

What happens to the children when parents fight?

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(HealthDay)—"Don't fight in front of the kids."

Sounds like familiar advice that's been passed down from generation to generation. But as it turns out, it's not always the fighting, but rather the way you fight that can have a negative—or a positive—effect on your children.

Researchers E. Mark Cummings and Patrick Davies have studied this topic for decades. They say hearing parents argue in a positive, constructive way can actually boost a child's development, from learning better [social skills](#) to doing better in school.

On the other hand, whether you go behind closed doors to fight or argue in front of your kids, if you do it in a mean-spirited way, you create a stressful environment that can affect their [psychological development](#). It can also lead to [behavioral problems](#), especially if kids are drawn into the arguments. Kids also get the wrong message when one parent tries to stop fights by giving in, especially if he or she is resentful or simply shuts down communication.

Taking a positive approach to arguments is better for kids and your relationship. Rather than having the mindset of an adversary prepared for battle, look at the situation from your partner's point of view to understand his or her perspective. If both of you do this, it will be easier to find solutions. Whether the fight is over a transgression or a difference in opinion, resist being critical and show kindness, an important behavior to model to your children that teaches them how to handle difficult situations in their own lives.

More information: The Urban Child Institute has more on [how stress can affect children](#) from a very early age.

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