



Conflict

Fights between friends can be really rough sometimes. You might still have classes with that person, or they might sit with you at lunch. How do you get through those tense situations and resolve the conflict?

Here are some tried and true strategies for overcoming friendship tension, used by other girls who have gone through conflict with a friend:



"Take sometime apart. If you spend every minute of every day with someone, you are bound to get on each other's nerves."

"Be honest. If you did something you regret, say that, and apologize. At the same time, don't pretend to be friends with a girl and trash her behind her back because she did something that upset you."

"Move to a different seat at lunch on a temporary or permanent basis."

"Talk about it once you have both cooled down, and ask a friend to be there when you do. She can keep you both in check."



"If you need a confidant to share the story with, choose one person who is 'safe.' That means not another girl who will blab the story to everyone, or a girl who will try and 'resolve' your conflict for you. I talk to my mom instead of my friends because she's a good listener, and if I ask her to keep something private, she does."





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What can you do to repair friendships that end badly?

"My best friend used to be Nina, a girl in my neighborhood. We had been together since first grade and told each other our deepest secrets, but then one day we got in a huge fight. We were in sixth grade and Nina decided she liked the same guy I did—Marco.

"Nina did everything she could to make Marco like her, including starting a rumor that I still sucked my thumb! In the end, he did like her, but it ruined our friendship."



Every friendship is bound to have its challenges. What could Rosa and Nina have done to prevent the situation from getting out of control?

Is there any hope for Rosa and Nina to repair their friendship now, so many years later?

How to handle conflict

It's rare not to have disagreements and conflict in a friendship—even if it's just about something like music or movies. But what happens when you don't agree? How do you express your opinions to your friends so you don't offend them?

Consider which of the following responses is a more positive way to express your opinion:

"I don't care if you like my outfit or not, I paid a fortune for my dress, and I'm wearing it to homecoming."

"Gee, I really like this outfit. Can you tell me what you think is wrong with it?"

"I know you like her, but I think that new girl is a snob. She didn't even say 'hi' when I got on the bus with her."

"I'm not sure what's up with that new girl. I've tried to be friendly with her because you said she's really nice, but something hasn't clicked."

"Ricky is a jerk. I can't believe you like him!"

"Ricky said something I thought was really rude. Maybe you understand him better than me."



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Conflict

Creative activity

There are many different ways you can handle conflict. Read up on "conflict resolution" strategies and create a Conflict Contract. Buy a piece of cardstock the size of a standard notebook page, use a blank inside cover from an old notebook, or create a new document on your computer. Design the page with borders and/or artwork and then write or paste a copy of your Conflict Contract inside, and sign it.



Options:

Make this an activity you do with your group of friends, and get everyone to sign it. Write a column for your school or community newspaper on how to solve relationship conflicts without aggression.

Work with your school to create some "Peace Time Out" spots where students can go to calm down in the midst of conflict. Find some posters with soothing images and some soft pillows to make the spots appealing.

Hannah says:



"I hate it when my friends fight because it creates such a huge drama that puts me right in the middle. I never get things started, but I always end up being forced to 'take sides' and pick between my friends."

Okay, Now You Say:



Which role is more difficult when there is conflict within your friendship circle—being the person who gets things started, or the person who gets caught in the middle?

What strategies have you seen used successfully when there was a friendship conflict? What strategies didn't work?

When there is conflict, what things make the situation worse?



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