Partnering and Parenting in the 21st Century Family

Traditional Family
- Dad, Mom, kids in the middle, everyone is happy.

Divorced
- Parents pull/tear apart the child
- Dad
- Child
- Mom

Single Parent with residential
- Comforting child alone

Single Parent with visititation
- Vying for child's affection

Stepfamily
- Children pulling couple apart
- Dad/Stepdad
- Mom/Stepmom
Inside front cover
Table of Contents
This book provides quick, hopeful and humorous basics. Different forms will be delineated, management issues, making it work will be described and depicted, all divided into patterns which bring us together and which connect and disconnect.

Section I:
Leave it to Beaver
The Divorced Family

Divorce is perhaps the most life altering experience first for children, then for parents. The "fall out and/or long-term effects of divorce are beginning to be studied. However, expert researchers disagree.

Parents often believe their problems are particular to their children. The child is taken to see a therapist to "help" the child, The focus is on the plight of the child. Seldom managed is the context of the changed family in the solution. This loss of unified partnership committed to family creates a whole new set of challenges.
It’s analogous to taking a fish out of polluted waters, nursing it back to health, and then throwing it back into the polluted waters.
Imagine if children were employees with
two different bosses who don’t agree,
two different offices,
two corporate cultures, but
no company handbook,
no written policies or procedures,
no outlined job description and
no clear expectations as to standards of behavior.
Donny

“My mom says my dad’s no good
My dad says my mom’s no good
I must be no good.”
### CHILDREN OF DIVORCE IMPACT SOCIETY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional scars that last a lifetime</td>
<td>Inability to flourish, bouts of depression, failure to create lasting relationships, lack of connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As adults they have trouble with their own intimate relationships</td>
<td>More divorce, refusal to marry, living together arrangements unstable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are asked to keep secrets about the different households</td>
<td>Kids learn to are encouraged to manipulate and lie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41% are doing poorly, worried, underachieving, deprecating, and often angry</td>
<td>Inability to function in workplace and socially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided between two homes and different values</td>
<td>Child’s self-esteem crushed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are left without clear guidance on what is right and what is wrong, turning instead to friends and siblings</td>
<td>May manifest as grandiosity, low self-esteem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Divorce “Fallout”

**Parental neglect**

**National diminishment of family life**

**The home may be child indulged but not child centered**

**Child’s two homes may be polar opposites**

**Excessive reliance for support on peers**

**Accountability, honesty, concept of duty absent and accepted**

**Structure and boundaries absent - and considered the norm**

**With a divided family the child must go back and forth between two homes**

**A clear moral and spiritual compass is often lacking**

**Sexual acting out**

**Child is raised with conflicting rules, or few rules at all**

Disrespect among ranks of society to authority and elders, and especially parents
This is my mom and stepdad. My real dad’s back there, he can’t come over here because of mom’s restraining order.
Single Parent Family

The single parent is torn between children, career, new love interests and their own needs.
The Single Parent

Mom
Dad
Alone
Re-coupled

There is little more daunting than the idea of parenting after the loss of the other parent’s presence in the home. Depression in children post divorce (and adults) is not managed, but often medicated. The loss of the family for most children of divorce is the most significant negative in their lives.
Aspects of the Single Parent Home

Often true for both the Custodial and Non Custodial Parent

- Mom/ Dad wants to find a new partner and a new life
  - Focus is directed away from family life
  - Focus is over-directed to pleasing the children
  - Loss of parenting, guidance, disciplining skills
  - New partners have different ideas about parenting
- Loss of roles, rules forms and norms.
- Parent share too much information with children
- Parent fail to co-parent
- **There are no ex-parents, only ex-spouses**
- Parents often bad-mouth-each other and thus confuse and severely diminish the self-esteem of the child.
- PLEASE CO-PARENT AFTER DIVORCE…for the sake of your children.
Single Mother

What about my partner...

What about my child...

What about my job...
Single Father

I always have to leave work early to see my kids...

