

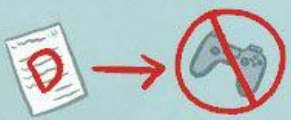
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CO-PARENTING RULES FOR THE NEWLY DIVORCE PARENT

- 1 ACKNOWLEDGE**
Acknowledge the other parent's rights and opinions.
- 2 COMMUNICATE**
Let your child communicate with the other parent. Keep the lines of communication open.
- 3 TEAMWORK**
Decide on rules for technology usage, homework, curfews, etc -as a team.
- 4 RESPECT**
Respect your ex's parenting style. Different doesn't necessarily mean wrong.
- 5 BOUNDARIES**
You are not in charge of how your child feels about the other parent.
- 6 KEEP TRYING**
Co-parenting is not easy. You will BOTH make mistakes. Don't be afraid to try new ways to improve your co-parenting relationship.

*AND WHATEVER HAPPENS, DON'T GIVE UP!
YOUR CHILD IS DEPENDING ON YOU!*

Tips to Reduce the Psychological Toll of Divorce on Children



Use consistent discipline



Don't put kids in the middle



Co-parent peacefully

Maintain a healthy relationship with your child

Help your child feel safe and secure



Monitor adolescents closely



Teach specific coping skills



Empower your child

10

Co-Parenting Success Tips

01

Choose to be a good co-parent

Parenting is not easy and co-parenting with an ex is even harder. Choosing to be a good co-parent is different from choosing to be a good parent. It's recognizing that you're in it together even after your divorce and making a conscious choice to make it work.

02

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Respect yourself, respect your ex, and respect your children.

03

Keep to a regular schedule

You may need to change the schedule as life changes but having a consistent schedule makes transitions easier for everyone.

04

Be flexible

While you need to keep a regular schedule, you both need to be flexible when it comes to time with extended family and special events.

05

Talk

You have to talk to each other regularly to stay on the same page about your kids.

06

Be a team

When it comes to major health, education or discipline issues, work together.

07

Pick your battles

You are not going to love everything your ex does. Accept it and decide what is really worth bringing up.

08

Honor each other's values

Have an honest conversation with your ex about what is most important when it comes to your children. Listen with intention, share honestly and respect each other's values.

09

Give your ex the benefit of the doubt

Your kids will say all kinds of things. Always respond by giving your ex the benefit of the doubt.

10

Don't give up

It's not always going to be easy. Just don't give up. Get professional support such as mediation if it's not working.

6 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL CO-PARENTING



PETERSON
WHITE



LEARN HOW TO COMMUNICATE



Communication for co-parents is key. Parenting is difficult enough already, but having to do it between two households can get confusing, especially at first. Find an effective communication strategy that works for your family and keep conversations open.

PUT YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS FIRST

When in doubt, consider your child's best interests. It can be easy to get caught up in emotions when you're parenting with your ex. If it seems like you two are about to engage in an argument, take a step back and think about what's best for your child.



STICK TO YOUR PARENTING PLAN



Your parenting plan should cover how you will raise your children, custody arrangements, visitation schedule, and more. Once the courts finalize it, it's best to refer back to it for any issues and avoid deviating from it unless it's absolutely necessary.

AVOID BADMOUTHING YOUR CO-PARENT

Divorces can be extra difficult for your children. To help your kids get through the transition as smoothly as possible, do not argue or talk badly about their other parent. This will help their relationship continue to grow without any biases.



BE PATIENT AND STAY POSITIVE



As a new co-parent, adjusting to the new situation can take some time for your entire family. If someone is struggling, try to be patient and keep a positive outlook. This can also help show your kids that you are focused on raising them and making them feel loved.

DON'T NEGLECT YOURSELF

Self-care plays a significant role in co-parenting successfully. Reach out to close friends, try a new hobby, or join a support group. Taking time to care for yourself is healthy and it'll help you show up for your kids in the long run.



The Secrets of Successful Coparenting

It can be hard to focus on the big picture all the time, but experts say you should keep this research-backed advice in mind.

DO

- Almost everyone has a list of things they think their ex did wrong—a tally of emotional IOUs that never got paid—but try to cancel the debts. Make like Elsa and “Let It Go.”
- Standardize routines at the two homes as much as possible.
- Find and accept support—whether it’s from a coparenting counselor or class (which many courts are ordering these days), a therapist, or friends and family.
- Choose your battles with your ex carefully. And before telling your kids about any of these frustrations, consider whether the knowledge will truly benefit them.
- Although you may be unhappy that your kids could end up with a stepparent and new siblings, embrace a broader notion of family so that these changes will be easier for your children.
- Find a way to cut through the layers of pain and frustration and communicate effectively. Many swear by a policy of acknowledging texts and emails from a coparent promptly.
- Put on a happy face whenever your kids tell you about fun times with the other parent. This shows that love and loyalty don’t require choosing sides—and believing that is what frees them to enjoy their whole life.
- Google “children’s bill of rights in divorce.” There are

many versions, and Dr. Robert Emery’s includes: “The right not to have to be responsible for the burden of either of your parents’ emotional problems.”

DON'T

- Compare your child with the other parent in a negative way.
- Buy gifts or bend rules out of guilt or a desire to be the preferred parent.
- Box out new partners. Discussions that include every adult involved in the child’s daily life can be invaluable.
- Ask your child to agree that getting a divorce was the right decision.
- Rationalize how giving in to your bitterness or jealousy is in your kids’ best interest. Take, for example, telling them they can’t depend on their flaky father. You’re just shielding them from being disappointed, right? No. Try to look at things from their perspective, not yours.
- Treat your child like a fellow victim or a confidant, sharing money woes, details about your relationship, or the full brunt of your sadness or anger.
- Let yourself hate your ex more than you love your kids.
- Have controversial discussions when your kids are around.
- Use your kids as a go-between to deliver messages or pump them for information about the other parent.

Sources: Jann Blackstone and David L. Hill, M.D., coauthors of *Co-parenting Through Separation and Divorce*; Robert E. Emery, Ph.D., author of *Two Homes, One Childhood*; and Deesha Philyaw and Michael D. Thomas, coauthors of *Co-parenting 101*.



1 Have and keep an exact schedule of visitation hours.

Children are confused by separation, divorce, and all the new rules of living apart. Typically, they really miss the absent parent and want their old family back. The most important thing parents can do is to continue to nurture their children and provide structure. Honor family routines and rituals for meal times, naps, playtime, and bedtimes so that children experience some feelings of stability and continuity. Plan a schedule for children to spend time with the other parent and keep to it.

2 Speak positively about (don't badmouth) the other parent.

When parents say mean and unkind things about the other parent, children feel like they are being put down as well. The Donny Poem by Lofas and Roosevelt in the 1975 book, *Living in Step*, illustrates this point beautifully: "My Mom says, 'My Dad is no good.' My Dad says, 'My Mom is no good.' So, I must be no good!"

3 Remember that parenting is forever!

Only "ex-spouses" exist, not "ex-parents." Children need to know that their relationship with BOTH parents will continue, whenever possible.

4 Know and use "emotional etiquette" when talking to an "ex" within earshot of a child.

Show understanding of a child's general confusion and lack of understanding of what is happening. Don't add to the stress by talking about "grown up" issues in his/her presence. Imagine what the child is experiencing and understanding with his/her limited abilities to express thoughts and feelings.

5 The child should NOT experience and partake in negative feelings about the "ex."

Children are already adversely affected by divorce without this added type of stress. Babies and toddlers typically have changes in sleeping and eating patterns, and cry more. Two and three-year-olds often display frequent emotional shifts, playing happily one minute and screaming the next. Older children have more nightmares. Help ALL children have a secure attachment with the other parent and do not force them to choose sides.



6

Children should NOT be pumped for information about the other parent after visits.

Children are not pawns in a game. Respect the privacy of the other household. Really listen if the child needs to talk.

7

Children are NOT to be used as messengers for anything.

