



## Guide for Teachers: Helping Students Calm Down and Talk Through Conflict

### Approach the Student Who Is Upset or Angry

- Avoid touching students who are angry and agitated. Use your voice, body language, and physical spacing to show them you do not mean them any harm/additional upset.
- Once you get the student away from the conflict or the conflict has ended, ask about what happened in a soft, neutral tone of voice. When they feel *listened to*, kids who are stressed, angry, or escalated tend to calm down.
- Encourage the student(s) to use a calming strategy (i.e., take deep breaths, count to ten, say positive things to themselves, or imagine a relaxing place/use visual imagery).
  - Do it with them!
  - Acknowledge that calming down can be difficult. Let them know that they can do it if they try! It may take some time, and it gets easier with practice.

### After a Few Minutes of Calming Down

- Ask more questions to elicit the story while keeping a neutral tone of voice. If applicable, you may want to encourage the upset student to use their perspective-taking skills or put him or herself in someone else's shoes.
- Ask each student to be quiet and listen while the other child shares his or her perspective. Then the they will have a turn to talk and be heard.
- Encourage each student to give the other child the “benefit of the doubt.” Ask, “Is it at all possible that the other kid did not know he or she would hurt you, or didn't know you would be so upset by his or her actions?”
- Ask whether the students could let this conflict go and move on. If so, praise them for being flexible and positive.
- If not, give them some more time to calm down. Lead the students in discussing ways they could each feel better about what happened. Does one of them need an apology, even if it cannot happen right away? Is there another way to “make things right” that the students can identify?





## **Guide for Teachers: Helping Students Calm Down and Talk Through Conflict (continued)**

### **Going Forward**

- After a few hours or even a day has passed, help the students think about the consequences of the different choices they made. Ask, “How did your words and actions affect your friend?” Ask the students what they could have done differently that could have prevented the conflict.
- Instill hope. Students with poor emotion regulation have received a lot of negative attention and punishment over time, related to their anger management issues. Let the student know that you will support him or her in learning to avoid conflicts and tell the student that he or she will get to try again tomorrow!



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**Friend to Friend** is a school-based intervention program designed by experts at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to reduce relational aggression among high-risk 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade girls as well as improve the broader classroom climate in urban schools. Learn more about Friend to Friend by visiting <https://violence.chop.edu>.