

Getting on the Same Page

A Guide for Parents Navigating Parenting Conflicts Together

Parenting disagreements are normal — even in loving, committed partnerships. What matters most is not whether you agree on everything, but that you can work toward a **shared approach** your children can count on.

Why Parenting Conflicts Feel So Hard

- Each partner was shaped by a **different family of origin** with distinct rules, warmth, and expectations.
- Parenting touches our deepest values — it can feel like a **moral judgment**, not just a disagreement.
- Stress, fatigue, and fear amplify reactions and **narrow our perspective**.
- Children observe conflict and can be caught in the middle when parents are **visibly at odds**.

Common Conflict Zones

- **Discipline & consequences** — permissive vs. firm approaches
- **Screen time & routines** — bedtimes, meals, devices
- **Academic pressure** — how much to push or step back
- **Emotional style** — one parent comforts, one problem-solves
- **Extended family** — different loyalties and boundaries
- **Division of parenting labor** — who manages what, and how fairly

What United Parenting Gives Children

- A **sense of safety** — predictable, consistent boundaries reduce anxiety.
- **Emotional security** — children don't feel pulled between two worlds.
- **Modeling** — they learn that adults can disagree respectfully and repair.
- Less opportunity to **triangulate or play parents against each other**.
- Confidence that their parents are a **team**, even when imperfect.

Reflection: Know Your Own Triggers

Before you can align with your partner, it helps to understand what you bring to the table. Your reactions in parenting moments are often rooted in your own childhood — not your child's behavior.

- **Notice your body.** Tension, urgency, or shutdown are signals, not instructions.
- **Ask yourself:** "Does this remind me of something from my own childhood?"
- **Name your fear.** Most parenting conflicts hide a fear — of chaos, of failure, of repeating a pattern.
- **Pause before speaking.** A five-second breath changes what comes out of your mouth.
- **Own your part.** Saying "I got reactive" is not weakness — it's the foundation of repair.

Self-awareness is a parenting skill.

Five Principles for Getting Aligned

- **1. Talk about parenting — away from the kids.** Schedule brief, calm check-ins rather than reacting in the moment.
- **2. Seek the value behind the position.** Ask: "What are you trying to protect or teach?" — you often share the same goal.
- **3. Decide on the non-negotiables together.** Agree on 3–5 core family values; let everything else have flexibility.
- **4. Back each other up publicly — debrief privately.** Revisit decisions in conversation, not in front of your child.
- **5. Repair quickly.** If tension shows, a brief, calm repair with your child goes a long way.

A Framework for Conflict Conversations

- 1 Pause** — Choose a calm moment — not the heat of the situation.
- 2 Understand** — Each partner shares their concern without interruption.
- 3 Find common ground** — Name the shared value or goal underneath the conflict.
- 4 Experiment** — Agree to try one approach for a defined period of time.
- 5 Review** — Check in: what worked? What needs adjusting?

When to Seek Professional Support

- Conflicts recur around the same issue without resolution.
- One or both partners feel chronically dismissed or unheard.
- Children are showing signs of stress, anxiety, or behavior changes.
- Parenting conflict has become a **stand-in for other relationship tensions**.

Repair Phrases That Help

Words matter — especially after tension. These phrases are invitations, not scripts. Use them as a starting point in your own voice.

- "I know we see this differently. Help me understand what matters to you."
- "I don't want to win this — I want us to land somewhere we both trust."
- "Can we try your way for two weeks and then check in?"
- "I'm sorry I undermined you in front of the kids. Can we talk about it?"
- "I think we're both trying to do right by them — can we start from there?"
- "What would it look like if we both felt good about this decision?"

Repair is always available — it's never too late.