

PARENTING

If you're a parent, you probably agree parenting is incredibly challenging, but ultimately it's worth it. Since it is such a rewarding experience, parenting can really have an impact on you as a person.

## Parenting can also significantly impact the relationship you have with your partner.

Research has shown that having a child often adds to an individual's happiness, but more often than not a couple experiences a decrease in **marital satisfaction** after the birth of a child.

Acknowledging how parenting can affect your marriage is the first step to minimizing the negative impact.

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**Marital satisfaction** refers to each individual's level of satisfaction with the marriage.

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You and your partner might parent using different styles and you might even find yourself parenting each child with a different style. That's okay, but it might cause frustration and conflict. A variety of theories and explanations of parenting styles exist, but the **democratic, or balanced, style** has been known to be most effective for children. The key here is to understand the differences in style that exist between you and your partner and overall – aim for balance, agreement, and unity.

In addition to understanding each other's parenting style, it's important to support each other's parenting efforts.

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An easy way to increase confidence in parenting is to work on strengthening parenting skills and receive encouragement and support from your partner.

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The **democratic parenting style** balances age-appropriate child autonomy and parental control. Parenting is nurturing, discipline is consistent, and according to research this balanced style tends to have the best outcomes for children and teens.

## DISCUSSION

// Consider your relationship before and after having kids – What are the significant differences regarding communication, intimacy, conflict, or other topic areas? Discuss the differences you appreciate at each stage and the ones you'd like to work on.

// What parenting myths have you heard? How do these myths influence your parenting style? What myths are tempting to believe?

// How well do you support your partner as a parent? How can you provide additional support and encouragement of his/her parenting style? How can your partner support and encourage you? Discuss how more support and encouragement add to the “you’re on the same team” mentality.

// Consider other parental figures who influence your child(ren) – grandparents, step-parents, co-parents, etc. How do these other “parents” affect the effort you and your partner put into parenting? Discuss how you and your partner can work together to find balance and consistency amongst various parental figures.

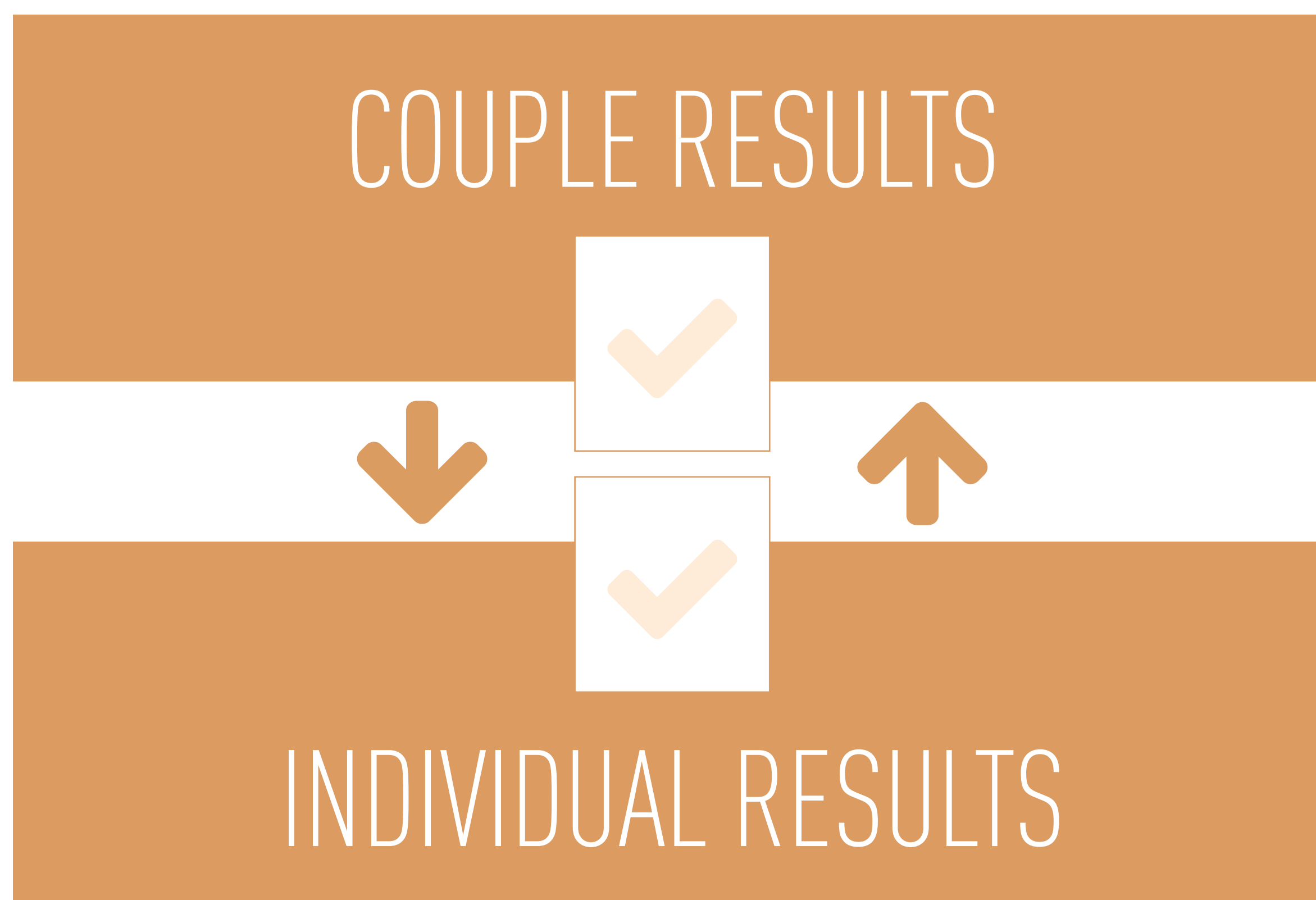
// Examine how you prioritize parenting and your relationship. Discuss how you currently balance these two important parts of your life. What are your expectations for finding balance? How are your partner’s expectations different than yours?

# CHECK IN WITH CHECKUP

## Check in with your Couple Checkup results

by reviewing the *Children & Parenting* or *Step-Parenting* sections of your report.

Are you surprised by the suggested discussion items?



Does this accurately reflect how you feel you and your partner handle parenting?

## TAKEAWAY

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Cultivate an understanding of how you and your partner each parent your children, and how you can support each other to become better parents, while also considering the impact it has on your relationship.

## APPLICATION

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Set aside a few days and document (in a notebook, in your phone, etc.) your parenting interactions with your child(ren) and simultaneously document your relationship satisfaction. Identify any patterns to better understand how your parenting and relationship relate. If you are curious about your parenting style – research the different styles and use your documented interactions as examples to help you figure out which style you gravitate towards.

## NEXT STEPS

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If you are looking to strengthen your parenting skills, check out what your community has to offer as resources. Take a class or join a group of other parents to work on your skills and gain support. If you are interested in understanding more about your relationship and parenting, consider locating a PREPARE/ENRICH Facilitator in your area and taking the Parenting Version of PREPARE/ENRICH.

## SECTION SUGGESTION

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Consider exploring **Family & Friends** or **Balancing I and We** next.