

Transitioning from Spouses to Co-Parents

Adjustment to a New Relationship

Transitioning to becoming a co-parent from being a spouse can be a challenging experience. Usually, it feels strange to change communication styles. This typically can be awkward. You will need to change your communication style (how you talk to each other and what topics you discuss). To make this process easier, I encourage co-parents to apply etiquette and conventional rules. The formula is to be polite, respectful, and business-like in behavior. Your goal is to support your child to become well-adjusted. Your new transition from a spouse to a parent shares a common purpose with your co-parent, the focus of your child's best needs. You need to interact respectfully, share information about the development of your children, and find productive solutions to problems. All the communication you have with your co-parent is to be using a business-like model. This guide will help you to avoid getting overly emotional and helps you to get straight-to-the-point (factual).

Preparing for "Business" Interactions

Remember, your focus and all topics with the other parent is now your children. Keep the communication open to sharing important information. Keep your communications polite, respectful, and business-like. All conversations about personal information are not appropriate. Do not allow your children to be the messenger to carry messages to the other parent for you. Keep adult conversations separate from your children! Do not let your children overhear any conversations.

All communications are to be fully prepared, to help both parties remain calm. Stick to informational facts. Do not enter judgments, assumptions, or opinions. Outline your points you would like to discuss in advance. Keep emotions out of your communication. You must continuously do a self-check; Is there something you can let go of? Are there solutions present for you without involving the other parent? Be honest with yourself and self-evaluate whatever you might contribute to the difficulty of poor communication. Are you justifying yourself? Are you making assumptions, blaming, manipulating, avoiding issues? Are you responsible for the problems? Do you interrupt or debate your co-parent? Check yourself on these points to help strengthen communications with your co-parent.

Conversation Structure

What Information is to Be Discussed:

- Emergencies
- Positive accounts and your child's achievements

- Medical (appointments, results of tests, up-to-date information regarding recent appointments, medicines, symptoms, general health concerns, and observations, school or events missed due to illness)
- Academic school (important information and dates for upcoming school or school events and dates of homework assignments due, dates of parent-teacher meetings, academic or behavioral issues progress or concerns)
- Social (important dates or information for upcoming social events such as sleepovers, parties, or activities, logistics for transportation and any items needed with the child, and who will be following through purchasing of gifts, transportation needs, or items needed for the event)
- Home (changes to normal routines, house rules, and discipline approaches)

This guide is a start to effectively co-parent. It is not meant to eliminate any other potentials needed in discussions for co-parenting.

Important Facts:

Your child is not to miss out on social, athletic, school, or extracurricular events because your child has two households.

Both parents should have the privilege to watch their child events, to cheer or praise them.

Recommendation best results: both parents should make a point to be on email, phone, or other mail listings to be notified directly by school, coaches, or other clubs about dates, times, and locations of events. Direct access to this information for each parent reduces additional communications between households and reduces the possibility of miscommunications or one parent forgetting to inform the other parent.

Take responsibility for getting the information for yourself directly from the source.

Recommendations: Schools, teams, and clubs often have email and phone listings and can accommodate more than one contact point for a family.

If you're the primary contact completing information for an organization or event, inform the other parent. Submit the other parent's contact information, with their permission, to receive information directly. Electronic choices for sharing information and calendars are the best strategy to use. Keep your child out of the role of being a messenger. The more you can automate systems for sharing information, you reduce possibilities for conflict!

2. Approach parenting issues.

Apply your best skills. Prepare and remind yourself *you want to make your best participation in the parenting relationship because you recognize that this is best for your kids.*

BEST COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Manage emotions. If you feel yourself getting angry or impatient, heightened emotions, regain your composure remember your common purpose of your children.

Perceptions: Be respectful, remember everyone has a viewpoint.

Be a Good Listener Summarize what you understood. Most problems arise when another point of view is not clearly understood. Repeat in summary to start good communication.

Realistic Expectations. Remember to phrase all requests as a request, not a demand.

Basic rules of politeness. Use basic rules of politeness such as "please" and "thank you." Validate other perspectives. Everyone wants to be acknowledged and appreciated.

Summarize all agreements or changes. Always confirm agreements or changes, consider a follow-up email that summarizes any specific agreements

Applying the above strategies will help you build a new relationship as co-parents. The goal is for both of you to share the privilege of raising your children to be well-adjusted adults. Learning new structures for interacting, applying a business-like formula for communication, and having new boundaries about what you discuss will support a successful transition from spouses to co-parent. Your children will benefit by reducing their symptoms of stress as parental conflict decreases. Applying these strategies is well worth the effort!

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