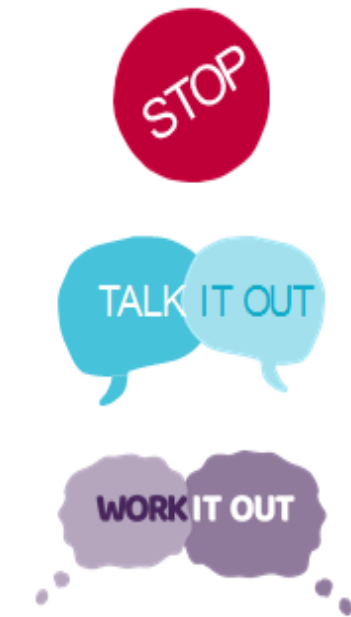


Working with parents in conflict



Brief encounters[®] OnePlusOne



How To Argue Better OnePlusOne 2018

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Working with parents in conflict



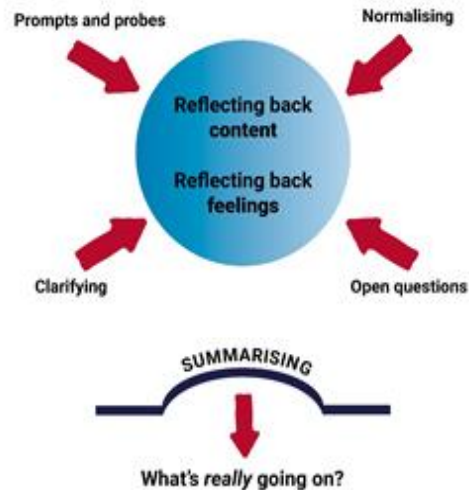
Signs of inter-parental conflict:
Active listening

Empathetic responding:
Open questions, clarifying, summarising

Solution focused questions:
Re-framing & identifying what needs to change

Action planning for change:
Collaborative based on need & shared agenda

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A solution focused approach

- How would things look if it were better?
- What would be happening?
- What would have to change?
- What would you or your partner being doing differently?
- When you've fallen out before what helped you make up?
What would help you make things better?

Seeing change

- How will others know?
- What will they see, hear, feel that will be different?
- How will you know things are different, what will you see, hear feel that will be different?

Working with parents in conflict



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Constructive conflict behaviour

Stay calm, listen



- **STOP Activity 1:** Why do arguments happen?



- **STOP Activity 2:** What's my conflict style?



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Constructive conflict behaviour

See it differently, speak for myself



- Talk It Out Activity 3
 - Seeing it differently
 - What you say, what I hear
- Talk it Out Activity 4
 - How not to start an argument

| What they say? | What they are trying to say? | How might they say this differently? |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| It's not looking good | | |
| It's a bit messy, but I'll get it sorted out | | |
| It's not done the way I'd like it | | |
| Will you ever learn how to do it properly? | | |
| Why can't you think about someone else that you'd like to meet? | | |

| HARSH | SOFT |
|--|---|
| I'm over at my business | I'm available at my house |
| We're not on a call | Can we have a chat about what's going on |
| You should think what you're putting in the market | It's not looking great, you might like to consider it |
| Are you aware of a limited time offer? | Remember to check out our limited time offer |

COMMUNICATE WITH I STATEMENTS

I feel _____

When you _____

Because _____

What I need is _____

Constructive conflict behaviour

Negotiate, problem solve



- Work it out Activity 5:
 - What do we need to do differently?
- Work it out Activity 6:
 - How to do it differently?



| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| State your different views | Explain your position | Choose the right time | See what you agree about |
| Show your understanding | Work out a solution you're both happy with | See what you think your partner should do | Ask for their point of view |
| Control us with lots of possible solutions | Try to persuade them your way | Check the responses | Don't respond when it's not your turn to speak |
| Listen | Show your agreement | Let them know you've understood | Accept you don't agree |

A resource for parents



Click is a unique service providing early intervention relationship support from a mobile-friendly platform.

It offers information and activities, based on relationship science and research evidence, accessible 24/7.

It provides parents with an early help virtual support environment 24/7 that helps them understand more about their relationship and what they can do to improve it.

STOP

Activity 1

STOP

Activity 1: Why do arguments happen?

Understanding why parents argue and what about is the first step in stopping arguments getting out of control.

If you are working with an individual parent or couple you could begin by asking them to describe the things that they argue about the most, this will help to explore the causes of their arguments and lead into this activity about why arguments happen. Using the metaphor of a fire ask them to think about:



a

What issues do you argue about most?

The logs



What usually starts an argument?

The match



What makes it worse?

Are you fueling the fire?



What helps calm things down?



STOP

Activity 2

STOP

Activity 2: What's my conflict style?

Now that the couple are clear about what is causing their argument it is helpful for them to consider how they react and how their partner reacts. Arrange these five cards on the table and ask the individual or couple to think about how they normally respond to one another in an argument.



- What do you do? How do you think that makes your partner feel?
- What does your partner do in response? How does that make you feel?
- What's the outcome?

It may be helpful to explain that the typical male and female responses are:

- Women tend to bottle things up then to go into 'ATTACK'.
- Men get overwhelmed by their feelings and are more likely to 'WALK OUT' to calm down.
- Women are then more likely to move to 'SULK' (the silent treatment).

