

Top tips for Parents on:

Connecting Families (Reducing Parental Conflict)

What does 'parental conflict' mean?

Conflict in relationships between parents is normal, and can happen between parents that are together and those separated. When conflict becomes destructive- arguments that are frequent, intense or poorly resolved- it can harm children's outcomes. By contrast, constructive conflict – where there continues to be respect, controlled emotions and good resolutions in our communication with our partner or co parent - is linked to very positive outcomes for children. This Tip Sheet can help you think if your relationship between yourselves as parents / co parents is **Constructive** or **Destructive**. Start by asking and answering the 3 F's questions and reading through this leaflet.

Frequency – How often are your arguments happening: daily, weekly, monthly?

Feelings – How are you left feeling?

Feedback – Is the conflict ever resolved? How and what happens to resolve it?

Arguments are like fire – they need logs, a flame to get going and fuel to keep it going.



The **logs** are the topics we argue about such as money, sex, responsibilities



The **fuel** – what makes the fire worse? Snapping, bringing up old arguments, walking off, saying hurtful things, bottling things up



The **water** – what puts the fire out? Saying sorry, hugging, listening, problem solving, negotiating.



The **Match** – what is your fire starter? It could be your tone of voice, complaining, not listening to each the other person, feeling stressed



It helps to think about how your arguments get better or worse.

Make it worse

- Intense arguments
- The silent treatment
- The need to win
- Personal attacks
- Arguments that are about or involve the children
- Hostile verbal exchanges



Make it better

- Problem solving together
- Agree to disagree
- Not putting the other person down
- Try to compromise
- Be affectionate
- Resolve differences



Common things we all do in arguments are:

Criticise – Criticism isn't the same as complaining. It is an attack. "You only think about yourself."

Instead try starting a sentence with "I..." and asking for what you need. "I was worried last night. I'd like it if you could text me when you're going to be late."

Contempt is when we are deliberately mean. We might use name-calling, or sarcasm, or roll our eyes to show we are not interested.

Instead try to focus on what you like about each other. Look for opportunities to pay each other compliments or praise.

Defensiveness is usually a response to criticism. We deflect blame onto the other person. "I've been busy. Why couldn't you do it?"

Instead

- Try to see things from each other's point of view.
- Take responsibility and say sorry when you're in the wrong.

Stonewalling is when we get so overwhelmed that we shut down completely, blanking one another, or walking out of the room.

Instead

- Try to be good to yourself. Take some time out to do something relaxing and enjoyable.

Which ones you do?

Think about a recent argument you had, how did you feel? How do you think your partner felt? How do you think your children felt?

Useful links:

Early help website: <http://www.mywalsall.org/walsallearlyhelp/rpc/>

Black Country Women's aid: <https://blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk/>

Relate: <https://www.relate.org.uk/>

For more information on our interactive sessions or groups please contact the early help hub on 0300 555 2866 opt 1