



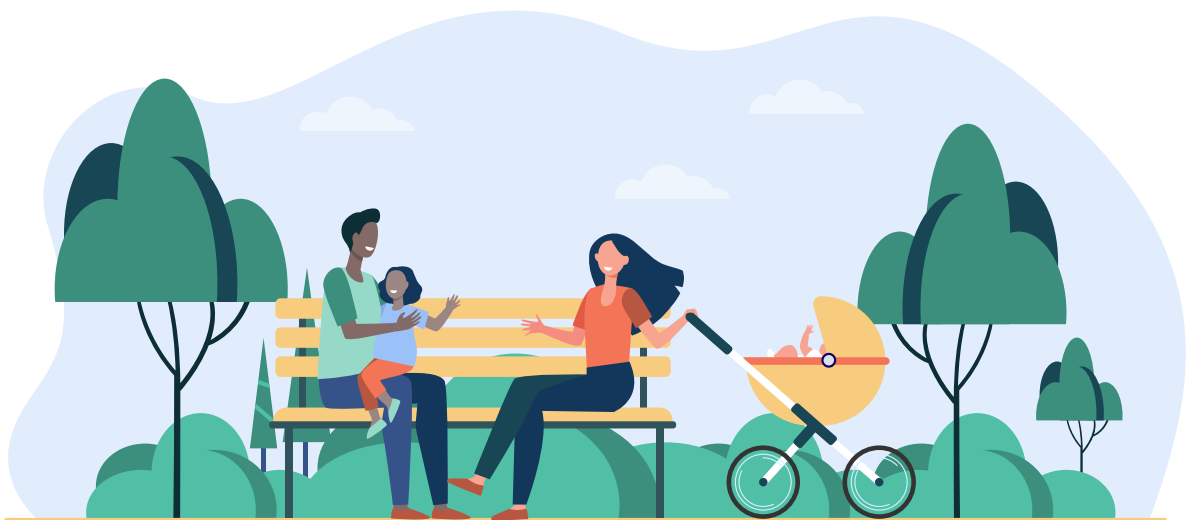
families are at the heart of us ●



Reducing Parental Conflict

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Introduction

WELCOME!

This resource has been prepared by **CFF** to support you – professionals that work with parents and / or families – with your approach to reducing parental conflict. To get the most out of this resource, read and understand all sections and try to apply to simpler cases first.

This is an abridged version of the information contained in CFF's group work programmes for parents, carers, and young people. Further training and support is available for a more in-depth understanding of Social Learning Theory and the 3-step What? Why? How? process.



If you are reading this guide on a computer, tablet, or phone, look out for this icon. Clicking on it takes you to our website where you can download and print additional materials / resources.



If you ever get lost, just click on this icon in the top right-hand corner of each left page and you will be brought back to the contents page.

Please note, whilst this document refers to 'parents', our definition is broadened include the variety of people who may be responsible for the 'parental care' of a child and can include grandparents and carers etc.

Who are CFF?



CFF (Centre for Fun and Families Ltd) is a leading registered charity delivering specialist parent and family support through the delivery of group work programmes based on Social Learning Theory.

We are a local, grassroots organisation that has developed its products through the voice of the families we work with. CFF group work programmes are evidence-based, which means that independent research has been carried out and clearly demonstrates that parents who attend a group will experience change as opposed to parents who do not receive the service.

CFF has a 30-year track record of working collaboratively with families and partner agencies. Over these 30 years, our core mission has remained unchanged:

Empowering Families by Building on their Strengths

Parents are empowered by gaining skills and knowledge and being actively involved in expressing their views and making decisions. This reinforces that parents are the experts and know their circumstances better than anyone else.

Feedback from young people and their families is consistently excellent across all programmes: reducing isolation, improving life chances, and putting the fun back into family life. We are a national training provider of parenting group work for professionals. Locally, our work with families is highly regarded by partners, local authorities, and the NHS.

We can be reached at:

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All the best,

The CFF Team



Our Values

OUR EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Families are at the heart of us.

