



This issue builds resilience in...

Conflict Skills

Negotiation

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## Careful, they're listening... and learning

Differences of opinions are part of every day family living. Siblings squabble over who will sit in the front seat, couples clash over who will take the garbage out or how to spend the family budget and families feud over something someone said. Disagreements sometimes escalate into arguments that can be destructive, depending on how they're managed. Handled well, arguments can resolve misunderstandings, provide a vent for hurt feelings, uncover solutions and result in stronger relationships.

### Developing a code of conduct

Having a code of conduct, developed collaboratively by all family members, is a safeguard for future conflicts. Clearly understanding what behaviour is considered acceptable and appropriate or not, is vital as a foundation for negotiation and ensuring respectful relationships. It's worth setting time aside for a family meeting to hear everyone's ideas on what could be included in the code and have it on display for all to see.

Here's one suggestion, a five-step 'code of conduct' that can be applied if an argument seems imminent or you catch yourself exchanging verbal blows with someone. We are each responsible for our own actions but when we model a code of conduct for ourselves, it does, with time, rub off on those nearest and dearest.

### Five simple steps to arguing well...

**A – Ask**, "Is this issue worth arguing over?" Will it matter in a few years from now? You can agree to disagree.

**R – Resist** the urge to retaliate. Instead, focus on the result you want. Communicate these clearly to the other person/s.

**G – Gentle**. Seek a gentle way to say it. It means fewer repairs later. This means avoiding blaming and shaming and simply stating facts.

**U – Unsaid**. Some things are simply better left unsaid. Count to 10 first. Do no harm.

**E – Example**. Remember they're watching... so modelling behaviour you'd like copied is important.

### Redirect your energy

The way people argue affects their health, their relationships and the dynamics of their family. Instead of 'arguing', redirect the energy to **solve problems**. Get help with this if you need it. By negotiating the responsibilities and privileges of the group, you'll be amazed at how the dynamic changes to one of respect and cooperation.

- ✓ Arguing can be destructive or constructive; it's a choice.
- ✓ Agree to disagree if necessary
- ✓ Above all else, do no harm.

**"To find fault is easy; to do better may be difficult."**

Plutarch