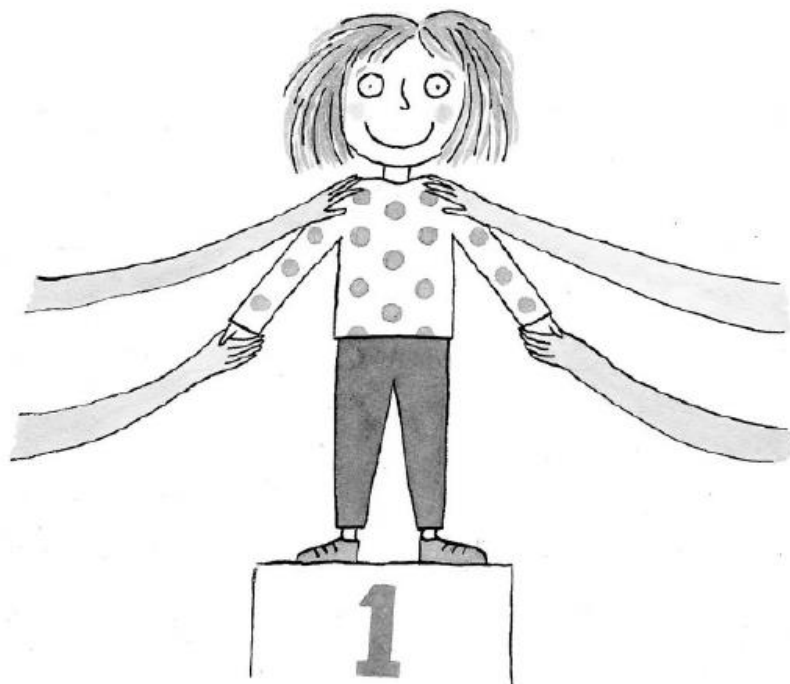


Family Ties:

An Online Therapy Service for Parents in Conflict



Parental conflict and separation are stressful experiences for the whole family, and for some conflict has intensified as a result of stresses associated with the pandemic and lockdown conditions. Often children are unintentionally caught up in arguments and disagreements between their parents, especially when these extend over a long period of time. Some children's relationship with a parent is negatively affected as a result of parental conflict.

The AFNCCF has a team that specialises in supporting families to protect children from parental conflict. We offer a range of interventions dependent on the family's circumstances. Family Ties remote program provides remote support for families who do not require intensive intervention but wish to better protect children from parental conflict.

Aims of the programme

The intervention focuses on the child's experience and works with parents and their support network, to:

- Minimize the negative impact of conflict on their child(ren)
- Gain further understanding of their conflict and stressors (including understanding and managing different cultural expectations) in order to find more effective ways to co-parent

- Build coping strategies in order to help them manage the stress associated with conflict, further reducing the impact of conflict on the child
- Reduce anxiety and loyalty conflicts for the child
- Protect the child against the possibility of their relationship with one parent breaking down as a result of parental conflict

Who is it for?

The intervention is suitable for families where:

- There is a need for support to reduce the impact of parental conflict on child(ren) (children can be any age)
- There is no ongoing domestic abuse or parental substance abuse or child protection concerns/ investigations (this is because we are unable to provide sufficient safeguarding monitoring in such situations via remote intervention)
- There are no ongoing proceedings in the family courts (families in ongoing proceedings usually require a more intensive intervention)
- If it is the case that the parents are separated, both parents have contact with the child(ren) (where contact with one parent has broken down completely a more intensive intervention is usually required)
- Parents accessing the programme can be together or separated/ divorced
- There is no current domestic abuse

We accept referrals directly from parents, from health care professionals (for example GP's, health visitors, CMHT's) and from social care.

How does it work?

'Family Ties Remote' is a remote intervention focused on the mind and welfare of the child. Parents are helped to connect with their child's thoughts and feelings in relation to parental conflict and to manage their conflict and co-ordinate their parenting in a way that protects the child from conflict. Parents are also helped to reflect on their own experience and the experience of the other parent in order to develop coping strategies and better manage conflict.

The intervention takes place over 10 remote sessions. Parents are seen individually and together with the other parent. Sessions take place weekly and are delivered by Microsoft Teams. Children over 5 also join briefly for two sessions- one at the beginning and one at the end of the programme. – This is so that the child can bear witness to their parents working together in their best interests. In the final session, parents of

children feedback to the child what they have been working together to achieve in an age appropriate way with the support of the clinician. Parents will also have access to additional online resources that they will be required to view, and 'intersession tasks' to complete between sessions.

What happens next?

Before starting the program, families will be asked to complete a short referral form and complete a brief questionnaire, which will help us to understand a bit more about their particular situation. Families meeting referral criteria for the intervention will be invited individually for an initial remote meeting with the clinician. . Following this meeting, families may be invited to join the intervention, or may be directed towards other resources that might be a better fit.

Once they have started the programme, parents will work with their assigned clinician each week, at a set time. There will also be a session where we ask parents to bring along someone from their social network, such as a friend or family member, to discuss the program and think about how the parent's social network can support them to make changes.

Referrals

Referrals can be made via Microsoft Forms on the Anna Freud website or by contacting Heather.Mayall@annafreud.org.