



Family Justice Services

Parenting After Separation Program

Participant's Manual





Parenting After Separation

A child's *reaction* to parent separation will depend on age, level of emotional development, attachment or relationship history and, most importantly, how respectful the parents are towards one another.

Meeting a child's *needs* during separation requires a parent to understand the impact of each of these factors.

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INTRODUCTION

Many parents are able to maintain an amicable relationship after separation. They are able to effectively co-parent. Much of the material in this book will seem like common sense to them.

In some situations there has been domestic violence where one or both parents are not able to restrain their physical behaviour. Sometimes one parent will use physical violence in an attempt to control the other parent.

There are also a small minority of families that do not fit patterns of domestic violence yet experience a high degree of conflict.

In both situations the parents are unable to cooperate. They are frequently in court to solve what should be relatively simple problems. Every issue becomes a potential source of conflict.

Research in the area of separated parents shows that unresolved conflict between parents is a major obstacle to children's adjustment in childhood as well as later in life.

What gets lost in the conflict are the needs of the children.

Parenting After Separation is a six hour workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to assist parents in understanding the process and effects of separation and to encourage parents to make positive choices about how they will continue to parent their children. The workshop includes information and discussion about separation and its effects on both parents and children; how to communicate more effectively; what the legal process involves; parenting plans; and mediation.

All children and most adults expect their family to last forever. When separation occurs, a child's idea of the world as an orderly place is disrupted. The pain of separation changes relationships among parents, grandparents, in-laws and friends, but it is the children who are the most vulnerable and least able to understand what is happening to them and their family. Every year, nearly 60,000 Canadian children are involved in custody decisions. With separation affecting so many, it is important that the process be as constructive as possible.

Children do not understand the legal concepts involved in separation. What they do understand is that one parent who shared their home is no longer living there. They must adjust to living in two homes and to all the changes. They often move into different neighbourhoods and schools. In addition, a new parental figure may attempt to replace the child's natural parent. The children also understand that they are vulnerable and need the protection of parents or members of the extended family in facing the consequences of divorce.

While separation may mean happier times for parents, that is not necessarily true for children. It is helpful for parents to understand all the changes and disruptions experienced by children so that they can help them. Children need information about the pending breakup and divorce. However, it must be information at their level of understanding and the information must not be one-sided. Let them know it is a parental decision and they are not the cause. They do not need to know every detail. Let them know they can ask questions.

(With permission, partially from "Positive Parenting" by Phillippe A. Barrette.)

This course focuses on children. It will hopefully give participants insight into the destructive nature of conflict between parents and how it affects children.

Because the course centres on children it does not matter if the parents were married or never even lived together. It is even relevant to non-parental guardian/parental conflicts and grandparent access.

Workshop Objectives

1. To Provide Information

This workshop provides parents with information about separation and its effects on both parents and children; ways to continue being a good parent after a separation; legal issues; and using mediation to help resolve parenting issues.

Separation is often an emotionally, financially and legally difficult time. When parents are able to understand what is happening to them, they are more likely able to cope. This means they will be better able to support and care for themselves and their children.

2. To Encourage Parenting Plans

This workshop encourages parents to develop effective parenting plans. A parenting plan is an agreement between parents on how to raise their children. It can include agreements on money, access, decision making, residency - almost any issue that relates to raising your children.

Generally, there are two ways to resolve these issues. A judge can tell you how things will be done or the parents can negotiate an agreement themselves. In most cases, the agreement that parents reach themselves works better and lasts longer. Besides, these are your children. Who better to make these decisions than you, the parents, who know and love your children.

3. To Promote Mediation

It is often difficult for separating parents to negotiate parenting plans, or any other kind of agreement, on their own. There is too much emotional tension, anger, and frustration. That's where mediation can help.

Mediation is a voluntary process. Individuals meet with a neutral third party who helps them communicate, develop options, clarify issues and focus on the future. The mediator does not make decisions but assists parties in reaching an agreement. Most parents who try mediation are able to reach an agreement. Because parents make the decision, they follow through with it more often than when it is imposed by the court. In short, mediation is faster, cheaper and less confrontational than going to court. Parents usually keep the agreement - and both parents and children are a lot happier.

Section I - Relationship Building

A. Attachment and Relationships

Attachment to other human beings first begins at birth when we come into contact with our parents. The quality of these relationships is measured by how secure and safe we feel, and sets the stage for the quality of relationships we will come to expect and be drawn to as children, adults, spouses, and parents ourselves. A secure and consistent hostile-free environment leads to a strong sense of self and the confidence to not only experiment in life and try different alternatives but also to expect others to treat us in a fair and equitable manner. When our sense of self is undermined by a series of destructive events such as child abuse, sexual abuse or the effects of poverty or alcoholism, our expectations of how the world should treat us are greatly reduced. Our ability to attach or relate to others, then, is a reflection of these experiences plus our ability to tolerate the loss of these same relationships.

The after-effects of separation can sometimes trigger memories of these previous attachment relationships or losses. A spouse can remind us (consciously or unconsciously) of family members we have experienced who were disappointing in their need to control, criticize or misunderstand us. What was offensive, assertive, or lacking in our earlier family experiences can be repeated initially through our choices of mates and friends. Relationships can become pots of boiling emotions steaming from previous untreated wounds. When a marital situation becomes unbearable and a decision to separate is made, a person is being asked to let go of not only the current loss, but of all previous unresolved losses. Some separation proceedings become prolonged and bitter because the marriage has come to represent the ultimate wound, the ultimate loss. To let go of the marriage and of the ex-spouse may require dealing separately with all of these prior losses.

For those spouses who remarry, the divorce rate increases substantially. The implication from this trend is that a lot of emotional baggage is carried from one marriage to another. The more one can learn to separate current losses from previous ones and to deal with them individually, the less likely this accumulation of emotional baggage will be brought into later relationships and marriages.

(With permission, from "Positive Parenting" by Phillippe A. Barrette)

B. Relationship Triangle

An important part of the grief process is when one partner begins viewing himself or herself as emotionally separate from their partner. This means that partners must redefine their roles with each other, their children, friends, in-laws and other relatives.

In a relationship, each partner plays two roles: spouse and parent. After the relationship ends, each partner has one role: parent. Partners no longer have to relate to one another as spouses, **but** they do have to relate to each other as parents of their children. Their ability to do this will affect how well their children accept the reality of separation.

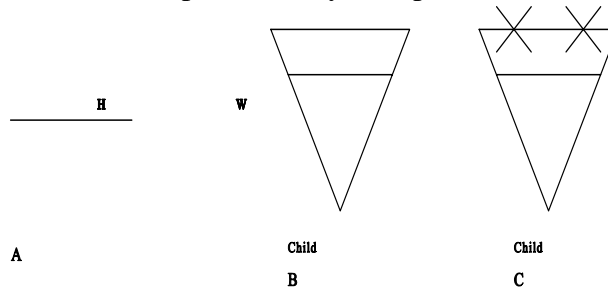
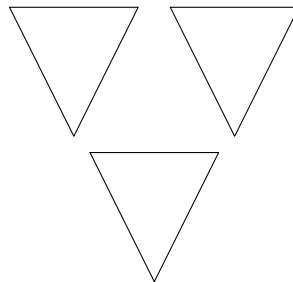


Diagram A shows how partners begin with a pre-child relationship which includes only the husband and wife. Diagram B shows a relationship which now includes the roles of father and mother. Diagram C shows a relationship after separation in which the roles of husband and wife have ended.

Diagram C shows that the child has one relationship with father and a separate relationship with mother. The father and child control what happens between them and the mother and child control what happens between them. What is important is to stay out of the other parent's relationship with the child. Father should not try to control mother's relationship with the child and mother should not try to control father's relationship with the child. Each parent is better off directing that energy to improving their own relationship with their child.



The relationship triangle grows as parents, previous or later partners are added. The child has many relationships. Each one is represented by a triangle which includes the child. They may be with grandparents, aunts, uncles, new partners, and others. These relationships are important to the child and should be encouraged.

(Triangle model used with permission, from "Positive Parenting" by Phillippe A. Barrette.)

There are many things which parents can do to improve and strengthen their own relationship with their child. There are also many things which can be done to help the child build strong relationships with the other parent. For example:

- Encourage visits
- Model appropriate behaviour for the child to copy
- Talk about the other parent in a neutral, if not positive, way
- Reassure the child that he or she will be able to see the other parent
- Do not talk about the breakdown of the relationship in front of the child
- Allow the child time to adjust when returning from a visit

It is important that children develop a strong, positive relationship with both of their parents. Grandparents and other family members can further the children's adjustment by being supportive of the children, by continuing to do activities with them, by not taking the side of either parent, by allowing children to express their feelings, and by listening and acting in a non-judgemental manner. It is also important for children that parents do everything they can to help the children maintain positive relationships with other members of their extended families.

Parents also need to ensure that new partners do not become mixed up in the relationships of the children with their biological parents. These partners should take care not to make any negative comments about the other parent, or to allow negative comments to be made in front of the children. It is sometimes difficult to do, but new partners should try not to become part of the problem.

Maintaining the balance of the triangle is also important in the legal proceedings. The Courts take a very dim view of parents who go out of their way to interfere in the relationship between the other parent and the children. A parent who openly criticizes, speaks negatively about the other parent, or behaves in ways which interfere with the children's relationship with the other parent, will not be regarded highly by judges in their determination of custody, residential and visitation arrangements for the children.

It is sometimes difficult for parents to speak positively about the other parent while they are dealing with the emotional realities of separation. Usually parents do not realize that they are doing or saying things that make the adjustments more difficult for their children. They must look beyond any sort of short-term (although misguided) pleasure in competing with the other parent and winning the children away from him or her.

C. The Alienated Child

The process of separation is by nature an alienating event in a family's life because of the necessity of establishing two homes and trying to parent when the children may only be with you for part of the time. However, the parenting triangle can be challenged in all families. One common example is when teenagers exert their independence and naturally pull away from the parents as part of growing up.

In some cases, instead of the children maintaining an equal attachment to both parents, the children may be pushed or pulled to one side of the triangle by one of the parents, at the expense of the other. This disruption in the relationships may be caused by the parents' inability to distinguish between their spousal and parenting issues, thereby resulting in one or both of them using positive or negative means of trying to destroy the children's attachment to one of them. The alienation of the children from one parent may occur consciously or unconsciously. Parents need to be aware of the potential occurrence of this type of alienation and try to resist becoming involved in it for the sake of the children.

However, children may have a natural affinity to or alignment with one parent, or an emotional dependence on one parent that is not caused by the parent's behaviour. This situation may be caused by such things as similar personalities, shared interests, gender, the child's fear of abandonment, or a child not wanting to appear disloyal to the parent with whom the child lives.

As well, poor parenting or lack of parenting may affect a child's attitude towards a parent. A child may resist time with a parent because of their history with that parent. There can be estrangement due to parental abuse of the child, violence directed against the other parent or neglect.

The parent-child relationship exists upon a range of attachment, including:

- An equal attachment to each parent
- An attraction between the children and one parent
- An alignment with the children and one parent
- The alienation of the children from one parent

A serious problem can arise for the family if the normal emotions of family breakdown become focussed on pushing one parent out of the triangle. There are some parents who are completely unaware of their behaviour and the effects of it on the children. Other parents intend to alienate the children from the other parent and deliberately set out on a campaign to accomplish their goal of pushing the other parent out of the triangle.

Research has identified four forms of alienating behaviour:

1. **Mild:** The behaviour is often subtle and feelings, emotions and beliefs about the other parent are often unconscious. For example, "You're welcome to visit your dad/mom anytime you want. **You** can decide for yourself: I won't force you." (No encouragement of visits.)
2. **Moderate:** The parent has some awareness of their motivations (anger, fear of loss) but little regard for the other parent. For example, "There are lots of things I can tell you about your dad/mom but I won't sink to his/her level."
3. **Overt:** When the alienation is overt, the motivation is blatant. The parent has an obsessive hatred of the other parent. There is an extreme lack of courtesy to the other parent. For example, false statements such as "Your mom/dad is a drug addict/alcoholic/violent person."

4. Severe: The parent holds no value at all for the other parent and will do anything to push that parent out of the triangle. The child takes on the alienating parent's hatred and expresses it as his or her own. The child never expresses any positive feeling for the other parent. Severe cases of alienation require diagnosis by a psychologist or psychiatrist. Often these cases are very complex and have multiple influences, not just the behaviour of the alienating parent.

Distorting the parenting triangle can have harmful, long-lasting effects on children. This distorting can cause severe problems when a child is an adult. The following suggestions will help you keep the triangle intact.

1. Educate yourself: Read books and articles to learn and understand how a distortion of a parent-child bond may occur.
2. Recognize the difference between your needs and your children's needs. Separation involves anger, rage, distress, loyalty bonds, and manipulation.
3. Understand the value of having both parents involved in your children's development, and the value of the other parent's role in the life of your children.
4. Find a lawyer, counsellor or mediator who understands the value of an intact triangle. With careful, thoughtful exploration your positive parenting traits will take over.
5. Contact a therapist or therapy group. Understanding your own emotional difficulties or sharing your experience with others going through the separation process may assist you in dealing with your situation in a more positive way.
6. Try to reduce conflict in your separation even if it means your having no contact with the other parent.

D. Abusive Relationships

Some conflict is normal. The most powerful determining factor in good adult outcomes for children of divorce or separation is the level and intensity of the parental conflict. Aggression, behaviour problems, and depression are frequent early responses to being caught in the middle of animosity between parents. Being in the middle ranges from hearing one parent berate the other to vicious, verbal attacks; from threats of violence to actual violence; or from subtle pleas for loyalty to explicit demands to openly side with one parent. All conflict hurts, and the more intense, pervasive, and open the hostility is, the greater the toll it can take on the children.

Although the link between interparental conflicts and the capacity to cope is complex and multidetermined, some children demonstrate remarkable resiliency and capacity to seek protective relationships outside the family. These children demonstrate good interpersonal adjustment, self-esteem, and coping. Other children, however, appear to succumb to the conflict between their parents. Boys are most at risk to externalize the model their parents' ineffective problem-solving style by becoming aggressive with peers, whereas girls are more likely to internalize distress and to suffer from anxiety and depression.

(This information was adapted with permission from "Working with High Conflict Families" written by Mitchell A. Baris, Christine A. Coates, et al.; Jason Aronson Inc., publisher)

When the relationship has been highly conflictual or when there has been spousal abuse, adults too, have extra issues to deal with. One of the issues is how to parent after separation. Traditionally, we expect that both parents will remain involved in the children's life and that they will work cooperatively in the best interest of the children. When there has been abuse or high conflict, parents cannot meet and cooperatively develop a parenting plan because either there are high levels of anger or it is not safe for one parent to meet the other.

(With permission, from "Positive Parenting" by Phillippe A. Barrette)

Definitions of Abusive Behaviour:

Emotional or psychological abuse:

Put-downs, constantly breaking down partner's belief system (cultural or religious); making partner watch children or pets be abused and not allowing partner to intervene.

Isolation:

Denying the partner access to or the opportunity to keep friends, social contacts, outside interests; making family contact difficult.

Intimidation:

Threats to hurt or kill children, pets, friends; destruction of property; controlling partner's talk; making partner account for every minute, every action; threats to hurt anyone who helps the partner; threats to prove partner is an unfit parent; threats of suicide; controlling with fear.

Economic abuse:

Allowing partner no money or no opportunity to improve earning capacity; forcing partner to hand over every penny; forcing partner to account for every cent.

Physical Abuse:

Pushing, shoving, slapping, punching, kicking, breaking bones, knifing, shooting or use of other weapons, locking out of one's home, abandoning in an unsafe place and murder.

Sexual abuse:

Forced unwanted sex; demanding that partner wear more (or less) provocative clothing; forced sex with objects, friends, animals; insisting that partner act out pornographic fantasies and denial of partner's sexuality.

Section II – Effects on Parents

A. The Stages of Separation

Separation is not a single event occurring when one partner physically moves out of the house. It is a process that begins much earlier. Though partners may disagree on separation as a solution, they almost always agree that the relationship was in trouble prior to separating.

With separation comes an experience of loss that begins with the loss of the hopes or dreams of what the marriage or relationship was to be. As the process evolves from disillusionment to the point of physical separation and beyond, changes impact the adults, the children, and the family in different ways.

Separation usually takes place in stages and over several years - not all at once. There are three stages to the separation process:

Stage 1 - Immediate Crisis

- Begins when the parents separate and it becomes public knowledge
- Usually high stress, extreme conflict and emotional pain
- Sometimes characterized by "friendly" behaviour which may give false hopes to parents and children
- In abusive relationships this can be the time of greatest physical danger.

Stage 2 - Short-Term Adjustment

- Lasts up to 2 years
- If needed, a legal agreement is reached about child support, custody/access
- Parenting schedules are well established

Stage 3 - Long-Term Recovery

- Starts 2-3 years after separation
- Partners have new friendships, try new things
- Acceptance of the end of the relationship

B. Issues to Resolve During the Separation Process

The process of separation requires that the spouses go through the three stages. Each of the stages requires a certain amount of work from the separating individuals. The individuals' willingness to invest time and energy into completing the tasks required, and their willingness to find constructive solutions to the issues that need to be resolved, affect how quickly and how well they adjust to the separation.

