

UNIFIED[®] PARENTING PLAN

HOW TO STOP 'GOOD
COP VS BAD COP'
AND PRESENT ONE
CALM TEAM

WHY THIS PLAN EXISTS

Problem:

In many families, one parent is seen as 'strict' and the other as 'soft'. The child quickly learns to:

- ask the soft parent for permission first,
- avoid the strict parent,
- play parents against each other ('But Mum said I could...' 'Dad doesn't mind...').

The result:

- constant conflict between parents,
- mixed messages for the child,
- rules that feel unfair and unpredictable.

This plan is designed to:

- help parents become a united team,
- create shared rules and shared language,
- give the child a clear sense of who's in charge (both of you, together).

You do not have to parent in the same style.

You do need a shared framework.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

Parent-only first:

Complete this booklet without your child first. This is your private agreement.

Agree on values + non-negotiables:

Decide what matters most (sleep, safety, school effort, respect, etc.).

Choose shared rules + consequences:

So you're saying the same thing when it matters.

Create signals + scripts:

Quick ways to say 'we'll decide together' when a child is trying to split you.

Meet weekly for 10 minutes:

A short check-in to keep you aligned.

Think of this as a playbook for you two as co-coaches.

STEP 1: PARENT-ONLY RESET (MINI-CONTRACT BETWEEN YOU)

Use this page as a gentle reset between you and your partner.

1. Acknowledge the pattern

Each parent completes:

I often get cast as the 'strict/soft' one when it comes to:

- homework: _____
- screen time: _____
- bedtime / routine: _____
- behaviour / respect: _____

When this happens, I usually feel:

- (e.g. unsupported / blamed / taken for granted / alone)

2. Shared commitment

We agree that:

- Our child benefits when we act as a team, not opponents.
- We will not undermine each other in front of our child.
- If we disagree, we will press pause and talk away from the child.

Parent A signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent B signature: _____ Date: _____

STEP 2: FAMILY VALUES & NON-NEGOTIABLES

Before rules, get clear on why.

1. Top 5 family values (circle or write your own)

Respect Honesty Effort Kindness Responsibility

Independence Health / Sleep Faith / Spirituality

Curiosity / Learning Other: _____

Together, list your Top 5 in order:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2. Our non-negotiables (we agree these ALWAYS matter)

Tick or write what is non-negotiable in your house:

- School attendance
- Minimum study / homework effort
- No physical aggression
- No deliberate cruelty / bullying
- Basic politeness (no swearing at parents, no 'shut up')
- Bedtime by _____ pm on school nights
- Devices out of bedroom after _____ pm
- Other: _____

These non-negotiables will shape your house rules and consequences.

STEP 3: HOUSE RULES MATRIX (SHARED RULES)

Use this matrix to agree on your baseline rules. Keep it simple and realistic.

A. Core areas

Area	Our agreed rule	Notes
Homework/Study	Example: 'Min 60 mins on school nights before screens.'	Compromise between strict/soft.
Screens (weekday)	Example: 'Max 1 hour, after homework.'	Clarify: games vs YouTube.
Screens (weekend)	Example: 'Max 2-3 hours per day.'	Track time together.
Bedtime	Example: '9:30 pm school nights.'	Note exceptions.
Devices in bedroom	Example: 'No phones after 9 pm.'	Both enforce.

Add more rows if needed.

STEP 4: OUR SHARED SIGNALS & STANDARD ANSWERS

Big goal: stop giving different answers in the moment.

1. Standard 'pause' line

Write one line you both will use when child asks for something big:

Our shared line:

'Thanks for asking. Mum and Dad will talk about it and give you one answer together.'

You both commit to:

- NOT answering big questions on the spot.
- Using that line every time.

2. Private signal between parents

Choose a subtle signal meaning: 'We're not aligned, let's pause.'

Examples:

- Light touch on the arm
- Code word: 'Let's park this for a moment.'
- Phrase: 'We'll come back to this after we talk.'

Write yours:

Our private signal: _____

Our de-escalation phrase: _____

3. Agreed default when you disagree but must answer

If you disagree in front of the child:

Parent A: 'I'm leaning no.'

Parent B: 'I'm leaning yes.'

Your shared response:

'We're not sure yet. We'll talk about it privately and let you know by _____.'

This protects unity even when you're not yet unified.

STEP 5: UNITED CONSEQUENCES MENU

Kids exploit inconsistent consequences. You don't need to be identical, but you do need a shared baseline.

1. Pick 3-5 core behaviours and agreed consequences

Behaviour	First response	If repeated
Disrespectful language	Calm reminder: 'Try that again respectfully.'	Loss of privilege for 1 day.
Ignoring homework rule	Reminder + choice.	Lose screen time.
Refusing basic rule	State rule, explain reason.	Natural consequence.
Physical aggression	Immediate stop + repair.	Loss of privileges + repair.

2. Make it visible (for parents, not child)

Keep this in a cupboard or bedroom so you both remember what you agreed.

The child just needs: 'We agreed that when X happens, Y consequence follows.'

STEP 6: WHAT WE WILL NOT DO IN FRONT OF THE CHILD

This page is critical. It's your pledge to each other.

We agree that in front of our child we will not:

- Criticise the other parent's decision
- Change a rule the other parent just gave
- Use the child's emotions to 'win' an argument
- Say 'Fine, go ask your mother/father' sarcastically
- Threaten each other

Instead, we will:

- Back each other in the moment, then
- Debrief later, in private.

Write your own personal 'never again' behaviours:

I will try to stop doing:

I'd like you to try to stop doing:

(Share these gently; this is about teamwork, not blame.)

WEEKLY 10-MIN PARENT CHECK-IN

Once a week (e.g. Sunday night), sit down together with this page.

1. What went better this week?

Parent A: 'I noticed things went better when we...'

Parent B: 'I noticed things went better when we...'

2. Where did we accidentally split?

- Did one of us give a different rule?
- Did the child quote one parent against the other?
- Did we contradict each other?

Write 1-2 examples:

Example: _____

Example: _____

3. Small adjustments for next week

One rule we want to tighten:

One rule we want to relax:

One phrase we want to use more:

You're making small, consistent tweaks, like a team after a match.

QUICK ONE-PAGE SUMMARY (TO KEEP ON YOUR PHONE)

You can turn this into a small printable card.

Unified Parenting Cheat Sheet

Pause line to child:

'Mum and Dad will talk and give you one answer together.'

Private signal:

(e.g. touch on arm / phrase 'Let's park this for now.')

Non-negotiables:

- Respect
- Basic homework effort
- Bedtime & devices
- No physical aggression
- (Your extras)

Top 3 house rules:

- Homework: _____
- Screens: _____
- Bedtime / devices: _____

Default consequence pattern:

- Warning - chance to repair
- If repeated - agreed consequence

Golden rule:

'We never debate each other in front of our child.
We can disagree. We just don't do it there and then.'

Used well, this Unified Parenting Plan turns 'strict vs soft' into:

- one calm, united team,
- clear, predictable rules,
- far fewer opportunities for your child to play you off -
- ...and a much more peaceful home around study, screens and everyday boundaries.