

A Brief Look At The Child's Perspective

What do you think are the main issues your child has living with you and not the bio-parents?

If you were the child, what would you be thinking/feeling towards your bio-parents?

There are many negative emotions that they could be feeling. Rejection, abandonment, confusion, sadness, and anger.

Not having what other kids have, a bio-parent could make them feel shame. The expectations of a having a parent that are unmet can cause heart sickness. Wondering where they are, why they are not with them can drive them to despair. Their parents are not being the people they want them to be and they cannot understand why. They must come to acceptance of where the parents are but that won't happen for a very long time if ever.

Here are some things to consider:

- The child must accept that their parents have done the best they were capable of doing, given their own fears, hardship, abilities and circumstances.
- Chances are their parents didn't set out to hurt them, but they have been most likely hurt themselves. Hurt people hurt people.
- If the child is saying statements like "Things should have been different," or the parent "should have known better," it does a disservice to both the child and parents. Why? Because the parents usually make choices that they are capable of making. They did the best they could even if it was good enough. If they could have done better they probably would have.

We have to deal with the childhood fantasy that it's our parents' duty to create a perfect, trouble-free world for us. We need to help the child realize it's not healthy or reasonable to expect perfection from imperfect people even if they are the parents.

How can we this talk with our child about this? When would be the right time if you were to have this talk with your child?

Parenting Skills You Didn't Need the First Time

We need to keep in mind we already have a tool box of parenting tools from having parented before. However, we have never been down this path before so you don't know what to expect or what is the right thing to do at times.

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

We need to be prepared to answer those who question you about your situation from outside your family differently according to who they are and the specific need to know. You don't owe the world an explanation just because it's out of the ordinary. Consider the following:

1. Who is asking the questions?
2. Why are they asking?
3. What information are they really looking for?

It is never inappropriate to politely clarify by asking, "What is it specifically you need to know?" Sometimes it's best to rely on your gut feeling to tell you how to respond.

How do we answer the difficult questions posed by the children? They may ask some very hard and complex things that you may not even want to begin to answer, like why do I have to be here with you? Keep in mind these types of questions are usually statements with deeper meanings.

Example #1: A child asks, Grandma, why can't our family be normal, like Emily's? We may try to just answer with the facts and point out not to be concerned about it. You may feel offended at this.

What is the real meaning here? The message is "I don't like being different." So how can we respond to this child's pain?

Example #2: Child asks, "Why can't I just go and live with Emily? Her parents are nice and fun. You may feel put off at this question after all you have/will do for her.

What is the real meaning here? Something is missing in our family that Emily's has." So how can we respond to this concern?

We need to set and maintain firm limits with the grandchildren. Any major change like being a step-family will set off a period of adjustment for everyone. They want to feel balanced or secure so they and you go through a transition. #1. Is **Suspicion/speculation**: A change is met with cautious skepticism. Will the change be rigid or flexible, temporary or permanent? #2. Is **Resistance**: They will challenge the new arrangement and the authority will be tested to see if they mean business and have consequences. #3. Is **Testing**: The child begins to act out. Statements like, "My Mom would never do things like that," or "They would let me do this or that." #4. **Escalation**: This is the storm. If the limits /consequences have held up and the parent is still strong then the child will increase the

PARENTING TWO GENERATIONS AT ONE TIME

There is no denying that the challenges facing those who take on the commitment of raising a second family are numerous and far-reaching. These challenges begin with the very basics, like considering the costs and juggling a budget and expenses in order to afford such a proposition. And then they escalate into broader consideration and logistical challenges that become more complex. One of these issues is the task of taking care of yourself both emotionally and physically while sifting through the deep and confusing pile of emotions the whole situation has left you with.

ARE YOU TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF? HOW ARE YOU DOING IT?

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES THAT NEED YOUR ATTENTION RIGHT NOW?

SOME COMMON MANIPULATIONS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

1. Finger pointing. Those who use this technique are likely to be those who are acutely in tune to your doubts about being a good parent or other areas of personal vulnerability.
Example of finger pointing: "You can't blame me if I'm a bad parent-I had you as a role model." Or "How dare you criticize me. Look what you did!"
Sample responses: "Your right. You're right. I have made my share of mistakes as a parent, but this is about you right now, not me. Or "I'm sorry if some of the things I've done have hurt you in some way, but it's high time for you to move on and start taking responsibility for your own choices now."
2. Pulling rank. It can be the ace in the hole to persuade you to back down from your stance. It's usually the last resort.
Example of pulling rank: "She's my child!" Or "You're not her Mother!"
Sample response: "Of course she is your child-no one has ever questioned that. But what we're talking about here is who has primary responsibility for making these kinds of decisions for her." Or "Yes, I realize I'm not her mother. I didn't bring her into the world, but I seem to have inherited the responsibility of judging what is and is not good for her, for the time being."