TALK IT OUT

Activity 3

TALK IT OUT

Activity 3: Seeing it differently

To demonstrate how to sort out conflict we need to see it from both sides. Hold a cup in front of you and ask the person opposite from you. "As you see it, which side of the cup is the handle on?"



When they reply, "Right", you say: "No, it's not; it's on the left", and then explain how this is what happens in conflict, we see it from our perspective and try to convince the other person that we are right.

Ask the couple, "What needs to happen for us to sort out this difference in viewpoint?". Draw out from their responses that each partner needs to see it from the other's point of view, then work out together how to sort out the difference to find a solution we're both happy with.

For this to happen we need to:

- Listen.
- Stop trying to get our own way.
- Be prepared to compromise.
- Apologise.

Helping the couple to see it differently, from each other's perspective, is an important first step. You may be able to use the cup activity or using their own example encourage the couple to listen to the others point of view:

- Ask partner 1 to talk for a minute about how they view things. Partner 2 is encouraged to listen but not interrupt or debate.
- Ask partner 2 to summarise what partner 1 has said, you may have to help if some points are missed.
- Ask the couple to swap over.

You might need to get the couple to agree some ground rules before you start. Encourage positives, helping the couple to define the issue without criticism or blame, so that they can start to think about a solution.

TALK IT OUT

Activity 3

| What I say | What you hear | What I mean |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Why don't you get someone to help you? | You're useless. | You're tired, you need some help. |
| You're not listening to me | | |
| You do know you've got to get up early, don't you? | | |
| You haven't done the washing up | | |
| Will you never learn how to change a nappy? | | |
| Why can't you think about someone other than yourself for once? | | |

TALK IT OUT

Activity 4: How not to start an argument

The purpose of this activity is to highlight to parents that the way you raise an issue can sometimes lead to an argument. When you want to talk about something that's bothering you about your partner the way you start the conversation will affect the way it goes.



Ask the couple about how they might start a conversation about a typical situation that can lead to an argument. If the information isn't forthcoming you might have to give an example such as:

You come home from work, or from collecting the kids from school and your partner is sitting watching TV, the dishes are piled up in the sink and there is nothing for tea. Discuss what their response might be.

A harsh 'start up' usually signals that you are making an attack and your partner is likely to get defensive and fight back... nothing gets sorted. This is when you go straight in with a criticism or a negative remark.

A soft 'start up' doesn't get the same reaction. It's a more neutral way of complaining about something and asking for what you want without blaming your partner. With a soft start up, your partner is more likely to listen and there's a chance you can sort things out.

Use this activity to encourage the couple to think about how they might start to talk about their differences.

Look at the following conversation starters that parents might say to their partners. What do you think the person actually wants from their partner? Is there a better way for them to get it? How might they rephrase what they're saying?

TALK IT OUT

Activity 4

At this point you can introduce the 'I' statement – a technique for raising an issue without creating defensiveness as it is less likely to be perceived as an attack on the other person.

**COMMUNICATE WITH
'I' STATEMENTS**

I feel

When you

Because

What I need is

HARSH

You never do any housework

Why can't you see to this?

You shouldn't drink when you've got to get up in the morning

I've told you about this a hundred times before!

You just don't think about how hard it is for me

You ought to think about someone other than yourself for a change

Whatever I do, you're never satisfied

Did you have to spend so much?

Can't you hear that baby crying

You're so bossy, you're just like your mum

Typical!

Well, I'm glad one of us is happy

SOFT

I'm worried about money. I wonder if we could talk about it

Can we have a chat about what's going on

I'm not having a go at you, it's just that sometimes feel that I have to do everything

I want to tell you something that's important to me, is that OK?

Sometimes I feel left out and it makes me angry

There's something bothering me, can I tell you about it?

I don't want us to fall out, what I do want is for us to sort this out together

I need to ask you something

Sorry, that came out wrongly, what I meant to say was...

WORK IT OUT

Activity 5

Sliding scale of happiness



This simple sliding scale of happiness represents how relationships can move from a state of happy to distress. The umbrella represents the factors that protect and sustain a happy relationship; time together, affection, humour, understanding each other and, importantly, arguing in ways that are constructive rather than destructive. You may find it useful to ask a couple where they think they are and what they would need to do to move to a more desired state.

Solution-focused questions

- How would it look if things were better?
- What would be happening?
- What would have to change?
- What would you and your partner be doing differently?
- When you fallen out before what has helped you make up?
- When things went well (e.g. an argument didn't escalate), what would you do again if you were in a similar situation?

Solution-focused tools are available at:

<https://psychologytools.com/solution-focused.html>

WORK IT OUT

Activity 6

WORK IT OUT

Activity 6: How to do it differently

Constructive conflict involves being able to resolve differences and find solutions that you both agree to. This requires negotiation.



Ask the couple to imagine they are trying to sort out a difference between themselves. Ask them to create a 'road map' by putting the cards in the order they think would be needed to find a solution. They can leave out any cards they don't think are helpful – hopefully the red ones! – and add any they think are missing.

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| State your different views | Explain your position | Choose the right time | Say what you agree about |
| Show you understand | Work out a solution you're both happy with | Say what you think your partner should do | Ask for their point of view |
| Come up with lots of possible solutions | Try to persuade them you're right | Check the response | Stop responding when it's not going your way |
| Listen | Show your appreciation | Let them know you've understood | Accept you don't agree |