

Parenting on the Same Page

Raising children is tough enough without opposition and antagonism from other adults who share in the responsibility. Researchers note that when parents are on the same page, family satisfaction increases, and outcomes for children improve—provided the parents' habits are positive.

In the early days of my marriage to Kylie, I had no idea how to be a dad – or a husband. Kylie was educated in early childhood. And me? I was not educated in anything. My parenting showed it. But I would not listen to Kylie's advice.

As it became clear that I was ineffective, and potentially making things worse, I began my studies and changed my ways. Now we were on different pages again. Kylie didn't like taking my advice. After all, she had previously had the 'right' answers. Now I was making suggestions that were contrary to what Kylie had always thought was appropriate. While Kylie's answers had been better than mine, now it seemed mine might be better than hers, or so I thought. But Kylie disagreed.

Kylie began to resent me making suggestions based on what I had been learning. Until... I came into the house one day and things were loud and tense. Kylie demanded I take over because the kids were driving her insane and I apparently had 'all the answers'. So I did. And within about 20 seconds everyone was calm, the children were apologetic and peace was restored. (If only I did it that well every time).

That incident allowed us to turn a corner. We're not entirely united in every aspect of our parenting, even now. I'm not sure perfect unity is possible. But we work together in consistent ways to get the best results for our children. And it makes such a difference.

So let's get on the same page. When we see things the same way – or at least work to understand one another – everyone gets along so much better. It's the first thing parents need to make their parenting work as well as it can.

Flat-out Refusal

In some situations, your partner might refuse to discuss things with you. They may not even be willing to read what you're reading.

Please remember, you're playing a long game. So be the example as Kylie was to me, and then as I was later able to be for her. We both had many strained conversations about how to parent. (Even now we still do as our teenagers find new ways to test our skills.) In the end, patience was the winner.

In the meantime, look for the good in the parenting of your partner, or in step- and co-parents. While you know (and deep down, they know) that they can improve, so can all of us! But just because there's room for improvement, it doesn't mean they're an abject failure. Most parents, even those who struggle, are doing some things right. Enjoy those moments and express gratitude and appreciation when they occur.

Focus on Strengths

It would be easy to focus on all the things that create division and misalignment. This probably won't be helpful at this stage of our discussion. Instead, let's focus on things that strengthen our views of one another.

- What's one thing your partner does with the children that you love?
- How can you encourage more of that?
- What family activities do you enjoy together?
- How can you make time for these activities?

Emphasising what we love doing together fosters greater alignment than fixating on our shortcomings.

United parents don't have to do everything the same or agree on everything. However, when there's consistency between parents and a willingness to work together toward shared outcomes that matter, we can foster harmony and purpose in our family. This positive environment benefits both our children and our partnerships.



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