OUR AMBITION

To help families build the best future and to put the fun back into family life.

OUR REASON FOR BEING

To help families make a positive change to the mental health and wellbeing of young people, parents and carers through evidence-based group work.

HOW WE WORK WITH EACH OTHER & YOU

Empowering | Inclusive | Collaborative.



Social Learning Theory



The basic assumption of Social Learning Theory is that many behaviours are learned and therefore can be changed by altering certain things in the environment before and / or after the behaviour has happened.

Social Learning Theory provides us with a greater choice and level of control over our affairs. It enables people to recognize the way other people influence them. Then, if they have some objection, the knowledge provides a way of countering such control. The theory is scientific and like the theory of gravity it applies universally without bias or prejudice regarding race, gender, disability, sexuality. Because it always sets behaviour in context, Social Learning Theory avoids labelling anybody as a 'problem'. It simply provides a means of identifying behaviours and the way they are maintained. It is for whoever uses these ideas to decide whether a given behaviour should be changed or not. Although Social Learning Theory itself may be free from bias or prejudice, people who work with families are not. It is therefore vitally important that you remember that families have different values and methods of child management and making assumptions about these is unhelpful.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977) Social Learning Theory. Harlow. Pearson Education.
- Pavlov, I. P. (1927) Conditional reflexes. New York. Oxford University Press.

Social Learning Theory and Parental Conflict

Social Learning Theory assists parents to reflect on their individual circumstances and work toward finding their own solutions to their conflicts. The approach does not apportion blame for behaviours but offers methods for change. It therefore avoids parents feeling they have failed or are 'problem parents / partners' and makes it possible for them to gain confidence, improve their self-esteem and take control of their lives.

Conflict between parents can be expressed in many ways such as aggression, silence, lack of respect, emotional control, lack of resolution, domestic abuse etc. Using Social Learning Theory focuses on the way that a couple behaves, rather than the status of the relationship. The aim is to empower parents through understanding and context to the conflicts that are happening in their lives, followed by strategies and techniques in conflict management skills. Negotiation and communication skills are not considered within this resource but are an integral approach to reducing parental conflict.

What? Why? How?

The **What? Why? How?** model involves going through a process with parents to identify the behaviour they want to change (the What?), the context of the behaviour (the Why?), and the strategies to bring about change (the How?). Most parents will want to get straight to changing behaviour, and they may find the process frustrating if the step-by-step approach is not explained to them.

Step 1. What?

- What behaviour am I / are we finding difficult?
- What is a clear description of this behaviour?
- What can I / we do to discover patterns of behaviour?

Step 2. Why?

- Why is the behaviour happening?
- Why do certain things prompt the behaviour?
- Why do certain things reinforce the behaviour?

Step 3. How?

- How can the behaviour be changed?
- How can I / we increase positive communication?
- How can I / we change the way we communicate with one another?
- How can I / we look after ourselves and avoid stress?



The ABC Model



The **ABC (Antecedents, Behaviours, Consequences) Model** can be used with parents to explore and reflect on the context of their conflict and unwanted behaviour(s) – the **Why?**

Social Learning Theory suggests that many behaviours are learned. Adult behaviour is influenced by our social environment – the physical and social setting in which we live. Things that happen before and after behaviour can establish, or maintain, a behaviour pattern.

If we understand the ABC (Antecedents, Behaviours, Consequences), it becomes more obvious why a behaviour is happening. Once we understand why a behaviour is happening, we are more able to change it by changing some of the antecedents (or triggers) and consequences (or payoffs).

ANTECEDENTS (OR TRIGGERS)

Who is around?

For example: Children / young people, friends, family members etc.

Where did the conflict happen?

For example: In the car, in the kitchen, on the doorstep etc.

What time did the conflict happen?

