



*For the Sake of the
Children*

Part B

Handouts

For the Sake of the Children Parent Information Program

Part B

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Handout #1

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

Sometimes, although you have made a good “I” Statement, the other person may still respond with a blaming or angry answer, or, they may get off topic. Try not to allow their response to trigger your own errors in communication. If you and the other parent have been communicating poorly for years, it can take some time to change things. It is important that you make a second or third attempt to stay focused, avoid blaming and ask for a change. You can always correct an error with the words, “Sorry, let me say that a different way.” If a second or third try fails within a single conversation, then you should probably try again at another time.

EXAMPLE 1 – A BLAMING RESPONSE

Your son, age eleven, often seems to neglect his homework and gets to school unprepared and disorganized. His teacher is frustrated.

You “I” Statement: “I am concerned that Danny does not always seem prepared for school. His teacher has talked about this. Can we discuss some way to help him get his homework done and remember to bring the things he needs for school each day?”

Other Parent’s BLAMING response: “Well, I knew if Danny spent so much time with you he would wind up being just like you, disorganized and forgetful”.

Your “I” Response: “I feel he needs both of us to help him get organized. Maybe we could choose a regular time for his homework each day and help him pack his knapsack before he goes to bed instead of at the last second as he is running out the door.”

This “I” statement response ignores the insult of the blaming answer. Then it gets back to the subject you needed to discuss. It is helpful to ignore “button pushing” statements. If you cannot do this, ask yourself why you give them so much power over the way you react?

EXAMPLE 2 – AN ANGRY RESPONSE

The other parent sometimes cancels time with your four-year old daughter only minutes before the scheduled pick-up time.

Your “I” Statement: “I often have a hard time dealing with Lori’s upset feelings when the access plans change at the last minute. Can we talk about how to make the schedule easier for us all to live with?”

The other parent’s ANGRY response: “You are truly impossible to please. You never cut me any slack! Get off my back!”

Your “I” Response: “I guess that this may not be a good time to talk and I think it is important that we discuss this in a calm way. How we act affects our daughter. Perhaps we can talk about this tomorrow.”

It is VERY IMPORTANT that we avoid angry discussions when our children may hear either end of the conversation. Remember, once a person is angry, they will have difficulty hearing you and making good decisions. Also, there is never any point in letting another person insult or verbally abuse you. Say bye in a polite way and try again another time.

EXAMPLE 3 – A RESPONSE THAT MIXES ISSUES

Your son is overweight and is being teased at school.

Your “I” Statement: “I’m worried that James is a little overweight. The kids at school are teasing him and he is refusing to eat most healthy foods. Can we talk about his eating habits and try to give him healthier choices?”

The other parent’s “mixing issues” response: “James is fat because you let him watch way too much television. He’s turning into a couch potato.”

Your “I” Response: “It’s really only possible for me to deal with one issue at a time. I would be happy to talk about James’ television watching too, but could we please discuss his diet?”

You have not been “triggered” by a blaming answer, and you also get back to the issue you needed to discuss. When you try to stay on topic this way, you should remember that the other parent has raised an issue too, and be willing to discuss their concern later.

It is important to keep trying to communicate in a healthy and non-blaming way. If a situation has arisen and you feel angry, always wait until you know you can stay calm before trying to talk about it. Write notes for yourself to keep you on topic. Even if the other parent doesn’t make it easy, remember, it is better for your children to have at least one parent trying to do thing the “right” way.

Handout #2

□ " I " STATEMENTS

- State your feelings
- Do not blame or criticize
- Ask for a change in behavior

I FEEL _____

WHEN _____

BECAUSE _____

I WONDER IF WE COULD _____

"WHAT DO YOU THINK?"

e.g. "I feel sad when the kids cry because they were looking forward to having both of us at their concert. I think it would help if we could make sure the kids know ahead of time if an event is going to be missed by either one of us. What do you think?"

□ CONFLICT AND THE FAMILY

- Using lawyers may be necessary, especially when major decisions need to be made
- Conflict does not have to be severe to negatively effect children
- Low contact between parents can ensure low conflict while keeping up the child's relationship with both parents
- Conflict can decrease over time
- If there has been violence in the family, counselling is required
- Low Contact Parenting Plan can become a Direct Parenting Plan over time, as long as violence is not an issue
- Building trust is key
- Plans must always ensure everyone's safety
- Where there is a threat of violence, direct parenting is NEVER the goal

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD

TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION:

- Give child permission to talk about their feelings
- Take time out to talk
- When you ask a question, listen to the answer
- Sit or crouch down so you are at your child's eye level
- Look at your child when they talk/when you talk to them
- Listen without interrupting
- Try not to contradict the child
- Restate what they say. "It sounds like you're feeling..."
- Empathize: "I'm sorry you are hurting right now. Is there anything I can do to help?"
- Encourage: "Gee you seem really upset about this. Maybe you could tell me a bit more about it."
- Respect their time – "Maybe you don't want to talk right now. When you do, please let me know."
- Be ready to give a pat on the back or a hug

