



12 TIPS FOR Successful Post-Divorce Co-Parenting

Co-parenting with an ex is seldom easy. The thought of close collaboration with the person you just divorced may bring on a panic attack or at least a bad case of heartburn. But setting aside your personal issues and developing an amicable co-parenting relationship is possible and highly desirable for your children. They want and need to keep both of you in their lives.

This Tip Sheet can help you deal constructively with the most common problems you are likely to encounter. These tips will enable you maintain your sanity, minimize conflict, and provide your children with the structure and consistency they need to feel safe and loved.

#1 DEFUSE ANGER BY DETACHING

Anger is the most common reason that parenting plans fail. The best way to solve the anger associated with

the shared parenting is to detach yourselves from each other emotionally. Try to see your former spouse, not as a failed life partner, but as your children's other parent. One technique that may work is to treat your ex like a business associate. Think of each contact with him or her about the children as a business meeting. Develop an agenda and stick to it.

#2 STICK WITH THE SCHEDULE

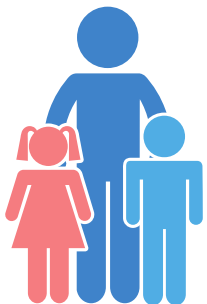


Seeing the kids whenever you feel like it or whenever you have the time is not going to work. Children need structure to feel secure and develop normally. Simply showing up to see your kids at odd times causes stress on the children and their other parent. You must make time for your children based on what they need, not what you need.

Stick with the parenting schedule as if it is the most important thing in your life. Your children are expecting you. Think about how they feel when they are all packed up and ready to go and you show up two hours late or not at all. What does that tell your children about how much they matter to you? Imagine how they are affected when you don't get them home until after midnight and they have to get up six hours later for school?

If you know you will be late, let your ex-spouse and children know immediately. Better yet, plan ahead, reschedule activities that interfere with your parenting schedule, and don't be late.

#3 REALIZE YOU CANNOT CONTROL YOUR EX-SPOUSE'S PARENTING



Divorced parents often differ in the parenting styles and opinions on how children should be raised. Differences of opinion on everything from diet to discipline and from hairstyles to hygiene are common. Some parents run a tight ship; others prefer a more relaxed environment. Differences in parenting styles are apt to become even more pronounced once you are in separate households.

In most cases, when one parent describes the other as inept, it is simply a difference in parenting styles. Do you actually believe the other parent would hurt your children? If the answer is no, then you need to relax and learn to accept what you cannot change.

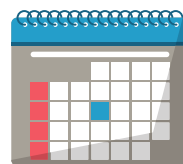
For example, you can't control what your spouse feeds or doesn't feed your children, so long as she doesn't let them go hungry. But if good nutrition is your concern, think about what you can do. You can feed your children properly when they are with you. You can pay for their school lunches or breakfasts. If the children are really in danger, a court will be willing to

intervene. Otherwise, let it go and do the best you can while they are with you.

If you couldn't change your spouse while you were married, you certainly can't change him now. The only thing you can control is yourself and how you parent. Unless your spouse is guilty of child abuse or neglect, no court is going to interfere with his parenting of the children while they are in his care. If he isn't providing what you think the children need, then it is your job to see that they get it while they are with you. Other than that, you do not have control of the situation.

#4 PLAN AHEAD FOR SICK DAYS AND EMERGENCIES

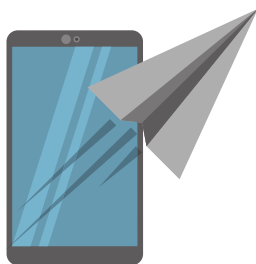
Decide now who is going to be called when your child is sick at school or there is an emergency. The job belongs to whoever can best minimize the impact on their finances. If mom is salaried and can make up the time whenever, and dad works on an hourly basis and can't get away without getting in trouble, then it's mom's job. If dad is laid off due to winter weather, then it's his job. Make sure the school has contact information for both of you.



#5 TRY A DUAL CALENDAR SYSTEM

Get two calendars. Highlight dad's days of parenting in blue and mom's in pink, or let your children choose two different colors. Each parent should have an identical calendar showing parenting time to put up in his or her home where the children can see it. Even very young children will be able to see in advance when they will see dad or mom next. Like regular meals and regular bedtimes, the calendars add to the sense of structure children need to feel secure.