My wife is always complaining about my kids...
The Re-Coupled or Stepfamily: The Conflict of Blood and Romance

We define the Stepfamily as any couple who are re-coupled, living together, and/or seriously dating, where there are children involved from a previous relationship. It is estimated, 66% of these families will break up.

In a biological family, a couple joins sexually and conceives a child, born of the blood and genes of both parents. The sexual bond of the parents and the blood bond between parent and child pull the family together.
In a stepfamily system, the sexual bond between parent and partner is in direct opposition to the blood bond between parent and child.

Indeed, the sexual bond pulls the energy of the family in one direction and the blood bonds pull the energy in conflicting directions.

This fact is seldom recognized and is often a “surprise” to those who bravely enter the world of step.
Conflicting Forces of Blood and Romance

Traditional Family

2nd Marriage, with Children, Post Divorce, Re-Coupling, Stepfamily

Stepmom   Dad   His Child
Rejection of the “Non-Self”

This phenomenon is worthy of our attention.

It is designed for survival and comes from the primitive part of our brain.

It is a “firing off,” without thought, to protect our young and defend our sexual turf. It bypasses reason, it is automatic. Without it, a mother would not jump in the pool to save her drowning child. A man would not compete with a potential suitor for his woman’s attention.

This is analogous to what goes on in an organ transplant. The body rejects “the non-self tissue.”

Doctors prepare for this phenomenon, so must the 21st Century Family.
You’re not my real kidney!

And YOU’RE not my REAL parent!
MYTHS of the Stepfamily

• The Stepfamily will operate just like the original family.
• “It’ll be like the old family, only better. We’ll be one big happy family, we know what we did wrong.”
• “Love me, love my children”
• “Now I have a partner who REALLY loves me”
• “My kids will finally have a REAL father/mother”
• “I get along great with the kids, I’m looking forward to it.”
• “My kids will love my partner because he/she makes me so happy.”
• “It’ll all work out, it just takes time.”
• “We’ll share everything.”
• “We’ll go slow in the beginning, don’t move too quickly, we’ll play it by ear.”
• “We don’t need to plan, we know what we’re doing, THIS time.”
Section II: Connected vs Disconnected

(Illustration: Left side: One happy family, right side, everyone looking in different directions.)

The purpose of this book is to create happy "connected" families, no matter what the family type or configuration. Today’s families have so many outside demands which take energy away from partnering and parenting. We need to manage in a way which connects us. We need to manage and reorganize in a way which creates connection.

Our houses are increasingly empty. Think of the "frowned upon 50’s." There were kids playing in the street, scout meetings just a few blocks away. Kids walked to school together and there were community events. We knew the people around us and could count on neighbors to watch our child, or borrow a cup of sugar. We talked over the back fence, and even had each other over for dinner.
Now the house is empty until six, meals are taken separately often in front of separate screens: TV, video, computer, text messaging etc. Gone are the days of meaningful conversation at the dinner table.

Partnering is subordinated - after the children are in bed. **For many:**
- Couples are tired
  - Meaningful talks are few
  - Making love less
- Weekends are shopping times, errand times
- Enforcement is exhausting
- Chores hardly exist
- Oft times children and grown ups go to bed within hours of each other
- Parenting has turned into nagging as children, no longer are expected to take part and require constant reminders "do your home work," “hang up your clothes,” “stop arguing”, etc.
- Enforcement is exhausting – it is often a question, not a statement “Would you PLEASE hang up your jacket?” vs. “Hang up your jacket.” With good parenting, expectations are set and met, not negotiated.
• *Focus is away from family for many.*
• People relationships have become secondary.
• Many find happiness in material things, placing little faith in close relationships, dear friends and community.
• **Civility**, not prioritized
• **Lack of good manners, respect, the concept of right and wrong**

In general we think the current lack of connection needs to be examined. Here we discover a way of "staying connected" in these difficult times.
Chapter 1: Forms and Norms

(Illustration: left side – orderly, neat bookshelf, on right- messy, chaotic bookcase with toys and books stacked backwards, etc.)