Issues surrounding the divorce process fall into seven categories. They are:

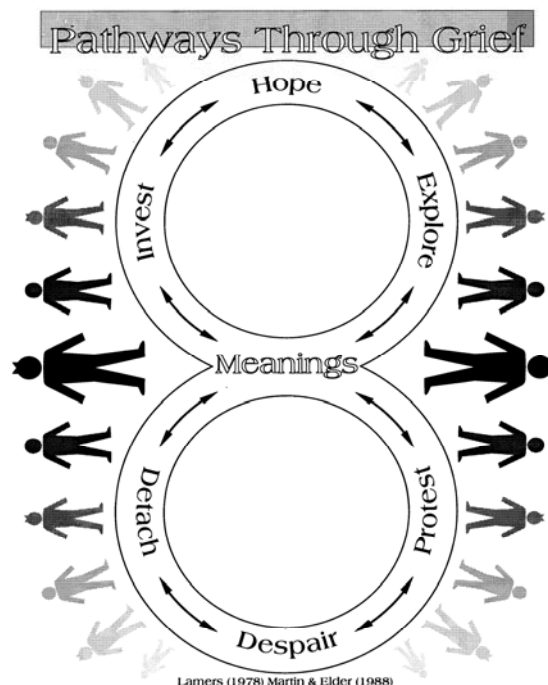
- Physical
- Emotional
- Economic
- Social
- Legal
- Restructuring
- Renegotiating relationship and boundaries

1. Physical

A major cause of pain in relationship breakups is the fact that the parties involved are seldom at the same level of readiness to end the relationship. Most often, one partner moves out before the other partner is ready to accept the relationship breakdown. When one partner physically leaves, the emotional pain for both partners is severe and must be dealt with.

2. Emotional

Going through separation and divorce provokes strong emotions in parents and children. The feelings are similar to those that are experienced when someone dies. That is because the end of a relationship leads to many changes; each one needs to be acknowledged and grieved. The problem is that grieving feels uncomfortable and can often feel scary. Some people prefer to try to ignore it, but the more you understand and face your grief, the better you can cope with it. The more you understand about your children's grief, the more you can help them learn how to cope with it, too. To help you with this, here is a model of the grief process.



The **Pathways through Grief** model draws on the experience of countless people who have been through major losses. The model encourages you to think of grief as a journey, but there are some routes that are more frequently travelled than others. This is not a nice, neat journey; some spots will be revisited many times.

- **Protest**

Many people begin their journey through grief with **Protest**. There are two ways to protest a loss: deny that it has occurred and act as if nothing is the matter or react to it by getting very upset. Both ways make sense. Some losses take a while to acknowledge, but at some point, the reality of the end of a relationship can no longer be denied.

- **Despair**

Once the reality of a loss sinks in, then **Despair** begins to surface. People in despair often feel overwhelmed by feelings of sadness, guilt, anger, and fear. These can be scary. Some people feel relieved when their marriage or relationship finally ends, but then they often feel guilty for feeling that way. All these feelings make sense. Trying to avoid them or make them go away by not thinking about them, working long hours, or drinking or using drugs will not make these emotions go away. Talking to someone, writing down your feelings, exercising or going for long walks, crying, and being with friends may help. Accepting the despair, feeling it, and expressing it can help you cope with it. After a while, though, you can get tired of feeling so emotional.

- **Detach**

Detaching is about withdrawing from all your commitments and wanting to be by yourself. It's about not caring much what happens next. That's because you have learned that caring about someone and having dreams can sometimes lead to pain. Give yourself time to heal. You need time to evaluate your life and decide what you want to do next. Until you are ready to get involved with the world again, you will need the patience and support of others, no matter how cranky you get. Remember, this journey is the same for your children, except they may not be able to understand their emotions or arrange for the support they need. They need the help of caring adults to arrange that for them.

- **Explore**

Once you feel more like getting involved with the world again, you are ready to **explore** your emotions. Some people begin dealing with their separation this way. You may go to a support group or for counselling; you may choose to learn about separation and grief by reading self-help books or talking to others who have been through similar situations. Information offers a sense of control over a situation that seems overwhelming.

- **Hope**

With a sense of control comes a renewed sense of **Hope** for a better life, a realization that you can survive and that you can start a new life with new dreams, despite what has happened to you.

- **Investing**

Once you are ready to start a new life, you can begin **Investing** in yourself and your future. Trying to do this too soon will set you up for failure but eventually, you need to move on. It is part of accepting the changes that have occurred. It is an important part of grieving.

Remember though that dealing with your grief fully means visiting both the top and bottom of the model. You, your ex-partner, and your children will seldom be in the same place in the model at the same time. That's because you will each view what is happening differently. That is, it will have different meanings for each of you.

- **Meaning**

The **Meaning** you give to the end of your relationship affects the way you handle it. Viewing your separation as something you will never get over makes it harder to deal with. It means you will likely stay at the bottom of the model. Viewing it as a challenge means you will take a more positive approach. It also means you will likely visit both parts of the model. Only you can decide what the end of a relationship means to you, but others can influence what you think about it.

Circle of Influence

All the people in your life, past and present, family and friends, and professionals of various kinds, make up your **Circle of Influence**. It affects how you feel about yourself as you go through your relationship breakdown. Some people may offer their support and help you feel good about yourself; others may put you down and make you feel like a failure. Even public attitudes towards divorce and children whose parents are separated can influence you and your children. The important thing is to decide whose opinions matter to you the most. Those are the people you want to be around as you and your children journey through grief. In the end, though, how all this turns out is up to you. It really is your journey.

[Written by Martin, K., 2000; adapted from Martin and Elder, 1993. Original source: Martin, K. and Elder, S. (1993). Pathways through Grief: A Model of the Process. In J. D. Morgan (Editor), Personal Care in an Impersonal World (pp. 73-86) New York, Baywood.]

3. Economic

Dealing with economic issues is certainly an area where the separation process can easily become adversarial - energies turn to who's going to win and who's going to lose. Money can become a symbolic battlefield. Sometimes parents get so involved in trying to win the battle that they forget that the ultimate losers are not us, the parents, but our children.

Parents need to communicate and cooperate with each other when it comes to money. Children should be told plainly that there is not as much money available but that it is nobody's fault. Budgets should be realistic, given the changed economic situation because of the separation.

Often both parents experience a drop in their standard of living because the same amount of money that supported one household must now support two. Aside from the expense of legal fees, there frequently are higher medical costs because the stress of divorce increases the likelihood of illness in both children and adults. Child care may be needed - either daycare for the preschool child or after school care for the young child.

It is important to remember that child support is for the children. Its purpose is to maintain a standard of living to minimize the social and emotional adjustments by children. Though most parents try to avoid burdening children with child support problems, children are deeply sensitive. They will pick up the anxiety a parent might feel who is living on the edge financially. Children will struggle with their reactions when there is a marked discrepancy in the lifestyle of one parent compared to the other.

Anxiety surrounding child support can lead to anger when payment is late or does not arrive at all. This might tempt a parent to tie access to child support payments. Unfortunately this strategy usually backfires. The tactic often pushes the delinquent parent even further away from his or her financial responsibilities. A parent who continues being actively involved in their child's life is much more likely to stay on track with financial support.

Resolving child support issues is solely a parental responsibility. Children should never be used as pawns or message-carriers to resolve them. Remember, there are more productive and effective means to resolve child support issues. Legal action is one such method. The courts are increasingly putting the focus on the rights of the child - that the child has the right to have a relationship with both parents, to be financially supported by both parents, based on each parent's ability to contribute, and to maintain, as close as possible, their former lifestyle.

4. Social

How well people cope with divorce can depend on the strength of their support system. There is a normal tendency for people to socialize with others in similar situations. Married couples tend to socialize with other married couples. Once they have children, they tend to seek out other couples with children. Therefore, divorced adults will likely develop a need to find a support group that can understand or relate to their experience. Older children in particular will begin seeking out friends who have experienced divorce in their families.

Friends can be a great support system. However, friendships often fall apart after a separation. There are questions such as, "Are they his friends or her friends?" Sometimes the partner with lots of friends ends up socializing a lot after separation while the partner with a smaller circle of friends stays home a lot more. Be careful that your friends do not become overly supportive, do not stop being objective, or do not reinforce inappropriate behaviour on your part.

Learning to be single again, initiating contacts with former friends, and finding new social groups are important steps in divorce. It is important to find out not so much who's on your side, but who's there for you.

Frequently, separating adults turn to their parents or family members for support. In this process, children become more connected with their extended families - grandparents, aunts and uncles - than they may have been prior to the separation. For example, more time may be spent with extended family during holidays. Unfortunately, with today's mobile society, family members no longer feel the need to live close to one another, and establishing ties with family to help with the ongoing needs of the children may not be feasible.

Parents need to guard against the tendency of the extended family to take their side and in doing so discredit the other parent in front of the children. It will be up to the parents to educate their extended families on the need for children to maintain the best possible relationship with both parents.

5. Legal

Legal issues may not exist for all couples. However, legal proceedings are necessary if the couple are legally married and want to end the marriage contract. Legal proceedings may be necessary to determine matters relating to children, support for children, where children live, etc.

Battles about living arrangements should be avoided if possible. These battles usually cause great pain for all involved. Children will feel pulled between both parents, causing the parents to feel even greater anger toward each other. This anger can make cooperation difficult. Only use the courts if you believe there is no other way to negotiate a settlement that will benefit your child. However, except in unusual cases, a judge's decision will keep both parents involved in the child's life and parents will still have to find a way to work together.

6. Restructuring

Issues related to restructuring include leaving old battles behind and adjusting to being single. For many people, separation is the first time they must stand on their own. People may become overprotective of the newly separated person. Parents, family and friends may attempt to fill what is missing, which may be smothering to the individual.

Newly separated individuals should use this time to care for themselves. They should ask for help when they need it, but also work on developing their autonomy. Individuals should pursue interests that help them feel better about themselves.

New relationships should be approached with caution. If there are new partners, carefully consider how they should be introduced to the children and what role they should play.

7. Renegotiating Relationship & Boundaries

In addition to reworking relationships with their children, separated and divorced partners also must renegotiate their relationship with each other. Many people find this observation ironic, because at least one partner apparently does not want a relationship with the other. It is true; however, those partners who are also parents, can never fully separate. Former spouses must have some form of a continuing relationship when children are involved in a separation. Ultimately, parents also must renegotiate the degree of closeness or distance in the relationship with each other. A highly conflicted relationship is still a relationship, and, in fact, it is suggested here that intense parental conflict is a sign of an overly involved relationship between former partners, not of an overly distant one.

Boundaries are the stated or unstated rules in a relationship.

In many cases, the key to successful renegotiations following separation lies in redefining the boundary of intimacy between the former partners. Changing the intimacy boundaries may take 2 to 5 years to complete. Common attempts at redefining the relationship range from cutting off all communication, trying to “be friends”, provoking jealousy, and occasional sexual reuniting.

Acceptable and appropriate behaviour may be negotiated directly in face-to-face meetings, such as separation counselling or mediation. Most parents will attempt to test an intimacy boundary or rule through their actions. A telephone call may be made late at night, for example. Such a call serves several purposes. It is a way of finding out whether or not the partner is at home or whether they are alone, and it is also a test of whether or not the former spouse is willing to talk at an inconvenient hour.

C. Shared Parenting: Maintaining the Family Concept

While a partner relationship can end, the role of a parent is lifelong. What an individual brings to that role varies, depending on individual strengths, personal childhood experiences with parents, motivation, and personal needs and values. Parents who separate must add to that their ability, willingness and skill to renegotiate with their former spouse, and their relationship as parents. This restructuring evolves as former spouses separate the way they used to relate as husband and wife from their mutual relationship as parents. This also means restructuring the way they communicate.

How well former spouses cooperate as co-parents is one of the major variables in how well children adjust to separation. There are immediate decisions parents must make in regard to custody, visitation, and child support. There are the ongoing decisions for children such as when and how to set limits, schooling, extracurricular activities, religious training, health care, summer activities, and vacations. Separated parents must come to terms with sharing both time and responsibilities for their children.

Parenting after a relationship breakdown can present challenges. Sometimes parents are unable to let go of the marital relationship and use parental issues to maintain their fight. In these cases, sharing information and making decisions in the best interest of children can get lost in rigidity and bitterness. At the other extreme, former spouses may blur their relationship as co-parents with their past husband and wife roles. For example, separated spouses may continue to have sex. Children's natural desires for reconciliation may be stirred up and result in them reliving the pain of separation when parents ultimately go in opposite directions.

The majority of parents come to some sort of parenting arrangement before going to court. There are many resources available to help separating and divorcing couples make decisions if they become stuck. Counsellors and therapists with specific training in family treatment and trained mediators with backgrounds in both legal issues and child development can be very helpful in working through issues.

D. Absentee Parents

There are times when one parent is unable or unwilling to involve himself/herself in the lives of children for whatever reason. If one parent is apparently choosing to be uninvolved, the following ideas may be useful:

- Support your child in expressing disappointments without criticizing the other parent.
- Inform the other parent of the child's activities. If there is a history of disappointments do not tell the child to inform his parent. Inform the other parent yourself.
- Do not push the child to involve his/her other parent. If the child wants to phone or write then support that.
- Focus on what you can control. That is, focus on your relationship with your child.
- Share photographs whenever possible.

- If possible, keep in contact with some people from the other parent's side of the family.
- If your child is showing symptoms of distress consider enlisting the help of an outside person to help (e.g. counsellor).

E. Pop Up Parents

It is not uncommon for a parent who has had little to do with the children to surface and want to see them. Sometimes it occurs when an application for child support is made or the parent starts a relationship with a new partner who is interested in the children. Sometimes a parent moves away only to later return, or in some instances, a parent has had to overcome addiction problems or mental health problems brought about by the breakdown of the relationship or otherwise.

The parent who is caring for the children and has frequently carried the burden alone for some time often is concerned when the other parent resurfaces and wants to have time with the children.

Whenever possible it is important for children to have both parents in their lives. However, reintroduction of a child to a parent sometimes has to occur slowly and occasionally with the assistance of a chartered psychologist or social worker.

F. Never Married Parents

There are two major categories of never married parents. There are those who have lived in what is referred to as a common-law relationship. Those who have lived together and raised children together are in reality no different than those who are married.

The other category includes those who never lived together or only lived together for a short period of time. Frequently there is not the emotional bond that is being broken in a marriage or a long term common-law relationship. However, that does not mean there is not strong emotion and conflict between them. On occasion a mother in this situation wants to exclude the father from the child's life or vice versa.

The contents of this manual for the most part, apply to never-married parents because it is child centred. It is the child that is important, not the relationship of the parents, except where that relationship has a detrimental effect on the development of the child.

G. High Conflict Separations

Marriages and common-law relationships end but parenting is lifelong. Parenting after a separation can present challenges. Sometimes parents are unable to let go of the spousal relationship and use parental issues to maintain their fight. It is important for the well-being of the children to keep adult separation issues distinct from childhood-related issues.

Parenting After Separation Participant's Manual

A parallel parenting model is used when there has been spousal abuse or high conflict in the relationship. It is a parenting model that affords some degree of safety. If communication is necessary, parallel mediation may be an option to more legal proceedings.

In parallel parenting, each parent agrees that they:

- Assume total responsibility for the children during the time they are in their care
- Have no expectation of flexibility or negotiation
- Have no say or influence over the actions of the other parent while the children are in that parent's care
- Will not plan activities for the children during the other parent's time
- Will make arrangements to avoid or minimize contact; for example, a safe and neutral drop-off/pick-up point
- Do not ask children to deliver verbal messages, and if it all possible, do not have the children deliver written notes
- Put all agreements about vacations, time sharing and school activities in writing to avoid confusion and conflict

In abusive or high-conflict relationships, one partner may try to use parenting arrangements as a way of maintaining control. There are resources available to help

- Counsellors and therapists with specific training in spousal abuse can help the abusive partner.
- Support groups for abused people can help them to find the support they need.
- Trained mediators with backgrounds in legal issues and child development and an understanding of the dynamics of spousal abuse can be helpful in working through parenting issues.

It has also been shown that high conflict separations are extremely detrimental to the physical and emotional health of children. For example, a conflicted exchange of the child can cause a child sufficient stress to trigger a physical illness. Research from the United States suggests that in high-conflict relationships, parents who start out parenting in parallel are more likely to come to a more cooperative arrangement than parents who try to parent cooperatively from the start.

Ten Tips for Successful Parallel Parenting

1. Maintain an attitude for non-interference with your child's other parent. Neither parent has influence or say over the actions of the other parent.
2. Carry on using a business like attitude; common courtesy is necessary.
3. Do not plan activities for the children during the other parent's time. It may be better for the child to miss an event than to witness conflict.
4. Stay focused on the present.
5. Stay oriented to the task at hand.
6. Keep your children's best interests in mind.
7. Remember the goal is to keep conflict to a minimum.
8. Follow up in writing all agreements and discussions regarding the children.
9. When communication and / or negotiation is necessary, use a neutral party to assist you.
10. Keep an open mind.

H. Comparing Co-operative Parenting and Parallel Parenting

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COOPERATIVE PARENTING	PARALLEL PARENTING
Child focused.	Adult confused.
Parents communicating regularly.	Parents communicate over emergencies.
Parents can communicate in person or over the phone.	Parents use email, third party, or a parenting notebook to communicate
Major decisions about the child are jointly discussed.	Major decisions are communicated rather than discussed.
Parents work together as needed to resolve issues related to the child.	Households are separate. Each makes the decisions about the child when s/he is in their household.
Parents work together in the best interests of the child.	Parents work separately for the best interests of the child.
Allows smooth transactions from one home to the other.	Culture changes for the child may be abrupt.
Allows for schedule changes - can be flexible and negotiable.	Written parenting plan or court decree followed exactly. Parents need an external authority.
Parents may be able to discuss issues between other parent and child.	Each parent is responsible for own relationship with child. "You must talk to your mom/dad about that."

