

Health Skill:

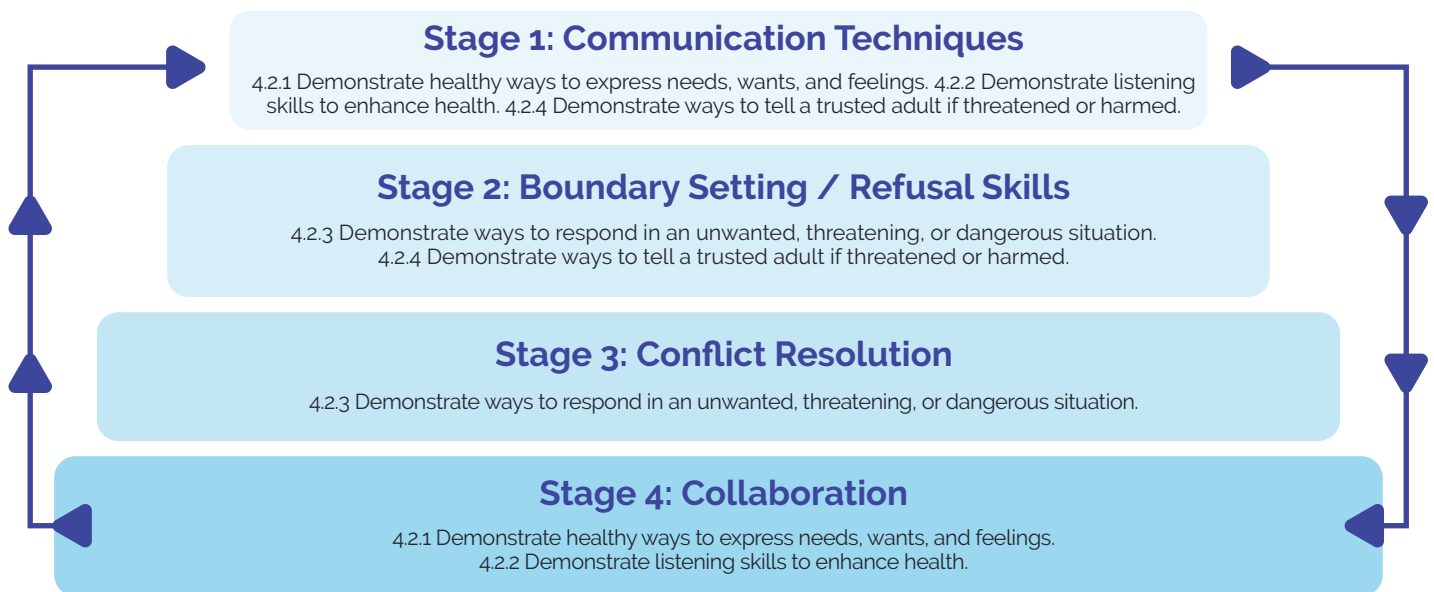
Interpersonal Communication



Background Information

The health skill, *Interpersonal Communication*, guides students to better understand, practice, and reflect on their interactions with others. By providing students with a safe space to practice strategies for healthy communication in school, students are more prepared to handle social situations throughout their life. The *Interpersonal Communication* health skill begins with practicing appropriate communication techniques, then explores healthy boundaries with strategies to uphold those boundaries, moving to examining the importance of productive conflict and conflict resolution, and ends with strategies to ensure effective collaboration. Each stage of *Interpersonal Communication* supports students to better understand themselves and their community, while working toward having more authentic, intentional communication with others.

The four stages of *Interpersonal Communication* are designed to support the growth of each student toward more complex levels of communication, beginning with the individual and ending with effective team work. The *Teaching Progression* for the four stages were developed in sequential order to ensure strategies build upon one another, leading to more inclusive, authentic, and collaborative teamwork. However, teachers can rearrange the stages as appropriate for their classroom.



NATIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARD (NHES) 4:

Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

National Health Education Standard Rationale: Effective communication enhances personal, family, and community health. This standard focuses on how responsible individuals use verbal and non-verbal skills to develop and maintain healthy personal relationships. The ability to organize and to convey information and feelings is the basis for strengthening interpersonal interactions and reducing or avoiding conflict.



Grades PreK-2 Framework

In grades PreK-2, students learn a variety of strategies to effectively communicate in a variety of modes. The graphic below outlines the strategies learned in each stage, beginning with **Stage 1: Communication Techniques** and ending with **Stage 4: Collaboration**. Teachers should use the strategies listed as a starting point and add strategies to meet the needs of their students.



Notes on Grade Level Progression

Activities, vocabulary, and language throughout the models are vertically aligned and build upon one another. If students require scaffolding refer to previous grade levels for additional ideas for activities and instruction that address gaps in student skills. For enrichment activities, look at higher grade levels in order to provide additional practice opportunities or for ideas on how to deepen understanding.



Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a natural and vital part of our social interactions, and when conflict is addressed using healthy communication skills, it leads to growth and understanding. Everyone engages in conflict, and explicitly teaching specific strategies for resolving these often uncomfortable situations helps turn unproductive conflict into productive conflict. In *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution*, students explore their experiences with conflict and learn new strategies for handling different types of conflict. *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* allows students to reflect on real-life situations. Finally, I-Statements are a crucial part of *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* as their use allows a person to express how they are feeling without placing blame.

The Steps:



Grades PreK-2 Framework

In grades PreK-2, students will focus on appropriate steps for handling conflict with peers. The three steps in this health skill model use strategies practiced in *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* to deepen understanding of *Interpersonal Communication*. Students in grades PreK-2 should focus on their use of words to express how they feel in conflicts. In *Stage 2: Conflict Resolution*, students practice responses to real-life scenarios to prepare for conflict in their daily life. These strategies include strategies to stay calm when conflicts arise, how to use I-Statements to express their feelings, and how to come to an agreement. Many of the activities in the *Teaching Progression* are written for students who have not started reading and writing. If students are reading and writing, adapt or add to activities to reinforce literacy skills. For some activities, guidance is provided for how literacy may be included.

Mastery of *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* for grades PreK-2 means students are able to explain the conflict, use strategies to remain calm, and voice their needs to others, including those who can help.



Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

The Steps:



Step 1: Stop & Think

Step Overview: During conflict it is important to take a moment to stop and think, which helps to identify the root cause of the conflict and utilize coping strategies to enter conflict resolution calmly. Students begin this health skill by identifying conflict and emotions associated with different situations. Next students should practice calming strategies to engage in conversation with another person during a conflict. This step allows students to evaluate the situation, calm themselves down, and think about how to proceed.

Sub Skill(s):

- Understand the conflict
- Use calming strategies



Step 2: Say Feelings

Step Overview: After using effective coping strategies, those involved in conflict must talk with each other to establish needs, wants, and feelings. Students begin this step by learning the purpose of I-Statements. While I-Statements can be used in a variety of situations that do not involve conflict, I-Statements are taught here because of their necessity in Conflict Resolution. Using I-Statements in conflict allows students to clearly state their feelings without attacking the other person in the conflict. I-Statements are typically broken down into three parts: 1. stating the feeling; 2. explaining the action that caused the feeling; and 3. explaining why the action caused the feeling. Teachers should reinforce the listening and speaking strategies in *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* as they practice saying their I-Statements.

Sub Skill(s):

- Use I-Statements
- Listen to the other person



Step 3: Agree or Get Help

Step Overview: During conflict, individuals first must stop and think, and then talk about how they are feeling. Once this has happened, they must work on coming to an agreement or seek help from someone who can settle the conflict. Students begin this step by examining balanced, fair agreements for different scenarios. When making an agreement, it is important to ensure that both people feel that the agreement is fair and balanced. The majority of this step is spent on students justifying agreements by explaining why the agreements are balanced and fair.

