

Don't Compromise!

Seeking to settle a dispute over the amount of time the children spend between their parents? Don't compromise!

Compromise is overrated. In fact, I don't even like it as a concept.

To compromise suggests giving something up to gain elsewhere. The problem with that is, no one ever wants to give up anything. No how. No way.

Even the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines compromise as the "settlement of differences by arbitration or by consent reached by mutual concessions."

As soon as one suggests arbitration, the matters of contention and settlement of those matters are already outside the control of those subject to the conflict. These persons don't even have control of the outcome. It is difficult to accept a resolution where you have give something up, likely not of your choosing and the outcome is beyond your control. This compromise may thus be doomed to failure from the get-go as the mere process of achieving it precludes accepting it.

No. Rather than talk of compromise, I like to speak of prioritize.

Let me give you some examples.

After a long renovation, my wife and I had to choose paint colors. Now you have to know that my wife and I are two very different personalities. In short, I am gregarious and my wife is quiet. Hence my choice of colors fall towards loud primary colors and my wife's fall towards muted earth tones.

In an effort to achieve mutual satisfaction with a color scheme, my wife suggested we each chose one color from the color palette and that would form the basis of our color scheme. In short, compromise.

We tried and ended with very mismatching colors. Upon her insistence we tried again... and again. Each time resulted in a clash of colors. Some colors just don't work well together.

I suggested she chose the colors outright. She was concerned though that I wouldn't like her choices. I told her, I don't have to like her color choices, I have to like her. I long since realized that while colors fade, I want my marriage to remain intact and shine brightly to the end of our lives.

My wife made great choices, just not what I would have chosen. Not bad whatsoever, just different from my

would-be selection. However, by playing to my "priority", a loving relationship with my wife, I didn't feel like I had given up anything at all. Indeed, I felt we both came away winners.

My wife applied the same concept when we had to decide on the choice of size for our kitchen island. She too set our relationship as the priority and I chose the kitchen island. We remain happy with each other because at the end of the day, each other remains our top priority.

I apply this concept of "prioritizing" to separated parents duking it out over the quantum of time children spend in their respective care. With each parent arguing over seemingly precious hours and minutes or days, they lose sight of the fact that a wholesome relationship and life-long relationship with their children come adulthood, is not determined by the quantum of time, but the reduction of parental conflict and meaningfulness of the time spent in each others company.

If your priority as a parent is to facilitate responsible human beings, capable of loving and productive lives and to have a life-long relationship with them, then quantum of time is no longer a fight worth having. Indeed playing to your priority, you can have far less direct time, but a more meaningful and fulfilling life with your children given the actual time available. That will be your children's legacy and your priority will have been met with nothing lost!

Love your children and certainly love them more than you love winning. Love your children more than keeping conflict alive. As conflict flourishes, children do not. With your children's lifelong well-being and a peaceful co-existence with their other parent as the priority, your children and your relationship with them will flourish.

It's all about setting your priority carefully. Children's well-being first.

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