



### Co-Parenting



### Figuring It Out Together

Here are some questions to ask yourself and talk about with your partner to help make co-parenting work for each of you and for your child:



**What do your interactions with each other and your child teach her about how people can live, work, and thrive together during *bumpy* and *smooth* times?**

As the protective factor *social and emotional competence of children* says, your relationship teaches your child what to expect from and how to relate to others. Do you interact in positive ways? Model ways to manage your feelings, like counting to ten or taking a deep breath? Talk about feelings? Show you care? Listen to each other?



**What is good parenting? To you? To your partner? To your extended family members or close friends?**

Each of you brings your family history, culture, and values to your relationship and parenting. Understanding how people see the role and responsibilities of parenting – how views are the same and how they are different – can help you in your supportive interactions with each other and with those who also care about you and your child.



**Are there little or big ways you might get in the way of the relationship between your child and your parenting partner?**

For example, do you always correct your partner about what she or he is doing in front of your child? Are you always the one to make your child's dinner, give her a bath, read to her, or put her to bed because you know the *right* way to do it? Are you the first in the door at child care when picking her up? Are there other things you might do that get in the way of your child's and your partner's relationship? If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, ask yourself, "What can I do or say differently to be sure our child has a strong relationship with both of us?"



**How do you appreciate differences in your parenting styles?**

Everyone has their own parenting style. For example, do you hear yourself saying, "Be careful" most of the time. While your partner says, "Go for it! You can do it!?" Do you watch what your child eats while your partner gives her treats? If your child is safe and thriving, take a breath. She is learning from and enjoying both of you. Who knows, maybe you'll learn a trick or two that you'll want to add to your parenting style.



**Have you made a plan about how to handle disagreements about child rearing, which are certainly going to come up?**

Talking ahead of time can help you know what to do when emotions heat up during a disagreement. Here are some ideas and strategies you may want to keep in mind during times of conflict:

- Keep your focus on what is best for your child. This can help you determine if this is a disagreement between you two or is it truly something about your child rearing?
- Remember, your child will notice what you say and do. If you can talk together and work things out do so. You will be teaching your child that disagreements are part of life. Develop a hand sign or other signal for times you may be very upset that says, "We will talk about this later."
- Consider letting small things go. Does it really matter if your partner gives your child a treat? Dresses her in clothes you don't think go together? Forgets to comb her hair?
- If there is an issue that feels big and impacts your child's health, safety, or sense of self or learning, here are some steps to follow:
  - Put the problem into words
  - Make a plan
  - Give yourself a set time to try the plan
  - Check back at the end of that time to see how things are going
  - Revise your plan as needed
  - Try again



**Do you talk regularly and often about your child? Are there ways you can communicate more often and more easily? Here are some ideas you might want to make part of your conversation:**

- When and where can you find time to talk? In the morning? At dinner? Before you go to sleep? During the day? In person? By phone? By text? By email?
- Is there a family calendar to keep track of appointments and plans?
- Is there a family shopping list and/or a TO DO list where you can write down a note when you think of it?
- How much of your time do you spend talking logistics and plans?
- Do you find the time to share stories? Special moments? Your questions? And those moments that bring you joy? If not, how can you find time to do this?