Section III - Effects on Your Children

A. Children's Feelings

As parents go through the emotional changes of separation, so do the children. Children are not isolated from what is happening to the parents. Children's feelings following separation differ according to the age and temperament of the child. Some children show feelings more openly than others.

- Common feelings of children following separation are:
- Abandonment, loss and depression
- Guilt, self-blame and lowered self-esteem
- Confusion and disorientation
- Feeling burdened
- Anger
- Helplessness and powerlessness
- Insecurity

When a child does not have the one parent available, the other parent needs to help the child deal with their feelings and issues, with the help of a therapist or a children's group if necessary.

B. What Children Need

1. To overcome their sense of feeling rejected, humiliated, guilty, unlovable and powerless.
2. To express feelings, resolve hurt, anger, sadness, etc.
3. To be free from self-blame.
4. To accept reality, without all the gory details.
5. To not be put in the middle of parental conflict.
6. To know they are loved by both parents.
7. To know they will continue to be loved by both parents.
8. To communicate and relate to both parents whenever possible.

C. Typical Reactions of Children

1. Transition Problems

Children continually enter into or experience a state of transition when moving from one household to another. Transition difficulties are common in the early stages of separation even when parents communicate well and there is a minimum of conflict over parenting issues.

In cooperative exchange situations, children will:

- Be reluctant to leave either parent (both coming and going)
- Be moderately anxious and whiny, and display testing behaviour
- On return to home base, be withdrawn, rebellious or unhappy for a day or so

These reactions are not necessarily the fault of the other parent. Too often one parent concludes that the child's reactions are caused by something the other parent is or is not doing, and that contact with the other parent should decrease or stop. It is important that parents work through this phase because the transition will get easier over time. When hostilities continue to run high between parents, the child's inability to adjust is more pronounced and more long-lasting.

2. Manipulation and Control

All relationships are interconnected. Like adults, children may learn how to best serve their own needs and to ensure love and attention. How well parents react influences the future behaviour of the children. This situation can develop into one of manipulation and control if parents communicate infrequently, not at all, or only through their children.

Children may tell parents what they want to hear, even if it's not true, in order to get love and attention. They will offer statements to support one position over the other, and when rewarded for this, their behaviour becomes reinforced. These situations necessarily result in feelings of guilt and worthlessness.

3. Parental Competition

When parents first separate, many fall into a pattern of entertaining and giving gifts to the children. This can be especially true for the parent who has less "home" time with the children. This pattern may not last as parents and children tire of the artificial "Santa Claus" parent. Alternatively, children may learn to take advantage of the situation. They may tell one parent what they got or did with the other parent.

4. Rule Setting and Control

Children understand that in different environments - such as school, sports and social activities - they need to behave differently. Separate households are different and may also require different behaviour.

If parents share information about bedtime, homework, treats and rules, children are less likely to abuse the situation by suggesting that anything goes in one home. Ongoing parent discussion means that it is the adults, not the children, who are in charge.

D. Children's Developmental Stages

Each child develops at their own rate. The following information on developmental stages is general information only.

One year:

- Serene, self-confident and friendly
- Enjoys simple games with adults such as "peek-a-boo"

Eighteen months:

- Balky age - likes to do the opposite of what is asked
- "No" is a favorite word

Two years:

- Finds it easy to obey, likes to please
- Loving and affectionate

Two and a half:

- Dictatorial and rigid
- Difficulty making choices
- Very demanding

Three:

- Begins to share with other children
- Cooperative age
- Enjoys new vocabulary

Three and a half:

- Whining
- Feels insecure and has poor coordination

Four:

- Loud and defiant
- Mood swings and bad language
- Has difficulty with the differences between reality and fiction

Five:

- Well-behaved and well-adjusted
- Stable and cooperative
- Friendly; likes to obey parents

Six:

- Very unsettled: “I love you” – “I hate you” extremes
- Overreacts
- Blames parents for everything
- Very rigid; things must be done child's own way
- Very energetic, eager for new experiences
- If all goes well, warm, enthusiastic and eager; if things go badly, crying and tantrums
- Difficult age for children to make decisions, accept blame, punishment or criticism

Seven:

- Withdrawn; likes to be alone; prefers to watch and listen; calmer
- Likes new experiences; may exhaust self on new projects, so needs help setting limits
- Full of complaints about others
- Age for running away, or for threatening to do so

Eight:

- Constantly busy and active; going out to meet the world
- May not be able to meet the challenges they set themselves, resulting in discouragement and tears; need understanding
- Interested in relationships with others and what they think
- Often wants a really close relationship with mom
- First real hints appear of the adult the child will become

Nine:

- Very independent; resists "bossing" by parents; can be capable and self-reliant
- Starts developing more interests in friends than family
- Needs to have maturity respected
- Is a worrier
- Complains frequently; lots of physical disturbances: stomach aches when told to clean room, etc.

Ten:

- Easy, comfortable, settled, friendly, matter-of-fact and honest
- Parents' word is law; obeys easily and naturally
- Good self-esteem
- Happy with parents, family and the world in general
- Doesn't take things too seriously
- Most stable period for next six years; parents will never be quite so accepted again

Eleven:

- Time of rapid growth, particularly in girls, leading to increased appetite
- Inability to sit still
- Loud, boorish behaviour and quarrels with parents and siblings
- Confrontations with adults; relates better to peers
- Argumentative, angry, moody and defensive

Twelve:

- More outgoing, enthusiastic and generous
- Yo-yo's back and forth from mature to childish behaviour
- Relates well with adults and peers
- Girls may have a better relationship with dad than mom
- Same-sex peer relationships are very important; interest in the opposite sex is mostly "talk"

Thirteen:

- More rapid growth and change
- Least happy of the adolescent years
- Preoccupied with self-awareness and self-definition
- Touchy, sulky, sensitive to lights (real or imagined)
- Needs time alone
- Wants to be just like peers
- Group of friends tends to be smaller
- May begin dating, although boys are less interested in girls

Fourteen:

- Self-esteem increases
- Is better able to cope with upsets, fears and worries
- Friendships blossom and the group of friends becomes larger
- A lot of interaction between boys and girls

Fifteen:

- Quieter and more inward-looking
- Final separation from parents as a child
- Apathetic and lethargic (can be mistaken for laziness and lack of cooperation)
- More complex and hard to understand
- Independence very important; resentful of infringement on freedom
- Mechanical answers to questions
- Drive for self-improvement; thinks realistically about the future
- Concern for moral, political and social issues
- Can withdraw into themselves when with others
- Doesn't want to spend time with the family
- More interested in group activities
- More matter-of-fact with the opposite sex; girls still more interested than boys

Sixteen:

- Has a sense of having made it; enjoys life
- Less sensitive
- Self-starting, sociable, outgoing and responsible
- More accepting of self, both positive and negative
- Less conflict with parents; better relationship with siblings
- Friendships become deeper
- Girls less obsessed with boys; boys like to "play the field"
- Crucial year for school: turning point between going on to post-secondary education or dropping out

(Used with permission from The Family Centre)

E. Children's Reaction to Separation

0 - 2 Years

These children are both the most and least vulnerable to the effects of a marital separation. They are most vulnerable because of their complete dependency on parents for meeting their needs. If parents are angry, irritated, depressed or absent, the infant detects this but has no ability to understand what is happening.

At this stage of growth, infants develop a sense of trust through receiving consistent and predictable care giving. Any ongoing upset in routine or emotional security can result in short-term stress for infants. If prolonged, this stress could result in the child being unable to relate and attach to others.

Child's Stress Symptoms:

- Difficulty sleeping, toileting or eating
- Slowing down in learning new skills
- Afraid to leave parent; clinging to parent
- General crankiness, temper tantrums, crying

Suggestions to make visitations easier:

- Give the child a piece of the parent's clothing to take on a visit.
- Provide a special suitcase for taking to the other parent.
- Arrange short and frequent periods of visitation with the non-custodial parent, if possible.
- Have pictures of both parents available.
- Allow unrestricted telephone calls.
- Provide a cassette tape of the absent parent reading a story or singing a lullaby.
- Provide a video of the absent parent talking, telling a story, or singing a song.

It is important that both parents be given an opportunity to bond with the infant. Frequent contact with both parents is important in order for the child to maintain an image of each parent

during separation. Meet the infant's needs promptly and consistently. Do not separate infants from their primary caregiver for long periods of time.

The 18-month to 2-year-old child can tolerate longer separations from their primary caregiver than infants, especially if older siblings are with them during the separation. Prepare the child for the separation by explaining what will happen.

2 - 4 Years

Children in this age group hunger for affection and exhibit a general neediness in relationships. Preschoolers cannot understand that separation is an adult decision which has nothing to do with them and their behaviour. Preschoolers feel they control all that happens, and they ask "what did I do to cause the separation?"

Preschoolers need order and routine. Children at this age begin to identify differences between the sexes. A sudden absence of a father may be interpreted differently by little boys than little girls. It is important that both parents continue to share time with their children.

Child's Stress Symptoms:

- Regression - a return to security blankets, old toys, lapses in toilet training
- Makes up fantasy stories
- Anxious at bedtime, sleeps fitfully, wakes frequently
- Fear of being abandoned by both parents
- Emotionally needy; seeks nurturing and physical contact
- More irritable and aggressive; has temper tantrums
- Intense nightmares

Suggestions to make visitations easier:

- Both parents remain involved in the child's life by spending time with the child.
- Encourage expression of your child's feelings and validate those feelings. For example, "I understand that you are unhappy/sad. . . ."
- Explore unexplained headaches and stomachaches, and nervous habits such as nail biting, because they can be a result of anger or anxiety.
- Read stories about children who have gone through a divorce.
- Encourage the child to express feelings through drawing, painting, clay or play dough.
- Explain to the child exactly what will happen to them: they may or may not need to move or change schools, etc.; how often they will see the other parent.
- Match your words and your actions.
- Let the child know he or she has your permission to love the other parent.
- Allow toys to be brought back and forth.
- Continue to remind the child that the divorce is not their fault.

Reassure your preschooler, verbally and physically. Tell them, "I love you." Hold, nurture, and cuddle them. Allow some regression. Keep routines consistent. Explain what is going to happen to the child and rehearse or role-play future events. The child will adapt to longer separations from one parent through frequent visits and overnights with the other parent.

5 - 8 Years

Children of this age may feel a great sense of sadness because they are more aware of the extent of the loss. They are still caught up in "magical thinking" and cling to reuniting fantasies. This fantasy can remain into adulthood.

This age group personalizes divorce. They feel that it is they who are being divorced or rejected. They are unable to appreciate their parents' needs. They fear abandonment. Since they feel they were not good enough for the parent to stay, they fear being replaced by other children in that parent's life. Children will long for the absent parent regardless of the quality of the previous relationship.

Child's Stress Symptoms:

- General sadness, feeling abandoned and rejected
- Crying
- Often fantasizes about parents' reconciliation
- Problems with impulsive behaviour
- Withdrawing from friends
- Difficulty with school work

Suggestions to make visitations easier:

- Reassure child the divorce is not their fault.
- Encourage the child to deal directly with each parent.
- Show interest in schooling and extracurricular activities.
- Allow time for adjustment at the beginning and end of visits.
- Allow unrestricted telephone calls.
- Allow creative expression through drawing, painting, clay, or play dough.

It is important that both parents remain involved in the children's life by spending as much time with them as possible. Allow the children to express their feelings. Help the children understand that the decision to divorce had nothing to do with them. Encourage the children to draw pictures about their feelings and ask them to explain the story and what it means to them.

9 - 12 Years

The preadolescent child tends to see the world in absolutes: good or bad, right or wrong, black or white. Although these children will be able to see the divorce as the parents' problem, they are still likely to be angry about the inability of their parents to work it out.

Preadolescents are likely to take sides - siding against the parent they think wanted the divorce. They want to lay the blame on one or the other parent. They will also try to fill voids by becoming a companion to a parent.

Child's Stress Symptoms:

- Intense anger at the parent blamed for causing the divorce
- Physical complaints; headaches and stomachaches
- Becomes overactive to avoid thinking about the divorce
- Drop in school grades
- Wanting to be continuously with friends
- Telling one parent what to say to the other parent
- Taking a "I don't care" attitude

Suggestions to make visitations easier:

- Ensure children each have their own rooms or spaces with clothes, books, and special things at each home.
- Encourage children to make a tape or video of a special activity or skill, to give to the other parent.
- Allow unrestricted telephone calls.
- Provide access to e-mail or a fax machine for sending messages.
- Allow children to occasionally take a friend with them on a visit.
- Provide contact with friends and activities when with the non-custodial parent.

There is an ongoing need for both parents to remain involved and honest, and to avoid blaming one another. Children of this age group are able to spend vacations with either parent. They should be allowed room to contact the other parent. Reassure them both physically and verbally. Inform the child of what is happening and what will occur. Maintain a consistent routine. Inform teachers of any stress the child is experiencing and get help for school problems.

Children need permission to continue loving both parents. They may require help in appropriately expressing their anger and frustration.

13 - 18 Years

It is important for parents to understand the normal developmental needs of teens, and to understand that their negative or different behaviour may be due to changing needs, and not necessarily due to the separation.

There are 2 main developmental milestones of adolescence:

1. Autonomy

- Teen wants less time with parents.
- Peers become very important.
- Teens need to spend time alone in their rooms, listening to music, for example.

2. Identity

- Teens experiment with different clothing and hairstyles.
- Teens try out different identities.
- Teens may change their group of friends more frequently than before.

When parents separate, teens often experience a wide range of feelings. Since teens routinely move toward separation from family anyway, separation creates anxiety about their future. "Will I fail in a relationship?", "Can I believe in love?", and "Will I be betrayed if I trust?" are all reasonable questions.

These anxieties may affect an individual's personal development. For example, a teen might feel the need to avoid or rush into intimacy. Teens are vulnerable to assuming the burdens of emotionally supporting a parent.

Teen's Stress Symptoms:

- Wanting continuous peer involvement
- Drinking and/or drug experimentation
- Drop in school grades
- Feels hurried to achieve independence
- Plays one parent against the other
- Adopts an "I don't care" attitude
- Chronic fatigue; hard to concentrate

Suggestions:

Find time to be with the teen and be flexible to their schedule. Respect the boundary if the teen wishes to be by themselves but make sure he/she knows that you are there for them. Communicate with the other parent to ensure that discipline is consistent. Parents need to consistently maintain discipline and limits while allowing for normal adolescent behaviour. Allow more freedom and choices. Listening is 90% of the job of parenting them. Get help from school or professionals if needed.

Shared parenting plans need to consider the importance of a teen's peer group and their natural desire to separate from family. Give teens input into the visitation schedule. Do not burden the teen with the responsibility for initiating contact or deciding on the visitation schedule. Both parents should understand that the teen may not want to spend as much time with them as they did before. Parents should avoid making the teen a "confidant" or relying on them for companionship.

(Information adapted from "Positive Parenting" by Phillippe A. Barrette)

F. How to Make Time with the Other Parent Easier on Children

- Speak positively to the children about the other parent.
- Be civil to your ex-spouse when you happen to be together.

- Let the children talk about and show enthusiasm for the other parent's living quarters and the activities they share.
- Encourage your children not to blame the parent who initiated the separation.
- Acknowledge the child's deep-seated wish for a reunited family without offering false hope or ongoing denials.
- Don't try to mediate conflicts or involve yourself in disagreements between your child and the other parent.
- Don't pump your child for information about the other parent.
- Don't force the children to become involved in adult business by asking them to take messages to the other parent (such as pick-up times, child support, etc.).

G. Children's Three Wishes

1. Get back together: Children always have a secret fantasy that their parents will be back together again one day.
2. Stop the fighting: Children suffer great pain when their parents fight prior to the breakup. They have even greater difficulty coping with ongoing fighting after the separation.
3. Love me and let me love both of my parents: Children want to be reassured that they are loved by both parents and that this love will continue. They also want each parent to give them permission to love the other without guilt or questions of loyalty.

H. Children – Do's and Don'ts

Children are often forgotten when a separation takes place. Both parents have a duty to the children that goes far beyond their physical needs. Children experience great stress when parents separate and it's up to the parents to make it as painless as possible for them. This is easier said than done especially when parents are dealing with their own loss and sadness.

As you work through the separation, remember: separations don't wreck children's lives, people do. Some things to remember are:

Do . . .

- Talk to your children about the separation at a level they can understand. Be honest and frank with them. Let them know the family will be different when one parent no longer lives with them.
- Let your children know that both parents still love them even though they are living apart. Children of separation often feel lost. They need to know they still have a mother and a father who will continue to be a part of their lives.

