

Learning About Managing Family Conflict



How can you manage conflict in your family?

Disagreeing now and then is a normal part of family life. Sharing your feelings—and your frustrations—is important even if it sometimes causes an argument. And avoiding all conflict can be unhealthy for relationships.

But arguing all the time—with your partner or other family members—can be harmful for your kids and the family. So it's important to be careful about how you deal with conflict in your family. You can learn to disagree in respectful, constructive ways.

Here are some ideas.

- Be a role model.

Your kids learn from your example. They may learn to resolve conflicts with others by watching how you act. So avoid being disrespectful or having big arguments in front of your children. They'll likely act the same way that you do when you're in an argument.

- Give your kids reassurance.

Remind them that even parents who love each other argue sometimes—and it doesn't mean you're going to stay mad. Explain that arguing once in a while is normal when you live with other people. Encourage your kids to share how they feel about family disagreements.

- Choose your battles.

Try to deal with bigger issues that need to be addressed. With smaller issues, sometimes it's okay to let it go. Ask yourself: Will it matter to me next week?

- Find the cause.

If certain disagreements happen often, figure out what's causing the issue. Work together to find a solution. Try to focus on solving the problem instead of blaming the person. If more serious arguments with a spouse or partner happen often, consider getting professional help from a counselor.

- When you have a disagreement, deal with it in a healthy way.

- Be calm and respectful. Listen to the other person's side. Then work toward a solution.
- Avoid yelling or name calling. This is especially important around kids. Being exposed to yelling or violence has a harmful effect on kids.
- Take a break if you need to. Go for a walk, or try deep breathing. Or go to another room to calm down. Decide on a time to discuss the problem later.
- Be willing to admit when you're wrong and to apologize. Let your loved ones know that you're trying to see their side of the issue.
- When you can, try to come to an agreement. What was decided? What are the next steps? But know that sometimes you may have to agree to disagree.
- Respect your teen's independence.

As older kids and teens become more independent, conflicts are more likely to happen. Arguments can be stressful. But they can also help teens build communication skills and learn how to set boundaries.

- Let your teen know that you value their opinions. But remind them that you're also trying to keep them safe and guide them in making good choices. While it's good to respect your child's independence as much as you can, it's also important to discuss how they can make choices that keep them healthy and safe.
- Be respectful of their views. Try to find ways to solve problems without having fights.
- Be willing to compromise at times. Remind your teen that sometimes they'll need to compromise too.

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