

successful co-parenting

Co-parenting can be successful as long as both parents recognize that the well-being of your child is your primary goal. Cooperation, flexibility, communication, and respect are key to working out any co-parenting plan.

Primary Parent

Agree that the primary parent, the one who assumes most of the day-to-day responsibility for child-rearing, has the authority to make plans and decisions without fear of being contradicted or undercut.

Feelings

Vow not to allow your feelings about each other to surface in front of the children. Co-parenting requires that you act with dignity and maturity. Save any anger or recriminations for a more appropriate time.

Positive Reinforcement

Praise any effort your co-parent makes to stay involved. Even if the effort is limited to telephone calls or occasional weekends with the kids, motivate him or her further by citing the benefits of such involvement to the children.

Communication

Resolve to keep the lines of communication open. Even if your marriage or relationship suffered from lack of communication, for the sake of your children you need to find a way to raise concerns and settle problems. Arrange a meeting with your co-parent on neutral territory, or stay in touch through e-mail or voice mail.

Flexibility

Allow for change and scary feelings. Change is part of life, but it can be made less scary and intimidating by accepting its power and potential to create a whole new lifestyle. When you're cooperating with someone in raising children and change of any sort happens, the new challenges can create much anxiety, but they can also produce strengths you never knew you had and become truly liberating.

Listening

Talk to and listen to your children. Allow them to express their feelings about the new parenting arrangements being negotiated on their behalf. Respond as best you can to their fears and worries about how their lives will change, and make sure your co-parent hears any input or suggestions your children may have. Better still, take steps to hold a family meeting from time to time, where everyone gets a chance to be heard.