- Be prepared to listen and reassure your children that there's nothing they could have done to prevent the separation. It is **not** their fault.
- Give your children special time. "Special" doesn't mean treats or staying up late, but it does mean watching or being aware of the children's needs. Let the child talk and comfort him or her.
- Encourage love and respect for the other parent. Children are still children of **both** of you. Whatever ended your relationship is **not** their fault. Children should be allowed to love the other parent without guilt or questions of loyalty.
- Learn to talk with your ex-partner about matters concerning your children. Although divorce ends a marriage, it should not put an end to the family.
- Avoid placing blame.
- Try to understand your own feelings and how best to cope with them. Separation offers the opportunity for personal growth. It does not have to be emotionally destructive.
- Help your children handle their feelings, because children react differently depending on their age; the kind of help you give must meet their needs at their age level.
- Let the children be part of planning for the future. This can be as simple as allowing a young child to decide the colour of his or her bedroom, or allowing older children a voice in choosing the new residence.
- Let your children's teachers know about the change in your family's structure so they can help the child.
- Think about the good things you shared in marriage. This can help overcome bitterness.
- Be punctual and faithful in your appointments if you are the visiting parent. Children are hurt by broken promises.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Let the child know its okay to phone even for no special reason.
- Remain consistent in your values as parents even though you are separated. Children find inconsistency bewildering.
- Remember to leave children out of family fights. Children can't help in a quarrel between the parents though they might try, and it could put the children in a position of having to choose sides.
- Keep changes to a minimum. Let the child know their routines will continue. For example, dad takes them to baseball, hockey, etc.

Don't . . .

- Tell the children more than they can grasp.
- Allow the child to become your "confidant."
- Let the children become part of your fights. A child knows when there is something wrong. Don't let arguments or shouting be part of your child's memories.
- Say unkind things to the children about the other parent. They should be encouraged to see the good in each parent.
- Use the children to spy on the other parent's activities. Children should not be used to get information. If a child volunteers information, accept it.
- Try to buy the children's affection through expensive gifts.

- Give children choices such as "Do you really want to see your dad this weekend?" or "It's up to you if you want to see your mom this weekend." This may make the child feel guilty about wanting to do something which to them seems natural.
- Try to win the favour of the child by being the fun or gift-giving parent (if you are the visiting parent). This only makes it harder for the parent who has the day-to-day care.
- Involve the children with your new partner too early because it can be a shock for the children. Children need time to adjust to their parents' separation before they can be expected to accept third parties.
- Compare your child to your ex-spouse even when similarities are poignantly striking and painful to observe.
- Blame the child's anxieties, fears or problems at this difficult time on the absent parent, either to the child or the absent parent.
- Ask a child who he or she wants to live with or loves more.
- Threaten your children with abandonment, not even in the hope that it will make them obey you. This is very frightening (they may feel they have already lost one parent), and can lead them to disrespect you and your tactics.
- Outlaw crying or an honest display of emotion for your children or yourself. Crying is natural and offers release when it is spontaneous and appropriate (fights and spats).
- Hesitate to seek professional help if problems are troubling you.
- Talk about the divorce if children may overhear.
- Use the children to punish the other parent – you will end up punishing the child in the long run.

Remember, enjoy your children. In the midst of all the do's and don'ts and new pressures, take time just to relax and play together. Laughter is a great healer. The years together will go by quickly and these fun times will be part of your treasure.

Trust yourself and your instincts. Trust your children and have confidence in their ability to change and learn. And for yourself, forgive yourself if you haven't scored 100% on this list of do's and don'ts - no one does.

I. Helping Children to be Resilient

Resiliency is the capacity to "bounce back" from adversity. When bad things happen to resilient kids, they are hurt and they struggle to cope but eventually they bounce back. They are not permanently "damaged."

Resilient kids have good self-esteem and social skills, and can solve problems. They also have a strong sense of self, purpose and future. Resilient children are also supported by caring and fulfilling relationships.

1. Building Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is how we feel and think about ourselves. Children's self-esteem grows when they are in an environment where they receive love and support. Children learn to think of themselves positively when the people who love them also support and encourage them.

- Point out when your child does something well.
- Compliment and hug your child several times a day.
- Set a good example because children learn by example. Talk about the things you do well, and if possible, what the other parent does well. If you can't do this, at least avoid running the other parent down.
- Be human, allow yourself to make mistakes, and allow your child to make mistakes. Children learn much better from their mistakes if they are complimented for their effort and not just criticized for their failure.

Activities

- Spend "special" time with each child.
- Plan activities that you can do together and let them know that you enjoy spending time with them.

2. Building Social Skills

Social skills are those skills we need in order to interact with other people. Social skills include things such as sharing, effective communication, politeness and respect for others, helping others, etc. Children learn social skills at home, at school, in the playground or other parts of the community. As parents, we teach social skills by example as well as by instruction.

- Set a good example. Respect your children and the other parent.
- Don't just set rules - let your children know the reason for the rules.
- Help your children to understand how other people feel about things by using real examples. When your children are helpful and kind to someone, ask them how they feel when other people are helpful and kind to them. This helps children connect actions to feelings; this is an important part of developing social skills.

Activities

- Involve your child in community play activities or a team sport.
- Encourage your older teen to be a volunteer.
- Work on a community project together.

3. Helping Your Child to Develop Problem-Solving Skills

Problem solving is the ability to both identify problems and to create solutions. Resilient children are able to take the responsibility for solving problems.

- Set a good example. Solve problems aloud and identify the steps to problem solving.
- Give your children time and space to solve their own problems. If they still can't create a solution, offer one or two alternatives and let them choose.
- If your children refuse the alternatives, encourage them to explore why. This will give them the space to create their own alternatives.
- Hold regular family meetings in which family rules and responsibilities are discussed. These should also be opportunities for children to bring forward problems and engage in problem solving.

- Help your child understand that actions always have consequences that have to be considered.
- Help your children to be responsible for their actions and decisions.

Activities

- **The Problem Card Game:** Have your child make a series of "problem cards", which can be pieces of paper with problems written or drawn on them. Younger children might use magazines to cut and paste pictures. The problems are to be things they think bother kids their age. At regular intervals, your child can choose a card and together you can try to solve a problem.
- Go the library and check out National Film Board or other educational videos to watch with your older child or teen. The videos can be about any sort of problem your teen - or someone your teen knows - might be struggling with. Encourage discussion about how the problem was solved and the solution created.

4. Building a Sense of Self, Purpose and Future

Children with a sense of purpose and self know they have a special place in the family and that they are valuable members of the family and the community. Children with a sense of purpose and future know they will achieve many positive things.

- Set a good example. Value the work you do and speak of it in a positive manner. This includes all work, not just paid employment. Parents work hard at many things - most do not involve "pay."
- Encourage your child to have goals to work towards.
- Recognize your child's unique skills.
- Compliment your children on their contributions to the family. Children contribute in many ways, such as doing their chores, being kind, solving a problem, giving a family member a hug, etc.
- Don't put your children down, call them names, or compare them to others. Each child is unique and each child needs to feel special.
- Help your child to develop an awareness that things change over time.
- Talk to your children about the future and what they would like to do when they grow up. Children whose parents have divorced often feel very uncertain about the future. They need extra help to develop a healthy sense of future again.
- Talk about what you or your friends do at work.

Activities

- Try to find a way to allow your child to take responsibility for something that is living, such as a plant or a pet.
- Have at least one meal a day with your child and talk about the day's activities and what if anything needs to be done for tomorrow.
- Allow your children to pick their own Christmas gifts for relatives. Set a limit to the amount they can spend.
- Allow teens to choose their own clothes.

- Encourage your teens to earn a little money for themselves and allow them to be responsible for it.

Resilient children are supported by caring and fulfilling relationships. Allow your child to have as good a relationship with the other parent as possible. Children need to know not only that they are loved but that they can love.

(The above section on resiliency, written by K.M. Nielsen, M.Ed., R.S.W., is used with permission from The Family Centre.)

J. Listening Strategies

1. Validation: Let your child know that you understand the logic of what he or she is saying even if you don't necessarily agree. Say something like, "I follow you."
2. Reflection or mirroring: Repeat what your teenager has said. For example, "You just said that it makes you angry when I treat you like a baby."
3. Empathize: Try to put yourself in your child's shoes by trying to identify his or her emotions. For example, "It sounds as if you feel hurt."

K. Teen Relationship Building

Stop struggling with your teen. Try these steps to build a new relationship with your teen.

1. Change your emphasis from "what the teen did" to "what can I do."
2. Change your language:
 - Use "I expect" statements.
 - Don't ask too many questions.
 - Silence is sometimes best.
3. Before you tackle problems, make them manageable:
 - Take one issue at a time - make it clear and specific.
 - Describe a behaviour - not a characteristic.
4. Letting go with love:
 - Turn over responsibility to the teen.
 - State your feelings and thoughts.
 - Protecting your teen can diminish his or her self-esteem.
 - Show trust.
5. Break out of the power struggle - take a stand
 - "I'm willing" and "I want."
 - Stay on track.
 - Describe only what you see.

6. Establish your credibility. Say what you want. Want what you say.
 - Do what you say you're going to do.
 - Don't threaten a consequence that you'll never carry out.
 - Strike a balance between setting limits and encouraging independent decision making.
7. Base your success on your behaviour, not your teen's behaviour.

(Adapted from "Stop Struggling," by Evonne Weinhaus and Karen Friedman.)

L. Children in High Conflict Situations

Parents who remain entrenched in high conflict over a long period of time may be sacrificing their children's future well being. The most powerful determining factor in healthy adult relationships for children of separated parents is the level and intensity of the parental conflict. Aggression, behavior problems, and depression are frequent responses to being caught in the middle of anger between parents. Being in the middle ranges from hearing one parent put down the other to vicious, verbal attacks; from threats of violence to actual violence; or from subtle pleas for loyalty to demands to openly side with one parent. All conflict hurts, and the more intense and open the hostility the greater the toll it takes on children.

Some separating parents battle furiously during the first year of separation. For one third to half of them, disputes will involve physical violence even when this was not present in the relationship. By the second year, most couples settle into a post-separation arrangement, and by the third year, those who have disengaged and begun to heal emotionally minimize their conflict. **Consequently, it can be assumed that couples who are still in intense conflict two to three years post separation are likely to remain in conflict and the children are at risk. (Maccoby and Mnookin 1992)**

It is important to understand, in some detail, how children of various ages and levels of maturity experience conflict between parents differently. Children cope with separation according to fairly consistent age patterns.

Factors that may affect children who cope successfully, who grow from the adversity in their lives, and who maintain optimism in spite of their difficult circumstances are:

- A supportive relationship with at least one parent.
- The presence of siblings. Siblings support each other during times of stress.
- Supportive caretakers in the role of grandparents, teachers, friends and child care providers.
- Community resources focusing on children of divorce/separation.

Separation can be framed many ways. The wise parent is one who does not deny the pain, loss, and anger, but who also does not sink into depression and pessimism because of it. Life can and will go on. Many children of separation manage to live the phrase

written by Robert Louis Stevenson and used by Mark Katz for the title of his recent book: "Life is not so much a matter of holding good cards, but sometimes of playing a poor hand well."

Information adapted with permission from "*Working with High Conflict Families*" written by Mitchell A. Baris, Christine A. Coates, et al.; Jason Aronson Inc., publisher

The Impact of Witnessing Domestic Violence or Ongoing High Conflict on Children

"Adapted with permission from Sheriff King Centre"

Countless children and young people are witnesses to domestic violence or high conflict each year. These children grow up in a "climate of fear". Many parents believe that their children do not witness and are not aware of the high conflict. In reality, research shows that 80% to 90% of children indicate the opposite (Jaffe et al., 1990; Jaffe & Geffner, 1998). In most cases they will be in same room or the next room when the conflict occurs. Even if children have not been in the room, they will have been able to sense the atmosphere in the home.

In the past decade, a growing body of empirical research has demonstrated that exposure to domestic violence or high conflict can negatively affect children's social, emotional, physiological and cognitive development (Edleson, 1999; Holden, Geffner & Jouriles, 1998; Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilso, 1990; Margolin, 1998; Osofsky & Fenichel, 1994; Peled & Davis, 1995; Rossman, 1998). Furthermore, data suggest that such exposure has long-term consequences for the well-being of these children, ultimately affecting their adult functioning (McNeal, & Amato, 1998).

Problems Associated with Children Witnessing Ongoing Conflict:

Children's responses to their experiences with high conflict vary. Children may develop a range of adjustment problems and psychopathology, or may emerge from their experiences relatively unscathed (Edleson, 1999; Holden, Geffner, & Jouriles, 1998; Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990; Margolin, 1998; Osofsky & Fenichel, 1994; Peled, & Davis, 1995). Many children who witness traumatic events, such as incidents of domestic violence or ongoing high conflict, may feel helpless and see the world as unpredictable, hostile, and threatening. Overall, research indicates that children who live in households affected by on going high conflict may suffer extensively and are susceptible to developing a multitude of immediate and long-term problems.

Research reveals that some of the symptoms that some of these children may display include aggressive behavior, reduced social competencies, depression, fears, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and learning problems (DVIRC, 1997; Edlson, 1999; Holden, Geffner, & Jouriles, 1998; Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990; Margolin, 1998; NCCEV, 2003; Osofsky & Fenichel, 1994; Peled, & Davis, 1995; Perry, 1996, 2003). Underlying many of these problems are the children's emotional responses to the violence or high conflict, such as the intense terror, fear of death, and fear of loss of a parent. However, children may conceal rage, feelings of guilt, and a sense of responsibility for the violence or ongoing high conflict.

Some children may feel responsible for the violence or ongoing high conflict. Often we associate acting out behaviors with the impact of witnessing domestic violence or ongoing high conflict, however many children may think they are making things easier for their parent by appearing to cope with the situation, by trying to be quieter, and by not expressing how they feel. Children communicate their plan in a number of different ways.

Common Reactions include:

- **Irritability:** increased aggressive behaviour, angry outbursts, difficult to soothe
- **Nervous and Anxious Behaviours:** feelings of fear, anger, depression, grief, shame, despair, distrust, tearfulness, sadness and talking about scared feelings or scary ideas
- **Sleep Disturbances:** frequent nightmares (often re-experiencing the violence or high conflict), waking in the night, bedwetting
- **Heightened Arousal:** worried, fearful, easily startled, hyper vigilant, or have night terrors
- **Physical Complaints:** physical reactions such as stomach cramps, headaches, sleeping and eating difficulties, frequent illness, abdominal pains, stuttering, other aches and pains with no clear medical cause
- **Regression:** loss of skills learned at an earlier age, babyish" behavior
- **Distorted Sense of Trust:** find it more difficult trust others or feel good about relationships; development of inappropriate boundaries
- **Withdrawal:** loss of interest in friends, school or other activities child used to enjoy and a sense powerlessness
- **Numbing of Responsiveness:** shows no feeling at all, not bothered by anything, dissociation
- **Separation Anxiety:** refusing to go to school, upset when left with babysitter or childcare provider
- **Limited Attention:** slowed developmental capabilities such as poor school performance, low self-esteem, difficulty relating to peers
- **Changes in Play:** repeatedly acting out violent events in play, less able to play spontaneously and creatively
- **Acting Out Behaviours:** substance abuse, glue sniffing, behavioural problems such as running away from home, aggressive language with peers and adults, and non-compliant behaviour
- **Changes in Attitudes:** endorsing that violence is a legitimate means for resolving conflict, or for obtaining control of a situation

It is important to preface the following sections by stating that not all children who are exposed to domestic violence or high conflict will exhibit maladaptive behaviours. In fact, some of these children are incredibly resilient and "appear" to emerge into adulthood relatively unscathed.

Parenting After Separation Participant's Manual

As illustrated in the chart below, children living in violent or high conflict homes can exhibit a number of characteristics that place them at risk for delayed childhood developmental. Infants living in a violent or high conflict environment have been shown to have poor general health, sleep disturbances and disruptions in their feeding schedule and excessive screaming (Campbell et al., 2000; Osofsky & Fenichel, 1994).

Stage 1: INFANTS (0 to 18 months)			
Typical Behaviour of Children	Helpful parenting Behaviours	Families Affected by Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict	Children Exposed to Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict
Cry or make noise in order to get needs met Cuddle Imitate others Make lots of sounds Enjoy Peek-a-boo; Look at and respond to faces, particularly eyes Test all senses by exploring the environment	Respond to child's needs Offer warmth, love, safety, and protection from harm Provide consistent nurturing care Interact frequently with child (touching, looking, rocking, talking, and singing) Be aware of own limits; reach out for support when needed Respond when child initiates play	Crisis affects ability to respond to baby's signals Abused parent may have difficulty coping with baby's demands Tendency of abusive partner to be intolerant of crying baby/rigid, angry, agitated responses Lack of protection, "child getting caught in the crossfire" Abused parent is often isolated from support network Family atmosphere is tense, physically and emotionally unsafe Authoritarian style of parenting by abusive partner / child is criticized, shamed or punished for exploring or anything Unrealistic expectations of children	Experience extreme stress or fear which has consequences on brain development Elevated levels of anxiety Have poor general health Sleep poorly Experience disruptions in their feeding schedule Scream excessively Fail to thrive in extreme cases Excessive separation anxiety Anxious attachment Bed-wetting

Parenting After Separation Participant's Manual

Infants exposed to ongoing high conflict and/or violence in the home can suffer permanently altered development of their central nervous system resulting in developmental delays, ongoing levels of anxiety, hyperactivity and mood disorders (Campbell et al., 2000; Perry, 1997). More immediate risks for infants include the potential for them to be caught in the "crossfire" by being accidentally hit or dropped during the violent or high conflict incident.

An emerging body of research suggests that infant's experiences stress and fear when exposed to domestic violence or ongoing high conflict. This may have devastating consequences on brain development which ultimately can decrease the child's ability to think abstractly, to learn, to control emotions and impulses and to experience empathy (Perry, 1997; Perry, Polland, Blakely, Baker, and Vifilante. 1995).

