



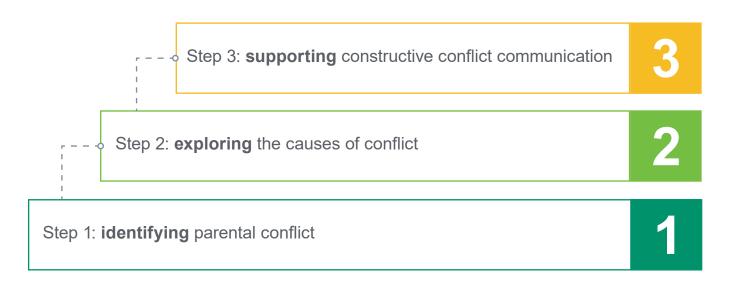
How do I support parents?



What the evidence tells us

Conflict between parents is normal, but if exposure is frequent, intense and poorly resolved, this can have a damaging impact on children, resulting in long-term mental health issues and emotional, social, behavioural and academic problems as they grow up. However, you can use these tools to work with parents by enhancing their relationship.

Our framework for working with parents



Enhancing inter-parental relationships to improve child outcomes

The quality of the interparental relationship is recognised as a primary influence on effective parenting practices and children's long-term mental health and future life chances.

Children of all ages can be affected by destructive interparental conflict, with effects evidenced across infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

The context of the wider family environment is an important factor that can protect or exacerbate child outcomes in response to exposure to interparental conflict.

To work effectively with couples/co-parents we should:

- · Use active, empathetic listening
- · Use open questions
- · Use probing prompts
- · Reflect our understanding
- · Summarise what we have heard

Tools for working with parents in conflict

The following list shows the tools you reviewed as part of your training plus a couple of extra that we feel are useful. The tools themselves are provided on the following pages for you to photocopy and use with parents.

You'll also have tools in your everyday kit that you can use to work with parents.

Stage 1 – Identifying parental conflict

- Relationship scaling tool (page 4) Use this to explore how each parent rates their situation on the scale from happy to distressed. This can highlight differences in how they are experiencing their relationship.
- Stages of relationships (page 5) This model shows how relationships evolve over time. The way in which a partner deals with challenges determines the quality of the relationship.

This model helps to 'normalise' the difficult phases and reminds them that things can get better. It is often during the transition between these stages that conflict occurs.

Stage 2 – Exploring the causes of the conflict

- What's going on for us? (VSA page 6) Using the VSA model helps parents understand the connection between stressful life events, the parents' past histories, and the methods they use to cope with stress or conflict, by asking them to reflect on these questions.
- Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviour (page 7) This model can be used to help couples to recognise how they internalise behaviour that they observe which in turn affects how they feel, impacting on their response. This can be used to help couples understand each other's behaviour.
- Our typical day (page 8) Use this table to identify how the family see their typical day. You can use this during discussions with the parents or you can ask each parent to complete and bring one to the next session. Once completed, ask them to consider when conflict is more likely to happen and what triggers it. Use this information to discuss what they could change to address and better manage conflict.

Stage 3 – Supporting constructive conflict communication

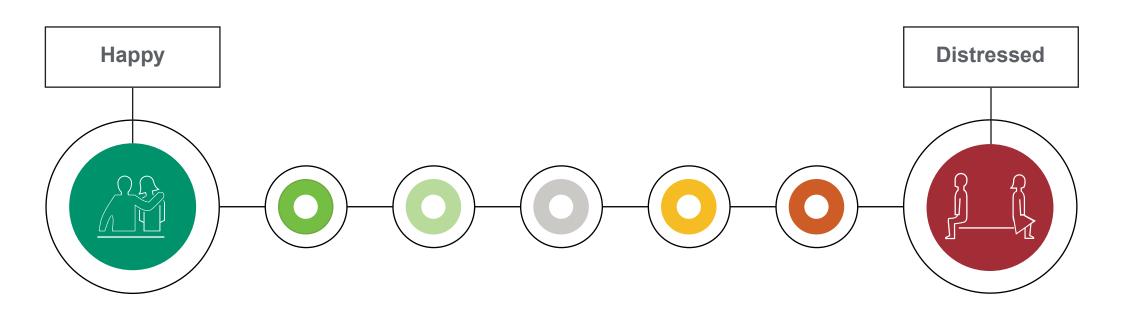
• Constructive or destructive prompt cards (page 9-12) – These cards give some examples of constructive and destructive behaviours within conflict and can be used with families in a variety of ways to help them explore what is going on for them now and help them plot a path to take in the future.