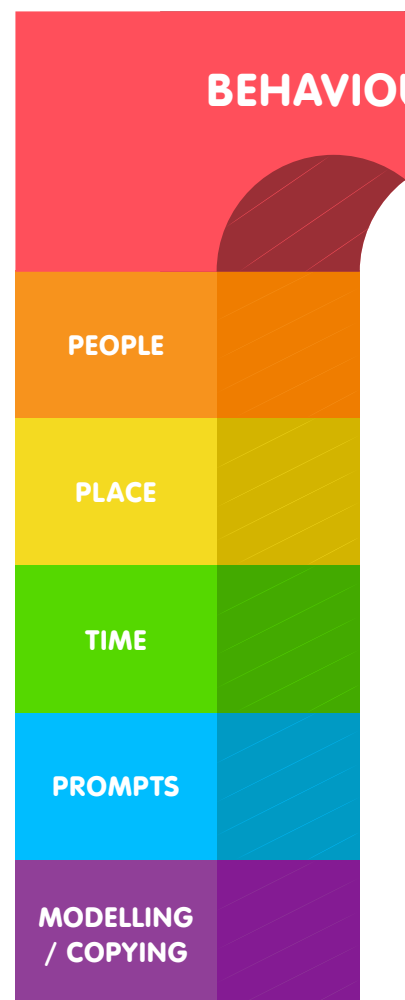
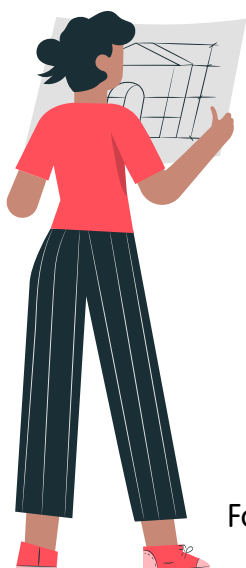
For example: In the morning, after work, dinner time etc.

What provoked the conflict?

For example: Something said, an untidy house, a bill etc.

What is happening in the moment?

For example: Reflecting each others' tone of voice / shouting etc.





A blank ABC Model template can be downloaded from our website.

ANTECEDENTS (OR TRIGGERS)

These blocks are things that come before the difficult behaviour(s) / conflict.

BEHAVIOUR

The behaviour is only held in place by what comes before and what comes after. Therefore, if we make a change, and remove some building blocks, the unwanted behaviour will fall down on its own.

CONSEQUENCES (OR PAYOFFS)

These blocks are things that come after the difficult behaviour(s) / conflict.

UR	
ATTENTION	
POWER / CONTROL	
TREATS / GOODIES	
AVOIDANCE	
ACCEPTANCE	

CONSEQUENCES (OR PAYOFFS)

Does anyone gain any positive or negative attention?

For example: Eye contact, verbal attention, physical attention etc.

Does anyone gain any power / control?

For example: Does someone get what they want? Who is wound up?

Does anyone get any treats or goodies?

For example: A favourite meal, to watch their TV programme etc.

Does anyone 'get out of it'?

For example: Avoid doing the task or taking responsibility etc.

Does anyone gain acceptance from others for their behaviour?

