

# **COPARENTING BEHAVIOR CODING SCALES**

**VERSION: 8-22-07**

## **Schoppe-Sullivan Lab**

- Modified from scales developed by Cowan & Cowan (1996)
- Used in the following published papers:
  - Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch (2001)
  - Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Frosch, & McHale (2004)
  - Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Brown, & Szewczyk Sokolowski (2007)
  - Davis, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, & Brown (2009)
  - Schoppe-Sullivan, Weldon, Cook, Davis, & Buckley (2009)

...and others yet to come!

## Coparenting Behavior Coding Scales

### 1. **Pleasure:** Qualities

1. Couple appears to enjoy sharing and collaborating in parental role and is able to demonstrate that during the interaction.
2. Each partner appears to take pleasure in other's relationship with child; is able to watch comfortably partner's individual relationship with child.
3. Partners display playfulness and humor with each other about their respective parenting styles/practices and their relationship with their child.
4. How much the couple looks at one another, laughs, or smiles.

Range of scale:

(5) Very high pleasure: Such expressions of pleasure and appreciation as in (4) are very frequent and of high intensity (e.g., shared laughter, etc.). Couple seems to be getting a "kick" out of the interaction, having a blast.

(4) High pleasure: Partners express/show their enjoyment and appreciation of how their partner plays with their child and of the relationship between their partner and their child. Can share involvement with partner or enjoy watching dyad play. Laughs together frequently.

(3) Moderate pleasure: Parent seems to enjoy partner's relationship with child and parenting with partner. However, enjoyment is not present at all times and is generally muted in some way. Parents' enjoyment of each other is partly inferred rather than directly observed. Smiling or laughing a few clear times.

(2) Low pleasure: Though partners do not necessarily show negative feelings toward each other, parents rarely show enjoyment of partner's relationship with child. Their response to partner's relationship is either **neutral or negative** in tone. Rarely smiling or laughing.

(1) Very low pleasure: Virtually no pleasure visible.

Examples:

1. Is the pair having fun while doing the tasks?
2. Are they sharing clear positive comments, laughing, smiling?

## 2. Warmth: Qualities

1. Parents demonstrate affection and positive regard for each other; laugh, hug, touch, smile, say nice things to each other. Note: Physical affection is rare and if seen, definitely consider a “5”.
2. Responsive/working together – a feeling of connection between partners is visible.
3. Parents provide emotional support, reassurance, and encouragement for each other that is authentic.
4. Generosity of affect, touch, smiles, and self; this generosity seems authentic.

Range of scale:

(5) Very high warmth: Displays of warmth and affection pervade the episode. Playful, perhaps physically affectionate towards one another.

(4) High warmth: Parents openly, clearly demonstrate affection for each other. This regard for each other may be seen through visible displays of affection or inferred through a feeling of connectedness that exists between them, although, this feeling of warmth is not as pervasive as in (5). Frequently say nice things to one another.

(3) Moderate warmth: Parents display a reasonable amount of positive regard for each other. The sense of connectedness is apparent but not striking. Sometimes say nice things to one another.

(2) Low warmth: Parents are less open and relatively tentative in their display of affection for each other. Limited sense of connectedness between parents. Somewhat unresponsive to partner’s affection or gestures.

(1) Very low warmth: Virtually no warmth visible from partners; seem disconnected from each other.

Examples:

1. Looking at one another and laughing or smiling in a positive manner.
2. If one partner is saying something like “I am such a terrible artist,” the other might reassure the first by saying “You did a great job, that picture looks just like you!”

### 3. Cooperation: Qualities

1. Reflects degree to which partners help and support one another in teaching and playing with child.
2. Help and support between partners can be instrumental as well as emotional.

Range of scale:

(5) Very high cooperation: Partners are very frequently actively cooperative. They do not negatively interrupt one another, or distract from other's interventions with child. Parents working together consistently and effortlessly.

(4) High cooperation: Each partner builds on other's efforts to help child; minimum of interrupting or distracting from partner's interventions; cooperation is easy/smooth and frequent. Working together a lot, very actively involved.

(3) Moderate cooperation: Partners generally work with and support each other, though there are times when helping one another lapses and parents appear less in concert. Working together more than 50% of the time, echoing each other's comments, but not necessarily engaging in truly active cooperation.

