

Family Decision Making and Conflict Resolution

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Some people never admit mistakes, don't apologize and assume only one person can be right. If this sounds like you, you really need to CUT IT OUT! If your intention is to prove yourself right going into a conflict there can't possibly be a positive outcome. Catch yourself if you are feeling defensive and shift to a more loving position. That would mean that your intention is to resolve the issue for the good of all and empower your kids and others to develop confidence in their ability to make choices and contribute to decision-making. This also means challenging the belief system that says if your kids get to negotiate limits or have a say in things that they have won and you have lost. You win if you invite your children to problem solve through issues that involve them if it is done respectfully. You can't possibly win if you exercise power over your kids and at the end of the day children are much more likely to go along with limits if they are part of the process in making deals and decisions.

Healthy conflict resolution involves identifying the issue and sticking to it. Don't bring up other unrelated issues or problems from the past. Take time to hear and understand your kids before expressing your concerns. Brainstorm various ideas without judging them. Write them down or get your child to record them. Get creative and have some fun. Once all ideas have been exhausted look at the pros and cons to each one and find some middle ground that everybody can live with. Finally, put the decision into action and follow through. It is usually best to agree to follow up in a couple of weeks to see how things are going.

Five Steps to Resolving Conflict

1. Identify the issue
2. Hear the feelings and needs of all concerned
3. Brainstorm all ideas without judging them
4. Look at the pros and cons of each idea and negotiate
5. Put the ideas into action and agree to follow up in a couple of weeks