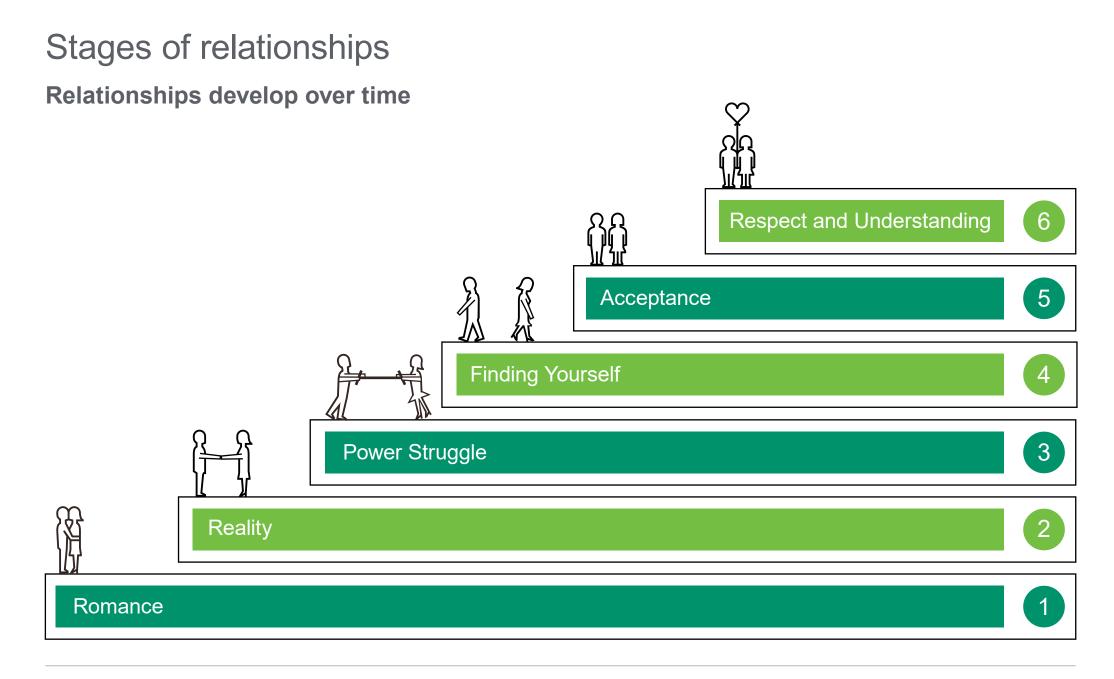
You may not feel that all the cards are suitable for the family that you are working with, in that case take some out and if the cards do not cover some of the issues you have identified in a family – consider creating your own (there are blank cards provided). Use the grid provided to explore how often these behaviours are demonstrated.

- Role Cards (page 13) Ask parents to review these cards and give examples of situations they might get into and consider the role they are asking the child/ren to take on.
- You vs. I statements (page 14-17) Use these cards to help parents to describe how they feel in a constructive way by using 'l' statements instead of 'You' statements to prevent conflict.

Relationship Scales

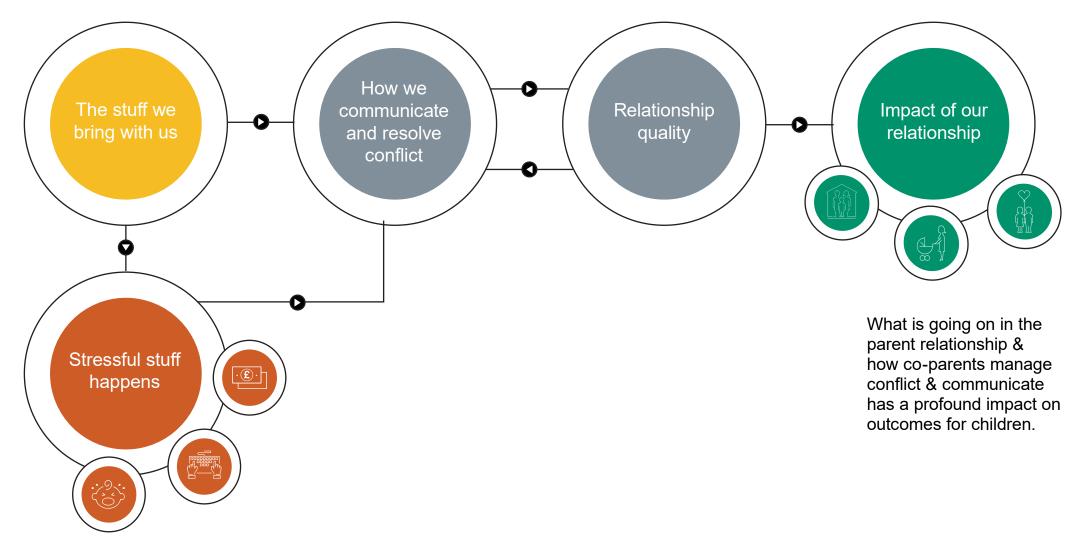
How are we doing?



