

## Do's and Don'ts of Parenting after a Divorce

- **Be open to discussing the divorce** but don't push kids to talk it if they don't want to. Let them know there are other resources available to them if they feel more comfortable talking with someone outside of the family environment
- **Be the functional adult not their peer**, don't share your fears, anger or disappoint with your kids. They don't have the emotional development to handle that. They need to feel safe and secure that the adults are still taking care of them, not them taking care of you.
- **Do hold kids accountable for their behavior**. Let them know that even if they're acting out because of the divorce, they will still be held accountable for their behavior.
- **Don't talk negatively about the other parent**. Kids need both their parents. They love both their parents unconditionally. It's a terrible emotional position to put a child in no matter what age they are.
- **Be cautious about introducing your kids to a new relationship** or a person you're dating. Don't expect them to be receptive, for them it could feel threatening and confusing.
- **Be honest and acknowledge that things have changed** and help them understand and adapt to the changes. Discuss with your kids what roles and activities are going to change. Don't ask them to figure out how they want things to be. Older children (adolescents) may be able to have some voice in the discussion but not younger children. It's not helpful to burden them with that kind of responsibility.
- **Don't use your kids as leverage** or as a threat to the other parent. This is a damaging and unfair position for any child. Kids are not bargaining chips. This is a no-win situation for them no matter what the outcome.
- **Learn how to co-parent** and strive for a united front with both parents giving consistent messages. Your child's familiar world is unraveling and they need consistency. They need strong co-parents who put their children's needs first.
- **Be willing to be in the same place at the same time** with you ex spouse. There are going to be school activities, soccer games, and other events that both parents will want to attend. This is another opportunity to present a united front for your children. Show your kids that you' love them as unconditionally as they love you.

- **Never allow yourself to believe that your children don't need you** in their lives. Adjusting to shared time with your kids may be painful in the beginning. Don't allow these emotions to interfere with the amount of time you spend with your kids. Nothing is more important to their well being than to know that even in separate households they are still a family with both parents.
- **Be willing to communicate with your ex spouse.** Be willing to communicate in a civil and respectful manner with each other. Even the best co-parenting plans or agreements cannot predict future needs or unexpected issues that will arise. Decide to be flexible and cooperative when discussing what is in the best interest of your children.