The abusive partners tend to have an "authoritarian" style of parenting. They expect their will to be done without question and are intolerant of any resistance or arguing from their children at this stage, especially considering that limit-testing and using the word "no" is normal part of child development.

Stage 2: TODDLERS (18 months to 3 years)			
Typical Behaviour of Children	Helpful parenting Behaviours	Families Affected by Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict	Children Exposed to Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict
Begin cause and effect thinking	Support and encourage attempts to explore	Family atmosphere tense, physically and emotionally unsafe	Experience excessive separation anxiety
Explore their environment	Provide opportunities for independence	Feelings not expressed	Display helplessness
Sometimes follow simple instruction, sometimes resist	Continue to offer warmth, love, safety, and protection	Authoritarian parenting style used by many abusive partners	May show signs of being physically abused
Engage in limit testing. "No, I won't, and you can't make me"	Accept positive and negative expressions of feelings	Abused parent may not set limits out of a sense of guilt	May engage in repetitive play
Tantrums	Teach options for expressing feelings instead of hitting or biting	Chronic criticism of child by abusive partner	May exhibit an exaggerated startle response
		Over protectiveness by abused parent	
		Unrealistic expectations	

Preschool children in violent or high conflict homes may regress developmentally and suffer sleep disturbances including nightmares and insomnia, bed-wetting, excessive clinging and separation anxiety (Carter & Schechter, 1997; Osofsky & Fenichel, 1994).

Stage 3: PRESCHOOL (3 years to 6 years)			
Typical Behaviour of Children	Helpful parenting Behaviours	Families Affected by Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict	Children Exposed to Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict
Engage in fantasy play, possibly with imaginary companions	Continue to offer warmth, love, safety, and protection from harm	Family atmosphere is tense, physically and emotionally unsafe	Re-enact violence or high conflict at home through play
Explore different identity roles by role playing	Encourage child's sense of initiative	"Traumatic bonding" between the abusive parent and the child	Mimic abusive partner's treatment of abused parent
Exhibits socially appropriate behaviour	Nurture a sense of responsibility	Children taught rigid gender roles, that girls/women must submit to men	Develop rigid beliefs about gender roles
Begin learning about power relationships by watching and setting up power struggles	Offer choices within limits	Any challenge to the power of the abusive partner is punished	Display aggressiveness
	Encourage child to enjoy being a boy or a girl; teach that both sexes are okay	Children may be ridiculed for role playing fantasies	Somatic complaints including nightmares
	Provide natural and logical consequences for behaviours		Engage in excessive clinging
			Have difficulty getting along with other children
			Blame themselves for the violence or high conflict

At this stage it is critical for children to develop their ability to initiate things independently. Children may be punished for their independent behaviour by the abusive spouse because this can often be seen as a challenge to his authority. The rigid parenting style can contribute to developmental problems for children who need to struggle with parents as part of the process of identity formation (Bukatko & Daehler, 2001).

Stage 4: School-Age (6 - 12 years)

Children at this stage need to learn more about "structure" and instill their own internal structure (Clarke & Dawson, 1989). The focus is on understanding the need for rules, the freedom associated with appropriate rules, the relevancy of rules, and the values on which rules are based. Also, it is during this stage that children acquire many kinds of skills (Clarke & Dawson, 1989). School-age children display an increasing need to interact and be accepted by peers with their sense of self-worth developing through these interactions. Erickson (1959) labeled this stage "industry versus inferior" and argued that it is critical for children to discover they are competent, and stressed the importance of recognition and praise in order for children to develop a positive self-concept. If on the other hand, the child's work is regularly discounted and seldom, praised, the outcome would involve feelings of inferiority.

School-age children exposed to ongoing high conflict between parents will often display a psychological effect such as depression, anxiety, confusion, a loss of self-esteem, anger, aggression, fear and withdrawal (Carter & Schechter, 1997). It is not uncommon for children to feel that they are responsible for the violence or on going high conflict. A child's behaviour can also be negatively affected (Jaffe & Geffner, 1998). Because children who witness violence or ongoing high conflict often perceive punishment as love, many seek punishment and "love" with behaviours such as lying or stealing. They may become aggressive, accident prone, self-destructive, and have difficulty concentrating in school. Conversely, children can exhibit perfectionist behaviour or display an irrational fear of failure. Many children display physical or psychosomatic symptoms of exposure to violence or ongoing high conflict. They may complain of headaches, stomach-aches and insomnia.

School-age children from violent or ongoing high conflict homes may have difficulty resolving conflict with their peers, often acting out of the aggression that has been role-modeled for them at home (Jaffe et al, 1990). Some studies indicate that externalized behaviours seem to be more prevalent in boys than in girls (Copping, 1996; Jaffe et al, 1986b; Jaffe et al, 1990). Others suggest that boys and girls are equally at risk (O'Keefe, 1994). There is some evidence to suggest that younger boys are more likely to exhibit externalized behaviours than are girls in this age group. Externalized behaviour appears to become more common in girls as they get older, reaching a peak as they enter adolescence (Coping, 1996).

Another factor that may impair school performance is transferring hyper vigilance to the classroom setting, thereby distracting these children from the academic material being presented.

NOTES:

Stage 4: SCHOOL-AGE (6 years to 12 years)			
Typical Behaviour of Children	Helpful parenting Behaviours	Families Affected by Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict	Children Exposed to Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict
<p>Ask questions and gather information</p> <p>Practice and learn new skills</p> <p>Compare, test, disagree with, set, break, and experiences consequences of rules</p> <p>Challenge parent values, argue and hassle</p>	<p>Continue to offer warmth, love, safety, and protection from harm</p> <p>Support child's efforts in order to encourage sense of competency</p> <p>Affirm the child for engaging in developmental tasks</p> <p>Provide encouragement around learning new skills</p> <p>Be a reliable source of information about people, the world, and sex</p> <p>Offer problem-solving tools</p> <p>Convey unconditional positive regard</p> <p>Set and enforce rules; negotiate where appropriate</p>	<p>Family atmosphere is tense, physically and emotionally unsafe</p> <p>Failure to support or encourage child's efforts; may lead to feelings of inferiority</p> <p>Uneven enforcement of rules</p> <p>Unwillingness to allow the child to feel miserable for brief times</p> <p>Rules and values too rigid or lacking</p> <p>Any challenge to the power of the abusive partner in punished</p> <p>Discounting</p>	<p>May experience depression, anxiety, and confusion</p> <p>Loss of self-esteem</p> <p>Feelings of anger</p> <p>Fearfulness</p> <p>Poor school performance</p> <p>Experience difficulty concentrating in school</p> <p>Exhibit perfectionist behaviour and an irrational fear of failure</p> <p>Difficulty with maintaining friendships</p> <p>Display physical or psychosomatic symptoms</p> <p>Act aggressively or withdraw</p> <p>Sex-role socialization</p> <p>Eating disturbances</p> <p>Fear of being abandoned</p>

Stage 5: Adolescence (13 - 19 years)

The adolescent stage is a time for youth to establish a strong sense of identity, achieve a clearer separation from family, and deal with emerging feeling of sexuality. Teenagers attempt to develop ideas about strengths, weaknesses, goals, occupations, sexual identity and gender roles and will often "try on" different identities. By the time children reach adolescence, their cognitive skills and internal resources reflect not only their own family dynamics but also outside networks such as peer groups and school influences. They develop an awareness of different ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in the world apart from those to which they have been exposed.

Given the important development tasks associated with adolescence, it would be expected that inter-parental violence or high conflict would have a profound effect on adolescent development (Hetherington & Anderson, 1998). At this stage youth see the violence or high conflict at home as the parent's problem and will often hold the abused parent responsible.

Adolescents, who have grown up in violent or high conflict homes, when they encounter the stresses associated with teenage years, are at risk for recreating the abusive relationship they have seen or by which they have been victimized (Carter & Schechter, 1997; Groves, Zuckerman, & Marans, 1993; Suderman, Jaffe & Hastings, 1995). They are also particularly vulnerable to destructive behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse, running away from home, becoming suicidal, engaging in criminal activities, and escaping into pregnancy or an early marriage (Wolfe, Wekerle, Reitzel & Gough, 1995).

Stage 5: ADOLESCENT (13 years to 19 years)			
Typical Behaviour of Children	Helpful parenting Behaviours	Families Affected by Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict	Children Exposed to Family Violence or Ongoing High Conflict
<p>May revisit or recycle the tasks of earlier stages with new information</p> <p>May act very mature one moment and immature the next</p> <p>Sometimes independent and other times wanting to be cared for</p> <p>Rebellious outbursts</p> <p>May break rules as part of separation from parent</p>	<p>Affirm adolescent for doing developmental tasks</p> <p>Continue to offer love, safety, and protection</p> <p>Accept all the adolescent's feelings</p> <p>Be sensitive to your child's emerging sexuality</p> <p>Celebrate his growing up and welcome him to adulthood</p>	<p>Unresponsive, uncaring behaviour</p> <p>Withholds loving touch</p> <p>Uses rigid rules or no rules or unevenly enforced rules or refusal to negotiate rules</p> <p>Cruelly teases about sexuality, interests, fantasies, dreams, appearance or friends</p> <p>Unwilling to allow child to feel miserable for brief times</p>	<p>Feel the shame and embarrassment of the family</p> <p>Experience insomnia or withdrawal into sleep</p> <p>Aggressive, destructive or delinquent behaviour</p> <p>Boys may become abusive in their own dating relationships</p> <p>Girls may accept abuse from boys as normal</p> <p>Assault either parent and younger siblings</p> <p>Run away, attempt suicide, abuse drugs or alcohol</p> <p>Perform poorly at school</p> <p>Escape into pregnancy</p>

Section IV - Communication Skills

A. Communicating With Each Other

Parents who are separated often are not comfortable in talking with their former spouse about the children. It is not easy to separate their feelings about the separation from the need to communicate about their children. Communication often involves a process of learning to move from the very intimate level of discussion in an intimate relationship, to a more distant, or businesslike style. This may feel awkward at first, but with time and practice, it will become more comfortable. Positive communication is essential to your children's well-being.

The relationship as co-parents is very different. The following are some suggestions that may help to make this adjustment:

1. Choose a time that is convenient for both of you and be on time.
2. Have a cooperative attitude.
3. Prepare the same way you would for a difficult business meeting.
4. Establish an agenda and stick to it.
5. Focus on the child and not on your emotions.
6. Start with topics you are most likely to agree on.
7. Bring up the past only if it relates to the child's present or future needs.
8. Avoid sidetracks and heightening emotions that would be counterproductive.

Parents still need to communicate regularly as co-parents. Effective communication can be encouraged by:

- **Attentive Listening:** Acknowledge what the other person has to say. Don't interrupt. Hear each other out before responding.
- **Personal Statements:** Use "I" messages which reflect your feelings or attitudes. For example, "I feel sad when the kids cry because they miss you. I would like to find ways for us to work together so we can address their feelings."
- **Restatements:** Validate the other person's statements by restating them in your own words. For example, "It sounds as though you are sad about the children being upset and that you want the two of us to solve this problem together." Restating the message conveys your understanding, even if you do not necessarily agree.
- **Asking for Input:** Invite discussion of how to solve a problem. For example, "Tom didn't make the football team, and he's really upset. Do you have any ideas of how we can help him through this right now?"
- **Focusing on Your Child's Welfare:** Avoid discussing what is fair or convenient for you. Focus on the needs of the child. Let your conversation be prompted by the question "What choice will serve the overall best interests of our child?"
- **Problem Solving:**
 - Each person presents their view on the topic.
 - Each listener indicates understanding by summarizing what the other person has said.
 - This summary does not mean you agree, but that you understand.
 - Brainstorm solutions.

Choose solutions that best meet the needs of the child.

(From "Healing Hearts" by Hickey and Dalton)

B. Pain Games

Dealing with the feelings of the grief process while limiting your conversations with your ex-partner to parental issues is difficult work. Typically, family members may not realize they do things which make the adjustment to separation more difficult. Besides, there is some short-term pleasure in letting your ex-partner "have it." Often painful games develop as a way of coping with the hurt and anger of the separation. While nearly everyone plays these games at some time during this process, continued use of these games can be harmful to all family members, especially children.

Don't Worry, It'll be Okay: While it may be nice to think that everything will remain the same, the reality is that separation means substantial changes for everyone. Saying otherwise is unrealistic. While it is true that each family member can have a different point of view, it is important that there be an openness to discuss the changes that are occurring. Denial of the changes is not helpful to anyone.

The Messenger Game: Angry parents may find it difficult to talk directly to each other. Rather than provide straightforward and honest information to each other, they frequently ask children to carry messages to the other parent. This puts children in the middle and burdens them with unnecessary responsibility. Conflicts often develop because the message is not delivered correctly.

Cut Down: The anger parents feel toward each other may cause them to criticize or condemn the other parent. Such negative feelings are understandable. However, when shared with children or in the presence of children, they can severely affect the self-esteem of the child and create conflicts of loyalty.

Disneyland Parent: Parents experience guilt, insecurity and loneliness as they struggle to relate to their children after separation or divorce. As a consequence, they may attempt to fill the time they have with the child with activities and gifts rather than talking to their children. This presents an unrealistic picture of love, parenting and family life.

Using Children as Spies: It is often difficult for family members to accept the reality that the relationship has ended. They continue to express curiosity and seek information about the lifestyle and activities of the other. Family members may give the child enormous control over what information is shared.

Friendly Separation: Many parents expect themselves to be friendly even though they feel unfriendly. It is difficult to maintain a friendship in an atmosphere of conflict. Being civil and maintaining a business relationship seems to work best and is less confusing to the children.

("Pain Games" was developed by Carol Roeder-Esserm, M.S.W., of Johnson County Mental Health Center, 1976 and 1983, cited in "Positive Parenting" by Phillippe A. Barrette.)

Section V – Parenting Plans

A parenting plan is an agreement between parents on how they will raise their children after they have separated and are no longer living together.

A parenting plan:

- Provides for physical needs and care of children
- Maintains children's emotional stability
- Specifies a residential schedule
- Allows for flexibility
- Adapts for the changing needs of your children
- Focuses on the welfare of the children
- Specifies parental input into major decisions
- Clarifies parental responsibilities and expectations
- Specifies a process for dispute resolution

Sometimes, parents spend a great deal of time and energy fighting for sole custody or joint custody. If you are able to agree on the essentials of how you will parent your children, the "name" of the arrangement will become secondary. The most important factor is your relationship with your children. Your relationship with each other is also important. The greater the animosity, resentment and anger towards the other parent, the more likely the children will be harmed in the process of separation.

The parenting plan facilitates both parents staying involved in the parenting of their children. Sometimes, it may be harmful to the children to have both parents involved extensively. For example if one parent:

- Has abandoned the children
- Is unable or refuses to properly provide for the children's physical and emotional needs
- Is physically, sexually or emotionally abusive
- Is using the parenting plan to control or manipulate the other parent
- Has unjustifiably refused to encourage the other parent's contact with the children

In these instances a court might find that protective measures need to be put in place to allow contact with that parent to continue in circumstances where the improper behaviour will not and cannot occur.

A. Residential Schedule

A residential schedule specifies when the children will be with each parent. A schedule should be specific, detailing the amount of time the children will spend with each parent. The schedule will include holidays and special occasions such as birthdays and mother's/father's day. The idea is to structure a schedule with the child's needs foremost and to consider all factors, including:

- What agreements are in place now
- Who has performed what parenting functions in the past
- Ability and willingness to perform parenting roles in the future
- Child's relationships with siblings, grandparents, teachers, friends, etc.
- Child's environment (school, hobbies, etc.)
- The wishes of your child, depending on age

A residential schedule may be based on either the primary residence or the shared residence concept. In the primary residence concept, the child lives with one parent and visits the other parent. In the shared residence concept, the child lives part of the time with one parent and part with the other. The choice depends on the individual child and the parents. An equally shared residential arrangement can be effective provided both parents live in the same geographic area, both parents are mature, responsible and able to cooperate and communicate well. Under these conditions, a shared, residential arrangement may be in the best interests of the children. In some cases it may be better not to have a schedule, but only if parents get along and both are flexible.

B. Decision-Making Authority

The parenting plan specifies who will have input into major decisions affecting your children's welfare. The major areas are education, religion, health care and extracurricular activities. Decisions regarding these areas can be made in several ways. They can be:

- Made by both parents
- Divided; or
- Made by only one parent

Relevant factors in determining how to make decisions include:

- The extent to which the parents have participated in past major decision(s)
- Degree of cooperation
- Willingness to participate in the future
- Whether special problems exist between your children and either parent

With respect to normal day-to-day decisions and emergency situations, it is important that these decisions be made by whichever parent your child is with at the particular time.

C. Dispute Resolution

It is important to include a specific process in the plan for parents to follow if they disagree on how to handle a particular issue. This way, the parents will have a way to resolve the conflict and the children will not be placed in the middle of the dispute. Options include counselling, mediation, arbitration and court. It is best for the parents to try to settle the disputed issue(s) before resorting to the courts. In other words, parents should try to work it out themselves with the aid of counselling or mediation before going to court.

