Two parents - one wavelength

You would have to be hiding under rock to realise that fathers are now expected to step up to the plate and take their fair share of the parenting role. The message has been out for more than a decade for fathers to become fully involved and engaged in their children’s lives.

Still the greatest challenge is for men and women to work together to raise their children. In the past when roles were split along gender lines parenting together was simple. Mothers were the carers/hurtles/chef cooks and bottle washers and fathers were the providers who brought home the bacon. “Go see your mother” was the answer to most children enquiries that were directed at fathers. They tended to defer most domestic matters to a higher authority.

Now the ‘new family’ requires men and women to work together to raise children and that is not as easy as it may seem. Differences in parenting styles as well as differences between genders need to be negotiated if outcomes for children are to be maximised. Partners who are separated can still work as a team if they have a willingness to put personal issues aside and act in the best interests of their children.

To help you work effectively with your partner consider the following three concepts

COMMUNICATE: Couples who work well together fine-tune their parenting by talking about a whole range of issues related to children. If one parent takes more responsibility for children then try to involve the other parent in all sorts of decisions ranging from the minor (e.g. what school they should go to) to the major (e.g. their mothers and fathers highly).

Compromise: Rarely do both partners agree about everything regarding children and neither they should. One partner may be too strict while the other too lenient. One may believe kids need plenty of encouragement while the other is more of a fault-finder. The differences between two people are healthy but they can lead to conflict. Often the best outcomes for children come when partners compromise and learn to find some common ground.

Keep out: Parents who work well together know when to keep out of conflict or an argument between a child and the other parent. Some children are experts at dragging a parent on side when there is conflict. The maxim should be along these lines - “That is an issue between you and your father. You two work it out yourselves.”

Parenting is rarely an even 50-50 split as one usually takes on a more hands-on or active leadership role than the other. But the real challenge lies in both partners getting their parenting act together. When this happens the outcomes for kids is maximised as one and one equals three. Two parents, one wavelength - worth working towards!

Quick Parenting Quiz

True or false.

1. In a recent Australian survey the majority of teenagers rated the parenting ability of their mothers and fathers highly.

Answers:

1. True. In a survey published in The Australian Reader’s Digest over 80 per cent of 14-18 year olds polled gave their parents at least a very good rating when judging their parenting skills.

2. False (only just). 17.5 per cent of children under age are only children.

Vitamins for parents

How will your children remember you?

Do any of these of these stereotypes sound familiar: Disneyland Mum or Dad, King of Play, Attila the Hun, Parenting Nazi and Morning Grump? To be truthful, you are probably all these at times depending on your mood. Children need to see many facets of our personalities, as there is a very good likelihood they will grow up and become like us.

The four phases of childhood go something like this:

When children are young they adore their parents. When they go to school they accept them. They become teenagers and judge their parents. Then they move into adulthood and they become like them. That can be a little scary!

Bright idea

When children ask you something difficult or put you on the spot with a request for a toy, item of clothing or to go out, get into the habit of deferring to the other parent. “I hear what you say but I am not sure if it is a good idea. I’ll check with your mother/father and get back to you.” Bring the other parent into the picture as often as practical.

Wise & Witty Words

“Your kids learn as much from the way you say ‘good morning’ to a stranger than from any lecture.”

Andrew Denton

“Parents are the bones on which children cut their teeth.”

Peter Ustinov