THE PARENTAL PRENUP

PLANNING TOGETHER FOR YOUR CHILD'S BEST OUTCOME.

We are choosing to be parents together.

We are not making this agreement because we expect our relationship to fail. We are making it because becoming parents changes a relationship, and because some of the pressures ahead may be difficult to understand while we are living through them.

There may be exhaustion, financial pressure, changes in intimacy, loss of freedom, work pressures, anxiety, depression, postnatal illness, disagreements about parenting and times when one or both of us simply aren't ourselves. Knowing this now may help us recognise it later.

We also accept that relationships sometimes end. If ours does, our relationship as parents will continue. We are choosing to think about these things openly, before circumstances decide them for us, and to place our child's best outcome at the centre of that thinking.

1. OUR CHILD COMES FIRST

Our child is not our property and will never be the prize at the end of an argument. When difficult decisions have to be made, we will try to distinguish what we want from what our child needs.

Our child's welfare, safety, stability and continuing relationships come before our anger, jealousy, pride or desire to win.

2. WE WILL LOOK AFTER THE PARENTS TOO

We recognise that pregnancy, childbirth, hormones, sleep deprivation, postnatal illness, anxiety, depression, financial pressure, work and the sheer demands of parenting can profoundly affect people and relationships.

We will try to notice changes in ourselves and each other before interpreting distress as hostility, rejection or failure. If one of us is struggling, we will talk about it and seek appropriate help where necessary.

If you become unwell, I will try to help you. If I become unwell, I give you permission to tell me.

3. WE WILL WORK AT OUR RELATIONSHIP - BUT RESPECT THE RIGHT TO LEAVE

We promise to communicate, listen and, where appropriate, seek help before allowing solvable problems to destroy our relationship. But neither of us owns the other.

If one of us ultimately decides that our relationship is over, the other will respect that decision. We may be devastated, disagree, or ask to talk or reconsider. But we will not use our child, money, threats, intimidation or access to our child to force the other person to remain.

4. ENDING OUR RELATIONSHIP DOES NOT END OUR PARENTHOOD

If we separate, neither of us stops being a parent. One home may need to become our child's primary home, but neither safe and responsible parent should casually become peripheral to our child's life. We will try to preserve our child's ordinary relationship with both parents.

Relationships can fail. Parenthood doesn't.

5. RESPONSIBILITY TIME - NOT VISITING RIGHTS

If we live apart, time with our child will not be treated simply as a right to access or visit. It is Responsibility Time: meals, washing, school, homework, transport, bedtime, illness, discipline, boredom, appointments, celebrations and simply being there.

Where it is safe and practical, we begin with the principle that each parent should continue to carry a meaningful share of real parenting responsibility. FWA proposes 80/20 as a minimum starting point for discussion, not a maximum, entitlement or compulsory formula. Our child's actual needs may require 50/50, 60/40, 70/30, 80/20 or something entirely different. The 80 and the 20 are not allocated by sex.

6. WE WILL NOT MAKE OUR CHILD CHOOSE

We will not deliberately damage our child's relationship with the other parent. We will not use our child as a messenger, spy, weapon, therapist or referee. We will not ask our child to carry adult information they are too young to carry, or make them feel that loving one parent is a betrayal of the other.

PLANNING FOR OUR CHILD'S BEST OUTCOME

7. MONEY DOES NOT BUY PARENTHOOD

Both of us remain financially responsible for our child. Money does not buy access, and difficulties over contact do not remove financial responsibility. Likewise, paying money is not a substitute for emotional and practical parenting where that parenting is possible.

Our child should eventually receive an age-appropriate and truthful understanding of the contribution both parents made to their life - emotional, practical and financial - without being recruited into our financial disputes.

8. SAFETY OVERRIDES THIS AGREEMENT

Nothing in this agreement requires a child to spend time with a parent where there is a genuine risk of harm. Where there are serious concerns about violence, abuse, coercion, addiction, mental illness or another risk to our child, we will seek appropriate professional help and safeguards.

The child's welfare comes before the agreement.

9. WE WILL LISTEN AS OUR CHILD GROWS

The arrangement that works for a toddler may not work for a teenager. Our child's wishes, friendships, education, health, independence and developing understanding will increasingly matter. We therefore promise not to treat any parenting arrangement as something we own forever.

The arrangement belongs to the child's life, not ours.

10. WE WILL APPLY THE FUTURE CHILD TEST

During difficult times we will occasionally ask ourselves: If our child could see everything we are doing now and asked us about it when they were 25, would we be comfortable explaining our behaviour?

We cannot promise to behave perfectly. We can promise to remember that today's argument may one day become part of our child's understanding of their childhood.

11. WE WILL TRY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS BEFORE WE FIGHT THEM

If we cannot agree, we will try conversation, mediation or appropriate professional advice before turning disagreement into prolonged conflict, wherever circumstances make that safe and reasonable. Neither of us promises never to go to court. We promise not to make conflict itself the objective.

12. WE WILL REMEMBER WHY WE SIGNED THIS

We know that life will not necessarily be easy. We will change. Our child will change. Circumstances we cannot presently imagine may arrive. This document cannot tell our future selves what every answer should be. It can remind us of the principles we agreed while we were able to think openly and calmly about what would be best for our child.

OUR CHILD COMES FIRST. • NEITHER OF US OWNS THE OTHER. • NEITHER OF US OWNS OUR CHILD.
FREEDOM DOES NOT CANCEL RESPONSIBILITY. • RIGHTS FOLLOW RESPONSIBILITY.

Parent 1: _____ Date: _____

Parent 2: _____ Date: _____

For our child / children: _____ _____

The FWA Parental Prenup is a voluntary framework for thinking and planning around parenthood. It is not a contract determining future child arrangements or a substitute for legal advice. In England and Wales, the welfare of the child remains paramount.