D. Basic Principles Concerning Children

When developing a parenting plan, remember that children have the right to:

- An independent relationship with each parent free of control and interference from the other
- Be free of any argument or conflict between the parents
- Be independent of the parental responsibility for making decisions about custody and access, etc.
- Be free from taking sides, defending or downgrading either parent
- Be guided, taught, supervised, disciplined and nurtured by each parent without interference from the other
- Financial support from both parents, regardless of time spent with parents
- Time with each parent, regardless of amount of financial support
- A personal sleeping area and space for possessions in each home
- Physical and emotional safety and adequate supervision
- Stable, consistent and responsible child care when with either parent
- Develop and maintain good relationships with other significant adults, without having these relationships replace or interfere with the relationship with parents (for example, grandparents, stepparents, other relatives)
- Both parents keeping their agreements and commitments regarding the parenting plan and visiting arrangements
- Both parents being informed as to medical, dental, educational, and legal matters concerning the children
- Consideration of special needs
- Participate in age-appropriate activities provided they do not significantly impair the relationship between the child and either parent

(This list was prepared by the Family Center of the Conciliation Court, Tucson, Arizona.)

E. Parenting Plan Worksheets

The following are two examples of two parenting plan worksheets that may be used to make a Parenting Plan.

Example A

Your Names

Mother

Father

In the spaces provided below give the full names and date of birth of each child. If any of the children has a different parent indicate this after their name below, as well as the name of the other parent and anyone else who legally has parental responsibility, or a contact order. The name by which a child is known should be changed only with the consent of both parents, or by court order.

Your Children's Names

First Name

Family Name

Date of Birth

Name of other person with interest and relationship to child.

We acknowledge that each of us remains a parent and we are jointly responsible for the welfare and development of each child. We are responsible for the day-to-day care, control and discipline of each of our children while they are in our immediate care.

There can be a variety of living arrangements when parents separate. Children usually spend more time with one parent than the other for practical reasons. In most cases the children will live with one parent and see the other on visits, but this may not suit your children or your circumstances. You will need to discuss this carefully with each other and your children if they are old enough and understand what is happening. Do not put pressure on the children to decide, but listen to their views. You also need to think about issues concerning the day-to-day care of your children.

- Where will the children mostly live?
- How will they be able to see the other parent?
- What travel arrangements will be made, and who will pay?
- If a visit needs to be postponed, how will another visit be organized?
- What will be the arrangements for phoning or receiving phone-calls from one parent, whilst staying with the other parent?
- How will you discuss discipline of the children; what's allowed and what is not? E.g. How late can they stay out, smoking rules?
- What are your rules of road safety and supervision? E.g. Is the child allowed to go to the shops alone?

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- Are there any other people who sometimes look after the children - relatives, child minders, neighbours, baby-sitters?
- What plans are agreed for holidays?
- How will care for children over the school holidays be divided?
- What will happen on half-days or days when the school may be closed?
- Will the children see grandparents, friends, wider family over the holidays?
- What travel arrangements need to be made, and who will pay?
- Who will obtain and hold the children's passports?

Children like to celebrate birthdays, religious festivals, and other special days in variety of ways. They also like to be included, as appropriate, in other special family or community events, such as weddings, funerals, anniversaries and celebrations.

- What days are special for your family or community?
- How will the children be involved in these occasions?
- What arrangements will need to be made?

Children usually want to keep in touch with their friends and members of the wider family (brothers and sisters, step and half brothers and sisters, grandparents, step-parents, cousins, etc.).

- Which friends and members of the wider family do your children want to stay in contact with?
 - How will your children stay in contact with these important friends and relatives?
 - How often would you like your children to see each of these people?
- Who do you feel it is important for your children to stay in contact with?
 - How will your children stay in contact with these important friends and relatives?
 - How often would you like your children to see each of these people?
- Will you attend school functions together or separately? e.g. Who will attend parents' evenings, sports events, and other school events?
- How will the parent not living with the children keep in touch with the school?
- How will the school be informed of the children's changed circumstances?

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- Will there be any changes in the children's schooling? How will a choice of school for the child be made?
- How will you discuss changes if this arises?
- Can the children go on school trips abroad?
- How are important choices, e.g. selection of GSE courses, careers advice, participation in sex education, to be decided?
- If any of the children have out-of-school classes or activities, what arrangements are needed for these?
- How do out-of school activities fit in with contact visits?
- Do any of the children have special physical needs, a disability or a special educational need? If so, what arrangements are being made for these?
- Do any of the children need regular medication, home-based therapy or educational programs? If so, what provisions are being made for these?
- If a child suffers from a chronic or permanent condition or illness, what form of treatment is planned?
- If a child requires urgent medical attention, how will you let each other know what is happening?
- Who takes responsibility for arranging routine medical care, vaccinations, routine dental checks and any special provision such as speech and language therapy or hospital appointments?
- Who will look after the children during short illnesses, e.g. flu?
- If parents are living far apart from each other, or in different countries, are the children to be registered with two GP's?
- Do any of the children need a special diet?
- If the children are being raised in a particular faith or cultural tradition what arrangements are being made for this?
- Is there a particular parent, grandparent or community role that needs to be discussed?
- If the children speak a second language, is it important to you that they continue to do so?

This might include family pets, sports, and school journeys, learning to drive the car, suitability of friends or any other of the many issues raised for parents and children whilst the children are growing up.

- What will happen to family pets?
- Will the child be able to continue with any special arrangements for sport, the arts, choir, band memberships, other special interests?
- Who will give driving lessons?
- Anything else?

Not only do children's needs change but adults' needs change too. New circumstances may mean that the arrangements for your children need to be changed. You need to decide how you will go about changing the plans. Some parents arrange to meet at regular intervals to assess how things are going. Others review their arrangements as and when circumstances change.

- What changes do you consider important, and how will the other parent be told when the need for change arises?
- What do you want to do about reviewing the arrangements when changes occur?
- Are there regular payments being made by either of you?
- Who will pay for clothes, shoes and trainers?
- Who will pay for school or club uniforms, sports kit or equipment?
- Who will pay for travel - visits to parents, grandparents, other people?
- Who will pay for school trips?
- Who will pay for large items such as bicycle, computer, musical instrument, driving lessons?
- Will you give your children pocket money?

Conclusion

This plan has been read and discussed by us as parents and we sign to indicate our commitment to it. As things change over the years we will hope to discuss matters in a similar way, discussing any changes with the children as appropriate.

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Mother's Name

Father's Name

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

This plan can also be signed by other people if you think it will help everyone to feel committed to what has been discussed - the children, a step-parent, grandparent, etc.

Name

Name

Signature

Signature

Relationship to family

Relationship to family

Date

Date

Name

Name

Signature

Signature

Relationship to family

Relationship to family

Date

Date

- Who will look after this plan?
- Who will have a copy of this plan?

Example B

1. Desired goals of co-parenting:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
2. Communication ground rules:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
3. Time-sharing arrangements (list all options):
 - i) Monthly schedule (refer to calendar, if helpful)
 - ii) Vacation times
 - iii) Holidays
 - iv) Special days (birthdays, parents' birthdays)
 - v) Special occasions (weddings, funerals, graduations)
 - vi) School, sports, church and community events (back-to-school night, parent/teacher conferences, school programs, sports events, church programs)
 - vii) Grandparent time-sharing arrangements
4. Transportation details:
 - i) Transportation responsibilities, exchange times and places
 - ii) Special instructions or restrictions
5. Telephone schedule:
 - i) When children are with Mom
 - ii) When children are with Dad

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6. Long-distance parenting arrangement (if one parent lives more than 150 km away):
 - i) Yearly time-sharing schedule
 - ii) Transportation details (including allocation of transportation costs)
 - iii) Logistics of sharing information
7. Procedure for making decisions:
 - i) How should major decisions be made and by whom? (education, daycare, medical and dental treatment, therapy)
 - ii) If you desire to share the decision-making responsibility, how will disagreements be resolved? Devise tie-breaking procedures.
8. Procedure for sharing information:
 - i) School-related information (report cards, academic or disciplinary problems, parent-teacher conferences, school activities)
 - ii) Extracurricular activities
 - iii) Health-related information (illnesses, prescriptions, checkups, therapy sessions, etc.)
 - iv) Community and special events
9. Agenda for parenting (on a monthly or weekly basis):
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
10. Child support:
 - i) Payor's income
 - ii) Recipient's income
 - iii) Special expenses to be included in guideline calculations - amount per month/year
 - iv) Guideline amount (as calculated by applicable Data Sheet)
 - v) Amount of support agreed to (if different than Guideline amount): \$_____

Reasons for deviation from the Guideline

- vi) Income information to be exchanged on or before _____ [date] of each year
 - _____ tax return
 - _____ financial statements
 - _____ proof of special expenses
 - _____ other _____

- g. Health Insurance:
 - Carried by whom
 - Claims procedure

- h. Special provisions for when children reach 18
 - How long will support continue
 - Conditions of support (e.g. attendance at educational facility, living arrangements, etc.)
 - Expected contribution by child by way of employment, student loans, etc.

F. Parenting Agreement Example

The following is an example of a parenting agreement:

We, _____ and _____, through the assistance of a mediator, have reached an agreement regarding certain parenting issues for the benefit of our children, on (date) _____.

In making this Agreement, we acknowledge the following:

1. We have chosen to resolve our parenting issues through the process of mediation because we feel confident in our abilities.
2. We are both dedicated parents who, although divorced, desire to create a co-parenting relationship for the benefit of our children.
3. We recognize that we may have made mistakes in the past and desire to start over as better, more committed parents.
4. We agree to focus on the needs and interests of our children ahead of our own. We desire to give our children the opportunity to have a meaningful relationship with both of us.
5. Any specific time-sharing schedule must focus upon meeting our children's emotional needs, as much as possible. Because these needs will change over time, we agree to approach establishing and revising a time-sharing schedule in a flexible manner as set forth below.
6. We agree to establish and maintain good communication with each other and to establish a cooperative working relationship as parents.
7. Because of our common concern for our children's emotional well-being, we enter into this Agreement.

Based on these premises, we agree that the following rules will govern our relationship:

Ground Rules

1. We agree that our working relationship as parents will be built on trust and cooperation.

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2. We agree to trade favours frequently. This will encourage cooperation and flexibility in our parenting relationship and prevent resentments from accumulating between us.
3. We believe open, honest and direct communication between us is essential to an effective parenting relationship. We agree to take affirmative steps to adapt procedures, ensuring that we have frequent communication in a civil manner.
4. We agree to support each other in our respective parenting roles. We recognize that we may have different parenting styles from time to time.
5. We agree to affirmatively support each other as parents by giving compliments to each other, giving our children permission to love both parents, and by showing appreciation for favours given.
6. We agree that spending quality time with the children is most important, and we agree to cooperate with each other and adjust our time-sharing arrangements to ensure that this is possible.
7. We recognize that conflict between us causes emotional trauma and pain to the children. We agree to be civil to one another in all of our future dealings.
8. We recognize that it is important for our children's emotional well-being that we hold the other parent in high esteem as a parent in our respective conversations with the children throughout their lives.
9. We agree to leave the past in the past. We agree to start working together today as co-parents and seeing the other parent as a resource.

Parenting Meeting

We agree to meet the first _____ of each month/week or have a telephone conversation to discuss our time-sharing arrangement for the month/week and to share information regarding our children.

Time-Sharing Schedule

We agree to prepare a monthly calendar so that our time-sharing schedule may be summarized, in writing, from month to month. We agree to review the time-sharing options and to formulate a schedule that will be in the best interest of our children. We agree to be flexible with each other if minor changes are necessary. We agree that the following schedule should be our guide:

1. Definition of "block time." We agree to spend blocks of time with each child. Each block of time will be _____ days in length and will begin at 6:00 p.m. and continue until 6:00 p.m. on the designated return date. Our children will go to the other parent's home together. However, _____ will return to _____'s home one day earlier than _____ in order to enable _____ to have some one-on-one time with _____ and to allow _____ to have one-on-one time with _____. The parent picking up the children is responsible for the children's dinner.
2. Birthdays. For the children's birthdays, we agree that whoever has the children during their "block time" will have the child's birthday party. We agree that the parent who is "off block" is free to plan a party the day before or the day after the child's birthday. We agree to work together to make birthdays special for our children.
3. Vacation. We agree to discuss with each other how we want to spend our respective vacation time with the children. We will work out an arrangement that is mutually

acceptable to both of us. We do agree, however, to give advance notice to the other parent of a planned vacation. If possible, we agree to give two weeks' notice.

4. Holidays. We agree to spend time with our children on holidays as per the court's standard time-sharing schedule.
5. Babysitter rule. We agree to call the other parent, whenever possible, for our baby-sitting needs.
6. Revision of time-sharing schedule. In order to better meet the emotional needs of our children, we agree to revise the time-sharing schedule, if necessary, by consulting with one another and cooperatively establishing a new time-sharing schedule. We also agree to consider revising our schedule if a significant change occurs in either of our lives. We agree to first meet with each other to modify the time-sharing arrangement as set forth above. Then, if we are unable to agree upon a new time-sharing schedule, we agree to hire a mediator to assist us before we seek a resolution in court.

Sharing Information

1. We agree to use our best efforts to communicate and share information with each other on a frequent basis regarding our children's development, school work, medical and dental treatment, therapy, and other information appropriate to share with the other parent.
2. We agree to affirmatively notify the other parent of all school programs, church events, extracurricular activities, and sporting events that involve one or more of our children.
3. We agree to notify the other parent of significant illnesses the children may have when they are at our individual homes.
4. We agree to discuss any problems either of us is experiencing with disciplining our children.
5. We agree to immediately advise the other parent of any changes in our address, telephone number, or other information relevant to communication.
6. We agree to advise the other parent of all logistical details regarding vacation time with our children, including places and telephone numbers where the children may be reached.
7. We both agree that we will communicate with each other both by telephone and in person. We agree that it is important for our children to see us working together in a positive and constructive way.

Consistency in Discipline and Parenting

1. We agree that consistency is one of the key elements in raising children. Therefore, we would like to see the same curfews and bedtimes implemented at each of our homes.
2. We recognize that our discipline and parenting of our children will be more effective if we work as a "united front." Therefore, we agree to discuss discipline philosophies with each other and come to a consensus as to what works.

Major Decisions

1. Decision-making procedure. We agree that all major decisions concerning our children will be discussed, including their health, education, general welfare, daycare, education, medical and dental treatment, and therapy. Further, we agree to use the following decision-making procedure:
2. Identify the issue
3. Brainstorm possible solutions
4. Choose the most sensible solution that considers the needs and interests of everyone involved
5. Tie-breaking procedure. We agree to meet and discuss major decisions together, focusing on objective criteria and facts, and involving any professionals who may be of assistance. If we do not reach an agreement, we agree to hire a mediator to help us come to a resolution of the problem before we seek a resolution in court.
6. Emergency medical decisions. We agree that the parent who has the child at the time he or she suffers an emergency medical condition has the authority to make any decision regarding emergency medical care. We agree to notify the other parent of the emergency as soon as possible.
7. Day-to-day decisions. We understand that the parent who has physical custody of our children may make minor, day-to-day decisions regarding them and their care.

Long-Distance Parenting

1. In the event that either of us decides to move out of the province or decides to move to a location in the province that makes our time-sharing arrangement impractical, we agree to revise our arrangement by discussing and reaching a time-sharing agreement prior to the parent's actual move.
2. The issues we agree to address include, but are not limited to, the following:
3. Time-sharing
4. Transportation details and cost allocation
5. Procedure for ensuring that decision-making can be shared when required
6. Procedure for sharing information about our children
7. If we cannot reach a long-distance parenting agreement on our own, we agree to consult with a mediator before we seek a resolution in court.

Miscellaneous

Mediation clause. In the event any future dispute arises between us that we cannot resolve ourselves, we agree to enter into mediation before seeking a resolution in court.

Requirement to obtain legal advice. During mediation, we acknowledge that our mediator requires that we seek legal advice concerning all issues arising in the context of this divorce proceeding. Each of us has considered the implications of this Agreement, has discussed it with our own legal counsel, and considers it to be fair and equitable.

Signature

Signature

(Above two sections are from "Healing Hearts" by Hickey & Dalton)

G. Parenting Plan for High Conflict Families

High-conflict families benefit from a very structured plan that details the drop-off and pick-up dates with times and locations. Holiday plans must be specific, as well as attendance at events and means of communication. The goal of a parenting plan for a high-conflict family is disengagement. Parallel parenting minimizes contact and conflict.

Violence is never acceptable. However, continual contact in some form, between the parents is often unavoidable. The parenting schedule may address time with the children in families where there has been abuse. Each family's circumstance should be assessed to determine safety of all members.

A. *Parallel Parenting*

Psychologists describe young children who play next to each other, but interact little with each other to be in "parallel play". In the same way, parents who parent their children at different times, but who have little or no direct interaction, are engaged in **Parallel Parenting**. This occurs when they engage in the same task, as long as they have little or no contact with one another.

While much of the literature focuses on co-parenting in which parents communicate and work with one another to raise the children in a cooperative fashion, high-conflict families have difficulty with this. Each parent usually thinks his/her style is the only way to parent and is often quite critical of the other. Interactions stimulate conflict, reducing benefits to the children.

The goal of parallel parenting is to reduce the level of conflict and make sure that one or both parents accomplish the tasks of parenting. It is important for parents to specify which parent is responsible for what parenting tasks. Parents develop a plan that identifies how each parent participates in the child's extracurricular activities; help with school, take care of medical needs, etc. Plans are developed to ensure that parents communicate with each other with less conflict. Fax machine, or e-mail or third parties may be used when the conflict is high. Each parent is encouraged to develop his/her separate routine and structure.

