

Reducing family ARGUMENTS

by Richard Fowler

Growing up as one of six children made for a very interesting home life. Plus, we were all very energetic and loud. Thinking back, I don't know how my parents did it! I remember arguments of all sorts: "Why did he get more than me?" or "That's mine, give it back!" I can still hear the echoes from my youth.

But apparently, when it comes to arguments, we were not alone. And neither are you. On average, families spend 49 minutes arguing each day.¹ It works out that parents have 2,184 arguments with their children (aged two to 12) every year.

As a teacher of teenagers in a mainstream school, I would say this

only increases in adolescence. The default setting of defiance seems to be triggered by puberty.

But is there a way to reduce arguments? A way to get our time back? Just think what you could do with an extra 49 minutes a day!

I'm not going to give you a lecture on parenting techniques, or the insider's guide to the psychology of a teenager. Instead, I will share something a lot simpler and leave each to decide how best to deploy this idea. It was a piece of wisdom I once read which on the surface appears to be so obvious.

"Fathers [and mothers], do not provoke your children to anger."²

Simple thought. Maybe too simple. But effective. I've seen hundreds of adult-child interactions. But I've noticed something: the interactions that end in arguments

are usually because someone has said something that provoked an escalation.

In any family confrontation the adults are game changers. And one way I've learnt to change this game and avoid provoking children is to make them feel they have been listened to. Reflecting what they are thinking and feeling back to them with my words does this. It lowers the emotion in any situation and helps them feel understood. You are now in a better position to move forward.

You can change your relationship with your children by seeking first to understand and then be understood.

Notes

¹ <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/lifestyle/pregnancy-parenting/families-spend-average-of-49-minutes-a-day-arguing-study-claims/ar-BBL7uhu?ocid=s>

² Ephesians 6:4

