Exercise #3 Principle and Compromise (with a sprinkle of emotion)

Vivian and Jasmine have finally worked out a parenting plan where Jasmine comes into the home the second week of every month, from Friday afterschool until Friday to school. In the other weeks, Jasmine has Zoe and Jack from after school on Wednesday until 8:00; these visits are either at Jasmine’s, or she takes them to dinner and to activities. Vivian and Jasmine have also agreed to incorporate the cost of a studio apartment into the budget, so that Vivian has a place to go on the week when Jasmine is at the house. Vivian is proud of the fact that she has been able to earn enough money to cover the rental of the studio by renting it as an Air BnB in the weeks she is not there. “It’s a lot of extra work,” Vivian says, “but this extra work that I am doing is what makes it possible for us to afford Jasmine’s desire to spend one week a month in the house.

They are three months into this arrangement, and have worked out the speed bumps (rules for cleaning, changing the sheets, and how to leave the refrigerator stocked, among other things). But now Jasmine announces an upcoming out-of-town work conference coming up two months from now. She has tagged a couple of extra days on to this conference for a “bit of a holiday”, and wants to switch her parenting week during that month.

Vivian is livid. “After everything I’ve done to accommodate Jasmine’s parenting in exactly the way she wanted it structured, despite the HUGE inconvenience to me, now she expects me to just shift everything around on her whim. I told you she wants to have her cake and eat it too. If that’s the way she wants to operate, she can just forget her parenting time that month. After all, it’s the principle! I give her what she wants but it’s never enough. Now you know what my life has been like. This is the last straw. She can forget it.”

Meanwhile, Jasmine is hollering at her lawyer over the phone. “I haven’t had a holiday in three years. Just because I want to add a couple of days onto a work trip, Vivian goes nuts. She has no idea how hard I work to keep this whole ball of wax from melting. What right does she have to take away my parenting time one month just because I have to work? She’s gotten everything she wants, the house, the kids, and even her own little private studio for her ‘downtime’. But I want a couple of days of downtime and she wants to punish me. For once, I’m not backing down. After all, it’s the principle, if I let her dictate my parenting time she’ll end up taking it all away.”

Worksheet Exercise #3: Principle and Compromise (while not ignoring emotion)

Vivian

1. What is Vivian’s Principle? What can you identify as some of her underlying values?
2. Once you have uncovered her underlying values, how can you move forward with Vivian? In working with her, can the two of you identify a value she can’t compromise on? A value she can compromise on?
3. If Vivian cannot find a place to compromise, what are her chances of being able to adhere to her most important value?
4. In working with Vivian, what are some techniques you can use to help her with emotional regulation?

Jasmine

1. What is Jasmine’s Principle? What can you identify as some of her underlying values?
2. Once you have uncovered her underlying values, how can you move forward with Jasmine? In working with her, can the two of you identify a value she can’t compromise on? A value she can compromise on?
3. If Jasmine cannot find a place to compromise, what are her chances of being able to adhere to her most important value? How can you use this information in working with Jasmine?
4. In working with Jasmine, what are some techniques you can use to help her with emotional regulation?