

2. How does it make me feel?
3. Are there times she is justified? Am I paying too little attention to what I'm doing, or insisting I know something about our child that I really don't? Am I not noticing when he is upset about something I am doing or not doing for him?

Are you being honest with yourselves? Here's a pop quiz for gate-keeping mothers.

### Gatekeeper Quiz for Moms<sup>4</sup>



Circle the answer that best describes how you feel.

1. It is part of my job as a parent to positively influence my child's relationship with his/her father.  
False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True
2. It is my job to help my spouse be the best parent that he can be for our child.  
False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True
3. My spouse tries to be a good parent but doesn't know enough about parenting to be the kind of parent my child needs.  
False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True
4. In order to best take care of my child, it is important for me to positively influence my child's relationship with his father.  
False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True
5. My spouse does a pretty good job being involved with our child, but he does not have a good understanding of who our child is and what he/she needs.  
False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True
6. My child benefits from the time he/she spends with his/her father.  
False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True
7. It helps my child's self-esteem to have a good relationship with his/her father.  
False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True

8. Our child would be better off seeing less of his/her father and more of another father figure.

False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True

9. My own parenting is more central to how my child's feels about him- or herself than is my spouse's parenting.

False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True

10. My husband is loving, but he often needs me to tell him what to do or how to do it so he doesn't offend or disappoint our child.

False      Somewhat False      Neutral      Somewhat True      True

If you circled "Somewhat False" or "False" to statements 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7, and "Somewhat True" or "True" to answers to statements 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10, then you are probably gatekeeping in unhelpful ways when co-parenting; you are not supporting the child's other parent in your behaviors or attitudes. It is time to talk to your spouse seriously about your co-parenting partnership.

For starters, think about specific situations in which you believe you acted in reasonable ways, versus situations in which you were a bit unfair. Now consider one of the unfair instances and think about what it would take for you to do it differently next time.

Ingrid and Eddie have three children under the age of six, two boys and a girl. Life is, of course, hectic, and Ingrid has gotten into the habit of leaving Eddie notes with detailed instructions about how to handle his Tuesday and Friday afternoons with the children. On those days, he comes home early and she goes to work until after the children are in bed. Lately, they have been having a fight every week, or at least it seems that way. Last week, Ingrid finally understood Eddie's exasperation after he blurted out in front of the children, "If you want to be a single parent, then go for it. But if you don't, back off!"

We asked Ingrid to write down how she thought she was being protective and how she was being unfair. She made this list:

Protective: I am making sure that Eddie takes enough diapers and wipes so the baby won't be uncomfortable.