

COMPENSATORY PARENTING

From parenting out of fear, guilt, or pressure...
to parenting in a way that actually feels right to you...
even when co-parenting with a narcissist

ASHLING PODMORE
PARENT EDUCATOR | CHILDREN'S AUTHOR

DOES THIS FEEL LIKE YOU?

Do you feel like you're **not parenting in the way you wanted to?**

Are you unsure what your parenting should even look like anymore?

Do you feel like you h**aven't quite found your feet** since leaving the relationship?

Do you feel like you **can't parent how you want to**, even if you try?

Are you scared that changing things might create more upset or unpredictability?





ARE YOU LOOKING FOR...

Clarity on **what you might be doing without realising**

Understanding of **why this is happening**

Relection on **what is influcing your parenting decisions**

Insight into **the impact on your child**

A way to **start changing things** gently

If so... you're in the right place

WHAT IS COMPENSATORY PARENTING?

Compensatory parenting is when you start adjusting how you parent to **make up for what's happening in the other home.**

Sometimes you notice you're doing it.
Sometimes you don't.

Sometimes it feels like a choice.
Sometimes it feels like **you don't have one.**

It usually comes from:

- **Love**
- **Protection**
- Wanting to **reduce harm**
- Wanting your child to feel **safe with you**

But here's the part most people don't realise:

You don't need to compensate for the other parent
And doing so can sometimes create **more confusion for your child**

WHY THIS MATTERS

This isn't about doing something wrong

It's about understanding what's happening so you can feel more **in control again.**

When we compensate, we can unintentionally:

- Make feelings seem like something to **fix or avoid**
- Create less **predictability and structure**
- Cause **confusion** when things don't match their experience
- Feel more overwhelmed as a parent ourselves

What children actually need is much simpler:

- **Consistency**
- **Clear boundaries**
- **Communication**

1 OVER-REASSURING & OVERPROTECTING

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Constantly asking “are you okay?”

Trying to fix every feeling straight away

Stepping in quickly to prevent upset when there is perceived conflict



WHY IT HAPPENS:

You know they’re **sensitive to conflict**

You know they have **sad or confusing moments elsewhere**

You want your time together to **feel happier and safe**



YOU THINK:

“I need to make sure they never feel like that again.”

THE IMPACT:

Feelings can start to feel like something to **avoid or fix**

Instead of something to **understand and process**

Your child becomes **unable to manage their emotions on their own** and relies on you to always help

2 AVOIDING BOUNDARIES TO CREATE BALANCE

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Saying yes more than you want to

Letting consequences slide

Routines becoming inconsistent



WHY IT HAPPENS:

The other home feels **harsh or unpredictable**

You feel sorry for them because of **what they're dealing with elsewhere**



YOU THINK:

I don't want to be "that kind of parent"

You are trying to make it easier for your child to distinguish between you.

THE IMPACT:

Less **predictability**

Less **sense of safety**

Children feel safest when things are **clear and consistent.** Despite their resistence to boundaries child need them to **feel safe and secure.**

3 OVER-EXPLAINING OR JUSTIFYING

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

"I'm sure they didn't mean it like that..."

Making justifications or providing explanations for everything

Softening or reinterpreting what actually happened for them, instead of acknowledging the behaviour for what it really is...unfair.



WHY IT HAPPENS:

You don't want them to feel **rejected or to blame**

You want to avoid **conflict or divided loyalty**

You know they still have to go

THE IMPACT:

Too much or too many explanations can create **confusion**

When their experience doesn't match what they're told it can lead to **self-doubt**

It can encourage your child to start over explaining too

It's time to leave compensatory parenting behind and step into something more YOU!

4 TRYING TO MAKE UP FOR THE OTHER HOME

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

- Extra treats, gifts, outings
- Overcompensating with time and attention
- Feeling pressure to make your home the “better” one



WHY IT HAPPENS:

- You don’t like your child to feel let down so you pick up the slack
- You feel guilty that the other parent doesn’t give your child the time or attention they deserve



YOU THINK:

“I just want to give them what they’re not getting.”

THE IMPACT:

- Children don’t need things to be **balanced out**
- They need **emotional safety and consistency**
- They don’t need you to buy their time or love. They just need your support to understand everything.

HOW TO BEGIN CHANGING THIS

YOU DON'T NEED TO CHANGE EVERYTHING AT ONCE...

START HERE:

Reflect honestly

What do you recognise in yourself?

What feels like **you**, and what doesn't?

Pick one thing at a time

Choose **one small change** to focus on

Give yourself time to adjust

Talk to your child

Let them know when things are changing

"I'm going to start doing this differently."

Keep things predictable

Follow through on boundaries

Keep routines steady

GENTLE REMINDERS

YOUR CHILD DOESN'T NEED YOU TO:

Balance out both homes

Pick up the slack

Keep making sure they're okay every second

Do more or give more

THEY NEED YOU TO:

Help them **understand their feelings**

Support them through **disappointment**

Be **consistent and predictable**

Hold **clear, safe boundaries**

Hi, I'm Ashling

I'm a parent educator, childhood and psychology specialist, and children's author
But before any of that... I was just a parent trying to figure this out.



ABOUT ME

Four years ago, I left a domestic violence relationship

And one of the biggest things I realised was...
I wasn't parenting in the way I wanted to.

I was trying to reduce their upset and compensate for the experiences they were having in their other home...
but I was also losing confidence in my own parenting and had truely lost touch with what actually felt important to me.

I was:

- Taking them to the zoo when they'd been promised it... even when I couldn't afford it
- Softening consequences because I felt bad
- Avoiding boundaries to prevent meltdowns
- Changing my tone completely because one of my children reacted to loud voices

What changed things for me was:

- Having more open conversations
- Keeping boundaries clear and consistent
- Matching consequences to behaviour
- Creating a home that felt predictable and safe

And something really important happened...

- Things didn't get worse
- They got calmer

- Fewer meltdowns
- Better communication
- More respect
- A stronger relationship

And I felt like myself again as a parent, more connected, more confident, more in control

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

LINKTR.EE/ASHLINGPODMORE