These parents need to disengage and then learn to work together. The parents need to meet periodically and develop a schedule of the child's activities. A mediator can facilitate the process of parallel parenting and help parents to disengage from conflict. Together, they can develop routines for the child and help coordinate a similar routine in each household, schedule times for calls between children and the other parent and assist each in doing those tasks that each parent does best. With this process there are no winners or losers, and the child benefits from the separate interaction with both parents, reducing the extent children are exposed to conflict. Once the parallel parenting plan is in place, parents can detach from one another and reduce the intensity of their conflict.

High conflict families need a Parenting Plan that:

- is very detailed
- provides for the physical needs, safety and care of the children
- maintains the children's emotional stability
- specifies a day-to-day and holiday schedule
- doesn't assume or expect flexibility. Flexibility can be a breeding ground for new conflict.
- clearly states each parent's responsibilities, decision making, and expectations
- specifies how disputes will be resolved
- provides for the safety of a spouse if necessary

B. Supervised Time

Time with both parents is the right of the children. It is seldom denied; however, in exceptional circumstances, for example, alcohol, drug, and physical/sexual/emotional abuse and/or neglect, the court may deny or place conditions upon access. These conditions may include shortened or supervised access. Regular contact with both parents is considered very important: it maintains the emotional bond despite the separation of the parents.

Generally, a parent has no right to interfere with the other parent's time with the children unless permitted by a court order. Court orders can be changed over time depending upon circumstances.

A Parenting Plan helps both parents to stay involved in the parenting of their children. Sometimes, it is harmful to the children to have both parents involved or involved to the same extent.

The psychological and physical safety of children must be ensured. If a parent poses a risk of physical harm to the child due to such things such as poor impulse control or poor parental judgement, then the need for the presence of a responsible adult during parent-child contact may be necessary. Many times the court is asked to weigh the risk of harm to a child in permitting continued contact under less-than-optimum parent-child contact. There will be instances when professionally supervised contact cannot protect the child from further trauma. When there is real danger to the children, in the form of violence, emotional abuse, threat of abduction, supervised or limited time might be necessary.

When there has been a finding of child abuse supervised time will be required until factors that contributed to child abuse have been dealt with through the appropriate venue such as police, intervention services, therapy, etc.

The ultimate purpose of supervised time is to protect the child from physical and/or psychological harm while preserving the parent-child relationship if possible. It may occur when:

- Supervised time is seen as a short-term situation until an identified problem is corrected
- Supervision at times can be provided by another family member, a friend with whom the child feels safe, from an agency, or a professional supervisor
- To protect against partner-abuse situations, manipulation, or inappropriate questioning of children

- When there is a danger of false allegations about a parent's behavior
- When a child refuses time with a parent
- When there are concerns about a parents' ability to adequately care for a child due to mental illness, substance abuse, inexperience
- To provide factual information that will assist in the evaluation of unresolved questions about the above issues
- When a parent has had minimal prior contact with the child
- When there is a threat of abduction
- Very limited or no time may be ordered when the perpetrator does not acknowledge the violence or the child fears supervised time
- In the most severe cases, treatment is necessary before time with the children can occur

Note: All supervised time does not require the same level of vigilance.

Information adapted with permission from "Working with High Conflict Families" Written by Mitchell A. Baris, Christine A. Coates et al.; Jason Aronson Inc publisher

C. Monitored Exchanges

Another intervention that is sometimes necessary is a supervised transfer of the children. This type of exchange or transfer is most likely to occur when there is no need to protect the children from direct violence but the threat of a violent or conflicted episode exists between the parents. In these circumstances:

- 3rd party transports the children
- If the risk of violence is less, the exchanges may be scheduled at a neutral site or with a trusted family member
- When the risk of violence is low and the risk of turmoil is high, it may be best to schedule exchanges away from the parents' altogether. Such as one parent drops the child off at school/daycare and the other parent picks the child up. The child, in these circumstances will require access to his/her belongings
- No direct verbal discussion or no physical contact between parents during the exchange, i.e. may occur outside the parental home
- If a one parent is likely to sabotage/interfere with the other parents' time
- When there is a need to monitor mental or physical status such as mental or substance abuse issues prior to parent-child contact

It is important to note that these structures are not a solution to the problems. Although they may reduce the conflict, a child may still be caught up in the dynamics of the conflict that is damaging to his/her development. Bringing an end to the conflict and possibly encouraging therapy is needed.

Information adapted with permission from "Working with High Conflict Families" Written by Mitchell A. Baris, Christine A. Coates et al.; Jason Aronson Inc., publisher

D. Decision-Making

The parenting plan specifies who will have input into major decisions affecting your children's welfare. The major areas are education, religion, health care and extracurricular activities. Decisions regarding these areas can be made in several ways. They can be:

- Made by both parents
- Divided; or
- Made by only one parent

Relevant factors in determining how to make decisions include:

- The extent to which the parents have participated in past major decision(s)
- Degree of co-operation
- Available dispute resolution mechanism
- Willingness to participate in the future
- Whether special problems exist between your children and either parent
- Each parent is responsible for making day-to-day decisions affecting the children during their time with them

E. Dispute Resolution

It is important to include a specific process in the parenting plan to deal with conflicts, if they arise. The parents will have a mechanism to resolve the issue and the children will not be placed in the middle of the conflict. Parallel parenting, does not assume there is an expectation of flexibility or communication so the dispute resolution plan may need to involve a third party and consider safety.

The greater the animosity, resentment and anger toward the other parent, the more likely the children will be harmed in the process of separation and divorce.

F. Parenting Plan Worksheet

The following is an example of a Parenting Plan Worksheet that may be used to develop a parenting plan.

NOTE: Families in high conflict require a detailed and specific Parenting Plan.

There can be a variety of living arrangements when parents separate. You will need to discuss this carefully with each other, if possible; with lawyers; or with a mediator. You will need to address the issues concerning the day-to-day care of your children.

Regular Parenting Schedule:

- Day-to-Day Schedule
 - When will the children live with their Mother and when will they live with their Father?
 - What exchange/travel arrangements need to be made?
 - If you need to re-schedule, can you? How will you and with how much notice?
 - What will be the arrangements for the children to phone or receive calls from a parent?
 - What should be consistent in both homes, (i.e. bedtime, curfew, chores?).
 - Who are alternate caregivers?

Parenting After Separation Participant's Manual

- Special Occasions and Holidays
 - Christmas, Easter, Summer /School Vacations, Long Weekends, Birthdays, Special Family Occasions (i.e. weddings, reunions)
- Out-of-City/Country Travel
- Transportation/Exchange Details
 - Who is responsible, at what times, and where?
 - Do you require a neutral third party?

Major Decision Making

- How will Major Decisions be made and by whom?
- If you wish to share the decision making responsibility, how will you communicate and resolve potential issues?
- Healthcare (Physical/Mental)
 - How are costs shared? (i.e. monthly premiums)
 - How will information be shared? (i.e. illness, prescription information, therapy)
- Education
 - How will you share school activity information?
 - How will you make decisions?
 - Report Cards? Academic or disciplinary problems?
 - Parent/teacher interviews
 - Volunteering – when/how?
 - School events – who?
- Religion
- Extracurricular Activities
 - How will you decide what activities the children will be involved in?
 - How are costs shared?
- Childcare

Other Child-Related Issues

- Guardianship
- Parental Communication
 - What is appropriate? (i.e. by phone weekly? direct e-mail? E-mail through 3rd.parties? and/or written journals?)

- Extended family/ New Partners
- Mobility

Child Support

- Base monthly amount
- Special Expenses (how are costs shared?)

Review of Parenting Plan/ Mediation

- Annual review?
- What happens if you cannot agree?

Section VI – Other Related Issues

A. Starting Over: Parenting in a Blended Family

Combining parenting styles, which often happens in blended families, can be very challenging and often frustrating. Self-awareness and open communication about the differences and similarities between partners are the keys.

When you're having struggles becoming parents together, try following these steps:

1. Figure out what the two of you agree on. Starting with areas of success sets the stage for hopefulness and teamwork.
2. Move on to areas of difference. As you discuss these, each of you must ask yourself: How important is this particular issue to me? Does this issue involve one of my core values? Is the issue important enough that not resolving it will mean I feel my integrity as a person is being sacrificed? (Hint: Try to imagine how you would feel if in two years the problem is absolutely unchanged.)
3. Ask yourself: What kind of change is acceptable (rather than ideal)? Be as clear and specific as possible in describing this to your partner. What will the change look like? How would we know there had been an improvement?
4. Ask yourself whether or not your expectations are realistic. Think about the child's age, life experiences, personality, developmental level, your relationship with the child, and any other relevant factors.
5. Identify issues that are not as crucial to you – those issues which you are willing to ignore, let go of, or for which you simply follow your partner's lead.
6. Sit down and negotiate a plan agreeable to both partners.

B. The Role of the Natural Parent in a Blended Family

1. Understanding and patience with your child is important. It will be an anxious time for the children and they may feel insecure. Talk about the changes and new rules, that the "step" is not a "new" mother or father, or a replacement, but an additional person in the child's life.
2. If there is a move, help children to be part of the move by having their own rooms or by knowing who they will share with and what part of it will be theirs.
3. Children who visit on weekends will feel more involved if they have their own room or space, to keep toys and clothes there permanently, and if they are occasionally allowed to have a friend sleep over.

C. The Role of the Stepparent

1. Accept the fact that the children have a natural parent; you are not their parent.
2. Your role is to be yourself. You are an addition to the child's life, a friend with authority because you share in responsibility for the stepchild as an adult member of the household.
3. Expect to be tested and compared to the natural parent. For example, "My Mom makes better cookies than you do." These remarks and the "testing" that goes on are not directed at you personally, but reflect the child's insecure and anxious feelings in the new family situation.
4. Most stepparents feel unappreciated at least sometimes; especially when they feel they are giving it all they've got. Feelings of "who needs this" and "what have I gotten into" are not uncommon. Remember that kids are unappreciative of their natural parents as well. To counter this, it is important to take care of your needs and to get support and understanding from your partner.

Suggestions:

1. With your partner, establish clear roles for the "new" household. Discuss the rules with all family members so that everybody knows who is what to whom and why.
2. Go into this with a sense of reality - make sure you make time for yourself so you are not looking to the family to fulfill all your needs.
3. Don't take rejection personally. Try to get to know your stepchildren as individuals. Be interested in what they are doing.
4. Try to support the children in their relationship with the natural parent. Children cannot cope with negative remarks about a natural parent; if the natural parent has glaring faults the children will discover them on their own, eventually.
5. Let the kids know you as a person - share your hopes, dreams, career and interests. Be yourself and don't try to be a "replacement."
6. Give yourself time to establish feelings for your stepchildren. You may grow to love them and you may not - many good relationships are built on respect and trust.
7. Don't expect instant love from your stepchild. Relationships take time to develop. While your partner chose you, his or her children did not; respect that.
8. Do not discipline your stepchild until a relationship is established, for example, when steps 1 to 7 above have been implemented. Without that, the child will resist. Let the natural parent look after the discipline; move in gradually in areas that affect you directly.

(The above three sections are used with permission from The Family Centre.)

D. Helping Children Adjust

Each parent has an obligation to help a child adjust when one of the parents form a new relationship. Most children want their parents to get back together and may feel resentful towards a new partner. Introduce a new partner slowly. As well, both parents need to speak positively of the new relationship. A parent who is critical of the other parent's partner creates great difficulty for the child. Allow the child to develop a relationship with the new partner. If the child is resistant do not blame the other parent but discuss the situation rationally with the child to try to understand the child's feelings.

Section VII - Legal Issues

Parenting after separation involves jointly making decisions about how to raise your children. Although your decisions will affect many aspects of your children's lives, these decisions usually fall into three categories: parenting time, responsibilities and child support. In order to discuss these topics and decide how to handle them, a clear understanding of the terms is helpful. Certain terms are relevant to married parents under the *Divorce Act* and different terms apply to those proceeding under the *Family Law Act*.

A. Guardianship

If you and your child's other parent are married to each other at the time of the birth of the child or you and your child's other parent marry each other after the birth of the child, you are both automatically joint guardians of your child.

If you have never been married to your child's other parent, the rules are somewhat different. If you and your child's other parent lived together for twelve (12) consecutive months during which time the child was born or you became each others adult interdependent partner when your child was born or after your child was born, you are both automatically joint guardians of your child. If you and your child's other parent are not guardians for the reasons mentioned above, you are still both automatically joint guardians until your child begins to "usually reside" with one of you at which point the parent your child "usually resides" with becomes the child's sole guardian or, if you child "usually resides" with both of you or alternately with each of you for substantially equivalent periods of time, you will both be guardians of your child. Once your child "usually resides" with you for one year, you will remain a guardian even if your child stops living with you.

You and your child's other parent can always agree in writing that you will both continue to be joint guardians even if your child usually resides with only one parent.

Upon adoption, both adoptive parents become joint guardians of the child.

In some situations, someone other than a child's parent can become a guardian of the child and in certain circumstances involving intervention services, a parent may be removed as guardian; but generally, once you are a guardian of a child your guardianship continues until the child turns 18 years of age.

B. Divorce

When married parents divorce, arrangements have to be made for their children. The arrangements are governed by the *Divorce Act* and involve a determination of custody and access.

Custody

Sole Custody: An award of sole custody to one parent with access rights to the "non-custodial" parent. The latter does **not** have the right to have input into decisions affecting the child. However, he or she has the **right to be informed** of decisions made as to the health, education and welfare of the child. These rights can be expanded and enforced only by written agreement with the custodial parent or by court order. There is no difference between a "Sole Custody" and a "Custody" order.

Split Custody: One parent has custody of and primary residence for one or more children and the other parent has custody of and primary residence for the remaining children. Or, the parents have joint custody and one or more children live with one parent, and the remaining children live with the other parent. In general, courts will attempt to keep the children together. Exceptions may be made because of severe hostility between siblings, preferences of older children, or inability of either parent to care for all children.

Divided Custody: Each parent has actual custody for a part of a given year or alternate years. This type of arrangement is not common, and is most often used when parents' homes are either quite far apart (for example, school year versus summer) or very close together, such that the children can attend the same school when with either parent.

Joint Custody: Joint custody may also be referred to as shared parenting, joint parenting, shared custody, co-custody or co-parenting. Both parents retain legal responsibility and authority for the care of the children. It is similar to the situation when the family was together. Both parents have equal rights with respect to decisions, particularly as to education, upbringing, religion, non-emergency medical care and general welfare. The parent with whom the child is residing at the time (residential parent) will make immediate, day-to-day decisions as to discipline, grooming, diet, activities, and emergency care.

Note: Joint legal custody as discussed above is defined by the shared decision-making power of the parents. It does not refer to residential care, which can be equally shared or divided between the parents in any manner they choose, within a joint custody scheme.

Temporary Custody: An agreement made about custody which is intended to be temporary only, or made for a short period of time. This is commonly referred to as "interim custody" and is usually intended from the date of separation or time of agreement until a more formal agreement or court order is obtained.

Permanent Custody: This is a custody agreement or order which is intended to be permanent. It is important to remember that permanent custody orders can be varied if there is a change of circumstances.

Access – Time Spent With Children

Access gives each parent the right to have the children with him or her for specified periods of time. This can range from a few hours at a time to longer periods. It is typically 2-3 days in succession, often over weekends, or longer for summer holidays, Christmas, and spring break.

Access to both parents is the right of the children, not of the parent. Access is seldom denied; however, in exceptional circumstances (for example, alcohol, drug and physical abuse situations) the court may deny or place conditions upon access. These conditions may include shortened or supervised access. Regular contact with both parents is considered very important: it maintains the child's emotional bond despite the separation of the parents.

Generally, a parent has no right to interfere with the other parent's access to the children unless ordered by the court. If a custodial parent refuses to allow the other parent to see the children, a court may order the non-custodial parent sole custody. Court orders can be changed over time depending upon circumstances.

The time a parent spends with the children under joint custody is sometimes referred to as "access," but this should not be confused with an Access Order when the other spouse has a Custody Order.

C. Parents Who Are Not Married

When parents are guardians and live together but are not married to one another, split up, or when parents are guardians and have never lived together, the *Family Law Act* governs the arrangements that need to be made for their children.

Under the *Family Law Act*, guardians have certain entitlements, responsibilities and powers towards their children. When guardians are not able to agree on carrying out their entitlements, powers and responsibilities, they can obtain a Parenting Order. A Parenting Order can allocate entitlements, powers and responsibilities of guardianship; a Parenting Order can allocate parenting time; a Parenting Order can set up a Dispute Resolution process for disputes; a Parenting Order can deal with any other appropriate issue between guardians.

Parenting time under the *Family Law Act* means the time during which the guardian has the power to make day-to-day decisions for the child including having day-to-day care and control of the child and supervising the child's daily activities.

If one guardian has been allocated an entitlement, power or responsibility, the other guardian can still make enquiries and get information about significant matters that arise in carrying out the entitlement, power or responsibility.

Parenting Orders can also include a term requiring a parent who intends to move his or her residence to provide notice and information about the move to the other guardian subject to safety concerns.

Parenting Orders

- These replace Custody and Access Orders. Parenting Orders are new to family law and encourage both parents to be involved with the child in most cases.
- The parties, and if necessary, the Court, can also use these orders as a tool to build a parenting system after separations.
- The Parenting Order sets out how decisions about the child are to be made, and how the child's time is shared between the parents.
- The Parenting Order can limit the powers of a guardian.
- When a judge decides the terms of a Parenting Order, the best interests of the children are considered. The Act sets out what factors the judge must look at.

