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## HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICT QUICKLY & REASONABLY

Last month we learned several things: (1) quick and reasonable conflict resolution is critical when dealing with children, (2) letting mini-conflicts become maxi-conflicts on a regular basis is very destructive to a child's development, and (3) a lot of parental chattering usually makes conflicts worse.

So how do you resolve squabbles quickly and reasonably? You need to stop and think a little bit and then come up with a plan. You can use one very simple kind of conflict resolution plan when you want your kids to *stop doing something obnoxious*, such as arguing, whining, fighting or tantruming. On the other hand, when you want your youngsters to *start doing something positive*, such as going to bed, eating, doing homework or picking up, you should put together some regular routines to handle these problems.

What's the plan for dealing with conflict based on obnoxious behavior? It's simple: explain—if necessary—first, and then if an explanation doesn't work, count. Your daughter, for example, wants a Twinkie right before dinner. You calmly said "No" and explained your reasoning. She pushes the issue, though, and starts whining.

Is another explanation going to pacify her? Not very likely! That kind of parental babbling, remember, is how mini-conflicts become maxi-conflicts. Instead, you hold up one finger and say, "That's 1." That's her first warning that she's out of line. If she hits a "2" and then a "3," there will be a consequence. If she stops at 1 or 2, fine.

## WHAT ABOUT ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR?

Sound too simple? It takes about two hours to learn how to count properly and to have all your questions answered about the procedure.

What about encouraging good behavior? You want to set up routines for things like bedtime, mealtimes, cleaning rooms and getting up and out in the morning. Your routines will consist of tactics such as praise, kitchen timers, The Docking System, natural consequences, and charting. Routines minimize conflict because you don't have to discuss and explain each time why something needs to get done.

What if the kids argue with you about a routine? They get counted.

## DON'T YOU WISH THERE WERE A GUIDEBOOK FOR THIS?

Are you feeling like a total dictator at this point? Relax. Keep in mind that good parents should be demanding—they should expect good behavior from their kids. But



good parents also are warm and friendly. They regularly listen to their children and have fun with them.

Minimizing conflict means knowing how to handle your three parenting jobs: controlling difficult behavior, encouraging good behavior and strengthening your relationships with your youngsters. Don't you wish there were a guidebook for this? There is: Dr. Phelan's best-selling, [1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12](#).

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## ONE-ON-ONE FUN

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