#6 WRITE TO EACH OTHER IF DIRECT COMMUNICATION IS A PROBLEM



Try keeping a notebook that goes back and forth with the children. Use it to communicate important information about your children to your ex-spouse if direct contact is a problem. Write in it anything you want your ex-spouse to know about the children. Read what your ex has written and write a response so your ex knows you got the message.

Alternatively, you can email each other each time the children switch homes or more often to report on their progress and needs.

Don't give your children verbal messages to pass on to your ex-spouse. If you cannot speak directly to your ex, then put it in writing, and do not share the contents with your children. You can make the kids mail carriers, but don't make them messengers. Communication with your ex-spouse may not be easy, but it's absolutely necessary for your kids.

#7 SHARE SCHOOL NOTICES AND SCHOOLWORK

Get a large manila envelope for each child. Write the child's name on it. Put into the envelope copies of any notices you receive from your child's school or teacher that your ex should be aware of. Include some of the child's schoolwork and artwork so the other parent can keep up with the child's progress.

#8 STOP THE TRANSFER WARS

Is there a battle every time the children switch homes? Eventually, your ex may decide to cut back or even stop seeing the children. Although that might seem a good outcome to you, it's a disaster for your children. Moreover, a parent who stops seeing the children

sometimes decides to stop paying child support, which is a disaster for both you and your children.

Avoid engaging your ex during transfers. If necessary minimize your contact with him or her. Agree that the exchange will take place at the curb and be as perfunctory as possible. Some parents even decide to make the switch at a neutral spot. One idea is the supermarket during the weekly shopping expedition.

Don't arrive to pick up or drop off the children with your significant other in tow, especially if he or she played a role in the demise of your marriage. Seeing you and the children with your romantic partner soon after the divorce is bound to raise tensions.

During the exchange if what you have to say isn't about the kids, don't bring it up. If it's about the kids and you can't be civil, put it in a note.

#9 DON'T USE YOUR CHILDREN AS SPIES



Don't pump your children for information about mom's new boyfriend or dad's latest expensive purchase. You can listen to what they have to say, and certainly follow up on hazards to their health. However the real danger is that you may make the children feel like traitors to their other parent. Hurt the relationship between your children and their other parent, and you will hurt your children.

#10 DON'T OVERREACT TO DECOMPRESSION

Children who go from one home to another may need time to adjust to the differences, unwind, and prepare time for the next day.

"Decompression" happens when children change households and go from one parenting style to

another. It occurs very commonly when children go from a household with little or no structure to one with that is highly structured. In the less structured household, your daughter may feel insecure. To compensate, she may try to create structure and actually assume control of when and how things are done. When she comes back to your house, she no longer needs to be in control, so she is momentarily disoriented by her change in roles. This causes her to act out, defying your structure when she is accustomed to creating her own.

The best way of handling the decompression is to avoid overreacting to it. Send the child to a secure, familiar place such as her bedroom to engage in a quiet activity like reading. It's not a punishment, just some down time. A couple of hours in her own space will usually allow enough time for her to adjust.

#11 PAY YOUR CHILD SUPPORT

If you resent paying child support because you think of it as money you are giving to your ex-spouse, you need to adjust your thinking. Every time you think it's for your spouse, remember it's for your kids. If writing the check makes you mad, have it withheld from your pay and transferred to your ex.



#12 KEEP A PARENT'S LOG

A parent's log is a record of the interaction between parents. It can be used to record when things work, when they don't, or even areas where improvement could be sought. Parent's logs serve several purposes. First, writing down what works will encourage you.

When something goes wrong, by reading the log you can remind yourself of successes, and give yourself a pat on the back for everything you did well. Second, the log can provide you with an emotional release. You

can dispel any anger you feel for your ex-spouse in a non-destructive manner. And finally, your log may serve as evidence. In a "he said, she said" arena, the parent who presents an organized and concise representation of events may prevail.

There is a line between bad parenting and criminal activity. Appropriately, courts rarely get involved in situations in which they are required to assess the difference between what is good parenting and what is bad. Courts only get involved when the actual physical welfare of your children is an issue. And those situations require evidence for the court to take action. One of the forms that evidence can take is your log.

What kind of things should you log that might be serious enough to seek court intervention? You'll need to use some common sense. A judge will probably not care that the kids had cold pizza for breakfast, stayed up a half-hour beyond their bed time, or went to school wearing mismatched socks.