(2) Low cooperation: Partners are usually not supporting or working with each other; partners will appear to have separate ways of working with their child, though they'll share the same approach on occasion. Working together less than 50% of the time, and coparenting is not very supportive, might even say is more hurtful than helpful.

(1) Very low cooperation: Virtually no effort is made by partners to support and assist each other; parents will appear to be working with the child independently of their partner.

Examples:

1. Parent repeats or elaborates on what the other has said to the child.
2. Partner complies willingly with partner's request for help or task.

Notes: Three is highest score you can get without actively cooperating. Active cooperation means deliberate action by one partner to involve the other partner: Ex: Mother: Let's play Daddy's game. If couple has low level of cooperation (like a 2) and then shows 1-2 instances of active cooperation, bump them up to a 3. If couple has moderate level of cooperation (like a 3) and shows 1-2 instances of active cooperation, bump them up to a 4, etc.

#### 4. **Interactiveness:** Qualities

1. Degree to which parents talk with and engage with each other.
2. Interaction can be both verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal might take the form of giving glances, touch, smiles, or other expressions, and attempting to elicit those from partner.
3. Interaction can be initiated by either partner.
4. Interaction can have a positive and/or a negative emotional tone; rating is more an assessment of quantity of interaction.

Range of scale:

(5) Very high interactiveness: Very frequent interaction between partners. Partners respond eagerly to interaction with one another. Partners talk a lot and frequently go off topic.

(4) High interactiveness: Partners both initiate and respond to interaction with each other. Interaction between parents facilitates family play and can be conversational. Partners must interact with one another, discussing subjects outside of the task. One off topic conversation in the context of high interaction.

(3) Moderate interactiveness: Partners' interactions usually occur around requirements of the task. Periods where partners are less interactive exist. Partners have one or two exchanges with one another, mostly centered around the task at hand.

(2) Low interactiveness: Partners engage with each other as needed, but interaction is brief. Parents rarely talk with each other unless necessary.

(1) Very low interactiveness: Parents barely engage with each other.

Examples (for higher scores):

1. Parents carry on a conversation about their plans for dinner, tomorrow's activities, etc.
2. Partners get sidetracked. For example, the father may want to color the mother's hair pink, and then they start a discussion about pink hair.

## 5. **Displeasure:** Qualities

1. Parents express dislike of partner's style of interacting with child either directly or veiled (i.e., sarcasm).
2. Parents express dislike of the quality of partner's relationship with child. (Dislike can be reaction to how positive the relationship is or to how negative it is.)
3. Parents do not enjoy working together.

Range of scale:

(5) Very high displeasure: Partners are both displeased and/or threatened by other partner's relationship with the child; displeasure can be expressed as jealousy (e.g., "he likes playing with you more than playing with me"). Parents display several clear comments.

(4) High displeasure: One partner (or both) actively shows or says they dislike how the other is parenting, or criticizes other's relationship with child. Statements are overt; feelings are clear. Partner may verbalize one clear comment plus several subtle comments.

(3) Moderate displeasure: Predominantly veiled (sarcastic) or subtle comments or tone during interaction suggest parents' dislike of each other's relationship with their child, or on only one occasion a partner shows overt displeasure. One or two subtle comments or one clear, overt comment from a parent.

(2) Low displeasure: Parents are generally unbothered by partner's relationship with their child; however, they might occasionally jab or otherwise indicate some negative feelings. One subtle comment from one of the partners. Some vague comments are made. Not clear. Not accompanied by negative facial reaction.

(1) Very low displeasure: No displeasure visible.

Examples:

1. A strong example might be the father said to the child "Look, Mommy is 'building-challenged!'"
2. A more subtle example might be if the father said to the child "You drew Mommy taller than Daddy."

## 6. **Coldness:** Qualities

1. Parents seem distant, closed-off, and lack affection for each other.
2. Sense of each parent keeping a distance between him/herself and partner.
3. Parent can show disdain toward partner. Disdain visible through curtness, snubbing, or a general lack of response toward partner and partner's attempts to engage in interaction.
4. Parent seems to withhold affection on purpose or because they have difficulty with intimacy.

Range of scale:

(5) Very high coldness: Non-engagement with partner predominates and appears to be intentional. Parents seem disinterested in partner. Disdain visible.

(4) High coldness: Parents interact with partner, but in a clearly withdrawn or aloof fashion. Captures essence of definition. Parent rejects partner's overtures for closeness (emotional or physical).

