

Dear Parents and Carers

Spending more time together under the current circumstances is likely to result in family disputes and arguments at some point. Everyone is experiencing some loss and change to their normal way of life, and may be feeling anxious and stressed. When emotions are high, tolerance can be low. Little things can then become big things really quickly.

Coping with conflict

If you feel yourself getting irritated or annoyed with your family and children, don't be too hard on yourself. This is a challenging time for lots of people and there are things you can do to help:

Find ways to manage your stress

- Talking about your frustrations with friends and family can relieve some of the tension
- Try to get some personal space and alone time—go out for some exercise, or a walk by yourself. Come up with a family agreement on places in the home that are 'do not disturb' spaces
- Focus on things you can control rather than things you can't control. Be realistic with expectations. Perhaps family rules need adjusting to take account of the current situation
- Plan a list of things you would like to do once lockdown is over.
- Every day, write down three things you are grateful for
- Learn some breathing techniques to help you calm down
- Plan fun family projects that will be a break from home schooling, work and other pressures



Constructive and Destructive

Conflict: Some disagreements and differences of opinion are helpful. They encourage us to think differently and bring about positive changes for the better. Constructive conflict is when people have respectful discussions, negotiate and seek compromise. They are aiming for a WIN-WIN solution that has the agreement of both parties and is fair. Those who are arguing are able to apologise and use humour and warmth to resolve differences. Destructive conflict is when arguments are intense and unresolved, and include verbal or physical aggression. Frequent, hostile conflict within families who are living together is particularly difficult.

A note about Domestic Violence

“Abuse is not a form of conflict. Conflict is mutual; abuse is a repeated pattern of behaviour in which one person controls another. Abuse is never your fault, and it is not your responsibility, nor is it possible, to practice mutual “conflict resolution” with an abuser.”

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE
0808 2000 247
24/7 CONFIDENTIAL FREEPHONE

Of course, conflict is a normal part of any relationship and occurs when about some thing. It is therefore really important to teach your children how to resolve conflicts in a respectful and kind way. Listening skills, turn taking, respect and empathy are key

Some helpful strategies to get a WIN:WIN

Avoid the Blame Game—As soon as we ‘finger point’ there’s no room for growth. In conflict we can start to get tunnel vision and massively prioritise our own perspective whilst minimising or dismissing the other person’s experience or position

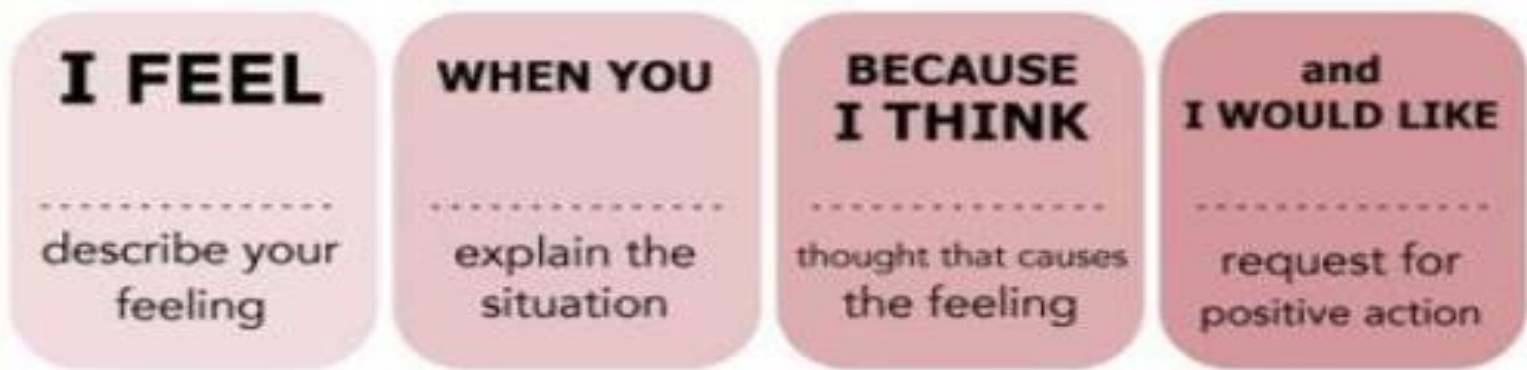


Use the 90/10 rule—Don’t assume the other person is experiencing things the same way that you are. When talking about difficult things try putting 90% of your energy into being curious and open to learning about the other person’s perspective and 10% on voicing your own opinion

Take responsibility for your part in any conflict e.g. “I know I’m finding it really difficult being couped up. I’m sorry I shouted and walked out before”

Use ‘I’ statements—it feels natural to begin discussions with ‘YOU’. “You always ..., You never ..., Why don’t you ..., “You should ...” This is unproductive as it puts the other person on the defensive and less likely to want to cooperate. Start working on your ‘I’ statements!

Find your reset button—When you can feel things escalating, remove yourself and find ways to calm down



‘I’ statements for assertive communication