But a judge probably will care if the children are never buckled into their car seats, or are left unsupervised, or if your ex smells of alcohol when dropping them off. These situations endanger the children. Keep a record of them. The judge is also likely to care if your ex leaves the children in the care of another family member or babysitter for most of the time he or she is supposed to be spending with them. If your spouse isn't engaged in the lives of your children, the court may find any of his or her demands related to parenting without basis.

Remember: Parental conflict is extremely damaging to children. Your children will thrive after the dissolution of your marriage only if you and your spouse eliminate conflict.

Show that you love your children more than you hate your ex by following these tips.



10 TIPS

for
saving
money
at the
grocery
store

If you ask ten friends, “What is your best tip for saving money at the grocery store?” you are likely to get ten different answers. That’s because there is no single best way to save money on groceries. The more tools you have at your disposal and the more often you use them, the more money you will save.

Toward that end, we present our list of Ten Tips for Saving Money at the Grocery Store. Give them a try and add the ones that work for your family to your savings “toolbox.” Even if you only use one or two of these tips each week, your time and effort will pay off at the register.

1. PLAN A WEEK OF MEALS.

Weekly meal-planning can result in significant savings, especially if you take a smart approach:

- Plan your meals around what is on sale that week.
- Plan 3-4 meals only . Fill out the week with leftovers.
- Incorporate less expensive alternatives to a traditional family dinner, e.g., breakfast for dinner or meatless Monday.
- Think about cost-saving food swaps. For example, consider swapping ground turkey or chicken, for ground beef; chicken thighs, for chicken breasts; and dried beans, for canned beans.

2. BE SMART ABOUT HOW YOU USE COUPONS.

You already know to use coupons, but you will save even more if you wait for an item to go on sale, and then apply a store coupon and a manufacturer’s coupon for that item. If you also can take advantage of “club member” savings at your local store, then you know you are getting the best deal.

3. MAKE A LIST; TAKE YOUR LIST WITH YOU; AND STICK TO IT.

If all you do is jot down a few “don’t forget” items, you inevitably will buy items you don’t need and forget items you do need. Take inventory of your pantry and fridge each week, so that you know what you need and what you don’t. Then, use your meal plan and your coupons to build a detailed list for the week.

Alternatively, download a shopping list app (e.g., Out of Milk). These apps have tools to help you get and stay organized, as well as sample lists to inspire you. Plus, if you tend to forget your list, an app can be a big help. As long as you have your phone, you have your list. For more on grocery list apps, see

www.bestproducts.com/eats/food/g1505/grocery-shopping-list-apps/?slide=6.





4. CHOOSE PRODUCE CAREFULLY.

- Buy what is in season, e.g., berries and melons in the summer; apples and pears in the fall. If you must have strawberries in the winter, go for the frozen kind.
- Be selective about buying organic. For some produce (e.g., spinach) it might make sense to spend the extra money for organic; for other produce (e.g., avocados), it may not. Review the Environmental Working Group’s “Shopper’s Guide to Pesticides in Produce” [www.ewg.org/foodnews/full-list.php] to help inform your decisions.
- Slice it yourself. Pre-sliced fruits and vegetables and bagged salads may be convenient, but you pay a steep mark-up for that convenience. Buy the whole pineapple or watermelon or head of lettuce, and cut it yourself.

5. BUY SPICES IN BULK.

You can buy a wide range of spices in bulk, and the savings are significant. Plus, because you only buy what you need, your spices will be fresh, making the dishes you cook with them taste better. If your go-to supermarket doesn’t have a bulk aisle with spices, it will be worth your time and effort to make a trip to a store near you that does.

6. CHOOSE GENERIC.

Most of the time, the ingredients in the generic brand are the same or essentially the same as in the name brand, and there is no difference in taste or quality. If, however, you just can’t go generic, then make sure you:

- Stock up when the name-brand item is on sale; and
- Get rewarded for your loyalty. Visit the manufacturer’s website for coupons and sign up to receive special offers by email.

7. PAY WITH CASH.

If you can only spend the cash you have in hand, it’s easier to limit yourself and avoid the little splurges that will bust your budget.

8. LEARN TO LOVE LEFTOVERS.

Throwing away food = throwing away money. Stop doing it. Meal planning will help to reduce food waste. Here are few more ideas you can try:

- Move items that are about to expire to a designated spot in the front of the refrigerator to remind you that they need to be eaten;
- Start a new family tradition: Empty the Fridge Friday.
- Transform leftovers into a new meal. If you need some inspiration, check out supercook.com/#/recipes or Google “recipes made with leftovers.”

