

ARTICLE #2

How can I as a parent, work towards reducing conflict with my ex-partner?

I am frequently asked by one parent involved in a high conflict situation, what they can do to reduce the post separation conflict. Often one parent has tried to disengage from the other parent but keeps getting drawn back into the conflict with that other parent.

The following are some 'tips' you may want to consider in staying out of the conflict.

- Never argue with your ex in front of the children. Regardless if it's at pick up or drop off time, a telephone conversation, contact at school, children are harmed by witnessing their parents argue. One little girl said to me that she felt badly that her parents fought over her. She felt guilty and sad that she was responsible for her parents arguing. This little girl felt burdened by parental conflict and she was experiencing some behavioral problems as a result.
- If you see something that the other parent does that you don't agree with from a parenting perspective, think carefully about how you want to raise the concern with the other parent. If your reaction to their action is causing you to be upset, take a moment to plan how you will raise this concern. You may want to 'filter' your comments so that you identify your concern in a positive, non-accusatory manner. If you've observed the other parent do something that is unsafe, it may be useful to focus on your concern that what was done may be harmful to the child.
- Always keep your concern focused on the impact on the child. Never insult the other parent by raising concerns about their fitness as a parent or attack their character in any way. If you think that making a helpful suggestion can remedy the situation from happening in future, you may want to try this approach.
- Never threaten the other parent's commitment to the child by saying something like 'if you cared about our child, you wouldn't have done that'
- Never use the child to relay messages (or spousal support payments) to the other parent