

Resolve conflicts with child's caregiver

Our son is 9 months old. Recently we've become uncomfortable with some viewpoints expressed by his caregiver. It's nothing major, and we don't want to ruin what has been a good thing, but I think we need to find a way to bring up our concerns. Is there a good way to handle this?

This type of conflict is not uncommon, and it actually goes both ways: Sometimes, providers have a problem with parents and aren't sure how best to approach the issue.

Family relations specialists with Cooperative Extension Services in several states across the country offer guidance, including:

- Think about how serious the issue is. Are you concerned about what might happen if it doesn't get resolved? Is it something that will affect your child's development negatively? Or is it a pet peeve that has no serious consequences? Thinking about the issue in these terms will, at the very least, help you articulate your thoughts and prepare you for discussing them with the childcare provider if you decide to move forward.

- Request a private meeting with your provider ahead of time. Don't bring the issue up during pick-up or drop-off. Those are normally very busy times, and your provider may not be able to focus on your concern at those times.

- Determine in advance how you can begin



and end the conversation on a positive note.

- When relating your concern, use “I” statements, and describe how the situation makes you feel. Avoid placing blame. For example, instead of saying “You don't seem to care” or “You shouldn't say such-and-such,” say “I heard you say this, and it made me concerned because...”

- Listen — really listen — to your caregiver's response. It's often helpful to rephrase the feedback by stating “What I am hearing you say is...” This will give your caregiver the opportunity to clarify any points he or she is trying to make.

- Be open-minded about the response. You never know — what you hear may change your mind about the issue.

- Discuss a plan for resolving the issue together. Include steps each of you will take, and determine when you should meet again to discuss your progress.

Throughout the conversation, be sure to be sensitive to your provider's feelings.

For more details about resolving issues with your childcare provider, see Purdue Extension's Provider-Parent Partnership series at <http://www.extension.purdue.edu/providerparent/> and University of Minnesota Extension's Online Parenting Resources at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/ParentEducation/onlinetools.html> (scroll down to “Child Care Resources”).

Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues. It is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Family Fundamentals, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or f Filipic.3@osu.edu.



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Dear Subscriber: This column was reviewed by Kara Newby, family life program coordinator for Ohio State University Extension in Ohio State's College of Education and Human Ecology.

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