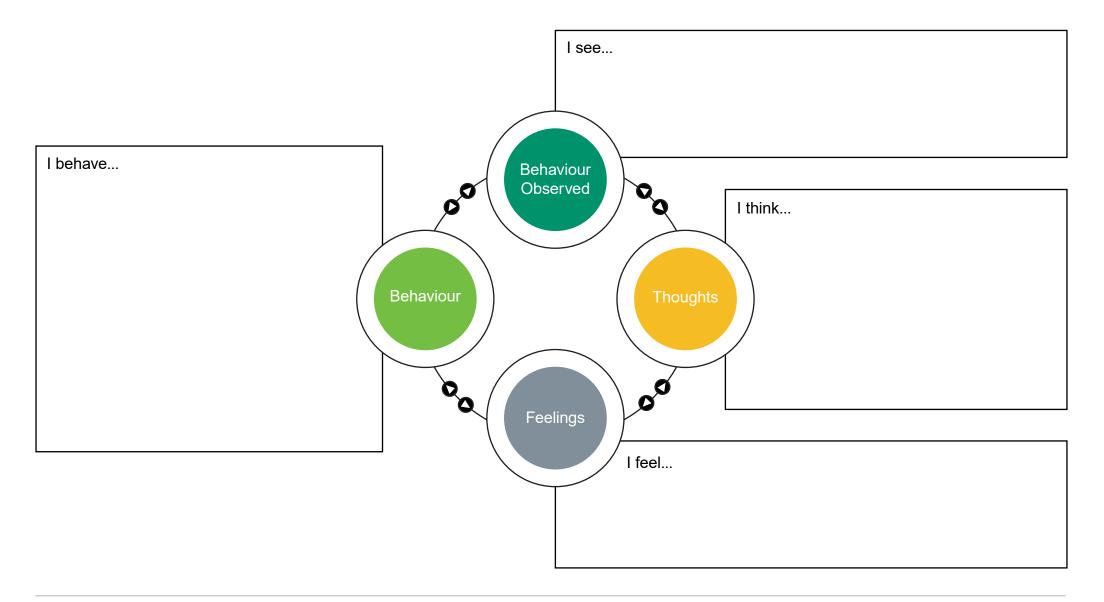


What's going on for us

Vulnerability Stress Adaptation Model



Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviour

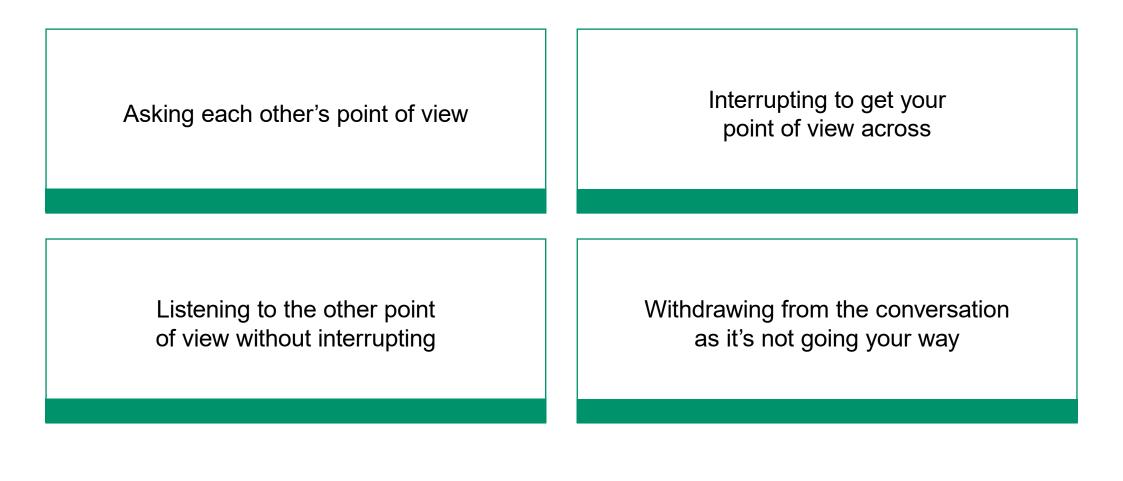


