelessly 'bad'.

■ *Praise for non-violent solutions*

Effective praise can encourage co-operative behaviour. The praise should provide specific encouragement for negotiating skills and non-violent solutions. Whatever the causes of violent behaviour, a child needs encouragement to achieve self-control. However, non-specific praise (eg 'you have been good today') can be confusing, since the child may not know which behaviour is being praised. Praise is most effective when it relates to specific actions ('it was thoughtful of you to suggest dividing the Lego into three when Gwydanc wanted to join you and Caleb').

■ *'Time out'*

'Time out' – a few minutes away from the group – for children who have hurt another child or are being disruptive is still in common use in early years settings and schools. The aim is to provide a 'cooling-off' period, for the adult as well as the child. However, it is often used more as a punishment. 'Time out' may be an improvement on the 'naughty chair', being sent out of the room, or standing in the corner that it developed from, but there is no evidence that it reduces the causes of violence. In fact, it may reinforce a child's feeling of social exclusion and being 'bad'. At worst, the adult may find themselves in a battle about the 'time out' itself – and pushed into the position of physically forcing an upset child to sit out of the group.

■ *Reparation*

There may be circumstances where reparation is appropriate – for example, a child who has broken another's Lego model could be asked to help them to build it up again – but these are likely to be few and far between, and difficult in practice if the child does not want to co-operate.

■ *Observation*

When a child is often violent, or very violent, individual plans can be helpful. These should be based on observation of the child:

- observe behaviour and related circumstances;
- develop a plan involving the key person and the parent/s;
- record and review results;
- revise as needed.

Some groups have found it helpful to look at acts of violence in their context – what is happening beforehand, the violent behaviour, and then the results (ABC : Antecedent, Behaviour,

Consequence) – and to record these in separate columns. The observations can be used to develop a picture – to see if there is a particular trigger for the violence and if there is a pattern as to who is involved; and to look at the outcomes. This picture can then form the basis for an agreed plan of action.

■ *Meaningful consequences*

Most action plans will include meaningful consequences – for example: 'if you crash your bike into someone, you have to get off it'. These work best if discussed and agreed beforehand with the child, and – in a daycare setting – with the whole group.

■ *Sympathy for the victims*

Children who have been hurt by another will need some sympathy and support. However, sympathy by itself may reward helplessness. Concern combined with support for an assertive response (for example, supporting a child to say to an aggressor 'That hurts. I'm not going to play with you.') empowers children to take a stand against violence themselves.

■ *Assertiveness training*

People who are able to resolve conflicts in mutually satisfactory ways are generally clear and assertive in communicating their own wishes and can be attentive to the wishes of the other person.

Assertiveness consists of effectively expressing your own needs and feelings and defending your rights, while respecting the rights and feelings of others. For children, as for adults, assertiveness stands between the extremes of aggression (where the rights and feelings of others are ignored) and submission or passivity.

In the context of violence prevention, assertiveness training for children serves four important functions:

- it offers a non-aggressive way for children to achieve their goals;
- it provides children with a way to avoid becoming victims;
- it prevents aggressive acts being rewarded by peer submission;
- it encourages good listening and communication skills.

A key part of assertiveness training with young children is teaching them to ask each other directly for what they want and to respond directly and non-violently to each other. Learning these skills will be helpful to everyone throughout their lives. Children – and adults – sometimes

resort to violence because they lack the problem-solving skills to get what they want in more acceptable ways.

Support for children who have experienced violence

Children who have experienced violence will need additional support to help them to deal with their feelings of pain and anger, and to find ways of expressing those feelings. Those who are refugees from war and violence may have experienced torture, rape and displacement and are likely to be affected in many different ways.

Creative play opportunities – drawing, painting, working with clay and dough – are essential, and children will also need imaginative play opportunities (small figures of people, home corner, dolls, puppets etc.). Some children find water and sand play therapeutic, and some need the physical challenges of outdoor play to help them to release tension.

Books and drama can help children to understand strong feelings, and painful experiences, and to begin to talk about them. They may need individual support to learn that it is fine to have strong feelings,

including anger and frustration, but that acting violently is never acceptable, no matter how they are feeling.

Part of this learning process involves helping children to evaluate the effects of violence they see portrayed on TV – where it may be shown as legitimate, socially approved, heroic, manly, or effective. Adults can help children to build skills in critically evaluating the ways in which violence on TV is unrealistic and in real life is harmful, destructive, and unacceptable.

