

## Parenting with the Assumption of Emotional Coherence

### Part 4: When There Are Conflicts

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For an introduction to the concept of emotional coherence, please see:  
[\*Introduction to the Emotional Coherence Framework.\*](#)

In part 1 of this series we talked about acquiring and exercising skills of healthy communication as much as possible during times that are problem-free, in order to have those capabilities in place for times when problems materialize. Then in part 2 we looked briefly at ideas for supporting your child when he or she is having a problem, and in part 3 we discussed the opposite constellation in which you yourself have a problem.

Just as a reminder: Underpinning and threading its way through this entire approach is the idea of emotional coherence—the assumption that what you and your child are thinking, feeling, or doing has a coherent, emotionally logical basis.

In **part 4** we look at how to handle conflict situations, i.e. times when *both* you and your child are having difficulties. This is, of course, the most challenging prospect of all. You'll need to develop the capability of tacking back and forth between supporting your child and supporting yourself—in the ways we touched on in the previous articles. This a serial process, because doing both at once often doesn't feel feasible.

During a conflict, a good guideline to adhere to is this: First understand, and then be understood. First attempt to put yourself into your child's position, and ask yourself how things might look from that viewpoint. Let your child know that you understand or can imagine how he is feeling. Once he feels understood by you, there will be more capacity and willingness for seeing things from your vantage point, and you'll be able to tack back to your own side of things.

Here's an example of how such an interchange can start. Imagine that your teenager absolutely doesn't want to go on vacation with the rest of the family, but you aren't willing to let her stay home alone. You might begin by saying, "I really understand that it would be more fun for you to stay here and be able to do things with your friends than to go on vacation with us!" If you continue being empathic and doing your best to understand the situation from her viewpoint, at some stage she'll be receptive to knowing *your* thoughts and feelings. It's then that you can tell her of your concerns, for instance "I'd be worried about you being in the house alone when we're so far away." In this way, both of you have the opportunity to be heard and understood by one another, and the conflict can deescalate.

One last hint: It's often a lot easier to work through differences of opinion when you're not in the heat of the conflict. Intense emotions make things more complicated, so try to pick a time when both of you can talk about the topic in a more neutral manner. And if it seems as though you can't manage to agree on anything, try finding something that you *can* agree on – a sort of "least common denominator." It can be something as simple as postponing the discussion until a later time.

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This material has been drawn from [How to Connect with Your Child](#) by Robin Ticic.