



Parenting on the Same Page: Practical Strategies

1. Always provide back-up. Unless concerned about abuse or neglect, back your partner up in the moment even if you don't agree. Can undermine both of your authority to disagree. Share your opinion, if you must, only when children are not around. At all costs, avoid disagreeing about parenting with a child present. If you feel another parent is harmful to your child, be firm and take steps to make sure your child is safe. Consider removing the child from the situation rather than argue with another parent. "Looks like your mom is very upset right now, let's take some space." If necessary, seek help from a trusted professional, faith leader or wise family member you both respect.

2. Work to reach agreement. Recognize the potential harm of conflict about parenting and the ways that it takes the focus off the needs of the child and creates emotional distress in the family. Consider varied methods of discussion, invite a trusted mediator, read some new materials together – seek new paths that will help you reach agreement whenever possible.



3. Consider who has the strongest feelings about the issue.

You might feel passionate about schoolwork and your partner might be concerned about sleepovers. When you have strong feelings let your partner know what the issue means to you and ask for support on this specific matter. Be sure to do the same when your partner feels strongly about another concern.

4. Discuss parenting approaches when you both feel calm. When you are emotionally upset, the emotions center of your brain, the thinking part of your brain is less active. For most people, concerns about our children is the most emotionally intense part of our lives. If you are serious about finding ways both parents can agree on parenting approaches, make sure your brain is calm and all thinking neurons are firing. Clear thinking can help you see that sometimes your disagreements may be about larger issues than the specific parenting challenge at hand.

5. Empathize with your child, but stay united with your partner. You've gone along with your partner on an issue because they have the stronger emotions, but you definitely understand your child's point of view. "I see that you're really disappointed not to sleep over at your friend's house. We can revisit this issue when you are a little older." And then, in private, you can talk with your partner about what factors need to be addressed so that he or she can feel comfortable with a sleep over.

