



BROCHURE : “10 steps for improving my relationship with my child”.

The Greek proposal : “How to avoid conflicts”

Introduction:One of the most common problems that the modern family faces are the conflicts between its members as a result of bad time management (e.g. hours of watching T.V, use of PC, video games, duration of entertainment, time for study, bedtime, etc)

For these reasons we focused on this issue, trying initially to locate the ways that conflicts are expressed, our emotions and common reactions.

Finally our aim was to search for solutions, so that we can avoid conflicts and we can create a good relationship based on good communication.

How the conflict is presented:

Loud voices, bawling

Offences

Threats

Criticism

Physical violence

Depreciation

Dominant emotions

Anger – fury

Sadness

Guilt

Stress

Fear

Embarrassment

Isolation

Sense that nobody understands us

Common reactions

Calm down

Retreat and wait

Aggressive behavior

Enforcement effort

Discussion (advice- listen to another opinion)

Flexibility (give space and time)

After capturing the thoughts, we formulated a phrase for the avoidance of conflicts.

“We create contracts-agreements between family members”

Specifically, we set a meeting with all the family members at the beginning of the school year and then we repeat it every fifteen days, in order to discuss and agree on the respect of the agreements made. Depending on the age of the children, we discuss and propose the time that they devote to their homework, games, TV, evening entertainment with friends. Parents and children express their opinions and find the balance, so that they reach a conclusion in order to respect the limits of the specific rules. It is fundamental that the rules come as a result of discussion and not to be imposed by parents. It should be clear to children that the decisions must be respected.

It is the parents` responsibility not to diverge from rules and back away because of their children`s` demands. The adherence to the rules helps children understand that their life is governed by rules. Secondly, it reduces the possibility of conflicts for daily matters. In case that the agreements are not respected parents should observe the “foul” and seek ways to avoid the repetition of the action.

Steps to be followed:

Set the limits

Define the objectives

Think about the possible solutions

Estimate the proposed solutions according to the family values

Help the child to choose a solution.

The implementation of our proposal showed that children permanently assert to extend the time limits, but the stability of parents helps them understand that the rules will be implemented strictly.

It is also basic that parents do not lose their self-control in case that the rules are broken and then start to accuse their children .

Instead, when we notice such a behavior :

- We characterize the behavior and not the children, e.g “ when somebody doesn` t listen to me...”
- We use I STATEMENTS and not “You...” e.g. “It annoys me...”
- We describe how the behavior influences us e.g. “I really feel injured...”
- We state what we prefer to be done e.g “It would be better, if...”
- We avoid excessive criticism, demeaning comments or derision e.g “You are irresponsible, don` t be like a baby, etc..”
- No matter how hard it might be, we try to start all interactions with our child with understanding, even if we don` t fully agree or even quite comprehend what they`re talking about. Here`s an example: Your teenage daughter is not doing her schoolwork, and instead is online with friends chatting. It drives you crazy because you`re thinking, “If she fails another test, her average will go down and she`ll never get into college. What kind of future will she have?”
- Try to start by saying, “I understand how difficult it is for you when you have a fight with one of your friends. I also know that you need to pass this test tomorrow. Schoolwork is your job and it`s your responsibility to do it to

the best of your abilities. Let's sit down and think of a good way you can manage your time tonight."

- Be sure not to say "I understand, but..." which will simply disqualify what you've just said. Start from a place of understanding, and try to put yourself in your child's shoes first before telling her what needs to change. This tends to "open kids' ears." Instead of feeling like they have to defend themselves against you, they actually listen.
- We encourage the child to express its feelings. We can start the discussion with phrases like
"Maybe I am wrong. I would like to hear your opinion."
- We create a map with the daily life of our children. It is very useful to have enough knowledge, info, about people, places or facts related with our child. We should know and discuss about its friends and teachers and search if someone or something influences the compliance to the rules.
- We shape behavior models for imitation. Reading stories helps young children to identify themselves with heroes and through them to shape models to emulate and achieve the desired behavior (e.g. time management, self-regulation of behavior, vocabulary description of emotions and desires)
- We use reward charts, especially with young children. At this point, we also want to stress that there are some important things to consider when implementing a behavior chart. The first thing to keep in mind is that *rewards are not bribes*. A reward is established ahead of time, at a point when things are calm and going relatively well. For example, saying to our child, "I expect you to help me find the items on the grocery list today. If you stick to the items on the list without asking for anything else, you can choose a special snack for your school lunches when we're done."

After implementing the previous techniques for a while, we came to the following conclusions:

- Young children responded positively to time keeping when they were given certain time limits to keep. We tried to motivate them using reward schedule charts. Another technique that worked with them was to have them completing their homework or daily chores using an alarm clock. In this way, the "battle" was between the child and the alarm clock, which motivated them playfully, instead of causing problems with the parents.
- Teenagers responded positively to a "punishment and reward system" the rules of which were set after they had been discussed and agreed in common with parents. e.g If they broke the rules then they would accept a "punishment" like not going out with their friends for a while, or not having access to the internet, etc.