



- Working with domestic abuse and creating a family safety plan [WF-10] n
- Working with domestic abuse: Revisiting the family story [WF-11] n

Main steps

Discuss outstanding issues from previous sessions, particularly if they include family meetings.

Establish that one of the main goals is to focus on conflicts that have made for significant difficulties within the family.

Help the family develop an approach to deal with problems when they arise.

Completing a family genogram

It is helpful to establish who is in the family, and a great deal can be learnt about relationships by drawing up a family tree using at least three generations, and discussing and noting types of relationships, intergenerational patterns of behaviour, strengths, difficulties, health issues, etc. See 'Using genograms' [WF-5].

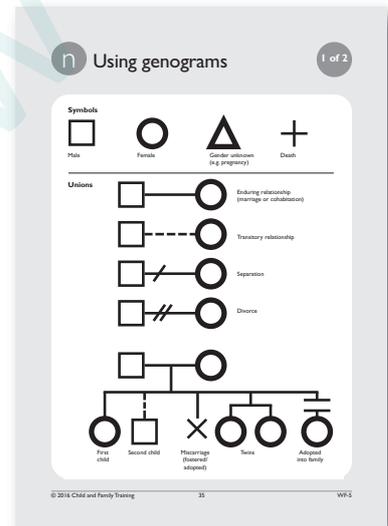
Discussion of a recent conflict

Indicate that as a way of supporting the family to deal with conflicts that arise, it would be helpful to have a discussion about the last serious conflict that occurred within the family context. This may have been a conflict between the parents about an issue that affected the children.

If the issues are personal between the parents and do not involve the children, it may be helpful to indicate that it is valuable to meet the parents alone to discuss these, and to focus on conflicts which the children would have been aware of because, for example, they were directly involved, or because the conflicts were about them.

Rules for the family

- You are going to want to hear everybody's perspective and know what happened, so that you can really understand how they as a family cope with situations of conflict.
- You will want to know how the conflict started, what triggered it, what happened next, what the role of each of the parents was, or the children and of people outside the immediate family: extended family, neighbours and professionals.
- Both direct and indirect questions can be used to clarify the process, including questions focusing on what individuals who were not present, another family member or a professional would have said occurred, so that gradually a picture emerges of the pattern of conflict.
- The conflict is likely to erupt with an argument between relevant family members. It is then possible to ask whether the picture that is emerging in the family at this moment is similar to the incident they described.





Discuss a current conflict



It looks as though a similar argument is happening here in the room – is that right? Can I check how everyone's feeling? Can you all think what happened – who got cross with whom? What was said, or communicated? What did it remind you of? How did it upset you? If we were not here, what might happen? What would make this argument worse? What would help to resolve it?

Techniques to manage conflict as it arises: Using questions⁴

A variety of questions can be used, and using questions can itself have an important effect on the expression of conflict. Conflict is based on action rather than thought and reflection, and the effectiveness of asking questions is to get people to think.

Asking questions with a normalising comment



The job of being a parent can be really tough. Which of you [parents] finds it most challenging?

Asking questions with an empathic comment



I imagine that this decision about what to do about the future direction is really hard. What's the most difficult aspect of it?

⁴ Bentovim, A. and Bingley Miller, L. (2001) *The Family Assessment: Assessment of Family Competence, Strengths and Difficulties*. Brighton: Pavilion.

Bentovim, A. and Bingley Miller, L. (2012) *The Family Assessment Guide: Assessment of Family Competence, Strengths and Difficulties*. York: Child and Family Training.