Sub Skill(s):

- Agree on what is fair
- Get help, if needed



Teaching Tips

- Teach I-Statements to support students in expressing their feelings during conflict. See the *Language of Health Literacy* for Step 3: Explain Perspectives for I-Statement language.
- Be careful not to convey that all conflict is bad, rather focus on the idea that conflict is normal and can lead to better outcomes and stronger relationships since it allows people to be honest about their feelings.
- Use role play to provide students the opportunity to work through conflict in low stakes environments.
- Share the steps of *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* with other school staff, so they can use similar language when conflict occurs in their classrooms or other spaces, such as the cafeteria or playground.

See *Teaching Progression* for suggested learning activities.



Teaching Progression:



Step 1: Stop & Think

SUB SKILL(S):

- Understand the conflict
- Use calming strategies

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What do I do if someone makes me feel angry, hurt, or sad? How do I stay calm in difficult situations?

NHES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

(4.2.1) Demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings. (4.2.3) Demonstrate ways to respond in an unwanted, threatening, or dangerous situation. (4.2.4) Demonstrate ways to tell a trusted adult if threatened or harmed.

VALUABLE VOCABULARY:

conflict,
calm, stop, think

Step 1: Stop & Think | Sub Skill: Understand The Conflict



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that people don't always agree or get along. Tell students that this is normal and tends to happen among friends, family, and at school. Explain to students that they will work together to think about how they act when they don't agree with someone.

Show students a video explaining conflict to young children. Ask students the following questions to help them process what they learned, encouraging students to talk with each other and act out their ideas:

- What does conflict look like?
- What does conflict sound like?
- How do you feel when you see conflict?

Language of Health Literacy:

I feel _____.

_____ (happened).

I want _____.

I need to _____ to calm down.

TEACHING NOTES:

- Depending on the age of students, do not require students to memorize a definition of conflict, but rather spend time ensuring students understand how conflict comes up and how it makes people feel.



Teaching Progression: Step 1 | Stop & Think (Cont.)



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Read a series of scenarios to have students think about how conflicts can occur and how it can make people feel. After each scenario, ask the students to identify the conflict and how they would feel.

TEACHING NOTES:

- Example Scenarios:
 - I was walking to lunch and someone pushed me from behind and I fall down... What is the conflict? How would you feel?
 - I was playing a game at recess and my friend takes the ball out of my hand and tells me my turn is over... What is the conflict? How would you feel?
 - I was playing a game with my sister, and she said I was cheating... What is the conflict? How would you feel?



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Explain to students that it is really important to Stop & Think before we react in a conflict. Tell students that when we Stop & Think, there are questions we need to ask ourselves before we react.

Provide students the following questions and example answers to help them Stop & Think:

- How do I feel? - "I am hurt and angry that someone pushed me down. I feel shaky and mad."
- Why do I feel this way? - "They tried to hurt me by pushing me."
- What do I want? - "I want the person to apologize."
- Do I need to do anything to calm myself down to talk to this person? - "I'll take three deep breaths, so I can be calm when I talk to this person."

Model for students what it means to Stop & Think using a relevant story and the questions above. Then, tell students another story about a conflict. Ask students to answer the questions with a partner.

TEACHING NOTES:

- Example Conflict: I was walking to lunch and someone pushed me from behind, and I fell down.
- Change the questions to be more responsive to student abilities, especially in the younger age group of this grade band.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 4:

Read students a story about a character that runs into conflict. As you read the story, have students shout out when the character should Stop & Think. When the students shout out, "Stop & Think," have students practice answering the questions above as if they were the character. Partner students up with a buddy to encourage all students to practice. Have one to two groups present how they think the character should respond when they Stop & Think.



Teaching Progression: Step 1 | Stop & Think (Cont.)

Step 1: Stop & Think | Sub Skill: Use Calming Strategies



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that when engaging in conflict, it is important to remain calm. Tell students that when we get mad, sad, or embarrassed, it can often be difficult to think clearly. Explain to students how you feel when you get upset and provide a strategy you use to become more calm and rational. Ask students to discuss the consequences of not being calm when we enter conflict.

