

Divorce Dos and Don'ts a/k/a Kids Know Who is the Grown-up

Following are some “tips” to help you and your children during this transition:

- **Try to settle at mediation.**

Research shows that when two parties enter into an agreement, they are less likely to return to Court for an expensive modification proceeding. Also, mediation allows for flexibility in customized arrangements which may be more agreeable to the kids and parents alike

- **Win-win with Joint Custody:**

Sole custody is intended for a parent who has severe issues with violent behavior, drugs or alcohol abuse. Unless that exist or some other extenuating circumstance, the Court will maintain your child's relationship with the parent who does not live with the child (i.e. They will make sure there is sufficient visitation.)

- **Consider sharing holidays instead of alternating holidays:**

Living within close proximity facilitates what can be a pleasant and new co-parenting adventure. Your kids will benefit from being able to see both parents (and grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, etc.) each year instead of having to alternate holidays every other year. Try to work out a reasonable schedule. Also, consider forming new traditions. Research the successful ways other families have created holiday co-parenting, joint activities. It's absolutely possible.

- **Be on time for visitation:**

Chose to be respectful and considerate -- make sure that exchanges go smoothly. If you are going to be late picking up or returning the kids, please do call the other parent.

- **Never ever fight in front of the kids.**

- **Don't let your kids pit you against each other:** Your kids catch on quickly about how to run to the other parent when one says no! Don't get caught up in this game. If you do, you are certain to regret it later.

- **If your child tells you something happened at their other parent's house, call the other parent before jumping to conclusions:**

Give your "ex" the same courtesy and benefit of the doubt you would like them to give you.

- **Try to communicate directly with each other instead of “through the children”:**

Don't put additional stress on your kids by making them your messengers.

- **Don't discuss any of the financial aspects of the divorce in front of or with your kids.**

- **Don't sleep in the same bed with your child:**

It's not healthy for your child or you. Maintain appropriate boundaries.

If you follow the above “tips,” your “parenting during and following divorce” experience will go much more smoothly! Not only will you be happier, but your kids will thank you for your efforts!