



FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS:

Keeping Your Marriage Dynamic

KinderKronicle talks a lot about the parental relationship. Why? Because study after study confirms that a stable marriage relationship gives parents and their children their best chance for a productive, stable family.

Parents who have a happy, compatible relationship have less stress in their marriage and are better able to devote time and energy to their parenting. And when Mom and Dad take time to nourish and strengthen their relationship, they have a better chance of staying connected and strong together after their children are grown and have moved on to create their own families.

Cohabiting moms and dads can also have a happy, compatible relationship leading to a productive, stable family. However, studies show that “only one out of three children born to cohabitating parents remains in a stable family through age 12, in contrast to nearly three out of four children born to married parents.”¹ Further, “children born to cohabitating parents experience nearly three times as many family transitions... [and] have fewer economic resources than do

children in married parent families.”² Interestingly, studies show that when cohabitating couples solemnize their relationship by getting married, their relationships are often strengthened and become more long-term. **Commitment is an essential element to a healthy, long-term Mom/Dad relationship.**

So, with all the demands on your time and energy every day, what are some ways to keep your marriage dynamic? Just in Time Parenting recommends the following:

- Spend time every day reconnecting with each other and having personal time together—just the two of you. It doesn’t have to be a long time—even fifteen minutes a day can really boost your relationship. If you are parent or a family of faith, pray together.
- Make sure that both of you feel included and valued in your family by saying to your spouse every day ‘i love you’...or something similar that reaffirms commitment

A Message from Vibert Kesler:

As KinderKronicle and your child begin their 5th year, a big parenting change is just around the corner. The Nurturing and Authority Stages of parenting will soon “meld” into the next stage of parenting, known as the **Interpretive Stage**. The Interpretive Stage begins when your child starts school and ends when your child approaches adolescence. The added parenting tasks for the Interpretive Stage are:

- To understand how you want to interpret reality for your child, and
- How and when to teach the values and virtues you want to promote.

During the Interpretive Stage of parenting, KinderKronicle will frequently advocate for:

- Dad/Mom unity—Parental unity is important because it is natural for children to campaign for what they want, and if parents are not on the same page, children will exploit parental division.
- Holding weekly Family Hours—It is my experience that a weekly Family Hour is the most successful family forum for parental governance and for teaching values.
VLK

KINDERKRONICLE-CHANGING LIVES ONE FAMILY AT A TIME

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- Help Dad feel connected to both Mom and the children. Children take a lot of time and energy—when you are both feeling connected to each other and your children, when you feel like a team, your relationship is strengthened.³

Other ways to keep your marriage dynamic valued in the family? :

- **Pay attention to the small things**—The nice things you do for each other every day build love and trust between you. This could be anything from kissing each other goodbye and hello every day, to making sure your spouse’s windshield is always cleared off after a snowfall, to fixing breakfast for your spouse every Saturday. Daily demonstrations of love are very meaningful and help keep a relationship strong.⁴

- **Limit screen time**—just like your relationship with your children, your relationship with your spouse needs to have time and effort put into it if it is going to flourish. Having a “no screen time” policy during your time together can encourage the two of you to really connect with each other—to look at each other and to talk to each other when it is “couple time.”⁵


- **Be willing to think positively about your spouse**—it can be easy to translate “He’s being short with me” into “Our marriage is in trouble,” even if the situation is more like “He’s had a bad day and not handling it well.” Or “She’s nagging me” when the situation is “She’s frustrated that I’m not listening and isn’t sure how to get through to me.” When couples are willing to assume the best about each other

and listen to the other, many small frustrations can be worked out in a satisfactory manner for both sides.

- **Communicate with each other on a regular basis**—and not just about work, or the kids. What drew you together in the first place? Is there a hobby or activity you both enjoy? People change and grow all the time—so if you want to keep your marriage dynamic and strong, it is a good idea to nurture your relationship so that you are changing and growing together.

- **Have a weekly date night.** During your courting stage you were probably creative on a tight budget. Keep it up.

- ◆ If babysitters or money are scarce, just setting aside a specific “date” time can help. If you can’t go out to an event or dinner together, play a two-person board game, cuddle on the couch together after the kids have gone to bed, or watch a movie on the TV together. You could even take turns reading a book to each other, or put on some music and dance together. Anything that gives you focused time to spend happily together can make for a good date night.

The Mom-Dad relationship is a big part of a stable, happy, productive family. Taking the time to nourish your relationship is worth the effort. 

