

Parent-Child Conflict: Care Instructions



Overview

Conflict between parents and children is normal. It is part of family life. But conflict that goes on for a long time and gets worse over time can cause stress and can hurt relationships. It is important to communicate with each other and bring conflict to a peaceful solution. You can do this through compromise or by agreeing to disagree.

In some cases, you may have to change your behavior to settle a conflict with your child. Some of your child's behavior may be a reaction to your behavior. So, if you want your child to behave in a certain way, the best approach may be to change your behavior so that your child will change their reaction.

But children should be responsible for their own actions—and the results. All parents want to protect their children. But in some cases, if the child is not in physical danger, it may be best to let the child deal with the negative results of things they do.

No matter what else you do, communicate with your children and make sure they know that you love them. This can make dealing with conflict easier and more effective.

Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems.

How can you care for your child at home?

- Make sure your child understands what your limits are, and be consistent with them. It is also just as important to follow through with what happens when your child goes beyond these limits.
- Talk to your child. Help your child learn that it is okay to be angry at times and that there are healthy ways to work through that anger.
- Pay attention and listen to your child. Children are more likely to listen to you if you show them respect.
- Explain your side of the conflict calmly and clearly. Make sure your child understands why you have a problem with their behavior.
- Compromise with your child. It is hard to find a peaceful solution if no one is willing to give anything up. And remember that the point is to solve the conflict, not to win the argument.
- Work together with your child to decide on the best solution to the conflict. Come up with as many ideas as you can. Make sure both you and your child follow the solution that you choose.
- Let your child be responsible for their behavior. It may be hard to watch your child go through the

consequences from their actions. But that is how children learn that the things they do cause other things—sometimes bad things—to happen.

- Do games and activities with your child where playing well with others pays off. For example, a child can learn a lot about "cause and effect" by rolling a ball back and forth with someone.
- Teach your child that sharing and give-and-take mean that both people win. For example, have one child divide a snack and have the other child pick first, or have one child suggest two games and have the other child choose first.
- Try using a "time-out" to stop aggressive behavior. Time-out means that you remove your child from a stressful situation for a short period of time.
 - Time-out works if it happens right after the behavior. Do not wait until later in the day or week.
 - It works best when your child is old enough to understand. This usually begins around three years of age.
 - When you put your child in time-out, do not do it in anger. Be calm and firm.
- Talk to your doctor about parent education classes or helpful books about child behavior.
- Talk with other parents about the ways they cope with behavior issues.

When should you call for help?

call anytime you think you or your child may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You are so frustrated with your child that you are afraid you might hurt them.
- You are afraid your child might hurt you or someone else.

Watch closely for changes in your child's behavior, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You want tips to help your child control their behavior.
- You want to see a behavior counselor.

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