(3) Moderate coldness: Parent generally keeps to self during much of the session OR some snubbing (verbal or nonverbal) of partner's attempts to engage or get close to each other (physically or emotionally). One partner says something and the other doesn't respond OR consistent looking up with no response. Emotionally withdrawn.

(2) Low coldness: Some withdrawal visible. Parent is generally open to his/her partner and to their overtures for warmth without necessarily initiating this contact themselves. A slight amount of distance between partners is noticeable. Must have some reason to think partner is emotionally withdrawn.

(1) Very low coldness: Virtually no coldness visible between parents.

Examples:

1. If a mother puts a piece of log on the house and a few seconds later, the father takes it off without telling her, this is a small amount of coldness.
2. If a partner brags to the other that their drawing or building skills are better than theirs.
3. If one partner makes a comment(s) and the other completely disregards it.

Notes:

1. Score using colder parent.
2. To get a score of 4-5, coldness must be intentional. This would happen when one partner makes a comment and the other completely ignores him/her.

## 7. Anger: Qualities

1. Degree to which parents express irritation or dislike toward each other or toward their specific behavior(s).
2. Anger can be expressed in a direct, expressive manner (e.g., sarcasm, irritation), or in a more withholding manner (e.g., by becoming quiet and withdrawn, disengaging from interaction with rejecting or annoyed quality).

Range of scale:

(5) Very high anger: Repeated or continuous hostility is expressed either overtly by parent's yelling, threatening, or blaming partner, or more indirectly through a continual disengagement from and rejection of partner. (For highest level rating, could display one burst of extreme hostility). Typically, though several clear comments.

(4) High anger: Clear hostility aimed at each other or at partner's behavior or requests. Intensity of emotion is clearly quite high and parents have difficulty calming down or letting go of the anger. Partners do not seem out of control, and anger, though quite strong, has some understandable source. One clear, angry comment among other vague angry instances.

(3) Moderate anger: Irritation is shown in a variety of ways (see definition) and lasts for more than just moments or recurs at points throughout the session. One clear, angry comment.

(2) Low anger: Partners show mild irritation with each other's specific behavior. Anger is momentary; partners recover easily and return to non-angry interactions. This irritation may occur one time, and if so would be considered typical. A few vague instances.

(1) Very low anger: No evidence of anger observed.

Examples:

1. If one partner is trying to work on building the house, and is doing it the wrong way, the other partner may say "That's not how you do it." The partner might stop working all together. Both partners seem irritated.
2. Some anger was visible during a building session when a father placed the toy figure of the "mommy" inside of the house innocently and the mother came back at him with "Can the Mommy be outside of the house?!"
3. If one partner repeats something over and over showing some irritation. For example "I have a question. I have a question. I have a question..." (while the other partner and child are engaged in something).



## 8. **Competition:** Qualities

1. Parents try to outdo each other's efforts to teach, work, and play with child.
2. Parents vie to have child respond to their suggestions or to them.
3. Parents might interrupt or talk over one another.

Range of scale:

(5) Very high competition: Efforts to outdo one another's teaching/playing take precedence over helping child to learn/playing with child or may appear completely independent of the child. Several clear intentional instances are displayed.

(4) High competition: Parents may be helping the child to learn/playing with the child, but their main concern is clearly to outdo each other – either in their parenting or in general – parents try to outdo one another throughout session. One clear instance of **intentional** competition plus several more subtle ones are shown.

(3) Moderate competition: Partners are visibly trying to “one up” each other but only on occasion; competition doesn't interfere with child's play or performance. One clear instance of competition is displayed (or a number of more subtle instances). These instances are not considered intentional (intentional instances get at least a “4”).

(2) Low competition: Parents are not engaged in efforts to out-parent or out-do one another for the most part; occasionally a comment or behavior will be made by one partner suggesting that they feel they have a more effective parenting strategy, though it comes across as constructive and not challenging. Partners talk over each other once or twice. Parents “accidentally” work on different parts of the task at the same time. If anything occurs at all, give a 2.

(1) Very low competition: No competition visible. Partners display absolutely no interruptions or other competitive comments.

Examples:

1. One parent might try to discuss something with the child, maybe a lesson on log cabins, and the other parent might interrupt and change the subject.
2. One parent might suggest one color of crayon to the child and the other might hand the child another color.
3. One partner might ask the child “Which drawing do you like better, Mommy's or Daddy's?” Meanwhile, he or she is pointing to their drawing. (High score – intentional.)