

A Practical Model for Interpersonal Conflict Resolution



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Introduction

Following is a basic model for interpersonal conflict resolution that maybe helpful for both Christian and non-Christian families, to help enjoy more peace and joy in our marriages, homes, work, marketplace, and neighborhoods. It is taken from the Bible.

In particular, many parents complain of continual sibling squabbling and fighting in the home, as they yearn for a more happy and peaceful home atmosphere.

Scenario 1: Parents increasingly frustrated by sibling bickering, arguing, yelling, and various levels of physical fighting.

Scenario 2: Parents increasingly frustrated by siblings continually coming to them to "tell-on", tattle, or complain about what another sibling has done to them.

Scenario 3: Marital, Work, Church, or Neighborhood relationship/relational hurts.

I was a parent of five sons and middle school teacher - and had good success with the following Biblical model. I have also seen it work in other family, church, work, neighborhood, and marital relationships.

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I taught and enforced 2 Major House / Classroom Rules that I used in my home and classrooms that made for great peace. I try to get parents and teachers to adopt and use them. I believe these are great life rules. Simple and easy to remember and do.

Rule 1: No destructive speech of any kind to or about other people allowed.

Rule 2: Keep your hands, arms, legs, body, and objects to yourself!

My sons and students knew they were not allowed to say mean and unkind words to each other (or *about* each other) . . . destructive name-calling, casual cut-downs, gossip, slandering, etc. These offenses were going to be confronted and appropriate disciplines administered. There were no free elbowing contests in the backseat of cars, no free pokes, physical teasing, hitting with objects, or destructive and purposeful insults allowed. Physical altercations were only allowed in the case of self-defense.

As a teacher, at the beginning of every school year, I committed to parents (*and the students*) that as best I could, I would be guarding each and every one of them from being wounded, picked-on, teased, or physically hurt by other students.

Numerous times over the years, people came up to my wife and I in restaurants to tell us how they were amazed at what nice children we had, and how well-behaved they were. We were able to tell them how God gives us wisdom how to raise them properly. This can be a great Christian witness. **This model teaches our children how to be true, real friends. It allows for true and safe friendships to grow. It helps teach them how we should truly treat one another, and help resolve our inevitable problems and offenses with each other.**

Interpersonal conflicts can begin from all kinds of perceived or imagined "hurts". **Teaching and enforcing interpersonal conflict skills before these hurts escalate into actions that break House Rules 1 and 2 can reduce a lot of pain and conflict for everyone!**

Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Model

Step 1. If a sibling is hurt or offended by words or actions of another, the offended person is to clearly communicate to the offender privately, exactly what the grievance is, and how it hurt them. **God puts the responsibility on the offended person to first go the offender, and make their case.** (If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private." - Matt 18) We commonly do *everything but* this!



Young people don't know how to properly handle hurts and offenses. They tend to administer justice by themselves (especially when parents and authorities are disconnected) by expressing their hurts destructively in both **verbal** and **physical** assaults. These are the inappropriate prohibited actions in House Rules 1 and 2. Young people need to know that they can get appropriate **justice** (listening to the issue, judging it, and bringing appropriate disciplines/consequences) from authorities if proper rules of conflict resolution have been followed by them.

