

SAFEGUARDING

Avoiding arguments

At school, we ensure our children are happy and safe. In this safe environment, children may disclose to their trusted adults in school, that they hear or are witness to arguments at home. Nearly always, these arguments have a negative effect on the children's wellbeing and the success of future relationships. It is normal to disagree from time to time, and, watching parents resolve their differences can even be good for children; the key is stick to boundaries and healthy behaviours otherwise this negative effect can do serious mental health damage. Please take time to read the difference between a disagreement and an argument and how ground rules can help to create a positive safe space for dealing with disagreements from which children can learn important lifelong skills.

Dealing with arguments

A disagreement is different to an argument. Arguments tend to be more intense and can become volatile.

Occasional disagreements are a part of life. What isn't nice for children is being around continuous or inappropriate arguing. This kind of environment can feel scary to children. It can cause anxiety, or start to affect their own relationships and friendships.

If arguments are unavoidable, agree some ground rules to limit the disruption and worry to children.

Argument ground rules

- Don't argue in front of children. If you don't agree on something, wait until your child is out of sight or hearing distance to discuss it.
- Be mindful that children can hear you shout from upstairs and with doors shut!
- If things get heated, agree to take a breather and calm down.
- Try not to shout or scream at each other. It doesn't make the other person hear you any better, and only makes it harder to reach an agreement.
- Compromise is often key to resolving arguments, so try to stay open minded and listen to requests.
- Have the argument then draw a line under it and forget it. Agree to start the next day fresh – don't go back to old fights.

Things to think about

Sometimes asking for outside support can make all the difference. Counselling can be a big help in understanding why you argue, as well as how to resolve your differences.

Moving home, work stress, grief and challenging behaviour from children all impact family life and can cause arguments. Ask yourself what's adding pressure to your family, then get support and be kind to yourselves until you're in a better place.

Similarly, stay aware of what a partner may be going through in their personal life. This insight can help you stay patient with them and be more ready to compromise.

Useful links

www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk/relationships-conflict/avoiding-conflict

www.relate.org.uk

Working together to keep our children safe and happy.

Halina Rooney

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