

TEACH YOUR KIDS TO HANDLE LIFE'S CONFLICTS *Why it Can Be Good for Kids to See Their Parents Disagree*

By Dr. Charles Fay ©2003

With some simple tips from the Love and Logic Institute, parents can give their kids powerful skills for turning disagreements and conflicts into win-win solutions. All relationships experience conflict. People who understand this...and know how to maintain friendships in the face of friction...enjoy a lifetime of happiness. Those who lack these skills struggle through a life filled with broken relationships and divorce. Apply the following tips, and give your kids the skills they deserve:

Tip #1: Remember that children learn the most about relationships by observing how we handle ours.

How parents handle conflicts in their marriage is typically how their children will handle conflicts in their friendships and future marriages. What we do in front of our kids is far more powerful than how we tell them to live their lives.

Tip #2: Don't make the mistake of trying to create a conflict-free family.

There's no doubt that kids suffer tremendously when they see their parents yell, argue and fight. It's never helpful for children to witness this type of behavior.

It's also unhealthy for kids to see their parents stuff their emotions and try to pretend that nothing is wrong. This sends the unhealthy message that problems are to be avoided rather than solved.

Children are incredibly sensitive to unspoken tension, and they suffer great anxiety when their parents try to hide conflicts that need to be addressed.

Tip #3: Have some healthy disagreements or conflicts in front of your kids.

Children need to see their parents disagreeing, expressing their emotions in assertive ways, and tackling conflicts head on. It's healthy for kids to hear parents say things like, "It makes me mad when I try to use the car and it has no gas" or "It's frustrating to me when it doesn't seem like you are listening to me."

Tip #4: Use the lingo of problem-solving and compromise.

Children also need to hear us saying things like, "How can we solve this problem?" "Let's compromise." "I'm sorry that I hurt your feelings" "Here are some possible solutions..."

Tip #5: Use commonsense about what you discuss in front of your kids.

Wise parents discuss very sensitive topics only when and their children cannot hear.

One mother remarked, “I realize now that my husband and I were actually making it harder for our kids to have happy relationships. By trying to keep all of our disagreements a secret, we were robbing them of opportunities to see how problems can be solved. We were also creating a lot of unspoken tension that was draining the life out of our marriage.”

She continued, “After following the tips you suggested, I witnessed our six-year-old arguing over a toy. I could hardly stop giggling when I heard him say, ‘How can we solve this problem? Let’s play something else.’ That sure beats the whining contests I used to hear!”

Get started with Love and Logic today...and enjoy happier and more responsible kids tomorrow!

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Dr. Charles Fay is a nationally known speaker, parent, and school psychologist with the Love and Logic Institute in Golden, Colo. The Love and Logic audio CDs, *Four Steps to Responsibility* and *Love Me Enough To Set Some Limits*, provide a wealth of ideas for raising kids ages toddler to teen who are ready to learn and ready for the real world. For more information about Love and Logic parenting and teaching techniques for children of all ages, call **1-800-LUV-LOGIC** or visit **www.loveandlogic.com**.