Set guidelines on bringing toys from home

Toys brought from home can stimulate conflicts and reinforce the relationship between possessions and power. It can be particularly hard for the children whose family cannot afford the toy of the moment.

- Encourage bringing in a favourite book instead of Buzz Lightyear.
- Some staff find it helpful to agree a strategy with parents for bringing in toys from home on one day a week only, or keeping them out of reach on a shelf during the day.

Section 8

Monitoring and review

It is important to monitor the effectiveness of non-violent conflict resolution strategies, to find out which work well and which result in further or unresolved conflict.

Every time an activity or new strategy is introduced, the children and adults involved should record their views on how it works. Examples of observation sheets for young children and adults that are currently in use in children's centres are shown below.

For children, experience has shown that separately recorded views work best – and the youngest children may need some help (for example, by an adult asking them what they felt about the activity as well as the child making a drawing to express their response).

Children's records of achievement should include a space in the section on personal and social development for recording progress in relation to conflict resolution and negotiating skills, so that individual changes are recorded over time. Where there is an action plan for a particular child in relation to violence, careful observations need to be made at agreed times each day, so that different strategies can be evaluated.

It is, however, harder to evaluate any changes made by introducing non-violent conflict resolution strategies into a group or school as a whole. Levels of conflict may change as children leave and new children arrive, but it should be possible to measure changes over time through questionnaires for parents, staff and children.

An evaluation of a three-year conflict resolution programme undertaken with 196 groups of 5- to 10-year-olds by the University of Belgrade found that children became:

- better able to understand the consequences of their behaviour;
- better able to manage their feelings – especially anger;
- better at conflict management and negotiating disagreements;
- involved in fewer fights and upsets;
- more positive about themselves and their peers;

- better able to focus on and take another's perspective;
- more empathetic and respectful of the feelings of others;
- better at listening to others;
- more sharing, co-operative and mutually respectful;
- better in relations with teachers;
- more willing to learn;
- better at school performance.

In the UK, the centre which used 'time out' as a strategy for dealing with conflict found that they used it significantly less as a result of introducing some of the alternative strategies for conflict resolution suggested in this handbook.

In the USA, where more than 5,000 schools have conflict management programmes, a study by the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management undertook a three-year evaluation of several school-based conflict management programmes and found that most students 'improved their attitudes towards conflict, increased their understanding of non-violent problem solving methods, and enhanced their communication skills'.³³

Non-violent conflict resolution strategies should be regularly reviewed with children, staff and parents, to make sure that they are effective and used consistently by all concerned.

Ongoing amendments to policy and strategies may be needed to meet changing situations, or this may be an opportunity to talk through how the policy works in relation to other policies, for example an equal opportunities policy.

If a policy has not been implemented since the last review (these should take place at least annually), it may be because staff and parents need more training in dealing with conflict, and supporting children to find non-violent solutions.

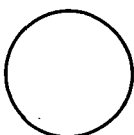
When the review identifies consistent progress towards non-violence, then children, staff, and parents will be part of a process of moving towards a more peaceful world.

Our evaluation

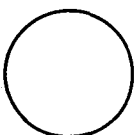
Name _____

The activity _____ on _____ made me feel

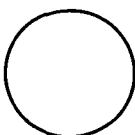
happy



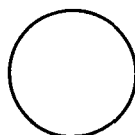
sad



scared

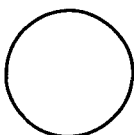


other

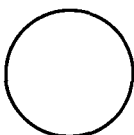


The activity _____ on _____ made me feel

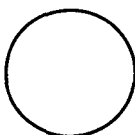
happy



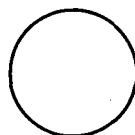
sad



scared

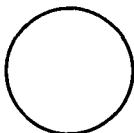


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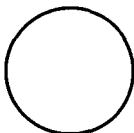


The activity _____ on _____ made me feel

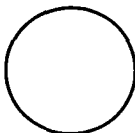
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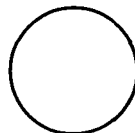
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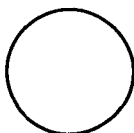


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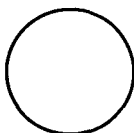


The activity _____ on _____ made me feel

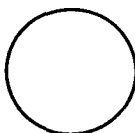
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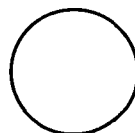
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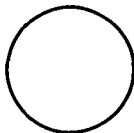


