



Tips for Reducing Conflict at Home

Remain Calm

When you're angry or upset it can feel impossible not to raise your voice, shout insults and let emotions get in the way of logic. None of these, by the way, are techniques for proper conflict resolution.

Many families engage in shouting matches where they hurl insults and hurtful words at each other, storm off and bury the issue. Not only does the original problem remain unresolved, but both sides feel anger, frustration and resentment about what was said to them. This cycle will repeat itself again and again, creating deep-seated resentment and pain, unless the people learn how to work out the problems that are an inevitable part of any family relationship. If you cannot control your anger, set a specific time to talk through the issue after you've both cooled down and collected your thoughts.

Focus on Problem Solving

Often times we try to make the other person see why they are wrong by pointing out their mistakes, flaws and weaknesses. Resolving the issue means making both people feel satisfied— not one person winning. Sure, it might feel good to “win,” but you won't solve any problems by making the other person feel like the loser. On a related note, avoid bringing up past or irrelevant issues, which are usually just used as extra ammunition against the other person.

Listen to Each Other

In the heat of an argument one person may wait impatiently for the other to stop talking so they can make their own point. By doing this we are hearing, but not listening. After your family member has stated how he or she feels, mirror it back to them; for example, say something like, “It sounds like you're feeling unappreciated because I don't thank you for your help around the house.”

This tactic forces you to listen to and accept what they are telling you. It can help them feel respected and understood.



Be Supportive

Be positive and give your family members credit for what they have done right. This shows them that you notice and appreciate their efforts and that you are not trying to attack them.

Be Willing to Compromise

This is a crucial skill in any relationship. You cannot always get exactly what you want in all conflicts and situations, but you should be able to figure out how both you and your family member can get your most important needs met.

Find the Real Issue

Families often have seemingly petty conflicts that are actually a symptom of a much larger problem. Work on figuring out and resolving those issues that present themselves again and again, even if they present themselves in different forms. Tell your family about the tactics you are using so they can do the same. If you are working to remain calm, withhold insults and argue logically, but your brother/sister/parent is not, you won't get anywhere. Be reasonable about what issues are worthy of a serious discussion and which to let go. If you constantly find yourself angry over small issues, that may be a sign of some deeper anger or resentment toward your family member - that's the issue you want to resolved

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