

# **Protecting Your Child's Emotional Well-Being: The Impact of Parental Hostility**

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Parental hostility and conflict discussions can take a toll on children, forcing them into uncomfortable situations where they may feel compelled to choose sides. This emotional tug-of-war can lead to overwhelming feelings of guilt and resentment, ultimately leaving them feeling betrayed. Merely witnessing this hostility can harm a child's emotional and psychological development. Numerous studies highlight the correlation between children exposed to parental conflict and behavioral, psychological, and academic difficulties, as well as increased risks of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

When children are caught in the crossfire of parental discord, they grapple with a range of emotions, from guilt to confusion and anxiety. In their powerlessness to halt the arguments, they often experience a sense of abandonment, as their parents seem more absorbed in their issues than their children's needs.

Even without explicit instructions to take sides, children present during parental disputes might feel pressured to favor one parent or become mediators or referees. Observing hostility creates a burden that can instill feelings of guilt, shame, confusion, fear, and anger, along with a sensation of being trapped and powerless or fearing abandonment. This continuous cycle of self-blame significantly impacts a child's self-esteem.

The long-term consequences of parental hostility and a child's involvement in the conflict are profound. Insecurity, trust issues, and difficulties forming relationships can plague their emotional and psychological development. Furthermore, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues become more likely. Exposure to parental hostility can also lead to maladaptive coping mechanisms like aggression, withdrawal, or substance abuse. Attachment problems frequently follow, with children becoming

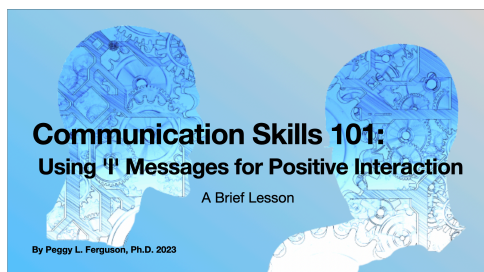
fearful of relationships, struggling with trust, and oscillating between the desire for and fear of relationships.

It is crucial for parents to understand the impact of their actions on their children. Taking proactive steps to reduce hostility and keep children out of the middle can help to safeguard their emotional and psychological well-being. Protecting the children from parental hostility involves fostering positive communication, avoiding arguments in front of the children, and acquiring additional communication and problem-solving skills as necessary. Professional help is readily available to support families through these challenges, not only to improve communication and problem-solving skills but to improve the quality of the marital relationship.



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The right tools are available to equip yourself to create a harmonious and supportive family environment. "Fair Fight Tactics" and "Communication Skills 101" are two Brief Lessons that can help you. These resources can assist you with practical guidance and strategies to foster healthy communication within your family. With "Fair Fight Tactics," you will learn how to use a problem-solving model to defuse conflicts more effectively while promoting understanding and empathy. Communication 101: Using "I" messages is a cornerstone for building good communication skills. So, if you want to know more about replacing arguing with healthy communication, these Brief Lessons are an excellent place to start.