

COPARENTING 101

The following are general directions on how to co-parent to reduce the impact of divorce upon your children, reduce their exposure to conflict, and comply with Florida law.

Co-Parenting Dos:

- ✓ Be flexible and supportive of your children's relationship with the other parent. Allow your children to develop an independent and meaningful relationship with each parent, understanding there will be differences between each parent and their home.
- ✓ Encourage your children to spend time with the other parent.
- ✓ Encourage excitement for your children about when they will have phone calls or spend time with the other parent.
- ✓ Keep your promises to your children, including when you will call or see them.
- ✓ Keep a consistent routine for your children, with set baths, dinner, bedtime.
- ✓ Reassure your children that they are loved by both parents.
- ✓ Keep your children insulated from the litigation, by ensuring your children cannot access pleadings, emails or text messages between adults.
- ✓ Share information about the children's school, teachers, daycare, discipline, healthcare, activities, events, and friends with the other parent.
- ✓ Share information about the children's appointments with the other parent *before* the appointments occur, so they can also attend. Include the medical provider's name and contact information.
- ✓ List the other parent as an "emergency contact" for the children.
- ✓ Contact the other parent immediately if there is an emergency involving the children.
- ✓ Provide the other parent with medication, homework assignments, and sporting equipment the children will need during the other parent's time-sharing.
- ✓ Keep all correspondence with the other parent business-like, polite, brief and informative, understanding that ALL correspondence may be read by a Judge, Parenting Evaluator, or Psychologist.
- ✓ Keep adequate clothing and toys for the children at your home.
- ✓ Return the children clean, fed, and with the clothes and personal items they brought to your home.
- ✓ If you have a drinking or substance abuse problem, immediately seek counseling.
- ✓ Timely pay your child support and share of the children's expenses.

Co-Parenting Donts:

- ✓ Unilaterally make major decisions about your children, such as signing the children up for educational testing, consenting to ADHD medication, or changing a child's school. Both parents must confer and agree upon major decisions for their children.
- ✓ Be uncooperative. The children suffer when their parents do not cooperate.
- ✓ Display anger, sarcasm, or profanity in the presence of the children.
- ✓ Speak poorly about the other parent, their extended family, or their significant other to the children, nor should you allow someone else to do so in the presence of your children.
- ✓ Harass, question, or criticize the other parent in your communications.
- ✓ Question the children about the other parent, including the parent's location, income, spending, or significant others.
- ✓ Use your children to relay information to the other parent.
- ✓ Talk to your children about child support or any financial matter.
- ✓ Allow your children to decide if or when they will spend time with the other parent.
- ✓ Edit, coach, monitor, or otherwise interfere with the children's communication with the other parent.
- ✓ Interrupt the other parent's time with the children by repeatedly calling, texting, or checking in with the other parent or children.
- ✓ Allow your children to act as your caretaker. Let your peers, adult family members, and mental health professionals be your counselors and sounding board. Let your children be children.