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# CONFLICT

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Conflict exists as part of everyday life: in home, work and in society. The effect on children can be negative or productive - depending on the type of conflict and how it is handled.

If the conflict is intense, with serious arguments that involve the children, or there are long silences with a stressful atmosphere, this can be detrimental to children. Some conflicts are short-lived and dealt with quickly. In this case, the child sees that you can have a disagreement and sort it out without any grudges.

Children can deal best with conflicts where there is negotiation, the argument is resolved, and there is an apology. This gives children an example to follow. They know quarrels happen but, equally, they begin to realise that they can be handled in a way which lets everyone move on.

Severe rows can result in children acting-up as a symptom of their stress. Other reactions may include distress, looking sad, going quiet, and becoming troublesome. This, inevitably, spills over into their school work and social relationships.

If rows are the norm in a family, then it is time to seek help to consider how to change the situation. There is no point in blaming the children for acting-up when the reason for their behaviour is the responsibility of the parents.

**Q:**

***I have a very fiery relationship with my mother, who is a constant source of annoyance. She sticks her nose into our business all the time. When she comes through the door, one of the children puts her hands over her ears - as she knows there will be an argument. What should I do?***

**A:**

This is a clear signal that she and, I'm sure, the other children, are unhappy about the rows. Someone needs to immediately take charge of the situation, and to stop what is going on - otherwise you are going to allow further damage to your children.

You may not be able to stop having rows with your mother, but you do need to have them well out of earshot of your children. You need to lay down the rule that if your mother is to come into the house there are to be no arguments - otherwise she will be asked to leave. Hard as this might be, the children must come first.