The vital components for success in any family Simply saying “I Do” and moving into the same home does not a marriage or family make. Roles have to be identified. Responsibilities have to be assigned. Everyone has to know where he fits in. The culture and identity of “the family” has to be established so the members we stay connected. We call this establishment of standards, the “Forms and Norms.”

Get organized. Create a routine and develop rituals and traditions that involve each member of the family. These tools will encourage the formation of a connected family unit.
A family works like a team. Everyone needs to know their position, everyone needs to play by the same rules, everyone needs to work together to win.
Rituals and Traditions have been created and serve to remind members that they are part of a couple and family.
Working together as a team allows for conversation and laughter.
Children and parents contribute - Tasks are delineated, everybody has jobs to do, responsibilities to keep.
Routines define roles, “who does what when, and how?”
Disconnected

- Rituals and traditions are in conflict from house to house, cause anxiety and stress
- Schedules are frenetic and constantly changing – participation is inconsistent and unpredictable
- Lessened self-respect when parent does all the housework and child watches TV – no sense of accomplishment or pride or “being part of”
- Energies and activities are separate
A Guide to Establishing Forms and Norms
The foundation for the family identity.

1. Create rituals
   - Meals – dinners, Sunday brunch, Shabat
   - Bedtimes – read a story, say prayers, sing a lullabye
   - Special Times – adult time alone, parent/child time alone, family time alone
   - Holidays – baking cookies, charitable giving

2. Define routines
   - Morning routine for school days and weekends
   - Sunday morning church
   - Friday evening Temple
   - Weekly Grocery shopping

3. Establish House Standards
   - Replace the TP roll when it is out
   - How much TV/week is allowed? In the average household the TV is on for 7 hours/day. Experts say children should watch no more than 14 hours/week.
4. Socialization
   - How we greet people at the door, at the grocery store, at the restaurant
   - How we answer the phone
   - How to help an adult – with packages, opening doors, across the street
5. Respect for self and others
Connected

Everyone helps after dinner.
Disconnected

The parent whose child visits does all the work while the child plays.
How Does TV Impact the Family?
Many recent studies show that TV destroys active, proactive and interactive brain cells. What does this mean?

• “Zoning” or not being “present”
• Not hearing when spoken to
• Inability to concentrate, or to filter out unimportant sounds (like an airplane passing overhead) from necessary sounds (like the teacher’s voice)
• Inability to remember and complete assignments
• Inability to focus
• A tendency to hyper focus (to focus to the exclusion of all else – total concentration) when stimulated by what they are doing
• Disconnected, detached, absent, not analytic,

Rate Your Kids
1. Do they frequently “Zone out”?
2. Do you have difficulty getting their attention?
3. Are they easily distracted when needing to focus?
4. Do they “over focus” – have difficulty switching from one task to another?
Chapter 2: Couple Strength

We define this as the power of the partnership.

The partnership may be between the original parents, the parent and stepparent and the parents who are now ex-spouses.

The strength that is natural to the “traditional” family does not inevitably occur.

The lack of “couple strength” is a major issue contributing to the chaos and confusion of today’s family.
Get your muddy feet off the couch!

Male
Head of Household

Female
Head of Household
Disconnected

My new white couch!!

He's just expressing himself!

Female
Head of Household

Male
Head of Household
## COUPLE STRENGTH

### Connected

- Couple has established house rules
- Couple time is prioritized and maintained
- Roles as a couple, roles re: the kids and roles in the house are clear
- Plan, generally pro-active
- A partnership is created and developed
- Couple controls and runs the household managing the best interests of everyone
- Laughter and talking
- Tell him/her “I love you” when they come up for air in the middle of an argument
## COUPLE STRENGTH

### Disconnected

- Couple time is “bumped” for children, career, ex-spouse concerns, etc.
  - No date night, no alone time
  - Sex life diminished
- Authority not established, unpredictable
- No plan, reactive atmosphere, chaos
- Partnership strategies are confused, priorities are not agreed upon
- Household revolves around child, partnership and parent needs are neglected
Connected

Mom and Dad (front seat)

Kids (back seat)
Disconnected

Bride and Groom, blissful, oblivious...

