

'How can I stop fighting with my child?'

Parenting can be a struggle...

Being a parent is not easy, and it may be one of the hardest jobs you ever do. When there's a disruption in the relationship with your child, and conflict occurs, this can increase the tension in the relationship you have with your child. As a parent, you may be left wondering, will I ever go a day without fighting with my child?



You're not alone. Every parent struggles with their children sometimes. There are many factors that contribute to the disruptions that occur in the parent-child relationship. These may include aspects such as your child's age, their temperament or stage of development, or their sensitivity to emotions. However, you also need to

consider your **own** factors that could be contributing to these arguments that ensue. These factors may include your self-defence mechanisms or your triggers, or possibly how you respond to situations, or even your ability to cope with the daily stressors we face as parents.

Is my own past affecting how I deal?

Perhaps **your** roots and childhood upbringing and your habitual way of reacting or responding are impacting your ability to think clearly in high stress situations, or when you are experiencing a confrontation with your child. Don't worry, this is a normal response. As you move through your relationship with your child, you may notice that your own childhood wounds begin to surface as your children inadvertently remind you of these deep intertwined wounds that you have.

We can expect our kids to act out in ways that send us over the cliff at times. That is why it is **our** responsibility as the parent to steer clear and stay away from that edge.

Understanding the reasons **why** you are arguing with your children can help to diffuse these situations and impact how you react to them. It is common for us as

parents to feel as though our children are behaving purposefully to push our buttons. However, our child's behaviour cannot cause our response, rather, those old wounds resurface through the triggers we encounter.

Flight or Fight

Let's think about the terminology of the fight-or-flight responses, where our body automatically enters survival mode; these sensations occur to avoid feeling uncomfortable in the moment, but it is not an actual emergency, like our body leads us to believe.

How we respond to our emotions is being mirrored by our children. Our children have emotions too! It is okay to feel hurt, to feel upset, disappointed, or angry at times; however, it is also important to recognize **how** we express those emotions and to do so in a meaningful, constructive way.

Better ways to respond

For example, rather than react to a situation with your child, be proactive in your responses. Begin to recognize when it is time to take a breather, take a step aside, or ask your child to take a breather too. Take those few minutes to calm yourself down. When our bodies are in a calmer state, we are much more likely to respond with clear thought, rather than responding emotionally, in the heat of the moment. This moment of calm can provide opportunity for you to listen to **why** you and your child are upset and to examine which of your needs, or your child's needs, are not being met.

Taking a breather does not mean that the issue won't be resolved or will be long forgotten. Rather, when we are able to provide clear acknowledgment of the emotions we are feeling, we can begin to verbalize them with our child, and encourage our children to regulate their emotions as well.



Words matter

When we are ready to express how we are feeling with our children, it can be helpful to be aware of the tone we use and our choice of words. When the language we use is consumed with highly charged words, we end up escalating the argument, rather than speaking from a place of calm. Most often, this



involves giving unreasonable threats that ultimately undermine our authority as parents. Avoid feeling rushed to give a consequence; take a moment to calm yourself down, so you can listen to your child, and respond to the child's behaviour with reason and respect.

Learn to choose your battles and be open to recognizing your own mistakes and taking ownership or responsibility when you may be a part of the problem. If we expect our children to apologize, we, as parents, also need to recognize when it is time to say "sorry" too.