Language of Health Literacy:

I need to _____ to stay calm.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Select a variety of coping strategies for students to practice. Create stations around the room to allow students to practice each strategy.

After trying different strategies, have students reflect on the strategies by answering the following questions:

- Did you enjoy that strategy?
- How did the strategy make you feel?

TEACHING NOTES:

- Suggested coping strategies: deep breathing, asking for a pause in the conflict, count to ten, find three items that are a specific color, etc.
- Model and provide the *Language of Health Literacy* to support students in identifying when they will need specific coping strategies.
- Provide ample time for students to practice these strategies.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Show students a video of two people having an argument. Instruct students to shout out, "calm down" when they think a character needs to calm down. Pause the video and have students identify which coping strategy the character should try to calm down. Once students have identified the coping strategy, ask students to demonstrate the coping strategy. Repeat this process for the rest of the video.



Teaching Progression:



Step 2: Say Feelings

SUB SKILL(S):

- Use I-Statements
- Listen to the other person

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

How do I tell someone how I feel when I am upset? How do I handle conflict?

NHES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

(4.2.1) Demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings. (4.2.3) Demonstrate ways to respond in an unwanted, threatening, or dangerous situation.

VALUABLE VOCABULARY:

*I-Statements,
emotions, feelings*

Step 2: Say Feelings | Sub Skill: Use I-Statements



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that the second step to say your feelings and to listen to how the other person is feeling during conflict. Tell students that they will practice making I-Statements to say how they feel during a conflict. Give students the *Language of Health Literacy* to help them practice I-Statements.

Language of Health Literacy:

I feel _____ (feeling) when (action of another person) because _____ (explanation of feeling).



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Start students on the first part of the I-Statements, "I feel." Read situations to students and have them say, "I feel _____ when..." The statements should give the students the "when." For example, I feel _____, when someone takes my pencil without asking." Provide multiple opportunities to create the "I feel" of the I-Statements with different situations. Have students share their I-Statements with a partner.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Facilitate student practice of creating the "when" for their I-Statements. Give students a piece of paper divided into three to four sections. For each section, assign a different image or word to show a specific emotion (e.g. happy, sad, angry, excited). Ask students to create a picture for a time when they would feel that emotion. For example a student may draw someone hitting them in the section labeled "angry."



Teaching Progression: Step 2 | Say Feelings (Cont.)



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 4:

Assign each corner in the room with an emotion (e.g. happy said, angry, excited). Read off different situations and have students move to the emotion that they feel when that situation occurs. For example, a friend won't let you play a game at recess. Students would move to angry or happy in the room. After students move, have them turn to a shoulder partner and explain why they chose the emotion. To reinforce instruction about body language from *Stage 1: Communication Techniques*, ask students to show the emotion with their face and body.

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 5:

Practice creating complete I-Statements. Explain to students that the final step in creating an excellent I-Statement is to explain their feelings. Tell students that this can be hard to figure out, but it is really important so the other person can better understand why you feel the way you do.

Give the students an example from earlier in the lesson. For example, "I feel angry when you take my pencil without asking because I need to use the pencil and it is mine." Read scenarios of common conflicts students face at school. Then, instruct students to create I-Statements with a partner for each conflict.

TEACHING NOTES:

- Make sure scenarios are responsive to the students in your classroom.
- Monitor students during practice, correct language, and encourage students to fully explain the reason for their emotions.



See *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* to support students using effective speaking strategies to use for I-Statements.

Step 2: Say Feelings | Sub Skill: Listen To The Other Person



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that it is important to listen when the other person states their feelings. This makes sure each person feels heard. Explain that in order to ensure we heard the other person, you can repeat back what you heard. Read an I-Statement to the class and model repeating the I-Statement back using the *Language of Health Literacy*. Read other I-Statements to the class. Then, ask students to turn to a partner and repeat back what they heard.

Language of Health Literacy:

You feel _____ when _____
because _____.



