



## Confident Parents, Confident Kids

### Fighting Fairly Family Pledge

Fighting is inevitable in families. It does not represent weakness but only reality. I know that the way we fight - what we say, how we say it and what we do - can either deepen our intimacy and strengthen our bonds or create divisions and break down trust. Here is our family commitment to one another.

We, the \_\_\_\_\_ (insert last name(s)) family, will...

#### **1. Plan ahead.**

We'll develop a plan for dealing with heated emotions, expressing ourselves respectfully and calming down. Each will create their own individual response and share it with the others in the family. We will respect each person's plan. See the [Family Emotional Safety Plan](#) for a simple template.

#### **2. Take responsibility for our own feelings and role in the problem.**

Instead of blaming others, we will voice our own feelings. We'll ask "What am I feeling? What's my role in this problem?" and "How can I articulate and take responsibility for my role fairly?"

#### **3. Move to empathy and get curious about other's perspectives.**

We'll assume that other family members have good intentions and that everyone can make mistakes. We'll ask, "What are you feeling? What are you thinking?" Then, we'll listen with an open mind and heart seeking understanding.

#### **4. Work together to meet each other's needs and forge an agreement.**

No agreement is going to work if needs—physical or emotional—are not met. So before finding solutions ask "What needs have to be met on both sides?" Then with those needs in mind, we'll discuss ways to move forward and work to resolve the problem.

### **3. End with love.**

This is typically not a possible way to close a conflict if the problem is not truly resolved. But when we've heard each other's feelings and thoughts, worked to understand one another and tried to resolve the problem fairly, then we'll end with an expression of love and care.

We, the \_\_\_\_\_(insert last name(s)) family, pledge not to use the following types of fighting that we know are destructive to our loving relationships. They can whittle away at our trust of one another and rock our foundation.

We will not...

#### **1. Use physical force.**

Whether it's between siblings or between a parent and child (including spanking), using physical force in a conflict signals that the individual has lost all control and only believes s/he can regain it with physical dominance. Five decades of research shows there are no positive and only negative outcomes when force is used. See the following article for numerous alternatives. Brainstorm alternatives so that children have other options at the ready.

#### **2. Triangulate.**

We will not talk with one person about another when they are not present. We will go directly to the person with whom we have the problem.

#### **3. Criticize.**

We will not judge or comment on the character of a person in the struggle but focus our energies and words on solving the problem at hand.

#### **4. Show contempt.**

We will not use hostile humor, sarcasm, name-calling, mockery or baiting body language. We recognize these all involve some kind of aggression and character attack with the implicit intention of causing harm.

#### **5. Become defensive or blaming.**

We will not point fingers and use "You..." language. Words like "always, never or forever" will not enter into our arguments since they cannot represent the truth.

**6. Stonewall.**

We will not refuse to listen, shut down the argument or give the silent treatment.

We know that our loving family relationships will continue to grow stronger through our commitment to this pledge.

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Family Member Signature

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