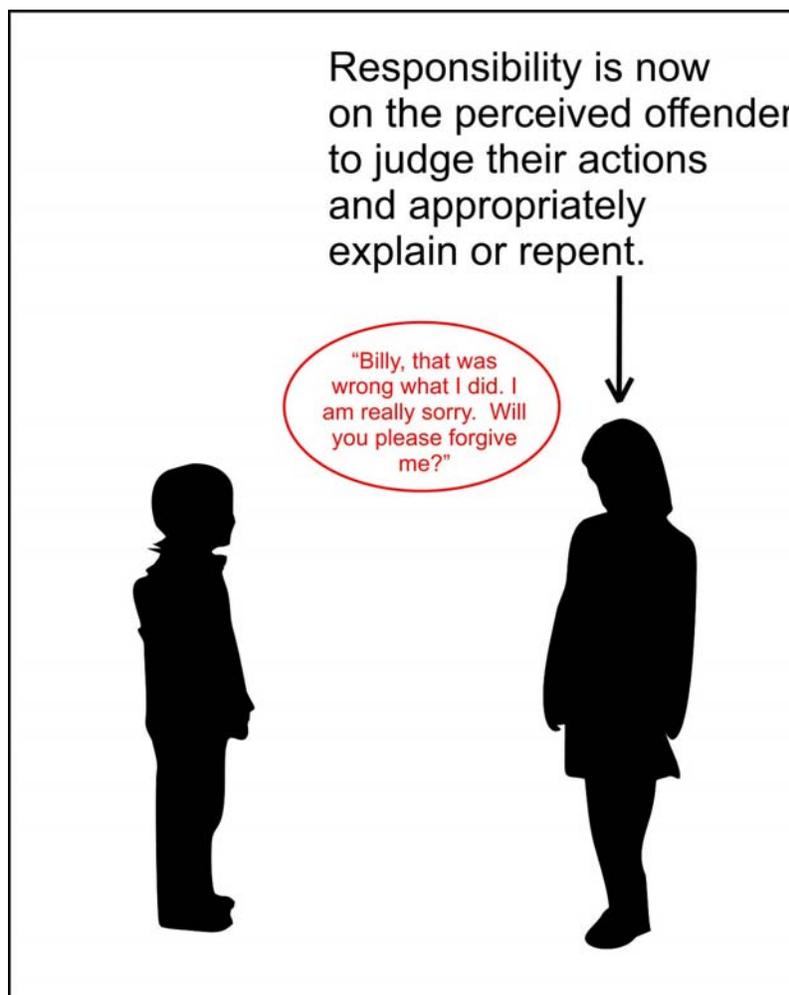
Bringing appropriate justice is a parent, teacher, boss, etc. responsibility.

Educating young people in the proper rules of conflict resolution is also parent and teacher responsibility.

Step 2. The offender then is required to "judge" their own actions, to determine themselves what was right or wrong, and make the appropriate response. If the offender realized what they said or did was selfish and wrong, they are to:

A. Verbally communicate they are sorry - in a heartfelt way. We can make ourselves sorrowful for what we did. We are all God-given human conscience, which can be molded and/or changed for better or for worse. We are all responsible for keeping our own conscience pure or polluted. A casual, non-caring and sarcastic "Sar-ree" is not being truly sorrowful and is not allowed. The offender needs to truly **be** sorry in a heartfelt way, and **say** they are sorry in a heartfelt way!

B. "Get" forgiveness. Just like a casual "sorry" to God many times does not bring His forgiveness (true repentance / "completely turning-around" does), we need to "get" forgiveness by asking the offended, **"Will you please forgive me?"** This verbal response from the offender breaks the hurt and anger in the offended **person's** heart, and begins to allow forgiveness to flow.

