



## Working Together to Keep the Peace – Part 2

Last week, we introduced general tips for keeping the peace in adult relationships as you parent. This week we begin tailoring some of those tips to unique relationships such as co-parenting, multi-generational households, other caregivers, etc. Navigating these relationships can be tricky.

### Co-Parenting

When it comes to co-parenting, regardless of how the adult relationship may have ended or its current condition, it is in the best interest of the children for the adults to work together, when safe and possible. *(Please note this does not apply to situations that may be dangerous for you or your child. Should you be in a situation of abuse or domestic violence please seek out professional help and support.)* Co-parenting requires work to establish consistency and balance as you navigate between multiple homes, separate lives and differing rules. Though sometimes difficult, be reminded that co-parenting is the shortened form of COOPERATIVE parenting. Keeping the peace in co-parenting can be done successfully by allowing the mutual goal of your child's best interest to be the anchor and center of the relationship.

### “Village” Child-Rearing

Grandparents, other extended family members, teachers and mentors often play key roles in raising children. As a parent or a primary caregiver, you have the opportunity to establish boundaries and expectations that guide village child-rearing. This also helps you plan for clear communication to avoid misunderstandings and uncomfortable situations.

**Regardless of your co-parenting and supportive relationship structures, this week's tips can help resolve or minimize conflicts for the betterment and wellness of your children. Parents....stay positive!**

*\*Please reference Keeping the Peace Part 1 Tips for more information\**

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## Keeping the Peace: Co-Parenting

*How to practice positive parenting across relationships throughout two or more households*

- **Commit to communicating regularly concerning your children**
  - Do not avoid difficult conversations about parenting disagreements
  - Sharing about the similarities and differences in your approach should be an opportunity to adopt shared approaches AND respect different approaches
  - Revisit week 1's communication tips
- **Honor agreed upon commitments with your co-parent for your children**
  - Be respectful of the other parent's time with the child(ren)
    - Honor agreed upon drop-off/pick-up times

- Honor phone calls and conversations without causing delays or interfering
  - Stay up to date on financial obligations for the children
    - When at all possible stay current on agreed upon financial obligations
  - Request or share changes in your ability to honor commitments as much ahead of time as possible
- **Don't get caught up in emotions - Act in the best interest of your children and not based on what may be going with your co-parent**
  - Hurt and Anger are expected at times. It's okay to be angry but don't allow your frustration to guide your actions
  - Keep the main thing, the main thing – Focus on your children and their real needs
  - Decide what's needed for you to take care of yourself (i.e. vent to friends/family, consider a therapist, going to the gym, writing, screaming into a pillow etc.)
- **Don't use your children as pawns - Keep them out of the middle of disagreements**
  - Work to establish this as an agreement with your co-parent, if possible
  - Commit to doing YOUR part, even if your co-parent does not...because it is about your children, not you
  - Always use the communication plan you've agreed on- Children should never pass messages between parents
  - Be mindful that if you attempt to make your child choose between you and your co-parent, not only will it negatively affect your child, but it will also strain the co-parenting relationship, causing major conflicts
- **Work diligently to continue to parent consistently across households**
  - When big decisions need to be made, try to make these decisions together (i.e. medical care, educational decisions and things that carry large cost)
  - As much as possible, consistent rules, discipline and scheduling between homes is most beneficial. HOWEVER, be mindful that you cannot force or control your co-parent's hand....if safety is not an issue, make room for differences...and work to accept them
- **R-E-S-P-E-C-T – Always remain respectful**
  - In all interactions prioritize being respectful towards your co-parent. Using basic manners (please and thank you) is a start towards developing a respectful co-parenting relationship
  - Allow simple disagreements to remain simple (don't bring up the past or other disagreements)
  - Disagree with a willingness to be solution-focused and to negotiate for shared agreement
  - Keep talking- don't let too much time pass between communication especially if the problem has not been resolved. Focus on what you agree on, not the disagreements
  - Do not go "tit for tat" or 'blow for blow' or retaliate against your co-parent
- **Seek a Mediator – when communication causes more harm than good, seek outside support.**
  - Trained mediators can help to narrow the conversation, seek common ground, and negotiate terms that might otherwise not be reached
- **Remain flexible and compromise –This means that sometimes, for the best interest of the child, we must remain flexible and bend/adapt to new terms that you may disagree with**
  - For example: accepting your child will celebrate a holiday at home with you, and another equally meaningful holiday with the co-parent and their family; or agreeing to modify old family traditions to allow flexibility with your child and the other co-parent.
- **Maintain Boundaries – you won't be able to make decisions for outside households**

- Have realistic expectations for yourself and respect the boundaries of the other parent. (This means, sometimes you will not agree with decisions made at the other parent's home.)
- Accept those things you cannot change, and work toward changing those things you can control.

### Try This Exercise from Family Transitions Triple P for self-reflection:

Do your feelings about your co-parent stop your child from having an ongoing positive relationship with them? As you read through the following information, place a check by the traps that you think happen in your home. Use this list as a guide to learn more about co-parenting relationships, and ways to avoid co-parenting conflict. For additional support, find a provider at [www.triplep-parenting.com](http://www.triplep-parenting.com)

- Put Downs:** Includes making negative comments about your co-parent, their new partners or things they do.
- Criticizing:** being critical of your co-parent to include what your child does when they are with the other parent
- Removal of reminders of your child's other parent:** Removing all objects that relate to your co-parent (i.e. photos, belongings) removes that other parent from your child's life as well as yours
- Blaming:** Blaming your co-parent for problems in your own life. This can make a child feel as though they have to be your ally against their other parent
- Not allowing your child to discuss their other parent:** If your child feels that it will upset you if they talk about their other parent they will learn to censor what they say which takes away their spontaneity and their sense of having two parents who love and support them. They will feel you only support the part of them that loves you and that the part of them that loves their other parent is bad.
- Unnecessarily or without reason, restricting access to your child's other parent:** Sometimes parents can unwittingly use their child as a pawn in their way against their co-parent. Parents' feelings towards each other should not impact a child's ability to have a relationship with both parents
- Forcing your child to take sides in disputes with your co-parent**
- Quizzing:** Such as asking for excessively detailed information about what your child did with the other parent

### Keeping the Peace: It Takes A Village

*How to manage multiple caregiving relationships*

- **As the parent, define roles/boundaries to match caregiving expectations from all other village caregivers** (*Village - Anybody working to care for and raise children, with shared responsibility*) Remember:
  - Consider your village as partners in raising your children
  - Recognize and acknowledge where there is shared authority
  - Everyone desires & deserves respect
  - Value village partners' strengths in the role they hold
- **Do not overuse the support of others, instead balance responsibilities**
  - Communicate schedules clearly, and then honor commitments – Think through a schedule that helps you feel supported and does not impose unnecessary burden
  - Be considerate of those who help you!
- **Caringly confront disagreements** - avoiding conflict can lead to bigger problems

- Work to address issues in a timely manner, when it comes to parenting/child-rearing
- Judgements can wait – work towards understanding each other & focus on teaching and collaboration instead of criticisms
- For Tense Situations
  - Plan for time where you have a handle on your emotions (you have to manage you emotions for effective communication in tense situations)
  - Remain focused on how the behavior impacts you; use “I feel” or other “I” statements to express yourself
  - Plan to be away from the children (out of the children’s earshot)
- For Uncomfortable situations
  - Practice what you plan to say, say it out-loud to yourself, and ask yourself how you would feel receiving that same communication
  - Avoid accusatory language, stick to “I” statements
  - Have a plan in place – don’t just complain, develop a solution and recommendations for the other caregivers



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