Strengthening Families Program by Dr. Karol Kumpfer

Banish the Boulder Family Agreement

Our Agreement: THIS HOME IS BOULDER-FREE

WE AGREE TO BANISH:

- ☐ Sarcasm
- ☐ Put-Downs
- ☐ Crabby-Voice
- ☐ Slash and Burn
- ☐ Hostile Criticism
- ☐ Always-Never
- ☐ Blame-Game
- ☐ Mind-Reading
- ☐ Stonewalling/GasLighting
- ☐ Flooding
- ☐ Take Offense
- ☐ Dumping

THIS HOME IS BOULDER-FREE: Instead of throwing Communication Boulders when we speak, we will:

- ☐ "LUV-Listen"
- ☐ Use "I-Messages"
- ☐ Show Respect
- ☐ Welcome Reminders

Sarcasm: Cutting humor that insults a person's ideas, efforts, or intelligence damages a family member's sense of self and desire to bond. Make a "stop-the-sarcasm" commitment and keep it.

Put-Downs: Mocking remarks or put-downs are disrespectful and hinder family bonding. Choose words that build.

Crabby-Voice: Cross or angry voice tones cause people to withdraw emotionally, and we get less cooperation. We control our voice tones and can speak calmly and respectfully if we practice. Always use a soft voice when addressing hard issues.

Slash and Burn: Yelling, name-calling, insults, or swearing are aggressive and abusive. They render us emotionally unsafe and we lose the love we seek. They have no place in family conversations. Choose to be assertive instead of aggressive.

Hostile Criticism: Hostile, insensitive, or harsh criticism demoralizes instead of builds and rarely gets positive results. Always-Never: Speaking in absolutes is insulting and usually inaccurate, as there are almost always exceptions. Leave those words out.

Blame-Game: Blaming others creates negative feelings and sets people against each other instead of working together. The goal is to fix the problem, not place blame or fight over who is at fault.

Mind-Reading: Implying you know a person's thoughts ("You care more about sports than me") is judgmental. Ask questions to seek understanding and use "LUV-Listening" and "I-Messages" instead of making assertions.

Flooding: Extra-long comments overwhelm kids and come across as lecturing or nagging. Be brief and to the point, andthen ask for feedback—or you'll be tuned out.

Stonewalling/Gas-Lighting: Refusing to admit you have fault to correct or distorting reality to make you feel like whatyou're seeing or feeling isn't real ("It's not MY fault that YOU like quiet time early in the morning when I am TRYING toget ready for my class!")

Take Offense: When we feel blamed or misunderstood, we often take offense and our voice tones become defensive, which puts a fence between us and the person we are talking to. If you start to feel defensive, stop yourself. Take a deep breath. Check your tone of voice; and then ask polite questions and use "LUV-Listening" to better understand their view. Or, make assertive "I-Messages" to keep communication going. If things get hostile, take a break and jointly set a time to revisit the issue when you both feel calm.

Dumping: Bringing up old arguments and injuries is a sure-fire way to kill constructive communication. Stick to the issue at hand. If you have hurtful issues that continue to surface because they haven't been resolved, make an appointment to discuss the troubling issues with the person using the Listening Stick or other techniques you learn in SFP.

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