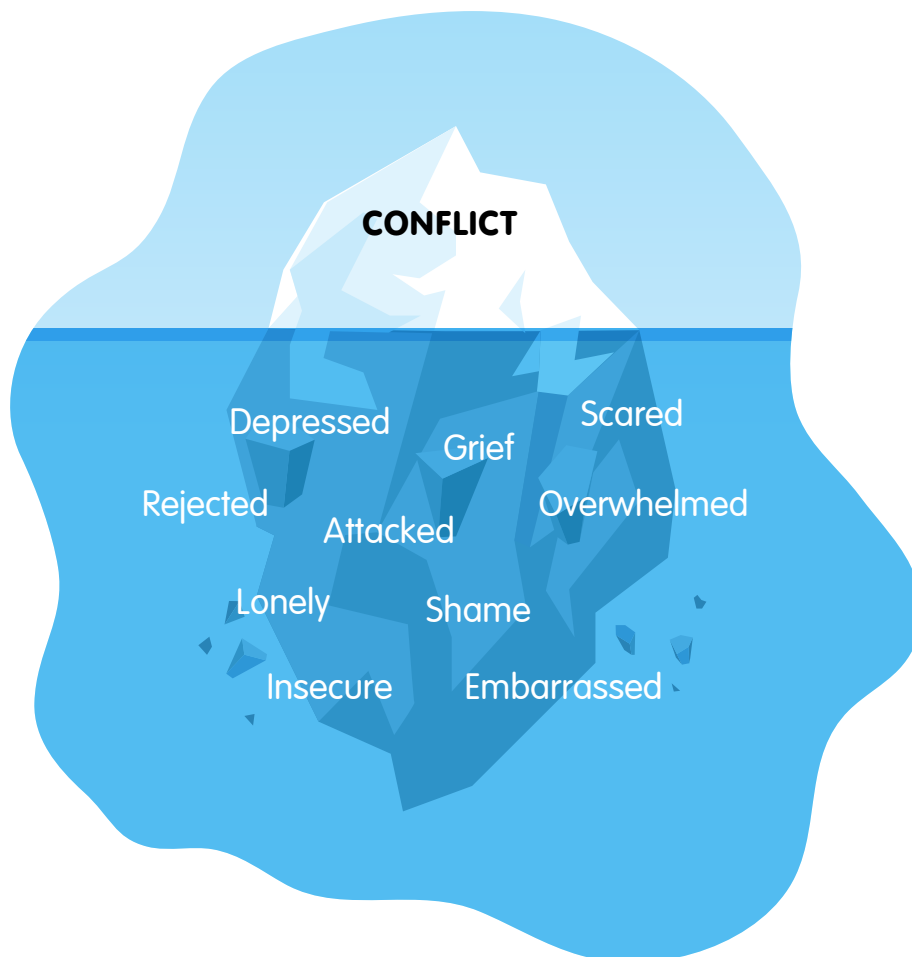
For example: A pat on the back, or "That's just the way they are" etc.

Conflict Iceberg

The **Conflict Iceberg** is a metaphor, based on Goleman's Anger Iceberg (1995, Emotional Intelligence), that can be used with parents to explore and reflect on the prompts / triggers of their conflict and unwanted behaviour(s).

Icebergs are large pieces of ice found floating in the open ocean. What you can see from the surface can be misleading as most of the iceberg is hidden below the surface of the water.

Conflict and the exhibited behaviour(s) are the tip of the iceberg, symptomatic of other unexpressed emotions and prompts. Hidden beneath the surface may be emotions such as guilt, fear, embarrassment, or jealousy; or other issues such as sleep, loneliness, poverty, mental health issues, substance misuse etc.



A blank Conflict Iceberg template can be downloaded from our website.

Turning Behaviour on its Head

To turn something on its head is to make it have the opposite effect or meaning.

So, rather than focusing on the unwanted behaviour, you instead focus on the behaviour you would like to see. Once a wanted behaviour has been identified, they can plan what needs to come before (to promote the success and occurrence of the wanted behaviour) and what needs to come after (to reinforce the wanted behaviour when it happens).

There are multiple benefits to this approach:

- You get more of what is paid attention to.
- It is easier and uses less energy than threats / shouting / complaining / pleading etc.
- It is more fun and positive to notice the good behaviour / interaction.
- It models the behaviour(s) parents would like to see from each other.
- It is more powerful and influential than focusing on the unwanted behaviour.
- Other behaviours often improve because of reinforcing one wanted behaviour.
- Improvements in behaviour last longer.

B E F A V I O U S R

Increase the positive triggers and pay-offs
to create the wanted behaviour.

Looking After Yourself



Strengthened well-being is vitally important for the healthy functioning of couples and families.

The concept of well-being comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well.

In 2008, the New Economics Foundation (NEF) presented a report to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence-base for improving people's well-being. The evidence suggested that a small improvement in well-being can help people to flourish and be their best selves.

NEF developed a set of five evidence-based actions to improve personal well-being known as the **Five Ways to Wellbeing**. The principles of these Five Ways include:

- General appeal for all ages.
- Positive (do something) not negative (stop doing).
- Actions that focus outward are better.
- Action themes can be done in parallel.
- Where possible, prioritise into your daily routine.

The Five Ways are:

Connect...

Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connection will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world about you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

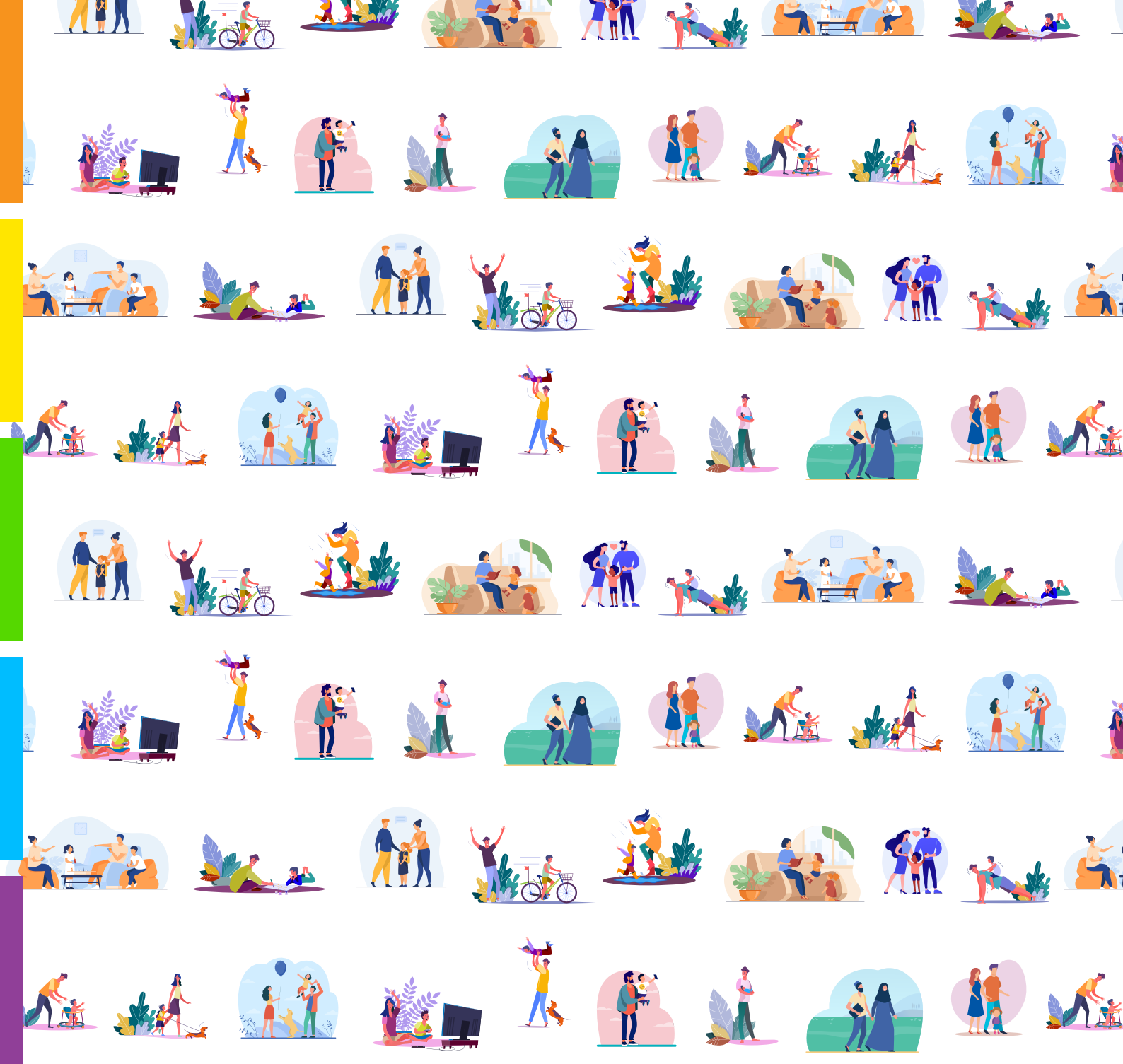
Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.





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