

Family Problems

Family problems and conflict generally feel very difficult for all members of the family. Each individual may have their own ideas regarding who is at fault and may not understand why other members of the family won't change. In reality, it is likely that everyone is contributing to the stress and break down of relationships in some way, and that everybody is suffering.

If you and your family are having difficulties getting along:

- Remember that you cannot really control or change anyone besides yourself. Think about what your contribution is to the situation, the aspects of your behaviour with which you are happy and those that you would like to change. If one person in a family changes, either positively or negatively, it can impact everyone else within the family.
- When parent's relationships are stressed, children often become distressed and develop behavioural problems. It is important that parents take the steps to ensure that their own relationships are open and positive, even if separated.
- Equally, when children behave badly it can create stress in parent's relationships. If this is occurring, take steps with your partner to manage the difficulties which arise in your relationship. If you and your partner can address any difficulties productively, there is less chance of a negative impact on the family.
- Think about any traumatic events or difficulties that your family or family members have faced. If individuals within the family are feeling angry, sad, anxious or confused about these events, this can be extremely detrimental to individual behaviour and family relationships. Take the time to explore how everyone is feeling about difficult events or issues and in particular, listen carefully to the thoughts and feelings expressed by children.
- Reflect on the ways that your family has fun together. It is vital that the family share fun and rewarding time together to further consolidate positive relationships. Try to identify activities that all family members will enjoy or take turns to choose activities in which all family members can participate and enjoy.

- Establish clear rules and expectations within the family. Children benefit from knowing the boundaries, receiving encouragement for respectful behaviour and knowing that suitable non-violent consequences of disrespectful behaviour will be reinforced. In identifying family rules and expectations of behaviour, it is important to identify the behaviours that you will reward, those that you will ignore and those that will result in a negative consequence.
- Be clear about the expectations you have of family members at different developmental stages. If you have the same expectations of a teenager as you do of a younger child, you are set for conflict and negative relationships.

Please feel free to contact Life Supports on 1300 735 030 if you would like to discuss your situation with a professional counsellor. You can find more information about Life Supports services by visiting www.lifesupports.com.au.