How Parents Engage in Conflict Affects Kids in Unexpected Ways

http://www.friefight.cn 2006-11-29

[作者] University of Rochester
[单位] University of Rochester
[摘要] November 20, 2006.- Different types of marital conflict between mothers and fathers may have different implications in the way they carry out their parenting duties, say researchers from the University of Rochester and the University of Notre Dame.
[关键词] Parents;Kids;psychology

November 20, 2006.

Different types of marital conflict between mothers and fathers may have different implications in the way they carry out their parenting duties, say researchers from the University of Rochester and the University of Notre Dame.

New research published in the journal Child Development found that parents who were openly hostile toward one another during marital disputes or who tried to withdraw from the discussion experienced difficulties in their parenting role. In turn, those actions impacted their child's adjustment over time.

"Taken together, the findings from the present study stress the importance of understanding how parents fight and the implications of these styles of conflict for the broader family system," according to Melissa Sturge

-Apple, the study's lead author and a researcher at Mt. Hope Family Center at the University of Rochester.

Earlier studies have shown that interparental conflict can affect child adjustment, make children vulnerable to psychological problems, and also undermine child

-rearing practices of parents. Those studies, however, did not distinguish between different types of marital conflict.

"Our study focused on two types of conflict—hostility and withdrawal—

rather than global assessments of anger or discord or dissatisfaction," says Sturge-

Apple. "In addition, this is the first paper to look at the process whereby these two types of conflict predict parenting for mothers and fathers separately, and how mothers' and fathers' parenting predicts a child's adjustment over a three

-year period." Sturge-

Apple points out that "types of conflict may have distinct meanings and consequences for the child and family system as a whole." The research with Patrick T. Davies, professor of psychology at Rochester, and E. Mark Cummings, professor of psychology at Notre Dame, is published in the November/December 2006 issue.

The researchers studied 212 families with 6-year-

old children for three years. Each spouse selected topics that were problematic in their marriage and talked through those together. Later, they engaged in both free play and clean

-up tasks with their children.

The study concluded that different types of conflict may have different implications for how mothers and fathers carry out their parenting duties. For example, mothers had difficulty being warm, supportive, and involved with their children when they experienced hostility with their spouse and when there was withdrawal between the parent. But fathers' ability to engage with their children was influenced mainly when there was withdrawal between th

The study further noted that the way fathers parent when they withdraw from their spouses may have a greater psychological effect on children than the way mothers deal with children under the same circumstances. Specifically, on average, when fathers were less warm, supportive, and involved, their children were more anxious, depressed, and withdrawn. They also exhibited more aggressive and delinquent behavior and had more trouble adjusting

Results from the research, the authors write, stressed the need to study "multiple dimensions of family process in examining how and why interparental conflict poses a risk for children's psychological adjustment." The research by the three psychologists was supported by the National Institute of Mental Health.

北京联建科技有限公司 Copyright © 2003-2008 Email: lemand@friefight.cn