

VITAL BEHAVIOR #1: NEXT STEPS SEG. 3

INTRODUCTION: We know how challenging it can be for parents to stay unified, especially with difficult family relationships. We know that it might take some work before you can talk about and agree upon key issues before moving forward. This activity is specifically designed to help you begin taking small, realistic steps toward that goal. The steps are outlined below. They aren't complicated, but they will require commitment and resiliency. Let's be real. The odds of getting frustrated during this process are high. Don't despair and don't give up! Most things worth achieving do not come easy. Rest assured, this is worth achieving.

STEP ONE: Put a check next to every item on the list below that you believe would strengthen your co-parenting relationship if you began focusing on doing better in that area. Don't worry about whether you are willing to do them yet, just consider what you believe would be helpful.

WHAT COULD I DO TO IMPROVE OUR CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIP?

Compliment more	Stop arguing in front of the kids
Strive for win/win solutions	Be open to other ideas
Be more flexible	Be more patient with the kids
Communicate more details	Avoid harsh consequences
Be less critical	Hold the kids accountable
Discuss before deciding	Be more forgiving
Spend time together	Less fault finding
Let little things go	Look for the good more often
Stay calm during arguments	Listen with the goal of understanding
Admit my faults/mistakes	Offer to help more
Start marriage counseling	Ask about each other's hopes
Follow through on decisions	Express appreciation more
Not take things so seriously	Stop minimizing their concerns
Listen without interrupting	Stand up for each other

STEP TWO: Looking over the same list below, put a check next to no more than five of the items that you would most appreciate your co-parent improving upon. Don't worry about whether you believe they are willing to do them yet, just consider what you believe would be helpful.

WHAT WOULD I APPRECIATE MY CO-PARENT FOCUSING ON?

Compliment more	Stop arguing in front of the kids
Strive for win/win solutions	Be open to other ideas
Be more flexible	Be more patient with the kids
Communicate more details	Avoid harsh consequences
Be less critical	Hold the kids accountable
Discuss before deciding	Be more forgiving
Spend time together	Less fault finding
Let little things go	Look for the good more often
Stay calm during arguments	Listen with the goal of understanding
Admit their faults/mistakes	Offer to help more
Start marriage counseling	Ask about each other's hopes
Follow through on decisions	Express appreciation more
Not take things so seriously	Stop minimizing my concerns
Listen without interrupting	Stand up for each other
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

STEP THREE: Schedule a time to have a family council with your co-parent. Be sure it's a time when you'll be rested and in a good mindset.

STEP FOUR: In your family council (co-parents only), take turns sharing the topics outlined in A, B and C below. Each person should share his or her thoughts before moving to the next topic.

- A – Share 3 things you appreciate about your co-parent.
- B – Share 2 things you are committed to doing better (from your list above).
- C – Share 1 thing you would like to ask your co-parent to work on (from the list above).

Important: When discussing item C, keep your conversation present and future-focused, rather than digging up old stories and complaints. Avoid the urge to try and change the other person. You're simply making a request and looking for agreement on what each co-parent believes would improve the relationship. If you make the request and your co-parent isn't willing to work on that issue or doesn't believe it's a problem, don't debate it or take it personally. Just move on and make a different request.

STEP FIVE: Moving forward, make a genuine effort to keep your commitments for improvement. In addition, avoid the urge to look for and point out how your co-parent is falling short. Rather, make it a point to watch for and sincerely comment on the positive efforts your co-parent is making.

KEEP WORKING AT IT!

Remember, this is an ongoing process. Be patient and stay committed to improving! If you're struggling, don't give up hope. As you move forward through the Not By Chance video course, you'll continue to learn strategies and develop skills that will increase the odds of holding effective family councils.

Please note: Although we are currently emphasizing family councils between co-parents only, family councils can consist of any of the following combinations of family members:

- The entire family
- A parent along with one or more children
- Both parents with one child
- Two or more co-parents
- A single parent with another trusted individual (sibling, parent, friend, etc.)

In segment 16 of the video series, you'll learn more about holding effective family councils with the whole family. In the meantime, becoming good at holding family councils with your co-parent is the best way to prepare for those family councils. So press forward and give it your very best!