

## 6 Simple Ways to Stop Fighting in Front of the Kids



No parents want their children to see them fighting. Here, simple ways to stop.

By Judy Koutsky

My husband and I had what we thought was a harmless discussion over cleaning up and child care (basically, the “who does more” debate). I didn’t think much about it until my son asked, days later on our way to school, why I was fighting with Daddy.

Couples have arguments, which is normal, but having them in front of the kids can be detrimental. “Parents model the behaviors that children will use in the world; if parents model fighting to express negative feelings, then kids will think that this is how to express themselves when they are upset,” says parenting coach and licensed social worker [Mercedes Samudio \(http://theparentingskill.com\)](http://theparentingskill.com).

Here, six ways to curb fighting with your spouse in front of the kids.

**1. Acknowledge that fighting in front of the kids is not ideal.** This may seem obvious, but many couples don’t realize that arguing around the kids can be really harmful. Some people grew up with their parents fighting all the time and view it as normal. “Arguing in front of your kids is one of the most detrimental things you can do,” says [John Mayer \(http://www.DrJohnMayer.com\)](http://www.DrJohnMayer.com), clinical psychologist. Realizing that is one of the first ways to stop it.

**2. Know the long-term effects of even a quick argument.** Everything you do has an impact on your kids, and arguing is no different. Kids might develop anxiety or depression or may bully or act out in school, says [Lisa Bahar \(http://www.lisabahar.com/\)](http://www.lisabahar.com/), marriage and family therapist.

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**3. Call a time-out with your spouse.** You give kids time-outs when they need to cool down, and sometimes, as an adult you need to do the same. “If things are escalating, develop a signal between yourselves to stop a heated conversation,” says Mayer. The key here is to remember to pick up the discussion later, so the issue ultimately *does* get resolved.

**4. Pick a place for discussions.** Maybe it’s the garage, the bedroom, or the basement. You want to choose a place that’s out of earshot from the kids. Agreeing on this spot for any discussion that could escalate into an argument gets you on the same page and allows you to keep one-on-one talks private.

5. **Walk away or send the kids out to play.** When things quickly get heated, sometimes you need to get some distance from the situation before you say something you really regret. Either walk away from your spouse, or if this is a conversation that really needs to happen now, send the kids outside to play or to another room.

6. **Know when to get help.** If you find yourself constantly fighting with your spouse and your own efforts to stop aren't working, consider finding a couples therapist who can teach you specific communication skills, says [Maryellen P. Mullin](#) (<http://www.messyparenting.com>), a marriage and family therapist. This is especially helpful if you find that you're having the same fight over and over again.

Arguments and disagreements are a part of life. If you do fight in front of your children – because you are human, after all – have a family meeting to explain why you fought and what solution you and your partner came to. “Also, apologize for fighting and ask how your children felt seeing you and your partner fight,” says Samudio. “This opens a safe space to talk about realistic solutions for how to cope with arguments in your family.”

How do you handle fights that erupt in front of the kids?

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