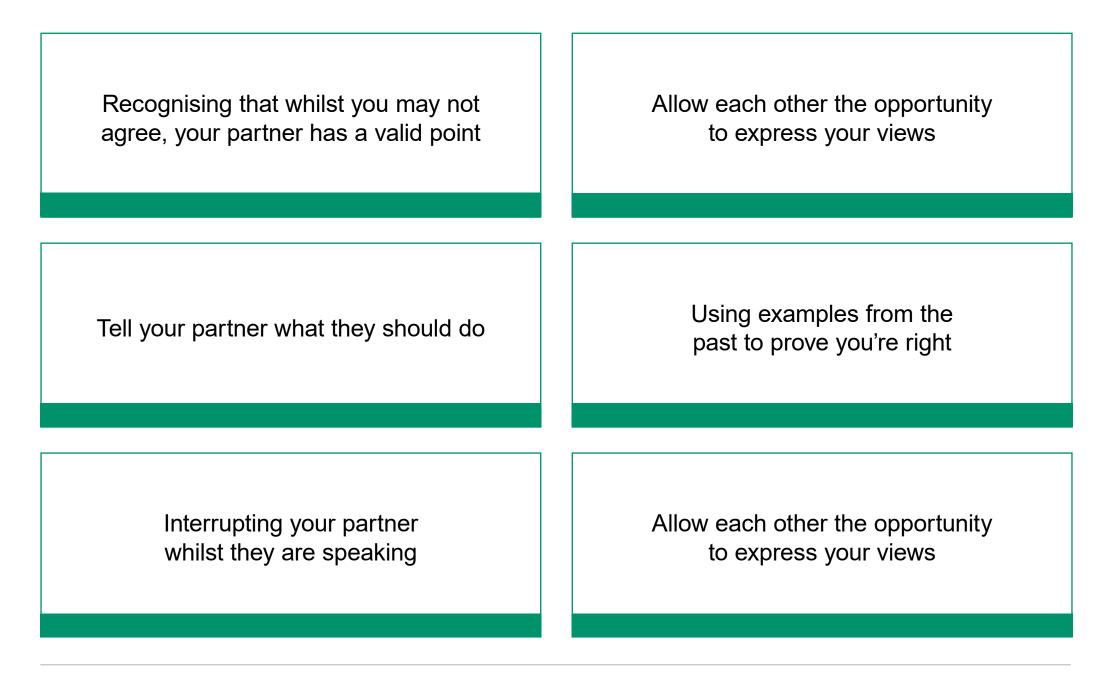
Our typical day

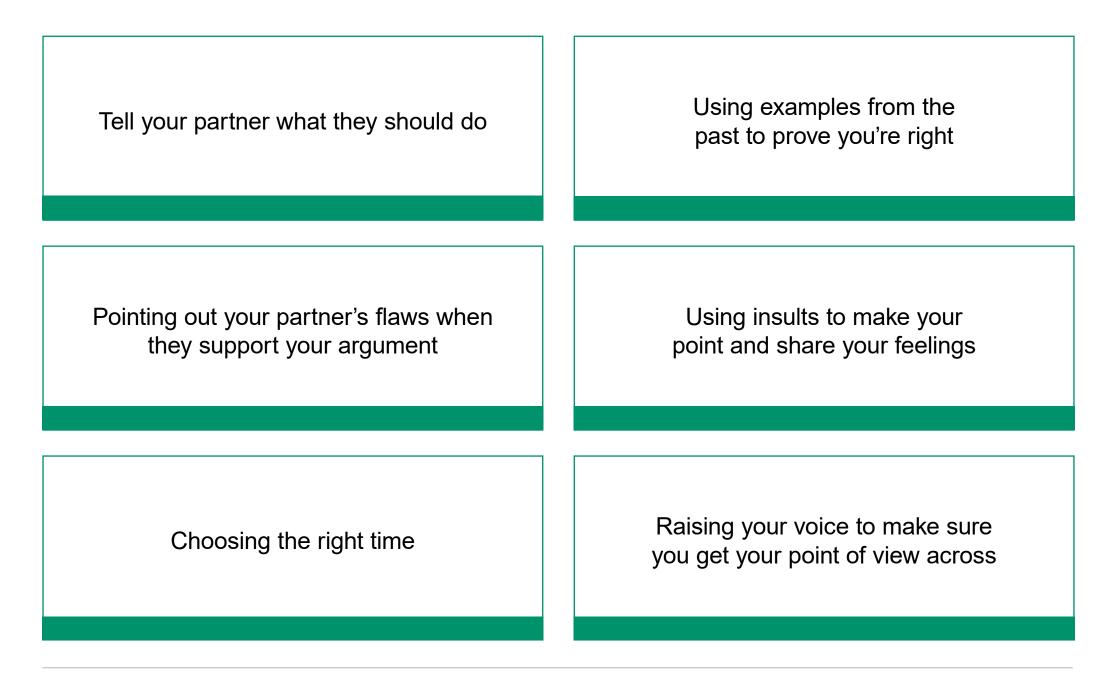
	What my day looks like	Triggers to conflict
Morning		
Afternoon		
Evening		
Night		

