Tips for Diffusing Conflict
MPS Social Emotional Learning Facilitator Laurie Stillman

1. Take a deep breath and remind yourself that this relationship is important to you and that it is worth addressing conflictual situations. Engage the person in conversation, at a time when you can both have perspective. Try to be curious and respectful of the other person’s point of view, while making it clear that you expect them to be respectful of yours.

2. Focus on listening to what the other person has to say, rather than obsessively planning and preparing what you want to say to them. Listening will allow you to reflect on, and observe, where they are coming from so that solutions can consider their perspectives and feelings. Ask questions, without blaming them, so you can problem solve together.

3. When important statements are made by the other person, mirror back what you think they are trying to express to you to make sure you understand what they are trying to say and to let them know that you are listening.

4. Be direct and forthcoming. Being liked should not be your first concern. You should be most concerned with resolving the conflict. “Talking with people honestly and with respect creates mutually rewarding relationships, even when conversations are difficult.”

5. Make sure that the other person understands what you’re saying as well. If they don’t seem to be picking up on your message, ask them to repeat their understanding of what you are attempting to communicate.

6. Finally, don’t put the conversation off—even though that’s what you would like to do. Otherwise the behavior or problem will likely be repeated, and feelings will fester. Nip the issue in the bud when it happens. If it is communicated in a respectful way, and you go into the conversation expecting positive results, you will likely get a good outcome.