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ARTICLES & INSIGHTS

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Six Essential Co-Parenting Tips for Divorced Couples

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The term “co-parenting” describes the process where two parents work together to raise a child even though they are divorced or separated and no longer live together. The manner in which parents separate will determine the parents’ ability to co-parent, and this will further impact the well-being and future of the children. Neither separation nor divorce terminates one’s responsibility to parent when children are involved. It is important during the separation process for parents to identify the reasons behind their separation and the ripple effect it can have on one’s ability to co-parent. While, as a married couple you may not be able to live together, as parents and for the sake of your children, you must figure out how to manage these issues. Divorcing parents have to make sure the problems they experienced as a couple do not cloud their desire to create a healthy and positive environment for their children. Children don’t get to choose their parents, nor their family circumstances. Divorce is difficult for all involved, including the children. The emotional turmoil caused by divorce can create angst and anxiety for children. It is essential for parents to understand what co-parenting entails. Here are a few pointers for divorcing couples struggling with the concept of co-parenting:

1. Identify the best method of communication.

“Can we talk?” “Should we email?” “Can we schedule weekly meetings to review calendars of upcoming events?” “Do we agree not to communicate through the children?”

2. Outline the terms of the custody schedule and degrees of flexibility.

Having a consistent plan is beneficial for everyone. However, both parties should consider how to handle schedule changes that may arise. How will these be handled? Some degree of flexibility is imperative because as they say, “life happens.”

3. Acknowledge your individual parenting styles.

“Can we keep similar routines with regard to bedtime, activities, types of movies to

watch, sleepover rules?" As you can imagine, inconsistent parenting styles as children get older can create unhealthy situations for your children whereby they begin to exert control because of your differences, playing one parent over the other. Be honest about your individual parenting styles and then set boundaries that work within that framework.

4. Set an example.

Allow the children to witness positive exchanges between the parents. Remember, your children have DNA from both of you.

5. Put your children first.

In order to successfully co-parent your children, you must put your children's needs above your own. Often this may mean that you feel trampled on or worse yet, kicked in the backside and at times, this may very well happen. However, the ultimate objective is to raise a healthy, happy, and well-adjusted child.

6. Last, be honest with one another.

Co-parenting requires honesty between the parents. Both of you should be on the same page regarding your children and being on the same page means that, at times, you may have to admit the need for help or you may need advice on a situation. Remember, if you had not separated, that other parent would have been there for the asking.

Co-Parenting is tough, and it takes work, but your children are worth it. Co-Parenting is a conscious decision that you can make and one that will have long-lasting consequences for your children. Good luck!

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