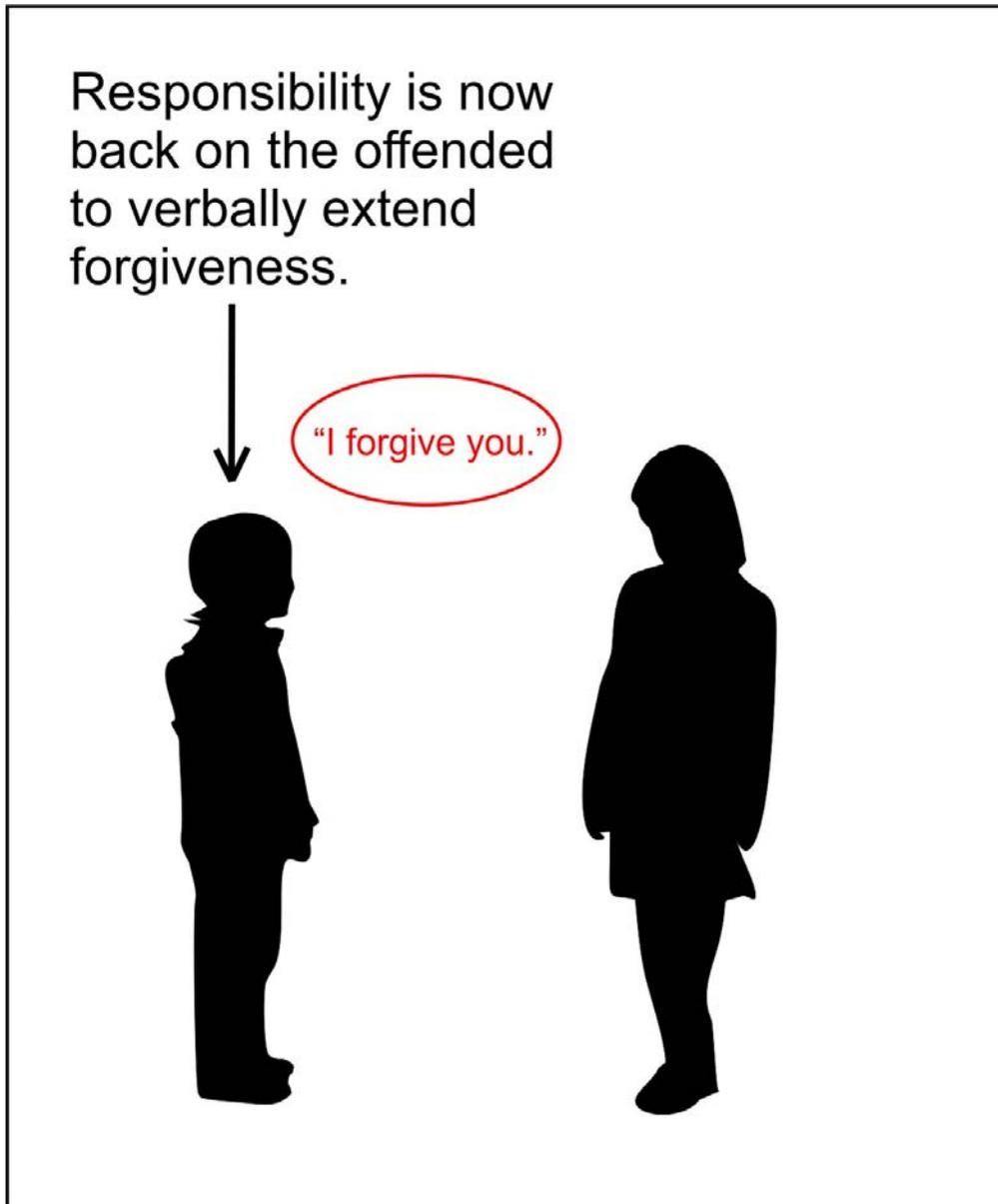


If at this point the offender will not judge their own actions and repent and make restitution, the offended is then to go to a parent or teacher for justice and the parent/teacher have "court."

If the perceived offender's action were found to be wrong and sinful, they are to be appropriately disciplined - for not only the offense - but also if they were being stubborn and hard-hearted for not judging their own actions when they easily could have.

