



How to Keep Children Out of the Middle

Research and common sense have come to the same conclusion:

Ongoing parental conflict is harmful to children. The impact is even greater when the children are caught in the middle of their parents' battles. Here are some simple things you can do to help keep your children out of the middle.

Don't discuss any issues pertaining to the children in front of them or if they are within hearing distance of either parent.

- Do discuss child-related issues directly with the other parent and when children are not present and out of earshot.
- Don't ask them to carry or relay messages, verbal or written.
- Do talk directly to one another, without using the children to relay messages.
- Don't ask them to play "detective," meaning don't use them as a source of information about the other parent's personal life.
- Do obtain information about one another from sources other than the children.
- Don't ask them to keep secrets from the other parent.
- Do encourage children to speak freely to both parents.
- Don't respond to their reports of disparaging remarks about you by the other parent to any extent. The less you say, the less you participate in putting them in the middle.
- Do resist the urge to respond to their reports of disparaging remarks that the other parent has made about you. Less is more. The less you say the more you help them stay out of the middle.
- Don't discuss any financial or legal matters related to your divorce with the children nor have them read any related documents.
- Do keep all discussions of financial and legal matters between adults.