

Collaborative Parenting in Early Recovery: Recommendations

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Navigating the early stages of recovery is a challenging journey that becomes even more complex when it involves parenting. The key to successful parenting in early recovery is unity. Establishing a unified approach ensures that both parents are on the same page, providing stability and consistency for their children during this transitional period. Here's a guide to help parents develop unity in their parenting approach while managing recovery demands.

Weekly Family Feelings Meetings:

Holding weekly family feelings meetings is essential to open lines of communication with your children. These meetings provide a safe space for everyone to express their thoughts and feelings, fostering a sense of understanding and empathy within the family. During these sessions, ensure each family member can speak without interruption, promoting active listening and mutual respect.

Problem-Solving Family Meetings:

In addition to regular feelings meetings, schedule problem-solving family meetings as needed. These meetings should focus on specific issues, allowing the family to work together to find solutions. Encourage collaborative problem-solving and ensure everyone has a voice and that others are listening. Effective communication fosters the family's ability to work together as a team.

Identifying Agreement and Disagreement in Child Rearing:

Take time to identify areas of agreement and disagreement in your parenting philosophies. Understanding where you align and differ is crucial for developing a cohesive approach. Discuss these differences openly and respectfully, aiming to find common ground or compromise where necessary.

Resolving Conflicts Regarding Parenting Philosophies:

Conflicts in parenting philosophies are natural, and constructively working through them is essential. Move away from black/white thinking and toward “middle ground” where additional potential solutions appear. When disagreements occur, address them away from the children to avoid undermining each other's authority. Problem-solve with your partner, then present a united front to the children. Do your debating, negotiating, and compromising behind the scenes. This unity and consistency provide children with a sense of security and clarity.

Managing Disagreements Without Undermining Authority:

When disagreements arise over issues involving the kids, it's vital not to undermine the other parent's authority in front of them. Instead, discuss these issues privately and agree on a unified response. This approach prevents children from feeling caught in the middle and respects the authority of both parents.

Avoiding "Divide and Conquer" Tactics:

Children may attempt to "divide and conquer" by playing one parent against the other to get what they want. To counter this, parents should jointly discuss decisions and clarify that they will get back to the children after consulting with each other. This strategy strengthens the parental partnership and teaches children the importance of deliberation and collaboration.

Excluding Kids from Marital Discussions:

It's crucial to exclude children from discussions about marital issues. Exposing children to these discussions can create unnecessary stress and anxiety. Instead, keep these conversations between the adults, ensuring the children feel safe and secure in their environment.

Avoiding Criticism of the Other Parent:

Refrain from criticizing the other parent in front of the children. Negative comments can damage the child's perception of the criticized parent and create loyalty conflicts. Model respect and constructive communication, even when disagreements occur.

Modeling Appropriate Expression of Feelings and Problem-Solving:

Parents should model appropriate ways to express feelings and solve problems. Demonstrating healthy communication and conflict-resolution skills gives children a valuable example to emulate. Show them how to handle emotions and challenges effectively.

Encouraging Open Discussion of Feelings:

You can encourage your children to discuss their feelings and problems with you by listening actively and empathetically without immediately trying to fix their issues. This approach helps children feel heard and supported while fostering their problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence.

Addressing Children's Changing Roles in Early Recovery:

Understand that children may flip-flop in their roles during early recovery. They might feel fear and distrust, and their behavior may reflect these emotions. Suddenly, being expected to act like children may feel insulting to them. It may feel like a demotion to them. They may also seek more attention now that you're sober while resenting the time you spend in AA

meetings. Acknowledge these feelings and provide reassurance and support.

Balancing Parental Responsibilities:

The parent managing most parenting duties might be reluctant to relinquish control. They may hold resentment about your previous lack of engagement in parenting. This resentment may come to the foreground, and any complaints that your focus is still elsewhere may also emerge. Open and honest communication is essential for addressing old resentments and working together to create a workable plan for collaborative parenting. Acknowledging harm to others from active addiction is a painful part of early recovery but a necessary one. It is a component of rebuilding trust and being willing to move forward with changed behavior. You can work together to balance parental responsibilities in a way that respects both parents' roles and contributions.

By following these recommendations and working collaboratively, parents in early recovery can create a supportive and stable environment for their children. Unity in parenting benefits the children and strengthens recovery, fostering a healthier family dynamic overall.



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