See *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* to support students listening to others.



Teaching Progression:



Step 3: Agree or Get Help

SUB SKILL(S):

- Agree on what is fair
- Get help, if needed

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

How do I make an agreement with someone during a conflict?

Who should I ask for help if I can't solve a conflict?

VALUABLE VOCABULARY:

agree, disagree, help, balanced, fair

NHES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

(4.2.1) Demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings. (4.2.2) Demonstrate listening skills to enhance health. (4.2.3) Demonstrate ways to respond in an unwanted, threatening, or dangerous situation. (4.2.4) Demonstrate ways to tell a trusted adult if threatened or harmed.

Step 3: Agree or Get Help | Sub Skill: Agree On What Is Fair



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that the third step to *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* is to try to reach an agreement with the other person or get help, if needed. Tell students that when two people have a conflict, they need to work together to come up with something they can both agree to do. This makes both people happy and ready to move forward.

Place students in small groups (2-3). Give groups one piece of paper and art materials. Tell students that they need to create a specific image (perfect day, best place to play, best animal). Give students up to five minutes to create their picture. Tell students that they must work together to agree on what the image should look like. Walk around to monitor student interactions. Ask students about their work to understand who is making decisions in groups.

Once groups are finished, ask students the following questions:

- How did your group decide what to draw?
- Did you ever have to not get your way so the group could agree?

Language of Health Literacy:

_____ is fair.

_____ is not fair.



Teaching Progression: Step 3 | Agree or Get Help (Cont.)



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Tell students that if we get into a conflict with another person, our goal should be to figure out solutions and agree on something that will make both people happy. Define **agreement**. *Agreement* means **both people in the conflict get something they need**. Show students a scale and discuss the term **balanced**. Explain to students that when an agreement is **balanced**, it is **a win-win situation for both people**. Read a scenario that demonstrates an agreement. Show students using the scale how the two sides are getting different things from the agreement. When a person in the story receives something that addresses their concern, place an object, such as a marble, to their side of the scale. Continue this process until both sides of the scale are balanced.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Place students in small groups (2-3). Give each group a drawing of a scale. Read a story of people in conflict that shows an agreement. When students hear a person in the story get something they need or want, have them write or draw pictures on both sides of the scale for what each person is getting.

After the story, ask students the following questions:

- Is this agreement balanced and fair?
- Why does this agreement make both people happy?
- Why do you think this will work?

TEACHING NOTES:

- Model and provide the *Language of Health Literacy* to support student discussion.
- If materials are available, use manipulatives that students can sort to show a fair and balanced agreement.

Step 3: Agree Or Get Help | Sub Skill: Get Help, If Needed



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that they may need to ask for help if they can't reach an agreement. Remind students that they aren't trying to tell on the other person, but they may need to get help if the issue is dangerous, emotional, or confusing.

Read students scenarios showing people in different conflicts. Have students decide if the student in the scenario should work it out or get help. Have students move to different sides of the room or stand up / sit down to show their opinion. Encourage students to explain their reasoning with partners.

Ask students the following questions to increase their critical thinking about the scenarios:

- Why should they try to work it out?
- How would you feel in this situation?
- What could happen if they don't ask for help?

Language of Health Literacy:

I need help to _____.

We need help to _____.

We feel _____, and we need _____. Can you please help?



See *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* to support students in asking for help.



Assessing Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

Students in grades PreK-2 will have mastered *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* by demonstrating their ability to showcase the performance indicators identified in Standard 4. Use the student friendly language below to support rubric creation and feedback to students.

Standard 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

4.2.1 Demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings.

- I can tell others my feelings using I-Statements.

4.2.2 Demonstrate listening skills to enhance health.

- I can come to an agreement with another person when we are in a conflict.

4.2.3 Demonstrate ways to respond in an unwanted, threatening, or dangerous situation.

- I can define conflict.
- I can use calming strategies to stop and think during a conflict.
- I can set boundaries with others.