1. Manning, Wendy D. “Cohabitation and Child Wellbeing.” *The Future of Children*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2015, pp. 51–66., doi:10.1353/foc.2015.0012.
2. Ibid.
3. <https://jtip.info/files/months-57-58.pdf>
4. <https://www.care.com/c/stories/5060/5-ways-to-keep-your-relationship-strong-af/>
5. Ibid.



PARENT LEADERSHIP:

Revisiting the ECE Formula for Family Rules



As the parents of a 48-month-old, you are still in the Authority Stage of Parenting. As we discussed in Month 22 of *KinderKronicle*, the Authority Stage is the time when you must “[accept your] authority over [your] child” as the leader in your home.¹

This doesn’t mean you need to be a harsh dictator (remember, *KinderKronicle* recommends the Authoritative style of parenting—see Month 23), but it does mean that you are the one to set the limits and boundaries in your home. The ECE formula for family rules we introduced in Month 22 of *KinderKronicle* is how parents set and enforce the family rules.

As a reminder, the ECE formula has three steps:

Step 1: Establish family rules.

Step 2: Communicate the family rules clearly to each member of the family, so everyone understands what is expected of them.


Step 3: Enforce the family rules with consistency.

As your child grows and matures, and as his needs change, the family rules will need to be revised or clarified. Family Hour is a great time to discuss any needed adjustments with everyone in the family— because

when everyone has input into the rules, everyone is more invested in abiding by them. Remember, your parenting has to grow up with your child if you want it to be effective.

Family Hour is also a great time to make sure everyone is clear on the rules, and understands the consequences of breaking family rules. Talking about potentially difficult issues is always much easier when you are calm, happy, and enjoying each other’s company.

The third step of the ECE formula is especially important. It doesn’t do a lot of good to have rules if they aren’t enforced. Consistency is important. Children thrive when they understand where the boundaries are and when they know that you are there to help them learn and grow within reasonable boundaries. When the rules are consistently enforced, your child quickly learns which rules and boundaries are firm ones and which boundaries are more flexible.

Your child is quickly heading toward school age, which is when the “Interpretive Stage” of parenting begins. Taking the time to build a strong foundation of love, reasonable limits and boundaries, and consistent follow-through now will help you to keep your family strong as outside influences begin to factor more heavily into your child’s life. 

1. Galinsky, Ellen. *The Six Stages of Parenthood*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub, 1987. Print.

THE DAD DIFFERENCE:

Solve: The Fifth Core Principle in Strengthening Husbands and Fathers

“The key to marital happiness is not to rid the relationship of differences: we ignore some, tolerate others, laugh about our humanness, and discuss those things we can do to work better together.”

– H. Wallace Goddard

So far, KinderKronicle has discussed the Dad Difference principles of “Commitment,” “Growth,” “Understand,” and “Nurture.” This month, we will focus on the principle of “Solve.”

H. Wallace Goddard says that “the assumption that, if we can only talk about our problems effectively, we will have a good relationship... may have caused more marital mischief than any other idea in the history of relationships.”¹ He points out that this approach “can at times keep partners focused on their discontents.”

Instead, he believes that being willing to “accept some differences and allow for them as a continuing part of the relationship” is more likely to help strengthen your relationship and solve many problems.²

He also suggests the following when working with your spouse to solve problems that arise³:

- **Stay calm in the face of differences:**

Even if you and your spouse are united in purpose and in your goals, there are going to be many times when you may have different approaches to situations or react in different ways. If you approach potential problems as a team, with a willingness to assume the best of each other, resolving issues becomes easier and less stressful for both of you.

- **Be open to other views:** Your spouse may approach tasks and problems differently than you do. When you are willing to be open to other views, you can learn from each other and grow together.



- **Consider multiple courses of action:**

There are often many different good ways to deal with problems that arise in relationships. Be willing to brainstorm ideas together to find solutions that work for both of you. For example, are you both satisfied with the division of labor in your home? Is each spouse given the “space” they need to carry out their agreed-upon tasks without nitpicking from the other?

- **Accept some differences as a part of the relationship:**

You and your spouse aren’t going to agree on every issue, you aren’t going to approach every situation in the same way, and you are going to differ on many topics. This is not only okay, but a good thing—it brings variety and strength to your relationship, if you let it, because you can fill in gaps for each other and multiple perspectives can enrich your home. You only need to learn to work together and be ok with each other’s differences.

- **Allow time for changes:** When issues do arise, remember that change doesn’t occur overnight. It takes time to learn new skills or new patterns of behavior, so patience with each other and loving support for each other are vital if real change is going to occur.

1. Goddard, H. Wallace. “Better Marriages Make for Better Fathering.” *Why Fathers Count*. Harriman, TN: Men’s Studies Press, 2007. 59-75. Print.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

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Meaning**

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