



Agreeing to negotiate

Usually, our first angry impulse is to push the point that we are right and win the argument at any cost. Finding a peaceful resolution can be difficult, if not impossible, when both parties stubbornly stick to their guns. It helps if everyone decides as a family to try listening to each other and negotiating instead. Suggestions include:

- Work out if the issue is worth fighting over.
- Try to separate the problem from the person.
- Try to cool off first if you feel too angry to talk calmly.
- Keep in mind that the idea is to resolve the conflict, not win the argument.
- Remember that the other party isn't obliged to always agree with you on everything.
- Define the problem and stick to the topic.
- Respect the other person's point of view by paying attention and listening.
- Talk clearly and reasonably.
- Try to find points of common ground.
- Agree to disagree.

Try to listen

Conflict can escalate when the people involved are too angry to listen to each other. Misunderstandings fuel arguments. Suggestions include:

- Try to stay calm.
- Try to put emotions aside.
- Don't interrupt the other person while they are speaking.
- Actively listen to what they are saying and what they mean.
- Check that you understand them by asking questions.
- Communicate your side of the story clearly and honestly.
- Resist the urge to bring up other unresolved but unrelated issues.

Work as a team

Once both parties understand the views and feelings of the other, you can work out a solution together. Suggestions include:

- Come up with as many possible solutions as you can.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Make sure everyone clearly understands the chosen solution.
- Once the solution is decided on, stick to it. • Write it down as a 'contract', if necessary.

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Professional advice

There are services available to help family members work through difficult issues of conflict. Seek professional advice if you think you need some assistance.

Where to get help

- Your Doctor
- Family Lives - a charity whose aim is to help support parents and carers to deal with all aspects of family life
- Relate - Highly trained counsellors available to support everyone's relationships during this difficult time. There is support available through live chat and telephone and webcam counselling. Following the government's latest advice on COVID-19, most face-to-face services are temporarily closed. They have also put together some advice and tips for keeping relationships healthy during self-isolation and social distancing.
- Evidence shows that parental conflict puts children's mental health and long-term future life chances at risk, regardless of whether the parents are together or separated or are biologically related to the child, such as in blended or foster families.

Things to remember

- Conflict can happen when family members have different views or beliefs that clash.
- Peaceful resolution depends on negotiation and respect for the other person's point of view.

Seek professional advice if you think you need help.

Information obtained at: WWW.familylives.org.uk and <https://reducingparentalconflict.eif.org.uk/>

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