4.2.4 Demonstrate ways to tell a trusted adult if threatened or harmed.

- I will be able to ask for help if I can't solve a conflict.

ASSESSMENT TOOL #1 (4.2.1, 4.2.2)

Show students a video, create a short skit with puppets, or read a book showing two characters in an argument. Stop when the argument when it gets to the point where students can practice creating I-Statements. Then, have students create an I-Statement and agreement that would make both characters happy. Have students finish the story with the agreements they choose. Students can finish the story by drawing their ending or acting out the ending with a small group.

ASSESSMENT TOOL #2 (4.2.2, 4.2.3)

Give students paper and drawing materials. The paper can have steps or boxes with arrows like a comic strip. Have students create a situation where they need to tell someone else to respect a boundary. Encourage students to draw a picture that shows two people interacting with one asking for the other person to stop. Once students complete their picture, have them turn to their shoulder partner to explain their image. Students should explain the situation and practice how the person in the situation would set a boundary. Use the *Language of Health Literacy* previously practiced.

**ASSESSMENT TOOL #3 (4.2.3, 4.2.4)**

Have students create a comic strip showing two people going through the three steps of conflict resolution. Give students four boxes to show the situation. The first box should show the conflict and how the characters "Stop & Think". The second box should show both characters talking to each other, and the final should show the two characters reaching an agreement with an agreement scale proving they have a fair agreement. In the fourth box, have students draw how the characters feel at the end of the conflict. Students who can write should be encouraged to label their comic. Students who cannot write should explain their scenarios to a small group.

Comics can be displayed in the classroom as a reminder of the steps for conflict resolution.

Content Area Connections

Build content understanding through connections with other courses. Share suggestions with teachers to develop plans for content overlap and student language connections.

The use of effective conflict resolution skills helps to create a safe and welcoming classroom. When planning for partner or group work, use **Stage 3: Conflict Resolution** to reinforce healthy ways of communicating during conflict. Explicitly teaching students conflict resolution skills will ensure that students are set up for success and using common language.

Utilize content structures and topics in classrooms to reinforce student understanding and to support ongoing student development. **Stage 3: Conflict Resolution** can be used across content areas when students encounter conflict amongst their peers or with teachers. Remind students to use their conflict resolution strategies to stay calm and come to a solution that is fair for both people. For example, during art class, students may disagree on how classroom materials should be shared. Teachers can prompt students to use the steps in **Stage 3: Conflict Resolution** to address the issue and move forward in the work.

Reinforce the understanding that effective conflict resolution can help in all areas of life by exploring the following questions with students across contents. Add specific content information in place of the italicized words as necessary. These questions are meant to be used when students are experiencing conflict and struggling to move forward. These questions are a guide for independent reflection when students are challenged to understand how best to communicate their needs, wants, and feelings during conflict and reach a fair compromise.

- How are you feeling in *this moment*?
- Are you calm enough for *this conflict*?
- What I-Statement could you use to express how you are feeling about *this*?
- What is the other person feeling in *this moment*?
- What do you need to resolve *this conflict*?
- What does the other person need to resolve *this conflict*?
- How can you reach a balanced agreement in *this conflict*?
- Is *this agreement* balanced for both people? Why or why not?

**VOCABULARY REINFORCEMENT:**

Utilize the vocabulary words below to reinforce student understanding and to showcase the ability to use words across content areas. For example, an entire grade-level team can decide to teach these words within the specific contexts of their classes to deepen understanding of vocabulary and language use.

*conflict, resolution, perspective, coping strategies,
listen, needs, wants, feelings, compromise, fair,
negotiate*

Resource Bank

RMC Health

- [Health Education Skills Model](#)

National Health Education Standards

- [Standards & Performance Indicators](#)

Sesame Street Conflict Video

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gl3e-OUavQ>

There's a Bear on My Chair by Ross Collins (book on conflict)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDfQNcn5uGo>

Suggested Books about Sharing

- <https://www.edsys.in/story-books-teach-children-importance-sharing/>