



## When Parents Disagree about the Best Way to Raise Their Children

When we become parents, we bring our own family history and childrearing beliefs with us, so it's no surprise that couples often disagree about the best way to raise their children. But those disagreements can take a toll on children and on the parents' relationship. So what does it take to work through those differences and find common ground? Here are Marti's tips:

### I. Underlying issues

- Children do best when parents are reasonably consistent, especially on the big things
- The parents' relationship is happier when they can work together toward the same goals
- We each come to parenting with our own history and childrearing beliefs, so agreement doesn't come naturally; we need to be intentional about developing an approach that will work for ourselves and our children

### II. Tips for finding common ground

- Identify areas of agreement  
*Begin by identifying areas of agreement – in writing, preferably. For example, describe the kind of person you hope your child will be at the age of 10 or 15. This will tell you what qualities you both value. Then identify the parenting strategies you both agree will help your child develop those desired qualities. Set aside areas of disagreement for later and focus first on your shared beliefs and expectations.*
- Calmly reflect on disagreements  
*Set aside a quiet time and place (away from the heat of the moment) to consider your areas of disagreement. Think about what you believe and where you learned it, using your memories to pinpoint the specific behaviors in your own parents that served you well and those that sometimes made it hard for you. A mature, healthy approach is to recognize that none of us had perfect parents; we all have things from our childhood that would be good to carry forward and other things that should be left behind.*
- Use reliable parenting resources  
*Sign up together for parenting classes. Read and discuss books by reputable parenting experts. Use credible online resources that provide research-based information, not just personal opinion.*
- Set regular, frequent check-in times  
*Agree to have regular check-in times with each other to discuss calmly how you both think things are going in your relationship with each other and with your child.*
- If disagreements continue to be a problem, seek professional help

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