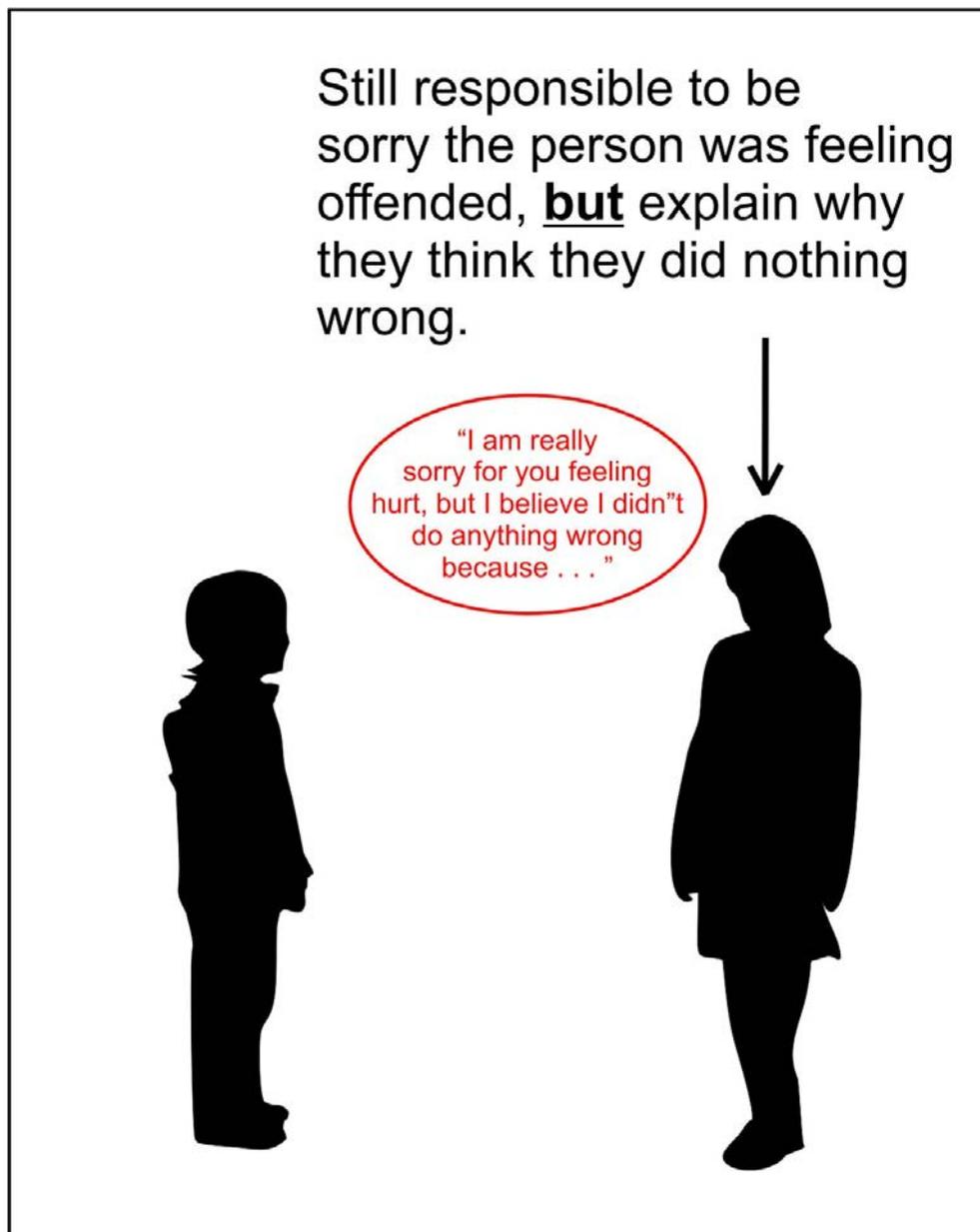
This scenario teaches children to judge themselves more quickly, and be better listening to others when being corrected by them.

Step 3. The offended is to heartfully forgive the offender and verbally extend forgiveness with "I forgive you." The verbal speaking of "I forgive you" is required because it helps break possible unforgiveness that may still be residing in the offended. *"Saying it" helps us better "Own it."*

