

## DISCIPLINE: A UNITED FRONT

So what do you do if you find that you and your spouse have different parenting styles? You can accept your differences and make an effort to complement each other's style. For example, if you are the more authoritarian spouse and have been deployed for the last six months, you may be frustrated to return home and find that your spouse's permissive style has resulted in a household that is looser than you are accustomed to. But rather than stepping in and taking over, you can gradually begin to set limits so that your children know what to expect from you.

It is important for both spouses to keep a united front when disciplining your children. If you start to carry through a punishment and your spouse decides that it is not necessary, you are likely to feel that your authority has been undermined. Ultimately, your children will be the losers because it will not be clear what is expected of them. Even if they feel good that they were not punished at the time, they will be generally confused about how they should behave. This type of difference can also lead to erosion in your marriage. It is important to stand by your spouse at the time, even if you disagree strongly. Afterward, in private, you can discuss how you might have handled the situation differently.

Here is a list of dos and don'ts that can help you discipline effectively.

DO	DON'T
Discipline consistently.	Let your child call the shots.
Discipline with compassion.	Punish inconsistently.
Set limits and use time-outs.	Yell, scream, or use physical punishments.
Choose punishments that are appropriate.	Use harsh punishments frequently.
Reinforce positive behaviors.	Notice only negative behaviors.
Keep a united front with your spouse.	Allow your child to play one of you against the other.

 Think about the way you currently discipline, and respond on the blank lines.

***Here is something we already do well:***

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***Here is something we need to work on:***

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