

## 5 WAYS TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER AS PARENTS

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When you become parents, you're both in a completely new element. It's hard enough figuring out your own needs and identity as a parent and knowing how to support your spouse is a challenge all its own. Parenting becomes another aspect of your couple relationship that thrives when you both feel supported by each other. Here are some ways you can support each other as parents:

### **1. Support each other with words.**

Sometimes nothing beats verbal encouragement. You might give each other direct compliments, such as, *"You're such a good dad. I love how you're so patient with the kids."* You can also show your support and admiration indirectly in how you talk about each other to your children. Saying things like, *"Your mom is a pretty special lady. She does so much for us,"* sets a positive example for children.

### **2. Support each other with empathy.**

We know empathy is a game-changer in relationships. It is particularly important as we deal with stress and uncertainty in the face of the challenges of parenting. Sometimes, we're just not at our best, but being empathetic toward each means that's okay. In those sleep-deprived days of becoming new parents, you can show empathy by knowing not to take it personally if you are short and snippy with each other. It is also being understanding when the other is feeling overwhelmed and asking what you can do to lighten their load.

### **3. Support each other with time.**

There are various ways this might look. For example, if your spouse is feeling burnt out, you might take care of bedtime responsibilities so they can enjoy dinner with friends or quiet time alone. You can support your relationships with the children by encouraging time for each of you to spend one-on-one with them. And don't forget, a strong marriage has a positive impact on your parenting, so don't forget to make time for yourselves as a couple.

### **4. Support each other as teammates.**

Being teammates means it's less about *"I do these things and you do those things"* and more about how you work together collectively to make it all happen. It means supporting each other's parenting decisions. On a small scale that might be overlooking the messy kitchen when your partner lets the kids help make dinner. On a bigger scale, that might mean making the effort to align with each other on discipline strategies or what school they'll attend.

### **5. Support each other by being flexible.**

Flexibility is a key component of a resilient relationship and family system. You can be flexible by having an open mind and trying new ways of doing things. You can be flexible by shifting roles & responsibilities to meet the needs of your situation – maybe you have a new job or work schedule, or your spouse has to leave for a few days to take care of a parent. By adapting to the circumstances, you disperse the weight of the stressor between both of you.

*When we become parents, we change as individuals – and ultimately as a couple. It requires us to navigate uncharted waters together, and it offers us the opportunity to support each other in new ways that send positive ripples throughout our relationship and family.*