

Working Together to Keep the Peace

Parenting brings joys and challenges! Let's be honest, raising children is hard! While some are navigating parenting with little to no support, many receive help in raising their children from their "village" (parents, grandparents, older siblings, step-parents, neighbors, etc.). The reality is that EVERY parent needs help and must, at times, have support from others. Add in a difficult partner, co-parenting, or supporting relationship and parenting can become a whirlwind of chaos. For the next two weeks, our tips will focus on adult interactions, how they impact our children and what we can do to keep the focus on what's best for our children.

There is NO PERFECT way to parent and there are NO PERFECT partners, co-parenting or supporting relationships! However, you CAN partner in working together effectively! We remind parents and caregivers that regardless of your parenting structure (single parent, co-parent, grandparent, etc.), it is OK to feel overwhelmed, and it is normal to have disagreements on parenting styles. The tips below can help you keep the child(ren) in the forefront, and work to establish safe and positive parenting relationships in each of your families. Most of all...remember to stay positive!

*For shared understanding, we are defining **partnering parenting** as single/individual or two parents (cohabitating) working together to raise children; **Co-parenting** as two (or more) parents in separate households working to raise children; and **supporting or village child-rearing** as all others grandparents, extended family, neighbors, teachers, community, etc. working to care for/raise children with shared responsibility.*

1. Create a Parenting Plan! Share your goals and desired outcomes regarding parenting

- As early as possible in your relationships, it's important to share your thoughts on parenting, such as discipline, showing affection, rule setting and more
 - When possible, schedule time to review and discuss parenting issues and brainstorm shared solutions
- Work to identify positives in the other parent/caregiver
 - Offer encouragement, or share when you observe parenting interactions that you find agreeable
 - Avoid negative talk of the other parent with or around the child
- Identify short-term and long-term goals for parenting (i.e. child making the honor roll, successful participation in sports, maintaining employment and good grades, graduating from college, having a career, etc.)

What hopes and dreams do I have for my child?
What are our shared goals of raising children?
What will we need to do to encourage the goals we desire for our children?
What shared approaches do we have?
What do we think we will struggle with?

2. Talk About It....Practice calm, focused, and clear communication

- Do not avoid difficult conversations about parenting disagreements. Instead:
 - Plan a time when you are calm and open to talking
 - Use “I” statements when talking about difficult topics
 - Talk only about how you feel or how actions make you feel
 - Don’t assume how other’s feel or apply your feelings to others, for example:
 - “When you do/say that...I feel _____”
 - “How can we work together on this to avoid ____, and develop ____”
- Avoid possessive statements that may place blame on others
 - Some language can be received as pointing fingers or assigning faults
 - “Your son is misbehaving”
 - “That’s your granddaughter who always has an attitude”
 - Instead, focus on shared responsibilities
- Communication is 7% of WHAT you say and 93% of HOW you say it
 - Be mindful of your body language (how loud you speak, clapping and waving hands, rolling eyes, the tone chosen etc.)
- Try different ways to have the conversation – different people receive messages in different ways
 - In-person (when safe and possible...especially for co-parents and/or volatile parenting relationships)
 - By phone or video chat when calm and thoughts are clear (write down your thoughts)
 - Email when communicating topics that may elicit strong emotions. This gives time to reflect before reacting
 - Be cautious with your choice of words when communicating difficult conversations (i.e. tone can be inferred and can interfere with the message being received as intended with written messages)
 - Texting can be useful when the communication is brief, but – USE CAUTION WITH TEXTING! (Texts can easily be misunderstood)
- Pause to allow quiet during conversations to gather your thoughts or calm down
 - Say, “please give me a minute” or “I’m thinking”
 - Take a moment to absorb and understand what’s been said
 - Pause to think about actions and appropriate responses
- Center on your children’s needs as the focus of the conversation
 - Separate your relationship needs from parenting needs, for example:

- Encourage your child to build positive parental relationships with both parents vs. being withheld from one parent for various reasons
 - Communicate with individuals that you don't particularly like to deal with to arrange pick-up/drop-off schedule for your children
 - Allow your child to participate in extra-curricular activities that they love and not allowing outside influences to get in the way of that
 - Be aware that emotions and feelings can complicate communication if you allow those feelings to be the center of communication
- Know your positive and negative communication habits (listening/not-listening, shutting down, over-talking, complimentary/critical, etc.)
 - Practice self-awareness in conversations
 - Know your triggers for not-listening, shutting down, over-talking and being critical
 - Listen to your body's response to stressful situations to know how to respond (relaxed shoulders, tense muscles, shallow breathing, increase heart rate, etc.)
 - Use "coping" and self-regulation techniques to minimize your trigger response:
 - Take a 5 second deep breath before responding
 - Reflect back what you heard to gain clarity before responding
 - Remind yourself that staying engaged benefits your child
 - Make an escape plan prior to your conversation
 - a. Know when you need to end the conversation (if it becomes emotionally fueled)
 - b. Practice your ending – ex. "I need to take a breather, can we come back to this discussion in an hour...or when I've gathered my thoughts.....or when we're both calmer.

3. Agree to Disagree and Remain SOLUTION Focused

- When disagreement occurs over child rearing... Learn to disagree without being disagreeable
 - Seek common ground
 - Remind yourself that parenting/caregiving it is not a competition
 - The outcome should be focused on what you want to achieve for the child(ren)
 - Our actions don't have to reflect the disagreement
- Give and receive constructive feedback...and put it to use!
 - Be open to differing parenting styles and approaches!
 - Acknowledge when things are going well and speak up when you feel they are not well
 - "I appreciate that you provided a consequence for that tantrum, 10 minutes seemed long, what do you think about trying 5 minutes instead?"
- Identify and define problems in a way that will help resolve them

- Avoid accusatory language and use specific examples (i.e. “Susie’s silly faces are for attention...If we use Planned Ignoring, we both deny her the attention she is seeking”)

4. Provide Support When Needed...Good Cop, Bad Good Cop!

- Provide parenting support when dealing with a problem child behaviors
 - If you hear the other parenting partner/co-parent/caregiver managing an unwanted behavior, be present to offer support
 - Stand by the family rules that have been broken and support follow through of a logical consequence
 - Work together to gain clear understanding of the situation
 - In co-parenting, address your child’s behaviors in a consistent manner between homes (if possible) and work together to support logical consequences and rewards
- Discuss disagreements on parenting away from the children
 - Avoid providing your child with the opportunity to pick sides – this can be a Parent Trap!
 - Parenting Traps are behaviors that parents accidentally fall into as a result of a specific misbehavior by the child
 - a. Buying candy for a screaming child at the grocery store
 - b. Screaming matches with a teen over unfollowed rules
 - c. Manipulation by the child to choose a favorite parent, usually the parent who does not practice consistent rule-following or consequences
- Respect the other adult’s diverse parenting style, while providing consistency in your home

5. Take Care of Yourself as a Parent – A Triple P CORE PRINCIPLE

- Remember, when others do not treat you as you wish to be treated, YOU Treat Yourself as You Wish to Be Treated!
 - We cannot control the words and actions of others – We can only control our own words and actions, remember to use them wisely!
- Practice self-care strategies before/after interactions to minimize arguments or outbursts
- Know when to ask for help (www.triplep-parenting.com)