

Consistency In Raising Children

Basic information:

As a rule, children are remarkably flexible. They know their parents are different people, and they can usually handle the variations in each home. Some of the differences between your two homes can be dealt with by saying, “Yes, at the other house you can do that, but I do things differently.” That said, children need their parents’ expectations and house rules to be as consistent as possible—whether the parents live together or apart. As a start, you and the other parent might agree on certain daily routines, such as meal times, bedtimes, and finishing homework before playing. Even when parents have very different parenting styles, they can maintain a minimum level of consistency by agreeing on a few rules that will be enforced in both homes. Be creative—find issues that matter to both of you and that you agree on.

Negotiation tip: No two people disagree on absolutely *everything*. For example, you might agree on permitted snack foods, television shows (or the number of hours each day the children can watch television), or requiring the children to show respect for both parents.

Things to think about:

Parents can avoid problems by talking to each other about behavior and disciplinary issues. If you don’t, your children will find the chinks in the unified front, and will play one of you off the other. Parents can avoid this problem by letting the other know about any behavior or discipline problems, and how the situation was resolved. In this way, you and the other parent can support each other, even if you might have handled the situation differently. If the differences between each parent’s homes are difficult, encourage your children to describe what bothers them, then talk to the other parent directly to work out a resolution.

Solution Ideas:

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 The standards for discipline in each of our homes will be as follows [choose all that apply]:

 We will abide by the same discipline standards.

 The following behavior rules will apply in both homes:

 If either of us has a discipline issue with our children, that parent will explain the issue and response to the other so we can be consistent in our discipline.

 If our children complain about discipline in one parent’s home, we will encourage them to talk about it with one, if not both parents.

_____ If we cannot agree on discipline standards that will apply in both homes, we will make an effort to understand and respect the other's right to establish behavior rules for our children.

_____ We further agree that [specify]: