

Common *ties*

A Newsletter for Families Parenting Apart

Healthy Co-Parenting

What IS “co-parenting”?

Co-parenting refers to how parents work together when they are raising a child. After divorce or separation, it can be hard for parents to separate the feelings they have toward one another from their duties as parents. However, one of the most helpful things parents can do for their child’s well-being is to put away their anger and cooperate in parenting.

Parents must learn to co-parent in a way that makes it easier for children to comfortably communicate, visit or live with each parent. Focusing on the needs of the children rather than frustration with each other is best. A successful co-parenting relationship is one that involves both parents working together to meet the day-to-day, month-to-month and year-to-year needs of their children.

Many people deal with difficult situations at work using negotiation and teamwork skills, yet forget to use these same skills when co-parenting with their former partner.

Parents try to cooperate so that they can co-parent their children?

Benefits of working together as co-parents following divorce or separation include:

- Children are exposed to less conflict.
- Children get their needs met by both parents.
- Children feel secure and not abandoned.
- Children are not put in the middle.
- Children are less likely to feel responsible for the needs of their parents.

There are advantages for parents as well:

- Less pressure on one parent to take on full responsibility for all decisions.
- Reduced legal conflict.
- Reduced stress for the children and both parents.

Source: Cooperative Extension; University of Wisconsin-Extension



“Two heads are better than one.”

-Polish Proverb

READ MORE ABOUT IT:



For Your Children:

Ricci, Isolina (2006). *Mom's House, Dad's House for Kids: Feeling at Home in One Home or Two*. Dr. Ricci adapts her classic book and provides older children and parents practical advice to build resiliency and move forward.

Winchester, Kent & Beyer, Roberta (2001). *What in the World Do You Do When Your Parents Divorce? A Survival Guide for Kids*. Written in simple, direct language this book answers questions that kids might have about how divorce will change their family.

For you...

Ahron, Constance (2004). *We're Still Family: What Grown Children Have to Say About Their Parents' Divorce*. This book revisits children 20 years after their first interviews when they were children of divorce. Their insights helps provide hope for parents that their children can come through divorce as strong people with good relationships.



Parenting Plans

Parenting plans help you anticipate challenges and minimize stress for you and your children. Planning ahead before you are in the middle of situation keeps your mind clearer and helps you think rationally. Mediation can be a great time to finalize details to a parenting plan. Consider:

- **Residential Arrangements:** Keep in mind what is best for the children and how placement can support their relationship with both parents.
- **Daily Decisions and Activities:** Establish guidelines around the daily decisions from haircuts to sports teams and lessons. Agree when one parent can decide and when both need to be involved.
- **School Decisions:** Decide how you will communicate on these important issues.
- **Family Relationships:** Decide how children can continue to have meaningful contact with



extended family members.

- **Vacations, Holidays and Special Days:** Make special efforts to continue the traditions that were in place prior to the divorce.
- **Religion & Cultural Heritage:** Discuss each of your views and intentions for the children to participate or not participate in these activities.
- **Financial Responsibilities:** Consider ALL future expenses like clothes, school supplies, medical bills, education and decide who will pay for what.

The Wisconsin Parenting Plan form is available at <http://blogs.ces.uwex.edu/co-parenting/supplemental-resources/>

The Keys For Your Child's Future

Here are 8 hidden keys that separated and divorced parents can use to build a better future for their child. Best of all, they're free, can be used immediately, and used regardless of what one's co-parent is doing.

1. Being civil to each other in front of your children
2. Keeping your children out of an adult role
3. Sharing 10 good things about their other parent
4. Celebrating what they get to do with their other parent

5. Cheerfully encouraging calls to their other parent
6. Promptly sharing child-related information
7. Staying out of unnecessary legal combat
8. Enjoying and admiring your Children

Source: www.uptoparents.org



Resilience in Tough Times



Experts say:

Resilient families have a flexible structure that they can modify to fit their needs and challenges over time, rather than holding a rigid conception of family roles and rules. This allows the family to adapt to changes which may come about through crisis or adversity. Resilient families rebound and reorganize in the face of challenge, rather than returning to the way things were before the crisis. (Walsh, F. 2006 *Strengthening Family Resilience*. New York: The Guilford Press)

In other words:

“Gifted are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape.” If we see the bigger picture of what the important issues are, we can be ready for some of the changes thrown our way. Maybe we need to change the rules and share in the decision making. We often get in a rut of thinking there is only one way to accomplish our goal--be open to new ideas and new ways of thinking.

What you can do:

Think out of the box! Have you ever had breakfast for dinner? Thinking of different ways to approach a situation can help you realize there is more than one solution. Traditions are important in our life, but we may need to create new traditions to meet the changing needs in our family. Who says holidays and birthdays can only be celebrated on one specific day? Being flexible makes it easier for everyone to cope.

Our Pledge to our Children:

There are about 10,000 minutes in a week. When parents live apart most children see them together for about 4 of those minutes. This leaves the parents about 9,996 minutes when they can talk about any topic, no matter how difficult or emotional. Is it really selfish for the children to ask that the 4 minutes when they see their parents together be consistently peaceful? Make this pledge:

*We now agree that all times when our children see us together or hear us speaking **belong to our children**. This time is entirely for meeting their needs, including especially their need to see us act as responsible adults who work together for them. For these few minutes we will not argue or deal with difficult issues. Our children deserve this gift.*

Regardless of what my co-parent does or how I think I've been treated, I will always speak and act as a courteous and responsible adult during:

- All pick-ups and drop-offs.
- All other times our children see us together.
- Any communication between us that our children can hear or see.

With this agreement each of us will have the benefit of knowing that our children will be safer and happier—and that we can approach all family encounters confident of a civil time.

TAKE AWAY TIPS:

What parents can do for their children



Parents who cooperate reduce stress and pressure on their children and themselves.

Creating a written parenting plan now helps reduce conflict in the future.

Keeping your children's needs in mind helps build a better future for all of you.

Being flexible makes it easier for everyone to cope.

Children don't see the two of you together for very many minutes. Strive to make that time peaceful. It is a gift you can give your children.





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Other Resources:

www.nptoparents.org

www.proudtoparent.org

www.whileweheal.org

www.betweenworlds.org

www.wisdomforseparatedparents.org

www.wecanparenttogether.org

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