



# Let's talk about...

## Conflict

### Handout #1: What is 'parental conflict', and why should we talk about it?

Watch Chapter 1 – Let's talk about 'normal' levels of conflict here:  
<https://bit.ly/2K78Vyv>

#### TAKEAWAY MESSAGE

Parental conflict can range from constructive to destructive, to domestic violence in its most extreme form. The good news is that normal levels of conflict are manageable and even give children chances to learn and grow, provided everyone remains safe and the ruptures are repaired. Much long-term harm to your child is preventable, and damage from many forms of conflict can be repaired.

#### MAIN CONTENT

Just as plants need soil to grow, your child needs emotional nourishment from you for their emotional and social development. As a parent, you are like a gardener. You and the relationships you create around your child become the soil your child grows in.

Low level conflict between parents is a normal part of family life. While it can include accommodating behaviours (such as staying calm, and seeing the other parent's point of view), there are times when it becomes destructive. Being around destructive conflict between parents (such as anger, distrust, threats, shouting, or the 'silent treatment') is like a toxin or bad soil. You might not see the damage at first, but emotional toxins can have a negative impact on your child's long-term mental health and future life chances.

Importantly, most parents can make small changes that make big differences to your child's life, allowing them to thrive and flourish.

#### TAKE A MOMENT

Consider how you respond to your partner or former partner when you are in a verbal disagreement, that's unpleasant but not unsafe. Do you recognise unhelpful behaviours in yourself? If you do, there is something you can do about it, beginning with communicating differently.

#### Acknowledgements

Let's Talk About Conflict © was written by Jennifer E. McIntosh and Craig Olsson from the Centre for Social and Early Emotional Development (SEED), Deakin University. It was produced by Relationships Australia South Australia.  
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