Everyone else: sad, mad, glum, distant, scared, hurt...
**Connected**

When the child calls, both parents come running - the adults prioritize the same thing.

---

**Disconnected**

Issues of priority and “Who Comes First” are unresolved and confused.
COMMON COMPLAINTS from Couples

- “Work, and the kid’s sports activities, there is no time for us.”
- “We both work full time but I still do most of the housework, and handle the kids, then he gets mad when I don’t have time for him!”
- “She works all day, coaches soccer in the afternoon, goes to aerobics in the evening and then is too tired for me!”
- “She expects me to help around the house but I work all day, doesn’t she see that I DO my part by making a good living for her?”
- “She talks too much.”
- “He never listens.”
- “She always complains.”
- “He never wants to talk about it.”
- “He/She spends more time with those kids than with me.”
- “He/She agrees on something, but then doesn’t follow through.”
COMMON COMPLAINTS about Prior Spouses

Ex-Wife
- "He hasn't got a good word to say about me or all those years I raised our children."
- "We have very little contact. He picks them up and honks the horn."
- "The children are my responsibility. He does so little to discipline or guide them."
- "He spoils them, he buys them everything they want."
- "He's late, his payments are late, yet he expects me to have the kids well dressed and on time when he wants them."

Ex-Husband
- "Sure my ex-wife has control over me: She controls my children."
- "My ex makes me out to be the wrongdoer, when she wanted the divorce."
- "How can she expect me to discipline them when I see them so little?"
COMMON COMPLAINTS of Couples in Stepfamilies

(Add and sort, break out each kind)

- “He’s either at his job or with his kids, where do I fit in?” - Stepmother
- “I can’t teach them what they need to learn from a man. She doesn’t support me.” - Stepfather
- "She always jumps to the kids' defense when I correct them. She's turning her boys into wimps." - Stepfather
- "It's her house, the kids were there before me, and they let me know that." - Stepfather
- "They need a man around here, and she and they won't let me be one!"
- "His children say the meanest things to me, and my husband defends them and tells ME I'm overreacting." – Stepfather
- "The worst of it is, when his children come over we have no sex life." - Stepmother
- "Sometimes I get so hurt by her leaving all day Saturday and expecting me to take the children out to dinner alone. But if I say anything she'll probably be there even less." – Bio Father
- "She knew I had children when she married me, so why does she act this way now?" – Bio Father
Great Ways to Build Couple Strength

• Create a partnering agreement including how to talk to each other, how to agree to disagree, how to solve disputes
• Form a plan for family rules as soon as the relationship gets serious
• Decide roles up front - from who takes out the garbage to who disciplines who, when, how and for what
• Have a date night once a week
• Back each other up in front of the kids, work it out behind closed doors and then set rules for next time
• Set aside 15-30 minutes a day to be alone with each other
  • Wake up early - before everyone else does
  • Meet for coffee on the way home from work
  • Have “cocktail time” before dinner
  • Take an after dinner walk
  • Pay your 9 year old to “babysit” and “sneak away” to the garage, back yard tool shed, front porch…
• Avoid Contempt, Criticism, Defensiveness and Withdrawal – 4 predictors of Divorce (Markman and Gottman *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*)
• Respect each other’s differences and recognize what you can learn from each other
• Argue Naked
Building Couple Strength Technique #204: Argue Naked

Ummmmm...?  “What were we talking about?”
8 Communication Skills

1. Use Turning To language and behavior - At the store she says, “Do we need dishwashing soap?”
   Turning Away: “How should I know?”
   Turning To: “Let’s get some just in case.”

2. Use “I feel, I see, I hear” and “My Reality Is…” to describe your experience without blaming, accusing or condemning your partner.

