

Celebrating My Entire Child

The worst mistake we've seen some parents make in their breakups was believing they could nurture their children while being bitter toward their other parent.



Children know.

And especially they know if their parents have a low opinion of each other. It will never work to say, "I love you; I just think your mom is such a fool," or "You're great; it's just that your dad's a liar." Or anything of the kind.

As one of the Commitments from the website says, children experience attacks between their parents as attacks on them. Can we remember this?

What should astound and inspire us is how so many parents—for all the hurt between them—heroically find ways to say to their children, "You get some great qualities from Dad/Mom."

Here are just a few ideas—ones we hope you'll think about and build on:

- ✚ Even once a week share with your children a good quality (or good memory) about your co-parent.
- ✚ Point out something good they take from the other parent ("Your eyes are as beautiful as Dad's," "You write so well—just like Mom").
- ✚ Let your children know that their other parent cares deeply about them (remember that the world is full of failed spouses who are still very good parents). "Mom/Dad cares about you a lot and has so much to offer you."
- ✚ Regularly talk about yourself and your co-parent collectively ("Daddy and I were talking and saying how proud we are about your report

card," "Mom and I are so excited about your making the team," "Dad and I will take care of that, I can guarantee it.")



- ✚ Celebrate things the children have done or will do with the other parent ("I think it's so great that you and Dad are doing Scouts together," "You're going to have such a wonderful time with Mom on your trip.")

- ✚ Regularly encourage your child to call the other parent for a friendly talk on the phone.

- ✚ Remember that just fifteen seconds of decent interaction between parents when children are picked up or dropped off will define how the next week of their lives goes, maybe even what memories they'll carry forever.

There are many, many more of these you can think of—and each one is a gift to your children as important as shelter. They cost only one thing: Your courage to give them something (1) they need and (2) only you can give.

And don't forget to congratulate yourself for saving your little miracles.

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