

# HANDLING CONFLICT with tweens & teens



Strategies to  
keep **TRUST &  
RESPECT** at the  
centre of  
disagreements  
in your home.

A webinar with **Michelle Mitchell**

## Four Key Mindsets

**Conflict is inevitable.** It is not a sign of an unhealthy relationship. It doesn't mean that you and I hate each other, or we don't get along. We can love each other and still fight. Friction is okay. Frosty moments are part of growing up. A few fights don't scare me or knock my love for you around. I'm feeling this tension with you. It's a shared experience.

**Conflict isn't to be feared.** HOW we fight is more important than what we fight about or that we fight. Conflict can build trust if we uphold trust and mutual respect. You need to know that... I'm not throwing you under the bus. I am not here to shame on you. I'm being responsible for my part here.

**Conflict can bring us closer together.** Conflict can help people learn more about each other. There is always something new to learn about another person during conflict. Conflict is always an opportunity to grow closer and stronger. It can go two ways – it can be helpful or unhelpful – we choose.

**Conflict can force healthy change.** Conflict can force new patterns, change and growth. This is an opportunity for my child to learn skills – voice, respect, resilience. Conflict is an opportunity to stand strong and hold boundaries – it forces change.

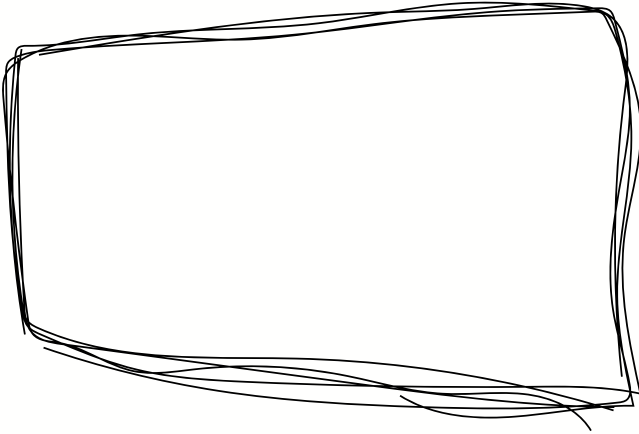
**There is no  
right or wrong,  
only  
perspectives.**

**And yet, it is a  
parent's job to  
make the final  
decision.**

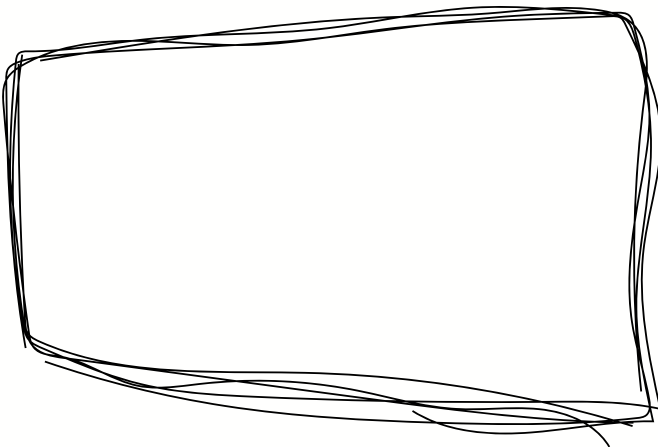
# What is the Ideal?

Conflict is inevitable so, what would you like it to look like? Remember, HOW you fight is more important than what you fight about.

**What does conflict currently look like in your home?**



**What would you like conflict to look like in your home?**



# Your Home of Origin

What is your preferred conflict style? If we know where a person “leans” we can work with each other’s preferences. That way we don’t provoke or poke each other but serve them.

## Three main conflict styles:

- Fight – Fight
- Fight – Flight
- Flight – Flight

## Reflection questions:

- What style did you see in your home of origin?
- What styles are you most comfortable with? And why?
- What style is your tween or teen most comfortable with?
- What style is most in your home? Between which people does this dynamic occur?

**Conflict is a shared experience.  
Try saying, I am feeling this tension  
with you.**

# Your Conflict Guardrails

## What are your family conflict guidelines?

We try not to:

- Swear
- Name call
- Blame each other
- Hurt the environment
- Raise our voice unless we are in harms way
- Use I statements...

We do try to:

- Stick on topic
- Find solutions
- Take turns to speak
- Listen to understand
- Be honest
- Take time out if we need to



**Getting Feedback.** The truth sometimes hurts but self-reflection is so important. What do you do to make things worse? How could you improve the way you react during conflict?

Three questions for each member of your family:

- If there was one thing you'd like me to stop
- If there was one thing you'd like me to continue
- If there was one thing you'd like me to start doing

# Questions for you!

Conversations are best had when people are in the green zone. It is so important they everyone is able to be honest about how they feel before important conversations, knowing how greatly this impacts our words and behaviour.

- **Green zone.** This is when people are calm, connected, trusting, safe, there is flow, they feel light, they can be themselves and there is respect.
- **Yellow zone.** There is tension. They may feel silly, inconsiderate, dis-regulated or unfocussed.
- **Red zone.** There is no control of emotions. They may be angry, sad or distressed.

**Take the potatoes off the boil.**

**How does each member of your family best self-soothe or regulate themselves?**



## One Analogy to Remember

“It's tempting, but a mistake to step into the boxing ring with a child and treat them like our opponents. Why? It's not a fair fight. They are not prepared. They don't have the right protective gear. An injury is inevitable and sometimes irreparable. You put them in a position where they have to rage to be heard and seen because, in their natural efforts, they are unable to win against you. You hold all the power.”

Extract from, *TWEENS: What kids now, before the teenage years*



# Thoughts for You...

## The Importance of Repair

Follow the 4 step repair process....

- I am sorry...
- I shouldn't have...
- What can I do to make this right?
- Then, changing behaviour is essential.

## Diffusing Tension

How do you diffuse typical patterns of tension? What is working for you?

- Humour
- Intentionally changing your response to a pattern
- Space - Humming, counting, singing...
- Ask, How do you want to be remembered as a parent?

## What is Behind Conflict?

What needs are underneath the issue? How can you best meet those needs outside of tense times?

- Respect and recognition
- Trust and closeness
- Power and control

**What stops you from listening?  
We fear what we will hear.  
We fear not being heard.**

**HOW** you are  
fighting is  
a lot more  
important  
than what you  
are fighting  
about.

# On on One Support

Sometimes we all need a little help! All of these professionals are people I have worked personally with, and know their stuff....

## Some directories of professionals to access:

Australian Counsellors Association

Australian Psychological Society



### **Suzanne Barr Counselling and Coaching** – Suzanne Barr

A systems therapist who works with the whole family. Great if you need some whole family support.



### **Craig Thomas Counselling** – Craig Thomas

Excellent with teenagers and deals with pornography exposure and addictions, as well as all things teenagers growing up!



### **Space Wellness** - Louise Klar

Great with those struggling with their confidence and ability to set personal boundaries.

**Conflict  
DOESN'T mean  
we hate each  
other or don't  
get along.**

**We can love  
each other **and**  
have tense  
moments.**