3. If things get too intense, call a “Time-Out”, cool off and set up a specific time later to finish the discussion.

4. Examine your motive: “Am I just trying to be right, or do I want to have a relationship?”

5. Use “could” and “would” when making requests.

6. Be mindful of the timing, your attitude and your tone when bringing up hot topics.

7. Keep it brief.

8. Be diplomatic.
The Importance of Communication

“You are an INSENSITIVE ASSHOLE!!”

“You are a WHINY BITCH!!”
Honor each other’s differences…

“My reality is that I am not being heard, that I am not being listened to.”

“My reality is that all I hear is that I never do anything right”
When a woman is hysterical, the best thing a man can do is wait until she is finished and then reassure her.

“You never listen...
“You ignore me...
“You are so insensitive...
“You never support ME!!”

“Look at me, I love you.”
It will all work out…

We’re Soulmates

And they lived happily ever after…

THIS marriage will never end in divorce

“IT will be better for me to be divorced than unhappy”

A new beginning…

Love me, love my kids….
Chapter 3: Expectations

As our culture evolves and roles overlap, expectations are often incongruent, confused and not recognized. The expectations become even more out of whack the more relationships we have, the older we get and when children are involved.

Indeed, our expectations are sometimes based on myths, incorrect assumptions and unrealistic hopes.
You knew I had children when you married me!
Biologically Intact Family

Have fun! At last, some time to myself!!

We're going out.

MOM

DAD
Re-Coupled Dad with New Partner

We're off to the zoo

You played with him all morning. I feel left out when your child is here
You need more attention than my children!!!

Husband

Wife
Connected

God bless Mommy and Daddy and fluffy.

Disconnected

“God bless Mommy and Daddy and please God, make Mommy’s new friend Sam die...”
Divorced/Re-Coupled

Daddy’s New Friend/ Stepmom

But Katey always rides in the front seat with me.

DAD
The Stepfather

“I try to put some order in the place and they all reject me!”
COMMON COMPLAINTS... about Expectations

Stepfather
• "Here she was alone with those kids, I come in to put some order in the place. . . and they all reject me."
• "A man has to be King of his Castle. I feel like the house boy."
• "I'm not the head of this house; the kids run it and she lets them."

Stepmother
• "I want a child of my own, and he's had enough."
• "He expects me to treat them as if I were the nurturing mother but then criticizes me when I discipline."
• "I think I'm becoming the "cruel" stepmother."

Father
• "She knew I had children when she married me, so why does she act this way now?"
• "She wants a baby and she can't even handle my children."

Mother
• “He ignores my kids but then expects me to treat his kids as if they were my own.”
• “He’s too tough on my kids …and too easy on his!”
### EXPECTATIONS

**Connected**

- Creating a family requires a vision, specific planning and work
- Adjustments need to be made by everyone
- Working together as a couple is key
- We all have different points of view and that’s respected
- I am responsible my relationships
## EXPECTATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disconnected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Love will conquer all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life after (marriage, re-marriage, children) will be better than before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If you love me, you will love my children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Few changes need to be made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Divorce is a solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s not my fault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s my way or the highway</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to Set Realistic Expectations

- Get educated…check out what works.
- Be brave and clear about what you need and want.
- Define your expectations up front regarding your partner and family member’s…
  - Daily routine
  - Holidays
  - Schedules
  - Duties
  - Chores
  - Contributions
- Refrain from assumptions, discuss and plan together.
- Recognize the bonds in your household that may not exist.
- Acknowledge that some things just don’t “evolve,” they need to be “resolved.”
Chapter 4: Parenting

“Good parenting is not democratic.”

“If you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for everything.”

“Children learn in simple ways… imitation, imitation, imitation.”
What is seldom addressed are the differences in the way traditional, dual career, divorced, single and stepparents bring up their children.

Parenting has evolved from strict and structured to democratic, “laissez-faire” and neglectful. There are as many forms of parenting as there are books about parenting.

