



THE RELATIONSHIP CENTER

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PARENT GUIDING, NURTURING & CONTROLLING DISCUSSION GUIDE

DIRECTIONS: This guide is meant to help you and your spouse more effectively communicate in regards to parenting issues. Read and complete the 4 Steps. The “Question Ideas” are suggested options to assist you in creating a meaningful dialogue. If you and your spouse think of additional questions, be sure to incorporate these into your discussion.

STEP 1: Define the Problem- Each parent should describe what is happening in the life of the child that is concerning to them and how long this has been going on. Example: “Our 4-year-old son has been having tantrums at the dinner table each night for the past 3 weeks.”

Remember, it is not uncommon for spouses to have a different view of what is or is not problematic. As such, from the beginning of this exercise, we are working towards communicating effectively with one another, which includes expressing views which differ. Do not, at this point, try and convince your spouse of your point of view. Instead, reflect back to them what you are hearing them say and validate their emotions. Example: “I hear you saying you are concerned about Johnny’s fits at the dinner table and you are fearful we are not handling them well.”

Question Ideas:

- *What is it about what my child’s behavior that upsets me the most?*
- *How does my child’s behavior effect my view of myself as a parent?*

STEP 2: Identify what you are currently using to address the issue using the 3 terms: Guidance, Nurturing & Control. Example: “We are controlling by not letting Johnny leave the table until he finishes his dinner, nurturing him by telling him how proud we are of him when he eats correctly, and guiding him by telling him it is important to eat so he can grow-up to be big and strong like dad.”



GUIDING: Parents directing the course of their child's life via the position of a trusted adviser. Throughout life, a child is faced with many decisions leading to various possible outcomes, some better than others. Parents give children direction and explaining why particular actions would be best in a given situation.

NURTURING: Nurturing is an act of loving a child in such a way that brings out their very best and refines it further, while challenging those aspects in need of change. **A parent's love sees what is great in their child, acting as a mirror.** The child will develop their own sense of self and worth via the reflection of their parent's nurturing. Parents do not simply highlight a child's strengths while ignoring issues. Instead, the parent demonstrates how to love deeply, bringing out the best in their child while refining rough edges.

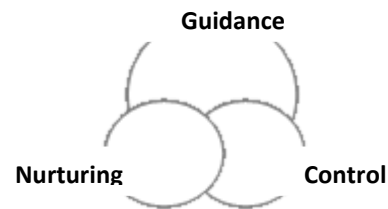
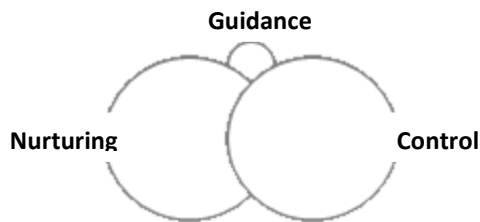
CONTROLLING: In contrast to guiding, **control is the action of directly exercising power over the course of a child's life. It is the act of parents making decisions about what will and will not be allowed to occur.** Control requires parental authority.

Question Ideas:

- *How much of each of the 3 strategies are we currently using? Remember, rarely if ever are these three strategies used in equal parts, as it would be inappropriate to do so.*

Tantruming 4 Year Old: We would use much more **Nurturing** and **Control** than **Guidance**, as developmentally, 4 year olds do not respond to reason very well. They need to know we love them, but their behavior is unacceptable and will be disciplined.

Teenager Not Eating Dinner: We would likely use more **Guidance** and less **Control** and **Nurturing**. *“Well son, it’s up to you whether or not you eat, but breakfast is a long way away, and you might get very hungry between now and then.”*



- *How is our child responding to this approach?*
- *How are we, as parents, responding to the approach we are using? Are we pleased, frustrated, fatigued?*

Step 3: Identify your rationale for how you are currently handling the situation the way you are in regards to Guiding, Nurturing & Controlling. Examples: “I feel like a bad mother if my child doesn’t eat.”*Guidance. “When I see my son being disrespectful, it’s my job as his father to let him know who is in charge.”*Controlling.

Question Ideas:

- *Why am I doing things the way I am are currently/what is my reasoning?*
- *What part of my response is my own “stuff” and what is my child’s? (Example: A mother may make excuses for her child’s behavior because she is fearful of the child being upset with her).*

Step 4: What are we after and how can we adapt to better reach this goal? Both parents can and should communicate what they would like to see happen and the listening parent should actively reflect back to them what they are saying. Agreement should be reached between parents as to what our goals as a parenting team are going to be. Finally, using the 3 terms- Guiding, Nurturing & Controlling, parents should make adjustments to the types and amount of interventions they are using in each of these areas.

Question Ideas:

- *To each parent: Am I willing to change what you are doing?*
- *If I am not willing to change, why? Do I feel like I would be failing/giving-in?*
- *How long will what I am currently doing have to not be working before I am willing to consider change?*
- *If we have already implemented a strategy we both agree on and believe to be correct, do we need to change or is it a matter of staying the course and being consistent?*
- *What is age appropriate behavior for my child?*

Author

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