



ESSENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH MANTRAS FOR CO-PARENTS

Change your brain, change your life. Your thoughts can play a huge role in your behavior and can shape your mood. Here, we have a list of the essential beliefs that promote mental wellness, and ways that you can translate them to fit your life as a co-parent. Read them, speak them aloud, and revisit as needed to keep you on a positive path.

CORE BELIEF	TRANSLATION FOR CO-PARENTS
You are NOT your feelings.	Feeling a certain way does not define you. For example, you are not an “angry person” if you’re still feeling anger about your co-parenting relationship. Similarly, try not to characterize your parenting partner by his/her emotional state. Also, just because you feel a certain way doesn’t mean you have to act on it; you can be frustrated with your parenting partner without acting out that frustration toward him/her or others.
The moment is what it is. This too shall pass.	You may be in a difficult period in your relationship with your co-parent; perhaps you have recently separated, are still working through your parenting agreement, or argue frequently. Pretending your feelings about it aren’t there, or that your situation is different than it is, won’t help you work through your current reality. Give yourself permission to be honest with yourself and others and accept where you’re at right now with the knowledge that things won’t be this way forever. It can be easier to wade through hard times if you’ve instilled in yourself the confidence that your situation is bound to evolve and look brighter in the future.
What you give attention to, you’ll get more of.	Acknowledge things that are going well with your parenting partner; for example, point out something he/she did well, or express appreciation for whatever you’re thankful for about him/her. This doesn’t just pertain to your relationship with your co-parent; you can make a concerted effort to find the positive in all aspects of your life. The more you do this, the more you’ll notice these positive things and there will be a snowball effect that changes your life for the better.

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Only YOU can control your own feelings, thoughts, and actions.	Blaming your parenting partner with statements such as “you make me so angry!” is unproductive and in some ways, unfair. It can often evoke defensiveness and escalate rather than resolve an issue. You’re the only one who can control your behavior, so don’t give your power away to someone else by allowing them to do so. This also means letting go of any efforts to control your parenting partner’s behavior, since this is an impossible feat.
No feeling is BAD. It’s OK not to be OK.	Your feelings don’t need justification; they are as they are. Yes, some correlate to a more positive mood, while others are more negative, but the feelings themselves are not “good” or “bad.” In fact, our feelings serve a purpose: to alert us, to reach us, etc. whatever you may be feeling about your parenting partner, about the dissolution of your romantic relationship, etc., allow yourself to feel that way without needing to find a justification. Give this grace to your parenting partner, as well, without trying immediately to “fix” it. It’s ok for either or both of you not to be “ok.”
You can feel more than one feeling at the same time.	Ambivalent or mixed feelings can be the hardest to move on from because they confuse us and are difficult to process. You may be wondering, for example, how can I still feel love for my ex but be so angry at the same time? Or maybe you’re wondering how you could possibly be grieving the loss of your former partner while also feeling excitement for the future. In reality, humans have the capability to feel many different emotions at the same time, and understanding this can help you to work through them. It can also be reassuring to know that even if you are experiencing emotions that are dragging you down, you can also simultaneously do things to evoke positive, uplifting feelings as well. Use this information to help your child as well, particularly with loyalty conflicts; for ex, you can tell your child that it’s ok to miss one parent and be excited to spend custody time with another.
What’s shareable is bearable.	if you’re struggling with strong and overwhelming emotions, find someone whom you trust to share them with. It’s not a sign of weakness to admit to someone else that you’re having a hard time, and it can often feel freeing to take off the mask and get the truth out into the open.



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