

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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