

Reducing Parental Conflict

Toolkit Resource: Why Are We Arguing?

Page 1

An activity which practitioners can print out and use with parents.

We disagree because we are all different and co-parenting is difficult.

You are who you are now because of your 'roots': how you were raised, the values you were raised with and your experiences (especially in relationships) along the way. You will believe some things are 'right' and other things are 'wrong'. You will have developed 'strengths' like 'being a good listener' or 'being determined' and, you will have developed 'vulnerabilities' like 'I hate being lied to because my ex did that!' Finally, you will have found ways to cope with issues in the past. Could you use the same coping techniques now? Or do you need other support?

We are also born with certain characteristics that make up our temperament. These characteristics are hard to change. When we are trying to co-parent with someone who has a very different temperament, we can sometimes find ourselves arguing over the same thing over and over again. Acknowledging these differences and working with them might break this cycle.

To help you work out why you are arguing or feeling unhappy in your relationship, try thinking about the following questions.

Questions 1

These questions are about your temperament: the characteristics you were born with:

- **Are you generally optimistic (look on the bright side) or pessimistic (think the worst)?**
Consider the issues if you and your co-parent are both pessimists. Are you seeing things so negatively because you are 'doubling up'? How can you deal with issues more positively? Consider your strengths. Could a third party help? If one of you is positive and the other is negative, is this causing conflict? How can you cope with this difference? Consider your strengths.
- **Do you have a short fuse(lose your temper quickly) or lots of patience?**
If you and your co-parent both have a short fuse, then stepping away and taking time to calm down will help.
- **Do you like routine or are you more spontaneous (think about your eating, sleeping and toilet habits)?**
Differences are likely to cause conflict. Compromise and working with the differences are more likely to 'work' than trying to change the co-parent.
- **Are you generally relaxed (laid back,take it slow, like to do things at your pace) or always busy (need to be on the go with work or at home, finding things to keep busy if necessary)?**
Differences are likely to cause conflict. Compromise and working with the differences are more likely to 'work' than trying to change the co-parent.

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Questions 2

These questions will help you identify your values, strengths, vulnerabilities and coping techniques. You can then find a way to move forward with more support if you need it]:

- Who raised you?
- Were your parents together?
- Do you believe it's right for parents to stay together for the sake of the children?
- Do you have a faith that directs your values and how you live?
- What strengths do you take from your upbringing?
- Did your upbringing make you particularly vulnerable or sensitive in any way?
- Do you see similarities between you and someone else in your family?
- Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic?
- Do you have a short fuse or lots of patience?
- Do you like routine or are you more spontaneous?
- Are you generally relaxed or always busy?
- Did your upbringing or past friendships or relationships give you particular strengths or vulnerabilities/sensitivities?
- How have you dealt with stresses in the past?
- Who has supported you?
- Are there skills you can use now?