



Revolutionary Love Letters to Parents

Fight

From:

The Revolutionary Love Project

To: You





Fight

Dear Parent,

You are alive, you have a child, and you are reading this because an unimaginable number of beings fought to keep their children safe and alive. This isn't just your direct ancestors, but anyone who made it possible for your ancestors and the land they lived on to flourish. So many people had to choose to support and protect life so that I could write this and you could read this. Our heartbeats are intertwined with the force for life and love in unfathomable ways.

Stepping into family life is one way to become part of that force. You birthed or assumed care of a child because you were willing to fight for the life of another being. To truly care for one child, we need peaceful relations and thriving ecologies for all.

Children often understand fight intuitively. We can see it in their play, favorite stories, and characters they gravitate toward. They protect and feed the babies when playing family, root for the underdog in stories, and often love superheroes who will use their power to protect others. Fairness and equity in rules and games become incredibly important as they age. Family, school, and social life are complex power dynamics that often feel unfair or unpredictable. *Why did she get the red shovel and I didn't?* Keenly attuned to issues of power, with a bit of help thinking things through, they are ready to be a force for justice.

The combination of these two stages of life makes family life a powerful force for justice. Parents are tapped into a force of love that wants to protect their children and create a world where they can thrive. Children, often powerless to adult decisions, thrive when they feel they can impact systems and people for justice.

It's easy then to start to align your family's story with the practice of fight. As a family, we fight for each other when we need it. If someone is harming you, I will be there to protect you. Our family is also a part of all the families of the earth. We wouldn't be alive if so many people before us hadn't fought for others to be safe. It's our job while we are alive to help fight for others who need us."

Becoming a family who fights for others doesn't mean you need to expose your young child to every bit of violence on the daily news. It means looking out in your community, in your child's life, for who needs you. It means reminding children to get a teacher's help for the kid being picked on or encouraging siblings to find ways to care for one another. It means letting your child see you fighting for the neighbors who need you. It means singing and dancing to music that celebrates the instinct for justice.

The web of connections within and between families is incredibly powerful. The practice of fight asks us to lean into that web and extend it a little further, which allows our children's innate sense of justice to flower and grow.

—With love, The Revolutionary Love Project Team

Defining fight

To fight is to choose to protect those in harm's way. To fight with Revolutionary Love is to fight against injustice alongside those most impacted by harm in a way that preserves our opponents' humanity as well as our own. When we fight for those outside our immediate circle, our love becomes revolutionary.

"The question therefore is not whether or not we will fight in our lives but how we choose to fight." (Kaur, 2020, p. 67)

"When you love someone, you fight to protect them when they are in harm's way. If you 'see no stranger' and choose to love all people, then you must fight for anyone who is suffering from the harm of injustice. This was the path of the warrior-sage: the warrior fights, the sage loves." (Kaur, 2020, p. 92)

For more exploration of fight, get **the Revolutionary Love Project Compass guide**.

Practices to foster fight

Help children delineate between useful and harmful fighting

Most young children are being taught not to fight, so it will be necessary to distinguish between fighting for someone and fighting against someone. *I know that usually people say fighting is bad. They are talking about the kind of fighting that is meant to hurt someone else. But there is another kind of fighting that's part of Rev-*

olutionary Love. That's when you fight to help someone who needs it. Like when you fight to make sure your little sister is included in the play when your cousins come over. Or when you tell people to speak kindly to each other on the playground at school. That is fighting for others, which is a part of loving them.

Ask questions that help children contemplate fight

Family life is full of potential moments to contemplate and enact plans with equity and justice in mind. For example, cousins of multiple ages are coming over, and when they do, the youngest often gets left out, or a child often comes home from school with stories of cruelty or injustice towards others, or you watch a bug cross the street and notice it could get run over. Moments can be used to engage children's instinct to fight for others by asking them questions like: *"What can we do to help this situation?"* Or *"I wonder what we could've done to fight for that person."* Or *"I wonder how we might make this fairer?"*

Asking questions allows children to practice creating their strategies, which they can use when you aren't there. Even if your child doesn't respond to your questions or the conversation goes differently than expected, being asked communicates that you value fighting for others. This will help children become more sensitive to potential moments to fight for others.

