

FACT SHEET 2

Children need parents to protect them from conflict

1. Your children need to be away from conflict because –

- Seeing or hearing conflict with your ex could damage them, even if they seem resilient or “tough”.
- They are likely to worry deeply if they see a parent they love being upset.
- If they see conflict, they will be more likely to settle their own differences in the same way.
- Kids are like sponges – they soak up negative emotions but they don’t usually know how to deal with them.

2. If conflict is a problem, focus on what you can do about it (you can’t control anyone else)

- Make some rules for starting conversations about parenting or relationship issues –
 - never in front of your children
 - never at changeovers
 - never by telephone when your children can hear you.
- If contact with the other parent always ends in conflict, then cut all contact in front of your children.
- Try to use a neutral third person, or a school, as a drop-off and collection point for change overs.

3. Don’t involve your children in conflict, and don’t do things to get them onto your side. It might seriously damage their relationships, including with you.

- Don’t let them hear you saying mean things about the other parent.
- Don’t ask them to pass on your difficult messages.
- Don’t ask them to “spy” for you.
- Don’t allow them to be mediators in your disputes.