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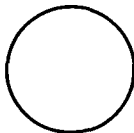


The activity _____ on _____ made me feel

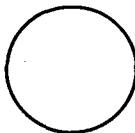
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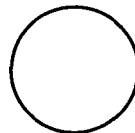
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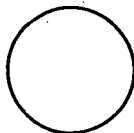


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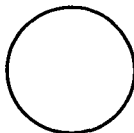


The activity _____ on _____ made me feel

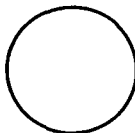
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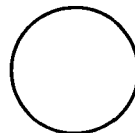
sad



scared



other



Please describe the activity and put the date in the top row, then ask each child involved to put their name or picture in the left hand column and draw a picture of how the activity made them feel on that line. One (or more) evaluation sheets should be completed for each activity. It is better to give children a separate sheet of their own to complete – since they may otherwise be influenced by the feelings of other children.

Staff evaluation

Activity	
Date, time begun and time ended	
Number of children involved	
Ages of children	
How well did this activity work ?	
Do you feel it would help to reduce conflict?	
Was this the right size/age-group?	
Was the timing right ?	
Did you need support?	
Would you use this activity again ?	
Any other comments ?	

Section 9

Partnership with parents

'My mum says, if someone hits you, hit them back.'

Many parents – and some early years workers and teachers – feel that children should be encouraged to stand up for themselves, and to hit back if hurt by another child. However, this can lead to escalating violence in a daycare or school setting, and leaves smaller and weaker children at a disadvantage.

It is important to aim for a consistent response to violence for children between home and nursery/playscheme/school (for instance an agreed no-smacking policy), since it can be very confusing for children if parents and teachers or childcare

workers have different strategies for dealing with violence.

This will involve careful consultation among all concerned about developing a policy on non-violent conflict resolution, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Children at one centre were asked about fighting and said that their mum had told them, 'if someone hits you, hit them back' – so staff discussed the rules of the centre with the children (no hitting), and this was then raised at a meeting with parents.

Partnership with parents is the subject of a separate leaflet which accompanies this handbook.

Section 10

Training suggestions

Talking about conflict can be very stressful for some people, and may bring up memories and issues about abuse and helplessness. It may be best to bring in an experienced facilitator, if this is possible, as it will be important for everyone within the group to feel safe.

Size of group

A maximum of 15 people is best, to ensure that everyone feels that they can make a contribution, and be heard. Some groups prefer to run separate training sessions for parents, staff and children, while others feel that mixed groups enable greater learning from each other.

Ground rules

Agree 'ground rules' before you start – such as confidentiality, respect for each other's point of view – and write them up on a flip-chart so that everyone can see and they can be added to if needed.

What if someone discloses information about abuse?

An initial agreement about confidentiality will be particularly important if issues about abuse come up. So will support – possibly on a 1:1 basis. Where children are involved in the sessions, the agreement about confidentiality may have to include agreement to over-ride it to take action to protect children if necessary.

Time

The suggestions for training sessions that follow will take approximately half a day – so they can be shortened to fit a staff meeting, or lengthened as needed.

Introductions

Facilitators often have favourite 'icebreakers' for people who do not know each other. One is to ask everyone in the group to walk around the room and find out three things from as many people as possible in a short time – *eg* their name, why they're interested in non-violence, and one thing they like about themselves – then to sit in a circle and ask people to remember what they can about each person. Or ask people to introduce the person next to them by finding out their name and why they are interested in non-violence, then tell the group.

Effective listening

Effective listening is essential to any kind of learning, and is particularly important in resolving conflicts without violence. The basis of effective listening is listening without interruption, while showing through body language (such as eye contact, turning towards the speaker, nodding if appropriate) that you are listening; it is best practised in pairs who take turns.

Closing circle

It is good to end with everyone in the group feeling valued. One way of doing this is to have a closing circle: for example, take a ball of wool, hold the end, and throw it to someone in the group saying at the same time what you valued about their contribution in the session; continue until everyone has been included in a 'web' of affirmation.

TRAINING SESSION 1

Developing a policy for non-violent conflict resolution

Aim

- to establish the need for a policy on non-violent conflict resolution and to look at ways of developing one which is 'owned' by parents, staff, and children

Group size

Up to 15

Resources

checklist on non-violence (page 15)
flip-chart, large felt-tip pens, Blu-tack, ball of wool (optional).