Tell stories of fighting for others

Share a variety of stories with your child about people who fought for others. They could be family members, people who fought for you, times you fought for others, stories about times your children fought for others, or about public people you admire. As you tell the stories, weave how standing up for others when something is hurtful or unfair is an essential part of your family's values.

You can include stories about the ways children fight for each other, such as when they say something like, *"Hey, Mom, they didn't get a toy."* Connecting their fight to the stories of larger cultural advocacy can help them build an identity as one who stands up for others.

Go on outings that are part of fighting for others

This could be a protest, serving food at a soup kitchen, volunteering for local ecosystem repair, or even showing up to help a neighbor move. You model the ethos of fight by routinely offering your child experiences in which you spend time showing up for others. Even if you don't bring your child along, you can explain to your child what you do as an aspect of fighting for others.

Sing and dance to protest music

Martin Luther King wrote that the music and prayer sung in church and then brought to the streets inspired the courage of the civil rights movement. Music and dance impart deeply held values and can be a resource we can draw on for courage. We've created a **Revolutionary Love Playlist for Children**. Listen to this playlist or other songs that inspire advocacy for others as part of your listening and dancing lives.

Prepare and have brave conversations with children

Even very young children see and absorb racial, gender, ability, class, religious, linguistic, and ageist biases. There is a plethora of research to support this. Part of healthy development is having resources to navigate our complex worlds. Talking with children about groups that need us to fight for them can be scary. How much do we share? How much information will overwhelm our children? Or what are we required to share to keep our children safe?

A good rule of thumb is to think about the information your child needs to be a good community member for others. For example, if your child is in preschool, they will likely hear about same-sex couples, and they may hear other children say that's strange or not okay. To be a good community member, they need to know that there are different kinds of families and that your family supports that. They also need to be prepared for some people who might think it's wrong or bad and that in your family, you stand up for people's right to marry who they like. They don't, however, need to know about the violence at the Stone Wall riots. Eventually, to be informed citizens, they will. This rule of thumb allows for changing cultural conditions and helps your child be prepared for complicated situations.

Talk with children about becoming upstanders

Upstanders are people who are willing to stand up for the rights of others. By introducing and defining the term for your child, you will help them be attuned to moments when they can practice fighting by standing up for others.

Children's books for fight

- **What Can a Citizen Do?** by Dave Eggers — This book uses the concept of being a citizen to explain how people can engage with each other to make things better for people—a simple, easy-to-read way to help children construct ideas about how they might fight for others.
- **Separated is Never Equal: Silvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation** by Duncan Tonatiuh — A true story about the Mendez's fight to desegregate schools. This is an excellent example of people who fight for others. A lengthier book, it's best for five years and up.
- **Click Clack Moo** by Doreen Cronin and Betsy Lemon — A story of cows who, gaining a typewriter, use it to negotiate better living conditions for all the cows.
- **Say Something: 10th-anniversary edition** by Peggy Moss — This book takes children through the pain of being teased, highlighting the importance of speaking up for others.
- **We Are Water Protectors** by Carole Lindstrom — Inspired by the indigenous movements to protect waterways. This book is a beautiful and poetic look at what it means to fight for the rights of people and the earth.
- **These Hands** by Margaret H. Mason and Floyd Cooper — A stunning story from the civil rights era about a boy's grandfather, whose hands could do just about anything but was banned from baking bread for white people. Ultimately, he joins hands with others, demonstrating the power and rights of everyone's hands.
- **We Move Together** by Kelly Fritch — A book about disability, accessibility, social justice, and community building. Equally about organizing and creating access for all people, this is a powerful way to help children think about what it means to fight for others.
- **One** by Kathryn Otoshi — This book is about bullying and the power of standing up to unkind behavior together.