

Quick Tips for Family Harmony *by Judith Aronson-Ramos, M.D.*

Conflict Resolution Guidelines for the Family

1. Know yourself. What "sets you off", be able to anticipate the times when you know you will "lose it". Know your kids, many parents can predict when a child will lose control before he or she does.
2. Pause to consider what the conflict is; define it in your mind. Breathing deeply can help you not to react too quickly. Take time to respond. Act don't react.
3. Limit yourself to the situation at hand, don't make the problem larger than it is or drag other issues into the current conflict. Be specific.
4. Plan what your next move will be, visualize it.
5. Watch body language, yours and your child's (pointing, grimacing, arms folded etc). Most communication is non-verbal.
6. Restate the other person's feelings, they want to be heard. Restate your feelings. Use "I feel..." instead of "You did..."
7. Have a compromise solution in mind.
8. Try to see how your role may have contributed to the conflict.
9. Role play.
10. Try family meetings: once a week at a set time, Sunday nights for example. Everyone gets a job in the meeting each week - note taker, leader, etc. A sample meeting might be as follows, but adapt it for your family. Begin with a comment about something nice that happened in the family or at home that week, Each person takes a turn. Each person can then make one gripe about another family member, but restate feelings positively. Brain storm resolutions to the problem. End with a plan for each person to improve something next week. Finish with a treat!

Anger Management for the Family

1. Know what anger is - a normal healthy emotion, not an excuse to explode. Describe examples.
2. Know what makes each family member angry
3. Know your body's signals (rapid heart beat, sweating etc)
4. Have a back up plan for when you can't control your anger: punching bag, hit a pillow, go to your room, breathe deeply in and out five times, go for bike ride or run etc.
5. Practice anger control:
 - *Keep a tally sheet.
 - * Draw pictures of angry feelings.
 - * Practice changing negative thoughts to positive ones, try using "I feel" statements instead of negative ones (Instead of "You are a real pain! Why can't you just sit and finish your homework like everybody else does", becomes " I feel annoyed when you take so long to sit and do something that should be quick. Next time I would like you to try....")

* Keep a journal (the wh's of your anger incident: Why, Where, When, What)
Place sticky notes with anger alternatives around the house: on the fridge, in the bathroom, in bedrooms etc. For example: No big deal! I can handle it! I am calm. Breathe in, breathe out relax. I can ignore that. I know he doesn't mean it. So what? What's the big deal? Next time will be better. Etc.

6. Practice forgiving each other.