

Kids Need a Happy Home

A strong, positive relationship between parenting partners is central for children to be successful. Marital conflict may be a clear predictor of child difficulties.

Tension and conflict in a marriage is related to these outcomes for children:

- Increased aggression and hostility
- Anti-social or withdrawn behaviors
- Learning and school difficulties
- Adjustment and problem-solving deficits
- Depression and poor interpersonal relationships that last into young adulthood

Family conflict damages children while greater family harmony and low levels of conflict may **protect** children against later emotional, psychological, learning, interpersonal and social problems. Work to give your child a *happy home*.

As we live and breathe, conflict, problems, disagreements and differences are a part of any relationship. Conflict is best faced directly. Relationships grow even stronger when partners treat each other with respect and commit to working through problems. The number one predictor of relationship failure or divorce is the habitual avoidance of conflict. Equally harmful is continuing, unresolved conflict.



When people handle their anger in a healthy way, they:

- Demonstrate respect and value for both your partner and relationship
- Use anger as a signal that there are problems to be addressed
- Take actions when necessary, but only after careful thought
- Express your anger in moderation, without losing control
- Use anger to solve problems, not just to express your feelings
- State your anger clearly, in ways that others can understand
- Give and keep your word for solutions
- Solve the problem(s) and let go of the anger

Avoid the pitfalls of:

- Bringing up past issues – “recycling” problems
- Expecting your partner to be a mind reader
- Thinking in “all or nothing” or “always or never” terms
- Getting stuck in the “blame game” (it doesn’t *have* to be someone’s fault!)
- Using name-calling, put-downs, sarcasm or other forms of disrespect

By working to cultivate affection, respect and closeness within your family, you effectively create a peaceful, harmonious home life where members experience love and support, and find refuge from the storms of life. There is no better legacy to give your child.

1. **Make family your top priority.** Close families make mindful decisions to have family life their number one priority. You have a unique and irreplaceable position as a parent and partner.

2. **Invest your time.** There is no substitute for spending time with your partner and children. Families need time together and joint activities to nurture and bond. Children cherish time alone with a parent. Parents need special alone-time, both with each other and to themselves.

3. **Never neglect three important words.** Close families know the healing power of forgiveness. They often say these words: "Please forgive me!", "I forgive you!", "Let's try again!" and "I LOVE you".

4. **Establish and maintain family rituals and traditions.** Rituals and traditions are the glue of family life. Today they are especially important, as family time becomes more limited in our complex and hectic society.

5. **Stay connected - be available – keep in touch.** No matter how busy you are, let your partner and children know you are always available. Let them know where you are and what you are doing, and expect the same. Share moments and occasions – big and small.



6. **Teach your children to love and be loved.** Loving smiles, words, actions, thoughts, and gestures within a family create an emotionally secure and healthy home. Have all family members express and experience the surrounding closeness because of that love. Nothing is as important to feelings of self-worth as the experience of being loved. Love to a child is like sunshine to a flower. Your children need to know beyond any doubt that they are lovable, that you love them, *and* that you love each other.

7. **Use words wisely.** Try to speak to your partner and children in ways that affirm and assure, not attack or abuse. How we speak to each other either pulls us together or tears us apart. When you speak, choose and use your words wisely. Words echo forever.

8. **Praise your partner and kids, both in private and public.** A word of praise is verbal sunshine to the spirit. How we speak about others has powerful effects.

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