

Resolving family conflict

We all have unique thoughts, feelings and beliefs which make it impossible for conflicts to not arise. Disagreements are a healthy part of family life.

Adults set the tone for their home, and the children in your family will mirror your behaviour. If you shout or use physical aggression to deal with conflict, then your children will think this is the way to communicate or win a disagreement.

If you have an argument with another family member, the best way to model anger is to take time to calm down before revisiting the issue. It's important to show kids that although conflict is inevitable in life, it can be dealt with effectively. Resolving family conflict effectively teaches kids how to negotiate and reach compromises, setting them up for strong relationships throughout life.

Here are some tips on how to develop some conflict resolution skills:

- **Cooperation:** Get kids to help solve conflict together. Help them approach conflict in a positive way, and that they can work together to solve it.
- **Managing emotions:** It can be really difficult for kids (and adults) to keep their cool in a conflict situation. Reacting aggressively or withdrawing from the situation are common responses. This is where taking a bit of time out to let everyone calm down can help before returning to the problem.
- **Empathy:** Teach kids how to listen to, and understand, the needs and concerns of other people. Help them to ask why the other person wants something and consider what it might be like to be 'in their shoes'.
- **Communication:** Learning to speak clearly and respectfully takes practice. You can help kids practise positive ways to ask for what they want: "I would like you to ask before using my things."

Family are the most important people in your life!

Above all family will always be there for you so it's important to always recognise the value of each member, make your relationships a priority by setting aside a few minutes each day to spend with them. Make dinners together, read a story or just talk. Good communication is essential for healthy relationships. Children learn how to communicate respectfully when they see the adults around them speaking to each other with consideration.

Sometimes family conflict can be too hard to solve on your own. In this situation it is best to get extra external support. Relationship Australia (6164 0440) the NGALA Parent line (9368 9368) and the Family Relationship Advice Line (1800 050 321) can assist with this.

Family or domestic violence is very different from disagreements which are part of healthy relationships. This is when someone within a family uses violence or other forms of abuse - psychological, verbal or sexual - to control or intimidate other family members. Family violence is never OK, and is no one's fault but the person choosing to perpetrate violence. If you are experiencing this please phone the 1800Respect helpline- 1800 737 732.