ONGOING PARENTING AND COMMUNICATION

- PARENTING ROLES CONTINUE
- PARENTING RELATIONSHIP CONTINUES
- MOVE TOWARD PUTTING THE PARTNER RELATIONSHIP ASIDE FOR NOW AND EVENTUALLY BEHIND YOU
- BUSINESS – LIKE APPROACH
- BALANCE BETWEEN SEPARATE LIVES –AND COMMUNICATING AS PARENTS
- USING YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE OTHER PARENT’S ISSUES IN A POSITIVE WAY

LOW - NO CONTACT PARENTING

PERSONAL BENEFITS

- You get to save your energy for yourself
- You end up with happier, healthier children
- You can take pride in being a positive involved parent
- You will have less stress in your life

WHAT IS IT?

- Both parents stay involved in their child/ren's lives
- Both parents keep parenting their child/ren
- Parenting roles are conducted separately
- Each parent has total responsibility while the child/ren are in his/her care
- No expectation of flexibility
- No expectation of negotiating changes to plan/
No pressure on either parent to do so without assistance
- If changes are required, help in negotiating should be sought

WHAT ARE THE GOALS?

- To keep both parents active in children's lives, in a healthy, positive way
- To minimize conflict for the benefit of all family members
- To stop interference in each other's parenting
- To let go of trying to control the other parent
- To let go of trying to change the other parent
- To create a "business like" relationship
- To create a safe, positive, healthy environment for the whole family

WHAT DOES IT INCLUDE?

- Neither parent interfering with the other
- Communication that is not usually done "face to face"
- Other people assisting when discussion is necessary
- Children not being involved

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO GET STARTED?

- Get help establishing a time sharing plan that fits for the children and that you can stick to
- Decide where exchanges will happen and whether any help is required
- Try to agree on basic rules for the children
- Decide on how to communicate important issues (writing letters, using answering machines, or a third person)

□ **WHAT ELSE WOULD HELP?**

- Setting good boundaries (“sticking to them”)
- Keeping your word
- Working to build trust
- Being respectful of each other
- Use "I" Statements

ESTABLISHING A TIME SHARING PLAN

- Get information about what would work best for the children
- Make sure the plan is realistic – something you can make work
- Mediation or another “3rd party” to assist – or
- Use lawyer to negotiate a plan that is good for the child
- Decide whether assistance / supervision would be helpful
- Decide who will help if changes are required or disagreements arise in the future

PREPARING CHILDREN FOR EXCHANGE TIMES

- Let them know the plan well ahead of time
- “Count downs” are helpful, especially for younger children
- Encourage. Tell them you hope they enjoy their time with other parent
- Check with them to make sure they have all their things

EXCHANGES

- Only use home base for exchanges if everyone feels safe & you are sure no conflicts will arise
- If there are ANY concerns, use a neutral location
- Picking children up from school, daycare, lessons etc. can be helpful
- Make sure your children know when and who is picking them up, if both parents will not be present at exchange time
- Ask a third “neutral” person (that both agree to) to attend

RULES FOR CHILDREN

- Although children can handle differences between their two homes, it is helpful if some basic rules are the same. For example:
 - Time for bed and nap times (especially for younger children)
 - Bath times (especially for younger children)
 - Curfews
 - Time for homework
 - Meal times (hint: sitting down with your children for a meal can be good “talk times”)
 - T.V., movies, video games (content and time limits); computer use (time limits)

NEW PARTNER ISSUES

- INTRODUCE YOUR CHILD TO A NEW PARTNER IF AND WHEN YOU KNOW THE RELATIONSHIP IS SERIOUS
- CHILDREN NEED TIME TO ADJUST TO A NEW PARTNER
- GIVE THEM TIME TO GET TO KNOW THE PERSON BEFORE THEY ARE EXPECTED TO SPEND EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME TOGETHER
- YOUR CHILD WILL NOT FEEL THE SAME WAY YOU DO ABOUT THE NEW PARTNER
- GIVE YOUR CHILD PERMISSION TO TALK ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS AND BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THEM
- SPEND TIME WITH YOUR CHILD WITHOUT YOUR NEW PARTNER
- BE DISCREET ABOUT INTIMATE BEHAVIOUR

OTHER NEW PARTNER ISSUES

- PARENTS ARE NOT REPLACEABLE
- NEW PARTNERS SHOULD NOT BE A THREAT TO EXISTING PARENTS
- NEW PARTNERS SHOULD NOT COMPETE WITH PARENTS
- GENERALLY, NEW PARTNERS SHOULD NOT SET THE RULES/SHOULD NOT DISCIPLINE
- NEW PARTNERS CAN BENEFIT THE CHILD

NO FUN PLAYGROUND

THE COURIER

THE OSTRICH

007

WHOSE RULES ANYWAY?

DISNEY WORLD

SHREDDIES

I'M JUST BEING HONEST

MY WAY OR THE HIGHWAY

SECRET, SECRET