- **Introductions**
- **Agree ground rules**
- **Why have a policy on non-violence?** in circle, talk about examples of violence that we can think of involving children – from newspapers, TV, and children we know; write up on flip-chart. Discuss OFSTED requirements for behaviour policy and desirable outcomes for learning.
- **How were we taught to deal with conflict?** in pairs, 5 minutes each way (effective listening without interruption for one of the pair while the

other one talks for 5 minutes, then the listener talking for 5 minutes) about messages adults gave us about conflict resolution when we were children.

- **What is the most effective policy?** in circle, feedback on the different ways we were taught to resolve conflicts – are they consistent? which ones have been effective?
- **Checklist on non-violence:** in small groups (3 to 5 people) discuss what would have to be added to the checklist to make an effective policy for your early years setting – how does it 'fit' with other policies, such as equal opportunities?
- **Implementation:** in circle, feedback on draft policies and talk about essentials for implementation. Write up on flip-chart – eg:
 - agree at staff meeting
 - agree at parents' meeting
 - discuss with children
 plus: home-school contracts? sanctions? preventative curriculum?
- **Close**

TRAINING SESSION 2

Creating a non-violent environment

Aim

- to review the effects of the immediate environment (premises and outdoor area) on children, and to look at how far it encourages or discourages conflict

Group size

Up to 15

Resources

flip-chart, large felt-tip pens, Blu-tack
Strategies section of the handbook.

- **Introductions**
- **Agree ground rules**
- **Where are the conflict-points in the day?** in groups of 4 to 5, look at the main points where conflicts (between children and staff as well as among children) occur in the building and outdoor area and write up on flip-chart paper.

- **What can be done to change them?** feedback in circle – brainstorm practical solutions (eg re-organise meal area, plan garden area to break up dangerous bike route, put equipment on low shelves for self-service etc.).
- **Policy into practice:** in groups of 2 to 3, take one 'problem' area and plan its redevelopment in line with the non-violent conflict resolution policy, bearing in mind the equal opportunities policy and curriculum.
- **Close:** closing circle – draw up individual action plans for changing the environment so that it discourages conflict (if all from one setting, set up action groups and plan observations and review process).

TRAINING SESSION 3

Planning a co-operative curriculum

Aim

- to plan a co-operative curriculum

Group size

Up to 15

Resources

flip-chart, large felt-tip pens, Blu-tack
suggested activities in this handbook

■ Introductions

■ Agree ground rules

- **Why choose a co-operative curriculum?** in pairs, (5 minutes each, one talking, one listening without interrupting) think about your experience of competitive games – who came first? who came last? what were the effects? how did you feel?

People may remember times when they or those with disabilities came last, and be reminded of feelings of unhappiness and barriers to learning. Ask for feedback about the effects, and this will hopefully lead on to:

- **Aims of a co-operative curriculum:** in circle – what should the curriculum aim to achieve (put on flip-chart)?
- **Implementation:** in small groups of 3 to 5, plan co-operative activities for each age-group on flip-charts – short-term and long-term (use suggested activities in handbook as a starting point if needed).
- **Feedback and close.**

TRAINING SESSION 4

Effective strategies for dealing with violence

Aim

- to identify and agree effective strategies for dealing with violence

Group size

Up to 15

Resources

flip-chart, large felt-tip pens, Blu-tack
EPOCH materials (see Resources, page 45)

■ Introductions

■ Agree ground rules

- **Causes of violence:** in circle, look at where violence comes from and put key words up onto flip-chart.
- **Possible strategies:** in pairs, list the strategies for dealing with violence that people have found to work.
- **Effective intervention:** in small groups of 3 to 4, discuss the most effective forms of intervention, and their pros and cons.
- **Feedback – agreement if possible, if all from one setting – and close.**

TRAINING SESSION 5

Partnership with parents

Aim

- to agree consistent strategies for dealing with violence

Group size

Up to 15 parents and staff

Resources

flip-chart, large felt-tip pens, Blu-tack
EPOCH materials (see Resources section)

■ Introductions

■ Agree ground rules

- **Causes of violence:** in circle, look at where violent behaviour comes from and put key words up on to flip-chart.
- **Possible strategies:** in circle, list strategies for dealing with violence.
- **How can we work together?** in small groups of 3 to 4, discuss the most effective forms of intervention, and how we can implement them consistently between home/school or home/pre-school.
- **Feedback – agreement on a policy if possible – and close.**