

FOCUS ON TEAMWORK: COPARENTING THE WHOLE FAMILY BENEFITS!

In any family arrangement, parents can best contribute to their family members' happiness by working TOGETHER!



COPARENTS: Adults recognized as a child's parents who act and communicate for the child's well-being, regardless of their parenting situation.

COPARENTING

"The way parents work together to raise their child, such as *shared parenting*, or how well spouses coordinate their parenting role (Dufresne, 2016)."

■ Origin of the concept: marital separation

The concept of coparenting was first introduced in the early 21st century in the context of marital separation to define the ongoing relationship between parents once the marital couple no longer exists. The principle of coparenting is based on the child's right to maintain a balanced relationship with both parents, even if they are separated or divorced. As a legal concept, coparenting will help define how each parent's rights and responsibilities with regard to the child are shared.

■ Children at the heart of coparenting

Having a coparenting vision for the parents themselves, and the stakeholders who support them, is a key way to put the focus back on the child. It promotes collaboration and teamwork between parents to achieve a common goal: the child's well-being, development, and safety and security.

■ The importance of father involvement

Fathers today are expressing the desire to be more involved with their children and families. An increasing number of parents, especially young parents, want a more equal parenting dynamic. Accordingly, coparenting is about placing value on father involvement, which benefits each member of the family ecosystem.

■ A vehicle for gender equality

Supporting coparenting and father involvement is a powerful vehicle for social transformation that helps:

- Strengthen equality between mothers and fathers in everyday life through greater father involvement, particularly in the sharing of tasks and responsibilities.
- Promote the work/family balance of mothers.
- Provide children with more egalitarian role models and pass down these values within families and society.

■ An inclusive vision of multiple parenting realities

Today, adopting a coparenting perspective is also a way to include and take into account the great diversity of parenting realities. Coparenting includes same-sex parents, grandparents, legal guardians, adoptive parents, parents living together as a couple, shared custody situations, blended families, and so on. In short, everyone who is part of a parenting team and must work together by "co-building" to provide the best possible upbringing and education for the child.

WINNING CONDITIONS

Good communication between parents

Consistency and shared values on child rearing

Support and recognition between parents

Satisfactory division of tasks and responsibilities

COMMUNICATION: THE KEY INGREDIENT OF A COPARENTING TEAM

Regardless of the family structure (whether the individuals are, were, or have never been a couple), communication between parents may be:

- **COOPERATIVE:** The adults coordinate regular communication and are on the same wavelength about the children.
- **PARALLEL:** The adults keep communication to a minimum and strictly in connection with the children. The quality of communication between parents may in turn determine the coparenting type:
- **POSITIVE:** Collaboration, cooperation, agreement, support
- **NEGATIVE:** Disagreement, opposition, unfairness, conflict

Communication involves **TALKING**, as well as **LISTENING** and **FINDING SOLUTIONS TOGETHER**.

Especially for parents who do not live together, important information about the child should be shared **ON A REGULAR BASIS** and the information communicated should be **COMPLETE, ACCURATE, AND TIMELY**.



CHALLENGES

Coparenting involves at least two different people who often have different experiences and different ways of seeing and doing things.

COPARENTING IS THE ART OF DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES!

While differences are a challenge for parents, as they involve communication and negotiation, they can be a great asset for the child.

STRENGTHENING COPARENTING IS ALL ABOUT PERCEPTIONS!

This is because each coparent has their own image of the other, of themselves, and of the relationship. For example, each individual can perceive a coparent's support very differently:



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