

Seeing Family Conflict as a Problem to Solve

Conflict isn't always to be avoided; clashes can be productive, stimulating learning, fostering understanding, and moving a relationship forward (Hart, 2006).

However, some conflict is unnecessary and avoidable, especially regarding daily tasks (such as tidying the house, going to bed, and completing chores).

Use this worksheet to help recognize everyday actions as problems to overcome rather than points of contention.

No-fault zone rules

Start by making up a simple set of rules for the family to abide by. Discuss within the family, and once in agreement, post them somewhere prominent, such as on the fridge.

Add your own rules to the following list (modified from Hart, 2006):

1. Everyone attempts to recognize and understand the good reasons behind what people do.
2. Everyone trusts (and practices) that each person's needs are considered and respected.
3. Everyone learns to focus on one another's needs rather than on criticism or blame.
4. Everyone cooperates and aims to make life more fun and enjoyable for one another.

Each person should add to the following list when the rules are not adhered to. Capture what happens and when, without assigning blame.

Start with "I feel..."

Who am I?	I feel this rule is not being followed	What happens? When and where?	How do I feel?
Sam	e.g. Rule 1.	When I make lunch for everyone, no one says thanks.	I feel that no one appreciates me.

Who am I?	I feel this rule is not being followed	What happens? When and where?	How do I feel?

Put the above list up beside the rules at the end of each week (replacing the previous week's list).

Agree to each read the list from time to time and consider working on following the rules better without fault or blame.

References

- Hart, S. (2006). *Respectful parents, respectful kids: 7 keys to turn family conflict into co-operation*. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press.

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