



Insights from SCA Staff

Parenting: The Importance of Teamwork

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Society has changed a lot in the last 50 years, and along with it, so has parenting. For example, most families require two salaries to make ends meet. This changes the amount of time available for parent-child relationships. Familial structures have broken down. Well over 50% of children live in single-parent homes. The children are required to transition between homes, and this creates ongoing disruptions in their living situation.

There are hundreds of books written about techniques for parenting – many of which focus on the need for consistency and having consequences that “fit the crime.” These things have contributed toward the creation of entitlement in kids. The other extreme, rigidly following parenting guidelines without any grace, can have very negative repercussions to the parent-child relationship. All this creates such confusion. What is a parent to do?

Parents need to work as teammates, whether married, divorced, or in a blended family. There needs to be a united front, with the single goal to raise the children to be responsible, well adjusted adults. Adolescents that are the angriest and most confused have lived in an environment in which parents do not work together, and are far apart in their parenting strategies. There can be many possible ways that parents undermine each other and hurt their children, which also fractures the parenting hierarchy.

First, a parent can talk negatively about the other, or overtly discount the other parent’s decisions, standards, and consequences. This can happen when children overhear conversations on the phone between parents, or even when a parent is venting frustrations to a friend.

Second, when children are put in the middle of parental conflicts, much anxiety can be created. Children are often asked to voice their opinions without knowing they are being used to hurt the other parent. When the child matures enough to understand what is happening, it can be quite devastating.

Last, parental alienation is very damaging to children. This occurs when children are not strongly encouraged to have a positive relationship with both parents, and can be very subtle. Time for both parents to develop/keep ongoing connections is the most important aspect to prevent parental alienation.

In conclusion, the heart of parenting is trying to do what is best for their children. Parents can’t let wounds or unmet needs from the other parent affect the choices that need to shape the lives of the children.