

http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/Parents/parents_fight.html

When Parents Fight

Chances are you've had an argument or two with your parents recently – about clothes, homework, friends, curfew – pretty much anything. But what's going on when your parents fight with each other?

You may be a little relieved that, for once, you're not the one arguing with a parent. But most people worry when they hear their parents argue.

It's normal for parents to disagree and argue from time to time. They might disagree about important things like their careers, finances, or major family decisions. They might even disagree about little things that don't seem important at all – like what's for dinner or what time someone gets home.

Sometimes parents stay levelheaded when they disagree, and they allow each other a chance to listen and to talk. But many times when parents disagree, they argue. What Does It Mean When Parents Fight?

When your parents are fighting, thoughts might start rushing around in your head: Why are they shouting at each other? Does this mean they don't love each other anymore? Are they going to get a divorce?

It can be easy to jump to conclusions when you hear parents argue. But most of the time, arguments are just a way to let off steam when parents have a bad day, don't feel well, or are under a lot of stress – kind of like when you argue with them.

Like you, when your parents get upset with each other they might yell, cry, or say things they don't really mean. Most people lose their cool now and then. So if your parents are fighting, don't always assume it means the worst.

It's OK for Parents to Argue Sometimes

It's natural for people to have different opinions, feelings, or approaches to things. Talking about these differences is a first step in working toward a

mutually agreeable solution. It's important for people in a family to be able to tell each other how they feel and what they think, even when they disagree.

Sometimes parents can feel so strongly about their differences that it may lead to arguments. Most of the time, these arguments are over quickly, parents apologize and make up, and the family settles back into its usual routine.

When Parents' Fighting Goes Too Far

But sometimes when parents fight, there's too much yelling and screaming, name calling, and too many harsh things said. Although some parents may do this, it's not OK to treat people in the family with disrespect, use degrading or insulting language, or yell and scream at them.

Sometimes parents' fighting really goes too far, and includes pushing and shoving, throwing things, or hitting. Even if one parent is not physically injured, an argument has gone too far when one parent uses threats to try to control the other through fear. Examples include if a parent:

- * threatens to injure himself or herself
- * threatens to commit suicide
- * threatens to leave the other parent
- * threatens to report the other parent to welfare
- * destroys the other's property

These things are never OK. When fights get physical or involve threats, the people fighting need to learn to get their anger under control.

What About You?

It's hard for most people to hear their parents yelling at each other. Seeing them upset and out of control can throw you off – aren't parents supposed to be the calm, composed, and mature ones in the family? How much it bothers you might depend on how often it happens, how loud or intense things get, or whether parents argue in front of other people.

You might worry more about one parent or the other during an argument. It's natural to worry that a parent may feel especially hurt by what the other parent says. Or maybe you worry that one parent could become angry enough to lose control. Should you be worried that

someone might get physically hurt? With all this extra mental and emotional stress, you may get a stomachache or want to go to your room and cry. It's understandable to feel this way when there's conflict around you.

If your parents are arguing about you, this can be especially upsetting. Lots of people in this situation might mistakenly think the argument is their fault. But your parents' arguments are never your fault.

If your parents' fighting really bothers you, you might find it hard to sleep or go to school. If this is the case, try talking to one or both of your parents about their behavior. They may not even realize how upset you are until you tell them how their arguments affect you.

If you or someone you know lives in a family where the fighting goes too far, let someone else know what's going on. Talking to other relatives, a teacher, a school counselor, or any adult you trust about the fighting can be helpful. Sometimes parents who fight can get so out of control that they hurt each other or other family members. If this happens, letting someone else know will allow the family to be helped and protected from such harmful fighting.

Family members can learn to listen to each other and talk about feelings and differences without yelling and screaming. They can get help with problem fighting from counselors and therapists. Though it may take some work, time, and practice, people in families can always learn to get along better.
Happy, Healthy Families

If your family argues from time to time, try not to sweat it: No family is perfect. Even in the happiest home, problems pop up and people argue. Usually the family members involved get what's bothering them out in the open and talk about it. Hopefully, they can reach some compromise or agreement. Everyone feels better and life can get back to normal.

Being part of a family means everyone pitches in and tries to make life better for each other. Arguments happen and that's OK. But with love, understanding, and some work, families can solve almost any problem.

This information was compiled by
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