

CO-PARENTING SKILLS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Communication Skills For Raising Emotionally Healthy Kids In Two Homes

DIRECTIONS: Circle the number that best represents agreement with your thinking, beliefs, or behavior about being a co-parent.

The CPSSA presents you with 55 statements divided into 11 major relationship categories. Your task is to read each statement and decide the degree to which you agree with the statement or believe that the statement typifies your thinking or behavior. Your choice is to select one of five descriptors, each with different point value.

The choices are *virtually never true (0 points)*, *rarely (1 point)*, *sometimes (2 points)*, *often (3 points)*, or *consistently true (4 points)*. There are five statements within each category, hence five scores to be added together for a category total. There is a possible range of 0 to 20 total points within each category. Once totaled category scores are transferred to the profile sheet.

The profile provides quick and easy visual interpretation of IRSSA-CP results. At a glance you'll see abilities and deficiencies and understand how best to direct self improvement efforts.

1. INTENTION

a. I believe this co-parenting relationship is important and should be maintained. I accept that as my goal.

0 1 2 3 4

b. I believe that one person can positively change our interaction as co-parents. I take responsibility for initiating change

0 1 2 3 4

c. I believe our differences are often a case of differing perceptions and that we mainly need to understand each others' perceptions. I intend to understand yours.

0 1 2 3 4

d. I believe I can change the way I relate to you and that these changes will help our relationship.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I believe conflicts are inevitable in a co-parenting relationship and are an opportunity for creating a more effective co-parenting relationship. I accept the need to work with conflict in a positive, relationship enhancing way.

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

2. SELF-AWARENESS

a. I am aware that my self talk and beliefs influence my behavior and choices when I'm responding to conflict.

0 1 2 3 4

b. I am aware when I'm responding to conflict by being "up-tight" with rapid or shallow upper chest breathing and increased muscle tension.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I recognize in myself tendencies to be defensive and self-protecting.

0 1 2 3 4

d. I recognize my difficulties in seeing the other parent's point of view during conflict.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I quickly see my choices as between being open and nondefensive, or closed and protected

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

3. CHOICE AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

a. I am able to use my awareness of "up-tight" feelings stemming from conflict as a signal to consciously begin calming myself.

0 1 2 3 4

b. I am able to rapidly change my breathing from upper chest, shallow or rapid breathing to abdominal breathing as a necessary step in self-calming, moving from "fight or flight" mode to having more positive choices.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I am able to use my awareness of muscle tension in my upper body, particularly in my head, face, neck and upper torso, to quickly begin relaxing those muscles.

0 1 2 3 4

d. I am able to use my awareness of conflict-escalating inner self-talk as a cue to shift to co-parenting relationship preservation and co-parenting relationship strengthening self-talk.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I am working on increasing my ability to rapidly shift from being defensive and reactive to being calm, open, and willing to learn.

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

4. RESPECTING AND ACCEPTING

a. I value you and respect you as a co-parent and see you as a unique individual, with the awareness and wisdom of your own experience, entitled to your own perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.

0 1 2 3 4

b. I support and encourage you being in control of your own life. I will respect your choices even though I choose differently.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I may not agree with you, but I will not put you down for your beliefs or perceptions.

0 1 2 3 4

d. When you disagree with me, I will do my best to not be defensive or argumentative.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I do not belittle you, use sarcasm, name-calling, or speak to you as about you contemptuously.

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

5. FOCUSING, ATTENDING, UNDERSTANDING, AND EMPATHY

a. When you make it clear to me that you want to discuss a parenting issue of importance to you I give you my full attention. If that is not practical at that particular moment, I set a time with you when I can fully focus on co-parenting.

0 1 2 3 4

b. When appropriate, I face you directly with relaxed and open body posture and good eye contact. Nonverbally, I communicate that I value what you have to say.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I may not agree with you but it is vital that I understand you.

0 1 2 3 4

d. I strive to capture the experience of walking in your shoes and experiencing your feelings as you experience them.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I tune into and track both your thoughts and feelings in regard to co-parenting. I ask questions as part of a sincere effort to understand you better. I check out my perceptions. A major goal for me is for you to feel understood.