Generally missing is the full-time parent. Substituted is daycare, after school programs and babysitters and nannies. Often these replacements provide little education, authority, guidance and discipline.

Sadly, we see the traditional mother’s place is vacant.
“Do’s”
“Don’ts”
# PARENTING

## Connected

- Guidance and love
- Teaching and working together
- Consequences for behavior
- *All* parents are devoted to raising and nurturing children
- Responsibility/reward for being a good parent
- *All* parents are respected and have authority
- Parent’s approval is important to children
- *All* parents know what is in the best interest of the children
- Partners back each other up
- Children know what is expected
- Routines are in place, no excuses
# PARENTING

## Disconnected

### Post Divorce /Visiting Parent
- Typically little guidance, a good time and indulgent
- Often the focus is on pleasing the child, not on guiding the child
- Guilt, shame and denial drive relationships
- Visiting parent vying/competing with the ex/other biological parent (bio)
- Limited emotional/parental resources of 1 person to focus on children

### Couple
- Often disagree in front of kids
- Lack of conflict resolution skills
- Stepparent (SP) gets few rewards
- Parent does not demand respect for self, partner, ex, etc.
- Child often resents stepparent and may not respect bio parent and/or adults in general
- Role of Stepparent not defined
- All feel alone
- No plan resulting in confusion and conflict
- Lack of structure and predictability
- Excuses are the norm
- Arguing with kids about the small stuff wastes bonding time

NOTE:
All of the above diminishes the child’s self-esteem, creates self-centeredness and excuses
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connected</th>
<th>Disconnected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV off!</td>
<td>Give them a break, I'll do it!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to clean your room!</td>
<td>Please hang up your coats!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Cartoon images corresponding to the text]

- TV off! (Connected)
- Time to clean your room! (Connected)
- Give them a break, I'll do it!! (Disconnected)
- Please hang up your coats! (Disconnected)
No, I won’t! you’re not my mother!!

Put away your toys!
COMMON COMPLAINTS... about Parenting

Stepparent
✓ "I can't teach them what they need to learn from a man. She doesn't support me."
✓ "My wife treats me like an outsider when it comes to the kids. "
✓ "I'm not the head of this house; the kids run it and he/she lets them."
✓ "He seldom says no, flies them, buys them, drives them."
✓ "The kids watch TV, we cook, we clean up."
✓ "Guilt runs his relationship with the children."
✓ "He always defends his kids and blames me for trying to be a good parent!"

Parent
✓ "Much of what she says to my children is edged in nastiness."
✓ "My new partner sees these bad things my kids do. I don’t see that."
✓ "He/She is just too tough and demanding with my kids."
✓ "His/Her biological kids get away with everything."

Ex- Spouses with Custody
✓ "I have all the daily burdens and then he gets the kids every other weekend."
✓ "When the kids visit him he just entertains them."
Tips for Parents Today

✓ Create the House Rules as a couple “In this House We…”
  (In a Stepfamily, the Parent directs whenever possible and the Stepparent
  says “In This House your mom/dad and I have decided that we…”)

ALL RULES ARE PRESENTED IN A POSITIVE FORM:

✓ We have good manners
  • Say Please, Thank You, Hello and Goodbye
  • Look each other in the eye when we talk
  • Allow a person to finish their sentences

✓ We do our chores as assigned
  • Clean up after ourselves
  • Are a team and help each other with assigned household responsibilities

✓ Positive and Negative Consequences
✓ “3 Strikes and You’re Out” – Parents say things once, twice and third time is a
  consequence
✓ Good Behavior gets rewarded
  ▪ Extra story read
  ▪ 30 minutes later to bed on non school night
- You get to pick movie or TV show we all watch
- You get to pick the game we all play
- You get to go first
- Know how many hours your kids need to sleep at night
- When we argue, we respect each other’s point of view
- We resolve conflicts in a positive manner
- We never argue within earshot of children
- We agree to disagree and get expert advice
- We never say negative things about the children’s biological parents or Stepparents – If we don’t have something good to say, we don’t say anything at all.

