

## Bonus material 5.2. Sharing parenthood and parenting duties

### Sharing parenting duties and responsibilities

The concept of sharing parenthood, as the name suggests, involves each parent taking an equal and fair share of responsibility when it comes to both the child and family life in general.

Obviously your child will take up a great deal of your time, and rightly so, but sharing the load also pertains to you as a couple. It is about much more than just raising a child, and by working together in every aspect of your lives, you will be able to enjoy your family more without taking on all the stresses and burdens by yourself. It is important to note that one parent may well excel in a certain area so can take on that responsibility, leaving the other partner to put more effort into another aspect of family life. Only by asking each other what you can do to help will you discover in which areas your partner may need assistance, but doing so lets them know you are always there and that they do not have to do everything alone.

When a couple first gets together, it is likely that the gender roles will be defined relatively early. However, this could take slightly longer in an intercultural relationship as they might be different in their respective cultures. While this may work when it is just the two of you, it is worth noting there is a chance you could slip into more traditional gender roles once your child arrives – either consciously or sub-consciously. For example, one partner may view the woman's role as being at home with the children and expect all the cooking and cleaning to be carried out by the female due to the fact they are at home all day. This is not necessarily the fault of the partner but merely what he or she has grown up with and how the roles have been carried out in his/her family and wider culture.

Moreover, some couples have said that housework itself does not exist as a concept before the arrival of their child, so it is worth bearing in mind that the growing amount of responsibilities you face may illicit new roles within then family. It then becomes absolutely crucial that each parent shares the load, but equally that neither hogs too much of the child's time to the detriment of the other. Try to find a balance which suits your family and do not feel as though you have to split every chore or responsibility evenly – you will both be better at some tasks and activities than others, so take on what feels comfortable. Again, this may seem simple but it is easy to lose sight of who is spending too little or too much time with the child when you are very busy and dealing with every other aspect of being a parent – as well as everyday life in general.

## How to approach sharing parenthood and parenting duties

Below is a useful checklist which you may wish to consider when thinking about how you are going to approach the subject of sharing parenthood. This is by no means a complete list, but should provide a solid base from which you can discuss the concept and adjust it to fit your family's needs.

- Give your partner space, time and the opportunities needed to be a parent
- Encourage your partner to take responsibility by saying "thank you" and giving positive feedback
- View your partner as a person rather than just the other parent of your child
- Don't believe you are irreplaceable
- Don't set perfect parenthood as your goal, as it is not achievable
- Don't judge your partner's way of being a parent or take sides
- Don't assume your partner knows what you are thinking
- Discuss your childhood experiences and memories with your partner