9. INVEST IN A WATER FILTER.

Help save the planet and put more money in your pocket by skipping the bottled water and buying a water filter instead. You can get a pitcher with a built-in filter or a basic in-sink faucet filter for around \$20.

10. IF YOU DO NOTHING ELSE . . .

Even if you are running low on time and patience, do these three things:

- Go alone. More people = more items in your cart.
- Never (never!) go to the grocery store hungry.
- Limit your time in the store. The more time you spend at the grocery store, the more money you spend. Make it a goal to shop for groceries once a week, and always be efficient once you get there.

These three tactics work like magic. With very little effort, they make all sorts of “extra” items disappear from your receipt. Try to pocket these “invisible” savings every week.

Make Someone Happy; Send a Thank You Note

(And You Will Be Happy Too)

Is there a person in your life who deserves your thanks: a teacher or other mentor; a co-worker who showed you the ropes; a family member, friend, or neighbor who stood by you in hard times? Perhaps the circumstances never gave you the opportunity to express thanks. Or maybe you feel that the person knows you are grateful and would only be embarrassed by your note. You may also be afraid that you cannot find the right words and the other person will think your note is lame or insincere.

All of us share these fears and they may be holding us back from taking a simple step that will improve our own and others' well-being. Research shows that expressing gratitude is strongly associated with feelings of happiness, emotional resilience, and strong relationships. Yet people hesitate to do it.

A study by two psychologists looked into this puzzle. Hundreds of study participants (the expressers) wrote brief gratitude emails to people who had a positive impact on their lives (the recipients). These were not the typical thanks for a birthday or holiday gift, but were for things like help finding a job, or getting into college, or support during a rough patch. The expressers predicted how they thought the notes would be received and the recipients were asked how they actually felt on reading the notes.

The surprising conclusions:

- The expressers significantly underestimated how surprised and pleased the recipients were to be thanked. Many of the recipients reported that they were “ecstatic” to receive the notes, rating their happiness at 4 out of 5.
- The expressers overestimated how embarrassed or awkward the recipients would feel on reading the notes.
- The expressers significantly underestimated how competent and articulate the recipients perceived the expressers to be.

In other words, the recipients of the thank you notes, by and large, were thrilled to get them; did not feel particularly embarrassed or awkward; and thought the expressers did a good job writing them.

So get out that pen and paper or open your email program. You don't have to be a Shakespeare or Hemingway. You don't have to write a book. Just a couple of simple, sincere sentences will do. Many expressers spent less than 5 minutes on their notes.

The recipient won't criticize your prose. Almost certainly, he or she will be delighted to get your note and you will be glad you wrote.



Watermelon, Tomato & Strawberry Salad With Burrata



Sweet watermelon, vine-ripened tomatoes and juicy strawberries, on top of melt-in-your-mouth burrata, sprinkled with fresh herbs and pine nuts. This salad is delicious.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 burrata cheese
- 2 pounds watermelon, cut into 1 1/2 " cubes
- 1 3/4 pounds heirloom tomatoes, cut into 1 1/2" cubes
- 1 pint strawberries, trimmed and halved
- 2 T basil, chiffonade
- 2 T mint, chiffonade
- 3 T pinenuts
- 2 T white balsamic vinegar
- 2 T olive oil
- Maldon salt to taste
- Pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Using your hands open a burrata cheese and spread it over a serving platter. Scatter watermelon, tomatoes and strawberries over the burrata. Sprinkle with herbs and pinenuts.
2. Put vinegar in a small bowl and whisk in olive oil to create an emulsion. Drizzle the dressing over the fruit and season with salt and pepper.

7 Rules for Getting Maximum Protection from Your Sunscreen

- 1 Use a broad spectrum protection product with an **SPF of at least 15**.
- 2 Apply enough of it. Experts recommend **1oz. or a shot glass full** for an average size adult at the beach or poolside.
- 3 Apply sunscreen **15 minutes before** sun exposure.
- 4 Apply sunscreen to **all exposed areas**. Don't forget: the neck; the ears; the upper chest (especially for women); the scalp (for those with thinning hair and consider a hat, too); the feet (both tops and bottoms which can be exposed when you are lying on your back or stomach).
- 5 #5. **Reapply every two hours** regardless of SPF factor. Set a timer on your phone or watch as a reminder.
- 6 #6. Reapply **after swimming** even if the sunscreen says it's waterproof.
- 7 #7. For the best cancer prevention and anti-aging benefits, **use sunscreen on exposed areas every day**, not just when at the beach or pool.