

Couple Scruples

This game is designed for small groups of individuals to discuss co-parenting situations. The object is not to seek consensus about a correct response, rather to openly discuss the different factors that influence parenting decisions.

1. Break into groups of 4 – 10. Assign gender roles to have an equal number of participants playing the roles of men and women.
2. Provide each group with a set of situation cards (sample situations are provided below). Also provide each individual with 3 color cards: green, yellow, and red.
3. In each group, participants should take turns pulling situation cards and reading them to the group.
4. At the same time, everyone in the group should select one color-coded card to indicate their response to the question. Simultaneously show your cards.
 - **Green card = yes**
 - **Yellow card = unsure**
 - **Red card = no**
5. Give every participant an opportunity to explain her/his choice.
6. After finishing: Debrief as a whole group. Look for commonalities in decision making. Talk about the challenges that arise when mothers and fathers make decisions about parenting. What lessons can individuals take to their own family lives?



This game was developed by **Jane Ellison** and **Glen Palm**, St. Cloud, Minnesota. Made available online at www.mnfathers.org in October 2008.

Aaron and Karla's infant daughter Jaina has been waking up several times at night. Aaron has taken on extra work at his job and is exhausted. Karla does full time care of Jaina, who is colicky, and desperately needs her sleep. Should Aaron and Karla equally share the night waking?

Julie's three-year-old son won't stay at the table during mealtimes. Jerry believes in family mealtimes and thinks that his son should sit at the table with the family until everyone is finished eating. Julie feels that this is not reasonable and will make mealtimes less pleasant. Should they follow Jerry's new rule?

Darryl thinks his three year old daughter should be put in her room as punishment when she whines. Cheryl wants to tell her daughter to ask in 'big girl words', but not punish her. Is it okay for Darryl and Cheryl to respond differently to their daughter's whines?

Bruce is always responsible for dropping off the children at day care-which makes him feel like the 'bad guy' because the children have a hard time with separation. Betsy gets to pick up the children and is seen as their 'savior'. This arrangement is most convenient but the children are starting to strongly prefer mom over dad. Should they take the more inconvenient route and share both tasks?

Mary stays home with the children full time. She has made the rule of 'no jumping on the couch or beds' to save the furniture. Terrell likes to rough house with the children and lets the kids jump off the couch and wrestle. He feels Mary's rules are often too restrictive and don't allow the kids to have fun. Should Terrell follow Mary's rules?

Paul has been working 60-70 hours a week on a special project at work. Annie has been functioning as a single parent during the past six weeks. Paul desperately needs a break and has been invited on a fishing weekend with some friends. Should he go?

Kyle thinks 5-year-old Melinda needs to take some swimming lessons so that she gets over her fear of the water. Martha feels Melinda can wait until she's older. Melinda cries and pleads not go to swimming lessons. Should Melinda go to swimming lessons?

Six year old Dana tells her dad that she had a good time with her mom and her new boyfriend who took them out to a fancy dinner. Should her dad take her out when she comes to stay with him over the weekend?

Four year old Jesse is confused about the new schedule and is afraid to go to her dad's new girlfriend's house for the weekend. She pleads with her mom that she is afraid and doesn't like daddy's new friend. Should her mom make her go?

Two year old Adrienne is staying with her dad overnight at his new house for the first time. She forgot her favorite stuffed animal at her mom's house. Mom is out on a date for the evening and Adrienne is crying and can't go to sleep. Does dad go to mom's house to wait til she comes home?