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

6. ACKNOWLEDGING AND INVITING

a. I demonstrate my willingness to follow your train of thought without sidetracking you with my own thoughts or agenda.

0 1 2 3 4

b. I stay with you as you speak, regardless of my agreement or disagreement, without blocking or being reactive.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I find a way to connect with you as a co-parent by letting you know I hear you and respect what you have to say as your truth. It is necessary for me to listen. It is not necessary for me to agree.

0 1 2 3 4

d. I encourage you to continue telling me your story -- your perception of co-parenting issues -- until you feel finished.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I find a way to communicate to you that what you are saying about co-parenting is important information to me and I will take time to listen.

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

7. ASSERTIVE, OPEN, AND SELF-REVEALING

a. In our co-parenting interactions, I strive for equality and "symmetry of air time." We each get to talk and be listened to with no one dominating the conversation or monopolizing the time we have for discussion.

0 1 2 3 4

b. I say what I mean. I don't agree or say yes if I feel differently or mean no.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I don't have to appear perfect. I am willing to hear your complaints and I am willing to discuss your perception of my parenting shortcomings (all of us parents have them) as well as my strengths.

0 1 2 3 4

d. I talk to you about what I perceive is going on with us in the here and now, in the moment. I do not "gunny sack," avoiding issues by stuffing and stacking my thoughts, feelings, and resentments until they can no longer be contained. I show respect for you by letting you know, assertively in respectfully, where I am coming from.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I am willing to take risks in our co-parenting relationship by sharing my true parenting needs and feelings, even though I may feel awkward, embarrassed, or vulnerable. I'm betting on our co-parenting relationship and my belief that honesty and openness is indispensable in co-parenting relationship building.

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

8. LANGUAGE CHOICE FOR CLIMATE MANAGEMENT (From Jack Gibb, 1961)

a. I carefully choose my words with the intent of encouraging an open and collaborative climate, rather than a climate characterized by defensiveness, resistance, or a fight or flight response. My language conveys *empathy* and *equality*, rather than cold and unfeeling *neutrality* or "holier than thou" *superiority*.

0 1 2 3 4

b. I *describe* what I see rather than use words that imply judgement. I use *descriptive language* to de-escalate and move toward a cooperative exchange. I describe my feelings rather than attack with them.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I choose language that implies an “us against the problem approach” (*problem orientation*), rather than language that only promotes my agenda (*control language*).

0 1 2 3 4

d. I go with the flow using language that is natural, receptive, flexible, and generated on the spot, communicating a willingness to follow the conversation about parenting wherever it may lead and however it evolves (*spontaneity language*). This is in contrast to *strategy language* that sounds rehearsed and conveys a preset or hidden agenda.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I demonstrate a willingness to be influenced by you, a willingness to be persuaded, even changing my mind if you are able to show me a new perspective, or show me something I’ve missed (*provisionalism*). This attitude is in marked contrast to *certainty language* that conveys a determination to stick to my own viewpoint and position, unmoved by anything you may want to contribute about our co-parenting.

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

9. STAYING TUNED IN TO THE PROCESS

a. I strive to be aware and stay aware of *process* as well as *content*. Content is the subject of our communication, what we are talking about, while process is the way you and I relate as co-parents. I believe a focus on how we relate is often the key to building our co-parenting relationship and producing a collaborative effort

0 1 2 3 4

b. When I see us stuck or at an impasse about a co-parenting issue, I invite you to join with me in discussing the process and how *we* as a team might do it better or differently.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I work to clarify confusion and misunderstandings during our interaction. I focus on the *process* so as to not let the discussion become sidetracked into a debate over who is right and who is wrong.

0 1 2 3 4

d. I am alert to nonverbal cues as our discussion proceeds, looking for indicators of problems in our communication. I use this awareness to describe what I’m seeing and invite you to work with me in getting our interaction on the right track.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I schedule and prepare for important co-parenting relationship talks.

