Conflict Resolution for Kids: Breathe, Learn, Talk

By Judy Ringer

My good friend and colleague, Thomas Crum, taught me a lot of what I know about having hard conversations. A method he uses with children - the BLT - is so simple and easy to remember, I often use it with adults, too. Breathe, Learn, Talk.

So when a mom asked me about how to help her 10-year-old daughter Becky solve a problem with her teasing friend, Tom's BLT method was a perfect solution. Becky's friend was making jokes at her expense, and Becky wanted her to stop.

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Dear Becky,

I'm sorry you're having a conflict with your friend. It's not fun, but conflict isn't always a bad thing. It can even be a way to have a closer relationship, if you're willing to talk to each other. Just remember these letters - BLT.

B - Breathe and Be Centered

I think you probably know what I mean when I say "center yourself," but if not, ask your mom. She'll help you find examples of times when you've been centered and ways to center with your friend. To be centered is to feel strong, confident, and balanced on your feet. When you're centered, you make wise decisions, and you know your purpose for the conversation.
Before talking with your friend, ask yourself:
- What’s important about being friends?
- What do I really want from the conversation?
- What if my friend can’t hear what I have to say?

Think about these things before talking with your friend. And center yourself (often) during the conversation. Breathe, feel your feet on the ground, and remember why you wanted to talk.

L - Learn

You might start the conversation by saying something like:
"I'd like to talk to you about something I think will help us be better friends."

Ask what she likes about being friends and tell her what you like. Listen and learn how she sees things. Do you both think the same things are important? Stand or sit beside her. Maybe take a walk together. Stay curious.

T - Talk

Even though the letters are BLT, if you want you can begin with T - Talk. For example:
"I'd like to talk to you about something that's bothering me."

Then:
- "I feel sad when you make jokes about ...."  
- Or "I don't like it when you say ......."
- Or "I'm surprised when you tease me about ...... because we 're friends, and I don't think that's what friends do. I would like you to stop."

Your friend might have something to say, too. I hope she says she's sorry. But whatever she says, listen and keep centering and remembering what’s important to you. When you're centered, you help your friend stay centered, too.

Managing Reactions

Whatever happens, remember that what your friend says or does is not about you. You can't make her do anything she doesn’t want to do, and if she keeps joking and teasing at your expense, you may decide she isn't that good a friend after all.

Wishing you lots of good energy!

Judy
"Conflict Resolution for Kids" works for adults, too. **Breathe and Be Centered. Learn from the situation. And be willing to Talk about the impact of your conflict partner's behavior.** Turn your conflicts into opportunities to learn, grow, and strengthen relationships.

Has this article been useful for you? **Please let us know here.**

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**About the Author:** Judy Ringer is the author of *Turn Enemies Into Allies: The Art of Peace in the Workplace.* She provides conflict and communication skills training based on mind/body principles from the martial art aikido, in which she holds a third-degree black belt. Employing best practice communication models, Judy brings to life key concepts such as self-management under pressure and appreciation of other viewpoints.

Judy is also the author of *Unlikely Teachers: Finding the Hidden Gifts in Daily Conflict,* and three CDs: *Managing Conflict in the Workplace,* *Simple Gifts: Making the Most of Life's Ki Moments,* and *This Little Light: The Gift of Christmas,* all of which can be found on her website www. JudyRinger.com, or Amazon.com.

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