Children do not want to feel pressured should they say something wrong and mess something up. Deliver messages personally. Talk about and agree on matters that relate to the child's needs so he/she feels important and loved.

8

Check with the other parent(s) about clothes and needed supplies.

Keep other relatives, child care providers, and babysitters informed about needs and family changes so that they can understand how to best care for the children.

9

Keep promises to the child(ren).

Give children the guiding love they need to succeed in this world. Reassure them of your love and commitment by doing what you say you will. Really LISTEN to what they have to say. Know that children want and need boundaries and to do the right thing. They will test your parental authority. That's their job. Set firm and loving limits.

10

Be on time.

Fifteen minutes can seem like an entire afternoon to a young child. Minds race and anxiety builds when a parent is not there when expected. Call if lateness cannot be avoided. Give your child enough time to say good-bye to you and warm up to the other parent when it is time to leave.

Co-Parenting

Co-Parenting—or “shared parenting”—is a way for divorced, separated, or never-married parents to approach the challenges of raising children *together* even when they’ve chosen not to live together or maintain an intimate relationship with each other.

Why is co-parenting so important for children?

- ❑ Children find comfort in knowing both parents love them and are putting them first.
- ❑ Children learn about commitment, responsibility and selflessness when they watch two adults willing to work together to make that happen.
- ❑ Children find security and safety in the consistent routine, rules, etc. of co-parenting.
- ❑ It’s easier for children to operate in daily life when both parents are aware of schedules, struggles, emergency contacts, and share school information, sports team schedules, medical appointments, etc.

How can parents get started with co-parenting?

- ❑ **COMMUNICATE:** Be willing to listen, focus on talking openly about your children (not past issues)
- ❑ **COMPROMISE:** Be open to partner’s concerns, thoughts and ideas
- ❑ **CREATE:** Write a “Parenting Plan” together, including an agreement on broad strategies as well as homework rules, curfews, allowance, etc.

What can get in the way of successful co-parenting?

- ❑ The strain of parents’ personal relationship, loss of trust which often follows separation/divorce
- ❑ Negative remarks about other parent
- ❑ Using your child to “punish” that parent
- ❑ Inconsistent discipline/routine
- ❑ Unwillingness to compromise (Co-parents often have different ways to diffuse a situation [i.e. humor vs. affection] which is actually healthy for the child, another reason why co-parenting is so beneficial.)
- ❑ An uncooperative partner (Try your best to keep your emotions in check, focus on the practical and your child’s best interest. Consider pulling in a third adult whom you both respect to help.)

Learn more online at www.scanva.org/prc

**Are you co-parenting?
Keep the focus on your
children and follow these tips:**

WITH YOUR CHILD:

- #1** Make it clear that you BOTH love your children and are working together for them.
- #2** Remind them when (and for how long) they will be going to the other parent’s house in advance so they will be prepared.
- #3** Agree to have the visiting parent drop off your child after a visit. By picking them up from the other parent, you may be encroaching on important bonding time.
- #4** When your child returns, keep things low-key. Try to follow a routine each time they return, such as having a special dinner or watching a movie together. Don’t ask irrelevant questions about the other parent.

WITH YOUR CO-PARENT:

- #1** Parent as a team. Try to agree with your co-parent on basic rules regarding homework, dinner and bedtimes. Family-wide rules, routines and disciplines that your child has to follow in both homes can be helpful. When rules are different, be clear, patient and consistent in your own home.
- #2** Agree to communicate without sarcasm, eye-rolling or complaints.
- #3** Set aside anger and hurt feelings. Have peaceful, consistent and purposeful conversations. Set a business-like tone, make requests rather than demands (“Would you be willing to...?”), listen, show restraint, talk openly and keep your conversations child-focused.
- #4** Consider the transition between homes and its impact on children and adults. Make sure if the child is punished or rewarded for behavior at one parent’s house that this is reinforced at the other parent’s house.

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DO YOU REACT OR RESPOND TO YOUR CO-PARENT



I know you did that on purpose!

You never put the kids first!

All you think about is yourself!

