

## Top tips for Parents on:

# Connecting Families (Reducing Parental Conflict)

### What does 'parental conflict' mean?

Conflict in relationships between parents is normal, and can happen between parents that are together and those separated. When conflict becomes destructive- arguments that are frequent, intense or poorly resolved- it can harm children's outcomes. By contrast, constructive conflict – where there continues to be respect, controlled emotions and good resolutions in our communication with our partner or co parent - is linked to very positive outcomes for children. This Tip Sheet can help you think if your relationship between yourselves as parents / co parents is **Constructive or Destructive**. Start by asking and answering the 3 F's questions and reading through this leaflet.

**Frequency** – How often are your arguments happening: daily, weekly, monthly?

**Feelings** – How are you left feeling?

**Feedback** – Is the conflict ever resolved? How and what happens to resolve it?

**Arguments are like fire – they need logs, a flame to get going and fuel to keep it going.**



**The logs** are the topics we argue about such as money, sex, responsibilities



**The fuel** – what makes the fire worse? Snapping, bringing up old arguments, walking off, saying hurtful things, bottling things up



**The water** – what puts the fire out? Saying sorry, hugging, listening, problem solving, negotiating.



**The Match** – what is your fire starter? It could be your tone of voice, complaining, not listening to each the other person, feeling stressed



**Walsall Council**



## It helps to think about how your arguments get better or worse.

### Make it worse

- Intense arguments
- The silent treatment
- The need to win
- Personal attacks
- Arguments that are about or involve the children
- Hostile verbal exchanges



### Make it better

- Problem solving together
- Agree to disagree
- Not putting the other person down
- Try to compromise
- Be affectionate
- Resolve differences



## Common things we all do in arguments are:

**Criticise** – Criticism isn't the same as complaining. It is an attack. "You only think about yourself."

**Instead** try starting a sentence with "I..." and asking for what you need. "I was worried last night. I'd like it if you could text me when you're going to be late."

**Contempt** is when we are deliberately mean. We might use name-calling, or sarcasm, or roll our eyes to show we are not interested.

**Instead** try to focus on what you like about each other. Look for opportunities to pay each other compliments or praise.

**Defensiveness** is usually a response to criticism. We deflect blame onto the other person. "I've been busy. Why couldn't you do it?"

### Instead

- Try to see things from each other's point of view.
- Take responsibility and say sorry when you're in the wrong.

**Stonewalling** is when we get so overwhelmed that we shut down completely, blanking one another, or walking out of the room.

### Instead

- Try to be good to yourself. Take some time out to do something relaxing and enjoyable.

### Which ones you do?

Think about a recent argument you had, how did you feel? How do you think your partner felt? How do you think your children felt?

## Useful links:

Early help website: <http://www.mywalsall.org/walsallearlyhelp/rpc/>

Black Country Women's aid: <https://blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk/>

Relate: <https://www.relate.org.uk/>

**For more information on our interactive sessions or groups please contact the early help hub on 0300 555 2866 opt 1**