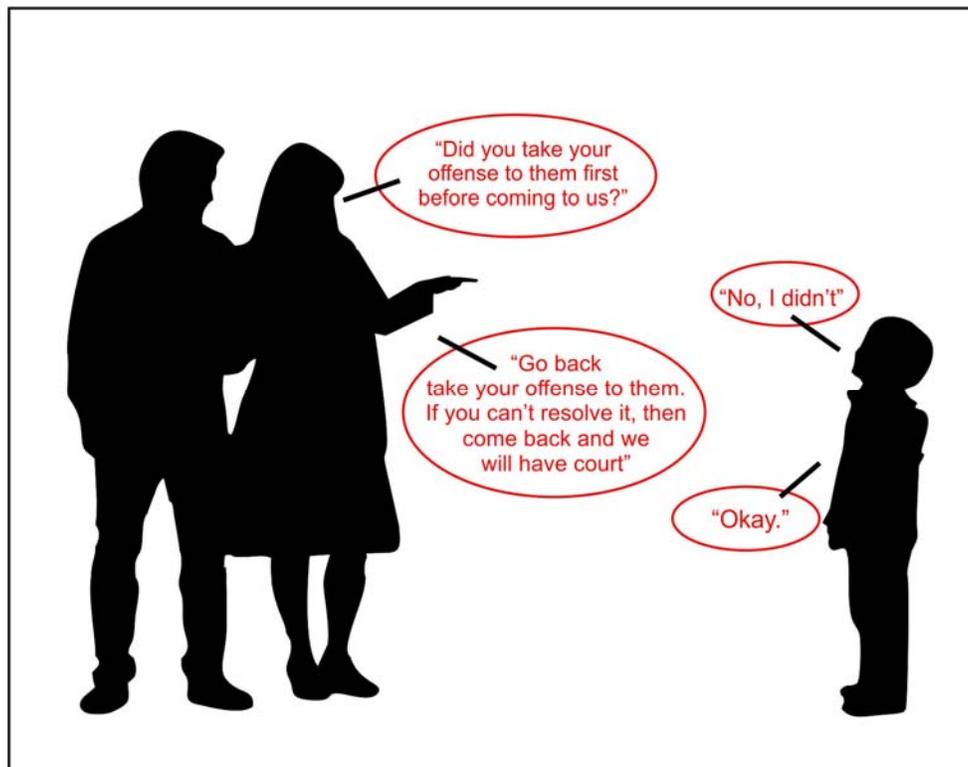
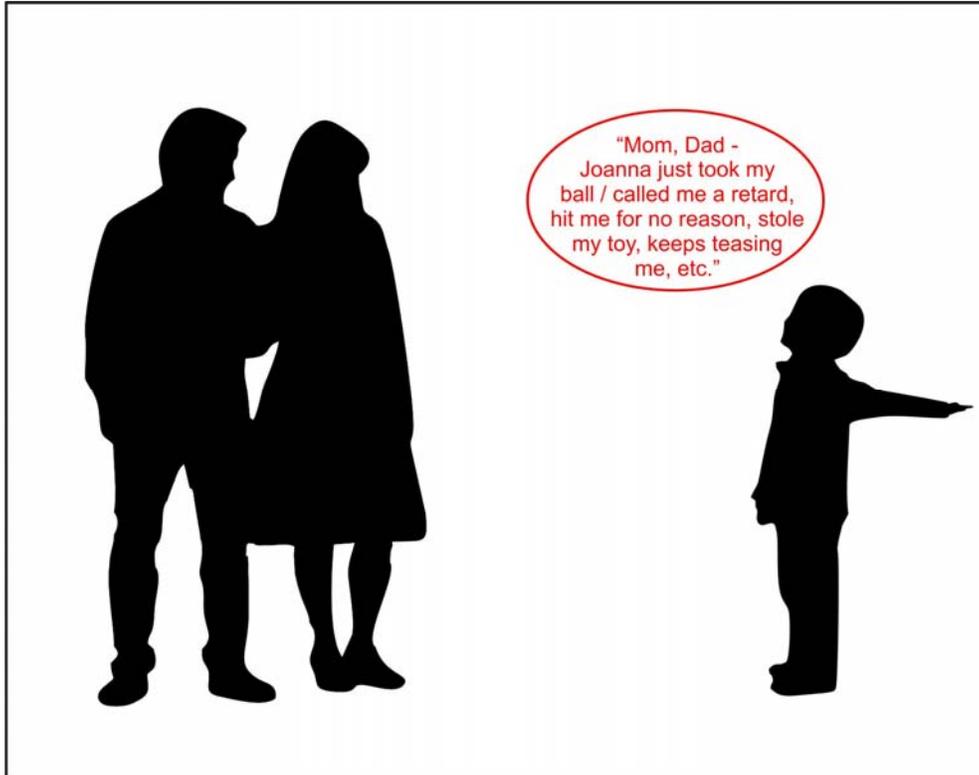


Most conflicts can / are resolved at this point.

Step 4. If the perceived offender does not think they committed a legitimate wrongdoing, they are still required to 1) Verbally express the they are sorry the offended is hurt, and 2) Best explain why they think their behavior was appropriate/legitimate/okay.



How to get this model going . . .



Pretty soon kids will learn not to waste the time going to parents or teachers without having gone to the offending person first !

If "court" is called, the **offender** knows he or she better have a good self-defense case, because they are now going to get possible **extra** punishment for not only the original selfish action, but for not judging their own heart and behavior when someone comes to them with a complaint.

This model, when employed correctly, minimizes parents and teacher frustration and burnout from handling hundreds of "cases" that could have been easily handled by the young people themselves. This makes for more happy lives for everyone. God's justice can better rule on the earth - even if at least in our little spheres.

These same rules of interpersonal conflict resolution need to be followed by us adults, too!

We need to remember - when we need justice - God Himself promises to speedily bring us justice, if we ask for it *His way*, "**now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly.**" (Lord Jesus Christ - Luke 18:7)