

Do You Fight In Front of Your Kids?

Editor's Pick. Written by Laura Markham for AhaParenting.com.

In the past, most experts reassured parents that there's no harm in children seeing them fight, as long as the kids also see the parents make up afterwards. However, recent developments in neurological research challenge this view. Not surprisingly, it turns out that when children hear angry voices, their stress hormones shoot up. In fact, even a sleeping infant registers loud, angry voices and experiences a rush of stress chemicals that takes some time to diminish.

So the research confirms what any child can tell you, which is that it's frightening when adults argue. After all, parents are the child's source of security. When parents are out of control, the world becomes a scary place. This "mobilization" response can make it difficult for kids to fall asleep, because the stress hormones stay in the child's body for hours. Since kids can't turn to the arguing adults for comfort, they stuff their fear, and it pops out in anxiety, defiance or misbehavior.

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