Constructive or destructive

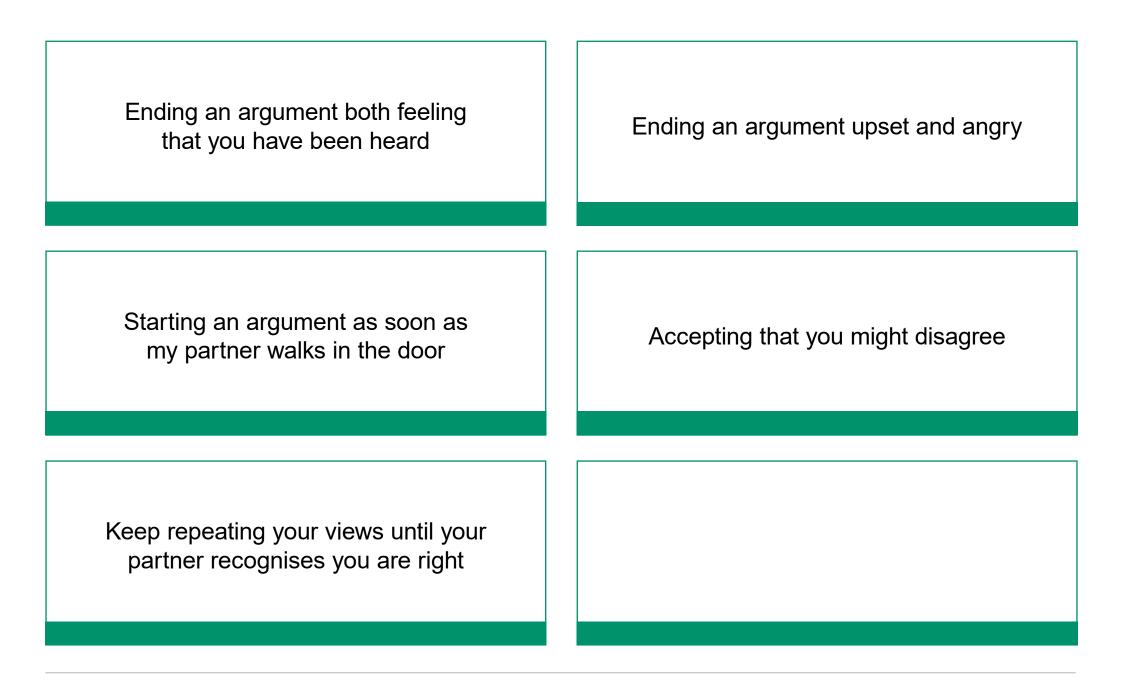
These cards give some examples of constructive and destructive behaviours within conflict.