This is why the kids don't want to be with you



Can we work together to find a solution for the kids?

Let's talk about what the kids say to each of us about this.

Ultimately, the choice is yours, but I'd like to tell you what the kids say

I don't want to argue with you, I'd like to find a solution.

WHICH WILL PROMOTE POSITIVE CO-PARENTING?

WHAT YOU SAY TO YOUR EX MATTERS.

For this & other great co-parenting tips, head to:

www.karenbeckerlifecoach.com

6 Holiday Co-Parenting Tips for the Recently Divorced

The holiday season can be stressful for anyone, but it can be especially trying for children following a divorce. If you've recently divorced, consider these holiday co-parenting tips to make the season bright for your kids.

1. Seek professional counseling early on.



If you see the following signs of emotional distress, arrange for your child to speak with a counselor as.s.p. You should also let your kids know it's OK to talk about the divorce and their feelings with you or another trusted adult.

Whether the holiday season is just around the corner or it's the middle of summer, many children benefit when given the opportunity to talk things through with a counselor who specializes in helping kids cope during and after a divorce.

2. Look for signs of emotional duress.



Signs include: lashing out at parents, depression or extended periods of sadness, spending more time than usual alone in his or her room, grades suffering, frequently tardy or missing class, missing extracurricular activities or practices, getting into trouble more frequently, visiting the school nurse pretending to be sick, approaching the school counselor on his or her own.

3. Don't overcompensate with lavish gifts.



Some people believe it's a good idea to dramatically change holiday traditions after a divorce – Disney cruise, Aspen ski trip – but that may not be the best idea. Ask your kids what they want to do. If you have always opened presents Christmas morning and now plan to open gifts Christmas Eve, some kids might not be OK with that.

Kids are smarter than you think -- especially teenagers. If you load your children up with expensive gifts to make them feel better or to compete with your ex, it could backfire on you. Older kids may assume you're trying to buy their love.

4. Keep holiday traditions alive.



5. Try to be flexible about holiday schedules, especially early on.



If the parents are at each other's throats, that just makes things harder on children during the holidays. Be flexible about holiday visitation and remain civil with your ex in front of the kid (always).

While your divorce agreement should spell out clear guidelines for holiday visitation, try to be flexible if it will put your child at ease. Some parents split holiday days or even open presents together if they are on good terms.

6. Just behave for the sake of the kids.



CO-PARENTING & DIVORCE

6 Guiding Principles for Success

Adapted from Parents.com

Divorce is never planned from the beginning. Once the initial shock is that follows divorce over, there may be a struggle to define new family relationships. Parents are also left to learn new ways of co-parenting. They need to create a new village, or rebuild existing ones, to help care for families. Co-parenting is not a simple task. As you continue on your journey of co-parenting, consider adopting the following behaviors:

Accept what is



We must accept the end of the marriage before we can enter into a healthy co-parenting relationship. If you are still trying to figure out why or how the marriage ended, it will blur your ability to treat your ex in a loving way. Do not rush yourself through this important process.

Put the children first every day



Live with intention. Find a way to remind yourself that today you will put the children first and you will treat your co-parent with love and respect. Create a mantra and repeat it as needed. For example, "Model loving behavior" is a great mantra to repeat throughout the day.

Compliment your ex



When your children share a story with you about your ex, challenge yourself to compliment your ex's parenting. There are so many opportunities to show your kids that you see good in their other parent.

Say sorry



If you mess up and talk down to or about your ex in front of the kids, do the right thing and apologize. The ego must be set aside when co-parenting. Set a good example for your children and ease any tension that may have been caused.

Keep some pre-divorce traditions



It's okay to still celebrate your children's birthdays together. It is a priceless gift to the birthday child. It also offers a full family tradition for their memory bank and it models loving behavior and well-placed priorities.

Learn from your mistakes



It is okay to mess up as a parent and an ex-spouse. It is an opportunity for growth. When you find yourself breaking one of your own personal co-parenting commandments, hold yourself accountable. Spend some time before bed, reviewing your behavior for the day.