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

10. CO-PARENTING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

a. I believe our child will benefit greatly when there is no more conflict or hostility between parents.

0 1 2 3 4

b. I believe our child needs both parents. I believe each of us should be as involved with our child as can be arranged.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I intend to actively support and encourage your loving involvement with our child.

0 1 2 3 4

d. I intend to learn and actively practice effective co-parenting skills.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I intend to base my decisions about our child upon what is in the best interest of our child, not on my feelings about our past relationship.

0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

11. FOLLOW-THROUGH, FOLLOW-UP

a. I make an effort to focus on *interests* (what we each want for our children) and options (our possible collaborative or win-win actions), rather than our surface *positions* (our immediate assertions, usually related to who is right or wrong,

good or bad).

0 1 2 3 4

b. I look for solutions where we both benefit and our children benefit, searching for options (often creative)

where we both gain.

0 1 2 3 4

c. I frequently check-in with you during our co-parenting interaction to get your thoughts on the process, i.e., what is helping or not helping.

0 1 2 3 4

d. I do not become complacent about our co-parenting relationship. I make it a point to observe, listen, and invite your input and feedback on co-parenting relationship matters.

0 1 2 3 4

e. I am proactive about co-parenting relationship building. I do not wait for problems to develop in our co-parenting relationship. I look for ways to build open communication, trust, safety, and a sense of productivity, optimism, and satisfaction in raising emotionally healthy kids.

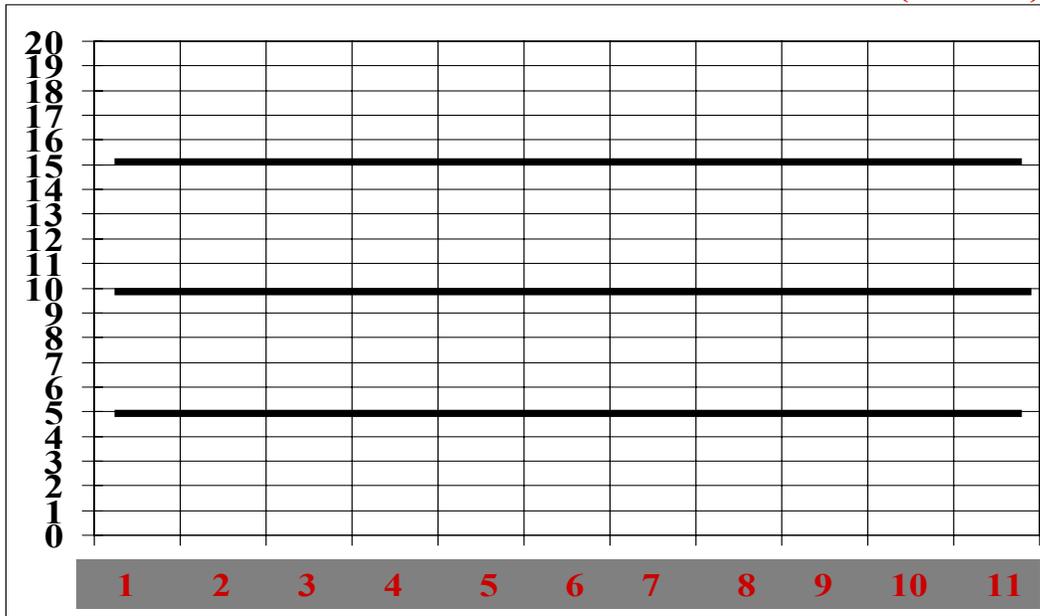
0 1 2 3 4

Category Total _____ (transfer to Profile Sheet)

SCORING

Add the scores for each statement for a category total. Enter all ten category totals on the Profile Sheet. The profile is a snapshot in time. You have the power to change any part of it. Your children will benefit greatly.

CO-PARENTING SKILLS SELF-ASSESSMENT (CPSSA)



SCALES

**Alternative Group Inc.
1902 Orange Tree lane, suite 150
Redlands, California 92374 (909) 798-4668**

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