- As exes we co-parent regardless of our old angers for the well being of our children
- Do not overindulge
- Do not “super-stepparent”
## Number of Hours of Sleep Required By Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th># of Hours Per Night</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>12 plus 1 hour nap in day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17+</td>
<td>8-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: Discipline
(Some picture exemplifying discipline e.g. karate)

Discipline n 1. instruction 2... 3. training that corrects, molds or perfects the mental faculties or moral character — Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary

Sociologically, with the plethora of dual career couples, single parents, visiting parents and stepparents, the concept of teaching children discipline has been given a bad name. Discipline need not be punitive, it is the teaching of life skills.

We excuse ourselves due to lack of time, exhaustion, and in the case of divorce, fear of losing the child to the other parent. Parenting is having the courage to hear “You’re mean!” “You’re so unfair!” “I hate you!” Discipline is loving your kids enough that they hate you so you can teach them something. A good parent is not always popular, but in the long run will be loved and respected. The lack of
discipline and guidance can result in a child who is entitled, distant, self-absorbed, depressed and - emotionally homeless.

Many children spend more than 7 hours per day “escaping” from interactions with adults by watching TV, instant messaging and talking with peers on the phone.

Indeed, the family as the central force in the child’s life is lost.

How we want our family to be is achieved by:

Vision.
Conviction.
Intention to succeed.
Order, hierarchy and teaching.
Connected

“My Dad will kill me if we’re not home by 11pm!”

Disconnected

“My Dad doesn’t know when I come home.”
**COMMON COMPLAINTS...about Discipline**

- "How can she expect me to discipline them when I see them so little?"
  
  — *Divorced Biological Father*

- "I'm afraid they will go and never come back if I start punishing them."
  
  — *Divorced Biological Father*

- "The children are my responsibility. He/She does so little teaching and has few boundaries."
  
  — *Divorced Biological Parent*

- "The kids love it. They're treated like princes and princesses. They never have to help."
  
  — *Divorced Biological Mother*

- "I'm not the head of this house; the kids run it and she lets them."
  
  — *Stepfather*

- "His children say the meanest things to me, and my husband defends them and tells ME I'm overreacting."
  
  — *Stepmother*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCIPLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connected</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Couple works together to define positive and negative: consequences, limits and boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents and children have confidence in their love and loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All parents (divorced, bio, step) support each other for the sake of the child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### DISCIPLINE

**Disconnected**

- No agreed upon guidelines, inconsistency
- Parents lack confidence in themselves as parents
- Parent fears not being loved by the child
- Parent openly defends child no matter what
- Stepparent, divorced parent feels disrespected, unimportant
- Child subconsciously feels “I’m not worth the attention”
- Children not clear what is expected - “What is my position, where do I rank? What is my role?“
- What is valued in this family?
- Children manipulate/break through weak boundaries
- Individual put first, family/team last
Discipline Do’s and Don’ts

- **DO** know that *discipline* means *guidance*
- **DO** know that as a parent you are a leader – Discipline comes from the word “disciple” which means student or pupil
- **DO** be confident in your role as a parent
- **DO** have a vision of the way you want your child to be
- **DO** model the behavior you want to see in your kids
- **DO** set boundaries and limits
- **DON’T** wimp out because of guilt or shame
- **DO** “catch” the kids doing something good
- **DO** know that discipline creates self-esteem
- **DO** remember to give 1 minute praisings
- **DON’T** use the excuse of “not enough time to…”
- **DON’T** make them the prince and princess of the house while you play maid and butler
- **DO** follow through with consequences (good and bad)– keep your word
- **DO** teach “discipline” and pave the road for successful adulthood
♦ Good Study/Work habits
♦ Cleanliness and Hygiene
♦ Responsibility for your things
♦ Pride in your appearance
♦ Order in your daily life

- DON’T start the day in chaos
- DO trust yourself to parent
- DON’T play MAID and BUTLER while the kids watch TV – the kids should participate