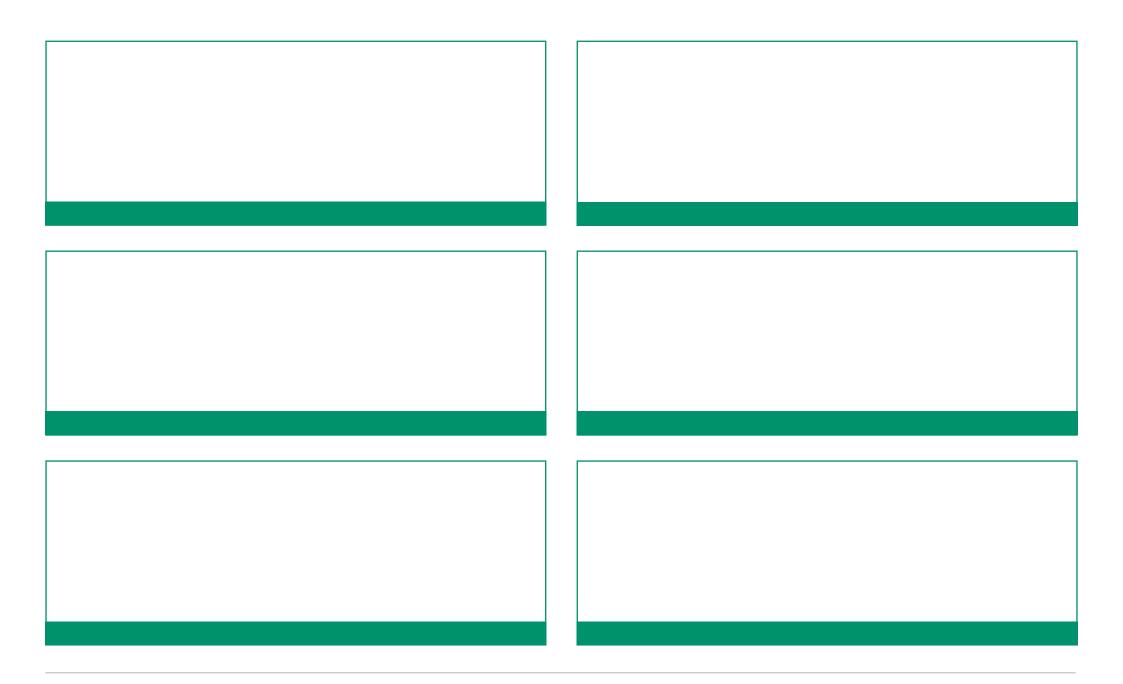






Explaining how the situation is making you feel	Considering issues from somebody else's point of view
Offering possible solutions to problems but be willing to compromise and listen to other suggestions	Having a solution in mind to the problem and don't change your mind
Check out what you agree about	Show you understand the other person's point of view





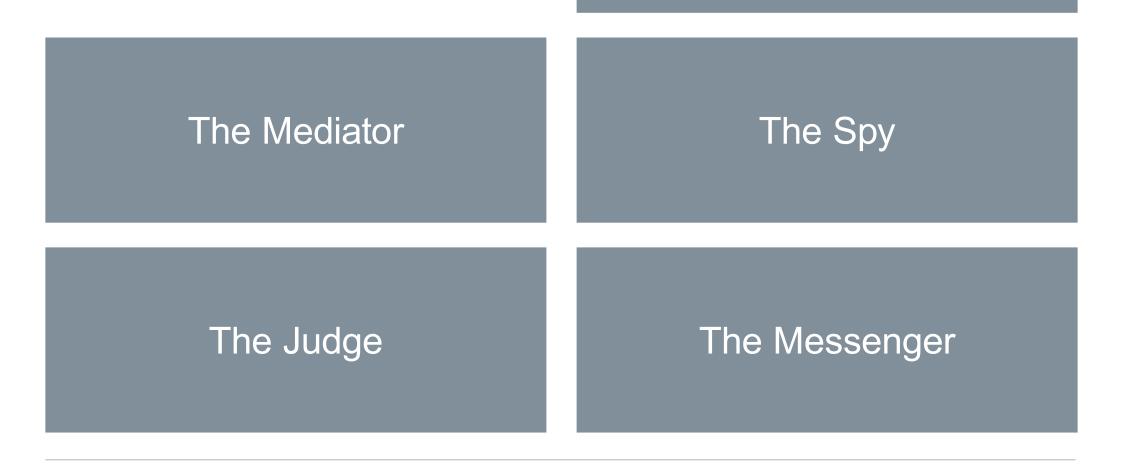
In our relationship we...



Role Cards

Review these cards and give examples of situations you and your partner might get into and consider the role you are asking your child/ren to take on.

The Confidant



When your child feels they have to be the mediator between parents, keeping everyone happy and solving problems When you share too much information with your child and expect them to fill the gap due to a lack of intimate communication with your partner or ex

When you ask your child to take information between you and your partner about money, contact etc. When you criticise your partner or ex and expect your child to decide who is right or wrong

When you ask your child questions about your partner or ex and rely on them to find out what is going on

You and I statements

Use these cards to help parents to describe how they feel using 'l' statements instead of 'You' statements.