Contact Orders

Address the ability of a non-parent or non-guardian to have time with the child. The *Family Law Act* does not use the term "access". A guardian's time with children is called "parenting time". A non-guardian's time with children is called "contact".

- Usually, a person who wants a contact order must first ask the Court for leave (permission) to apply for such an order.
- However, if parents are separated, or one parent is dead, a grandparent who has been denied contact with the child can apply for a Contact Order without first asking for leave.
- The Court must consider the best interest of the child in making a Contact Order.

Enforcement of Time with a Child

- The Court can order that time with a child be enforced.
- Applies to both Parenting Orders and Contact Orders.
- These used to be called "Access Enforcement Orders". Only the name has changed.

D. Child Support

Child support is the money paid by one parent to the other to help pay for the costs of raising the children. These costs include food, shelter, educational expenses, medical needs, activities, entertainment, lessons, gifts, vacations and other activities to which the children have been accustomed.

There are certain principles that are considered in setting the amount of child support:

- Both parents are expected to contribute to the costs of raising the children to the best of their abilities.
- The children's needs take priority over most other expenses.
- If possible, the children's standard of living should not be reduced as a result of the separation.
- The parent receiving the child support is generally not required to account to the parent paying as to how the support is spent.
- Child support is not tied to access.
- Even if the parents agree on an amount of child support, the court must compare the agreed-upon amount to the amount calculated under the Child Support Guidelines and make sure the agreed-upon amount is reasonable. The court can refuse to make an order if it is not reasonable.
- Child support ordered after May 1, 1997, is no longer taxable in the hands of the Recipient, nor is it deductible by the Payor.
- Child support is the right of the child, and therefore cannot be bargained away by the parent(s), or inappropriately reduced.

The Child Support Guidelines are a set of rules and tables to be used for calculating the amount of child support to be paid. The purpose of the Guidelines is to reduce conflict and the need for lengthy negotiations regarding the amount of child support, and to ensure consistent treatment of spouses and children in similar circumstances. The Guidelines **must** be considered when child support is dealt with as part of a divorce, but are generally applied in any situation when child support is an issue, so as to include parents who were never married.

Terms and Definitions

The Child Support Guidelines define some terms which may affect how child support is calculated. Some of the important terms are:

- **Payor:** The parent who is paying child support. Generally, this is the parent with whom the children do not reside; however, in split or shared custody situations, it is the parent with the higher income.
- **Recipient:** The parent who receives the child support.
- **Child of the Marriage:** Under the *Divorce Act*, this includes all children born to both parents who are under the age of majority (in Alberta, 18 years). However, children over 18 who are still dependent upon one or both parents by reason of illness, disability, or other cause (which usually includes reasonable post-secondary education) are also included as children of the marriage. Also included in the definition are children of one parent to whom the other parent has stood in the place of a parent during the marriage, which is also referred to as having stood in "loco parentes". The present legislation for children whose parents were never married generally makes provision for them only while they are minors (under the age of 18, no older than 22).
- **Income:** Child support calculations use the parent's gross annual income. Any income that is reported on the tax return is included, such as income from employment, investments,

property, or assets. If income changes or is difficult to calculate, different methods can be used to determine annual income. Parents can agree upon the figure to be used as annual income, but in that case, the court may still want to review income documents to make sure the agreed-upon figure is reasonable.

- **Custody:** For the purpose of the Federal Child Support Guidelines only, the word "custody" generally relates to the time the children spend or live with each parent. For example:
 - "Shared Custody" is defined as the children residing with the Recipient, but spending 40% or more of their time, over the course of the year, with the Payor.
 - "Split Custody" is defined as one or more of the children residing with one parent, and one or more children residing with the other parent.

Calculation of Child Support

Before calculating the child support amount, the parents should gather the income information from the Payor, and if special expenses are claimed (see below), or if custody is shared or split, from the Recipient as well.

Basic Table Amount

The basic table amount is determined by looking at the table for the province where the Payor resides. If the Payor resides outside Canada, use the table for the province where the Recipient resides. The table sets a basic amount of child support according to total income and the number of children.

Split Custody

Calculate the table amount that the mother, at her income, should pay to the father for the children residing with him. Then look at the table amount the father, at his income, should pay to the mother for the children residing with her. The lower amount is subtracted from the higher to obtain a "net" table amount. It is this net sum that the parent who would be paying the greater amount according to the original calculation should pay to the other parent.

Shared Custody

In shared custody situations, the guideline amount will not be automatically applied. The court may order, or the parties may agree upon, a different amount. If a court were asked to make a determination of a reasonable amount, in reaching its decision it would take into consideration the appropriate table amount each parent would pay if all of the children resided with the other, the increased costs of shared custody arrangements, the financial circumstances of the parents, and the needs of the children.

Special and Extraordinary Expenses

The basic table amount is intended to cover the Payor's share of the child's basic and ordinary expenses. Special and extraordinary expenses are proportionately divided between the parents and paid in addition to the basic table amount, and are often referred to as "add-on" expenses or costs.

Special expenses include:

- Child care expenses incurred as a result of the custodial parent's employment, illness, disability, or education or training for employment
- The child's portion of medical and dental insurance premiums
- Health-related expenses that exceed insurance reimbursement by at least \$100 annually per illness or event, including orthodontic treatment, professional counselling, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, prescription drugs, hearing aids, glasses and contact lenses
- Extraordinary expenses for primary and secondary school education or for any educational programs that meet the child's particular needs
- Expenses for post-secondary education
- Extraordinary expenses for extracurricular activities

These expenses are reduced by the amount of any subsidy and/or tax benefit available to the parent paying them, and by any contribution by a child over the age of 18.

Generally, special expenses can be paid for and claimed by either parent in the calculation of add-on expenses. These expenses are to be divided between the parents proportionately to their incomes. The additional amount to cover special expenses may be averaged out and paid monthly, or the parents may agree that specific expenses may be divided and paid by the parents as they arise.

Children 18 or Over or Children to Whom One Spouse Stands in Place of a Parent

In these cases, the amount calculated by the Child Support Guidelines does not have to be applied. One must look at the Guideline amount, but also the financial and other circumstances of each spouse and of the child. In addition, in the case of a spouse standing in the place of a parent, one must also consider the support obligations of the natural parent of that child.

Agreement as to Amount of Child Support

Parents can reach agreements as to the amount of child support to be paid. However, if the parties want to obtain a court order for child support, or a Divorce Judgment, the court has a legal obligation to ensure that the amount of child support is appropriate in the circumstances. The right to child support is that of the child, not of the parent, so the court will not allow a parent to forego child support, or to agree to a very low amount without good reason.

Undue Hardship

In rare cases, the court may award an amount less than suggested by the Guidelines, if the person seeking the reduction can satisfy the court that the Guideline amount would cause them undue hardship. Conversely, and again in rare cases, the court can award an amount greater than suggested by the Guidelines, if the prospective Recipient can satisfy the court that it must do so, because the Guideline amount is insufficient to avoid the Recipient and the children suffering an undue hardship. Before doing so, the court will look at the standard of living in each parent's household, including in its assessment the number of persons living in that household and the income of all of them. If the parent claiming undue hardship has a higher standard of living in their household than the other parent, the child support amount will not change.

Variation and Disclosure

If there is a change in circumstances that will change the amount of the child support as calculated under the Child Support Guidelines, then either parent can apply to the court for a variation. For that reason, the Child Support Guidelines provide that either parent can request financial information from the other on an annual basis, if that information is necessary to calculate the amount of child support. The Payor's information is always relevant, but the Recipient's information is relevant only if special expenses are claimed, if custody is shared or split, or if there is an issue of undue hardship.

Income Tax Changes

The *Income Tax Act* was changed at the same time as the Child Support Guidelines were implemented, on May 1, 1997. The effect of the tax changes is that child support in any new orders or agreements is no longer taxable; that is, the Payor no longer claims child support paid as a deduction, and the Recipient no longer claims it as income.

If you have a child support order or agreement made before May 1, 1997, the old tax provisions continue to apply unless:

- Both you and the other parent sign an election form with Revenue Canada advising that you no longer wish to declare or deduct the child support. (This form #T1157 is available at a Revenue Canada office); or
- You obtain a new child support order, or enter into a new agreement.

Costs

Litigation is expensive. When applications are made to court solely for the purpose of delay or to promote an unreasonable position, the court may award costs against the losing party. These amounts must be paid in addition to paying your own lawyer. For example, costs may be awarded for not complying with a Notice to Disclose, or against the losing party on a contested application, or for a party who has to come to court to enforce an order.

The costs that can be awarded against the losing party for these applications can range between \$500 and \$3,000. In addition, you could have to pay the disbursements of the other party which may include the cost of serving the documents on you and the costs of obtaining the transcript of the examination on affidavit.

Getting Help

Calculating child support can be quite complicated, even after you have determined the applicable principles and sections of the Child Support Guidelines which should apply to you and your family. Many lawyers have computer programs to assist in the calculations, once they have established the categories in which your particular situation may fall, and established all of the applicable income figures and costs to utilize. If you wish to do the calculations on your own and if you require help, you may contact the Family Law Information Centres (FLIC). You will have to supply the appropriate income figures and add-on costs and the Centres will assist you in the calculations.

Edmonton

Law Courts, Main Floor
1A Sir Winston Churchill Square
97 Street & 102A Avenue
Edmonton AB T5J 0R2
Phone: 780-415-0404

Calgary

Calgary Courts Centre
Suite 706-S, 601 - 5th Street SW
Calgary AB T2P 5P7
Phone: 403-297-6981

Grande Prairie

Court House
10260-99 Street
Grande Prairie AB T8V 2H4
Phone: 780-833-4234

Lethbridge

Court House
Main Floor, Room 148
320-4 Street, South
Lethbridge AB T1J 1Z8
Phone: 403-388-3102

Red Deer

Court House
4909-48 Avenue
Red Deer AB T4N 3T5
Phone: 403-755-1468

For TOLL FREE access in Alberta please dial 310-0000

Website: www.albertacourts.ab.ca/familylaw

The Role of the Maintenance Enforcement Program

Every court order that includes paying of child maintenance and spousal support must include a clause that states that the amount owing under the order is to be paid to the Director of Maintenance Enforcement and shall be enforced by the Director unless the creditor (person receiving payments) chooses not to register with the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP).

MEP's Responsibilities

MEP can only enforce maintenance when the debtor (payor), creditor (recipient) or Crown (government) has registered with MEP. MEP does not obtain court orders for clients and cannot change the amount of maintenance ordered by a court. MEP also does not provide legal advice or legal representation to clients. There is no cost to clients for MEP's enforcement services. MEP will:

- Maintain the confidentiality of clients' personal information
- Monitor and enforce child and spousal maintenance orders
- Collect payments from the debtor and forward them to the creditor at the request of the debtor. MEP will conduct child status reviews.

Creditors Responsibilities

If the creditor wishes to register with MEP, it is the creditor's responsibility to provide a Maintenance Order to MEP. Creditors should not accept any payments directly from the debtor once the file is registered. The creditors should keep MEP informed of:

- Changes in the creditor's mailing address and telephone numbers
- Changes in the child's status that may make the child no longer eligible for maintenance (e.g. residence, education, over age 18)
- Any information the creditor may have that could assist MEP in collecting, such as details of the debtor's location, telephone numbers, employment or assets.

Debtor's Responsibilities

It can be a benefit to the debtor to pay all child support through the Program so that an accurate accounting is kept and all payments are recognized at the time they are made.

If the debtor wishes to register with MEP, it is the debtor's responsibility to provide a Maintenance Order to MEP. Debtors should make all payments to MEP according to the Maintenance Order. To avoid the risk of having to pay twice, debtors should not make any payments directly to a creditor. The debtor shall keep MEP informed of:

- Changes in the debtor's address, telephone numbers, and employment
- Changes in the child's status that may make the child no longer eligible for maintenance (e.g. residence, education, over age 18)
- Any anticipated problems such as late payments

You can contact MEP for additional information at:

Maintenance Enforcement Program
John E. Brownlee Building
7th Floor, 10365 – 97 Street
Edmonton AB T5J 3Z7

Phone: 780-422-5555 or TOLL FREE at 310-0000
Fax: 780-422-1215
e-mail: Alberta.mep@gov.ab.ca
Website: www.gov.ab.ca/just/mep

Section VIII - Mediation

A. What is Mediation?

Mediation is a way for two or more parties to jointly make decisions about issues like parenting arrangements, child and spousal support and division of matrimonial property.

Through mediation, you and the other party can attempt to resolve the issues you are taking to court. If you reach an agreement through mediation you may avoid going to court altogether. Even if you are unable to resolve all the issues, you may simplify your court case by narrowing down the issues that still need to be addressed by the court.

Mediation is confidential. Your discussions with a mediator are confidential if your mediator is a member of an association who is bound by their professional ethics to keep your matters secret. Mediators who are members of Family Mediation Canada agree to follow a Code of Professional Conduct. This code includes a duty to keep their clients' matters confidential.

The mediator is bound by (Alberta) law to report any suspected instances of child abuse.

If you and the other party decide to try mediation, you will be asked to sign an Agreement to Mediate. If it says the mediation will take place without prejudice, that means what happens in mediation cannot be admitted as evidence in court.

Cases may not be appropriate for mediation where:

- One or both parties do not want to mediate.
- One or both parties are not willing to disclose information.
- An abusive relationship exists or has existed that hinders one party's ability to participate effectively in mediation.
- There is ongoing child welfare involvement.
- There is a power imbalance between the two parties.
- There is substance abuse or mental health issues.

Mediation may be beneficial because:

- It provides people with the opportunity to solve their own problems.
- Both parties can come out winners by addressing their needs and concerns and then finding a solution that best meets all of those needs and concerns.
- It can improve communication between the two parties.
- You have control over your own decisions when you mediate your disputes with the other party.
- Mediation agreements may suit the parties better and last longer than court orders.
- It may cost less than continuing with a court action.
- You may be able to resolve issues more quickly through mediation than by going to court.

B. How Does Mediation Work?

During the mediation process:

- You and the other party may meet separately or together with the mediator you have both chosen for most of the first mediation session.
- You and the other party will usually attend later mediation sessions together with the mediator.
- You can have your lawyer present at any mediation session.
- Mediation sessions vary in length, but most are less than three hours long.
- At the end of a session the mediator prepares a summary of your discussion, including issues you have resolved and those that remain to be resolved.

C. What Does the Mediator Do?

The mediator:

- Creates a non-threatening environment so you and the other party can discuss the issues
- Helps you and the other party talk about the issues you disagree about
- Helps you and the other party work out a mutually acceptable agreement
- May help you identify some alternatives, but you and the other party decide which alternative best meets everyone's needs

D. Do I Need a Lawyer?

Mediation does not replace the need for legal services:

- A mediated agreement is not legally binding.
- You should talk to a lawyer before proceeding with mediation.
- You may talk to your lawyer at any time during the mediation.
- During mediation, you are encouraged to have your lawyer look over the agreement before you finalize it.
- You are encouraged to have your lawyer write up the final agreement for your signature.

E. Does Mediation Cost Anything?

The mediation services provided by Family Justice Services, Alberta Justice, are free. If you choose to proceed with a private mediator, you must pay for it. Usually the two parties share the cost of mediation equally. However, you and the other party may agree to a different cost-sharing arrangement.

F. How Do I Find a Mediator?

There are several ways to find a mediator. You can:

- Ask your lawyer or counsellor to suggest a mediator.
- Ask friends or coworkers who have been to mediation to suggest a mediator.
- Look in the yellow pages of the phone book.
- Alberta Justice also offers mediation services without charge to those who qualify. The telephone numbers for Family Justice Services are:

Edmonton: 780-427-8329

Calgary: 403-297-6981

For the rest of the Province: 403-340-7187

Contact any of these offices TOLL FREE by calling 310-0000

When choosing a mediator, ask if he or she is a member of a professional mediation association, such as Family Mediation Canada, Alberta Family Mediation Society, or Alberta Arbitration & Mediation Society.

(Partially from Saskatchewan Justice brochure, Mediation Screening and Orientation.)

Section IX – Collaborative Family Law

A. What is Collaborative Family Law?

The collaborative family law process is cooperation, not confrontation. It is problem solving with collaborative lawyers where you and your partner try to understand each other. You and your partner are responsible for gathering information and coming to solutions. This process can also be used in other inter-familial disputes concerning children.

- Both lawyers help you and your spouse to:
 - find and focus on what is important to you
 - understand each other's concerns
 - gather facts to exchange information
 - explore a wide range of possible choices, and
 - reach solutions acceptable to both of you
- You and your spouse and both collaborative lawyers work as a team.

B. How Does Collaborative Law Work?

- You, your spouse and both lawyers will sign a contract agreeing not to go to court. What happens in the meetings cannot be used as evidence in Court. If matters cannot be resolved and you have to go to Court, you will have to hire a new lawyer.
- Both you, your spouse and both lawyers will meet together as often as you and your spouse need to meet.
- First, you will each meet alone with your own lawyer to identify your concerns and learn about the Collaborative Family Law Process.
- Then you and your collaborative lawyer and your spouse and his/her collaborative lawyer will meet together so the four of you can discuss what is important to you and what you need to talk about (issues).
- At all meetings where you, your spouse and both lawyers are present, you will follow the Collaborative Family Law Process.

C. Benefits of the Collaborative Family Law Process

- You may spend less money and time than you would using other methods for reaching separation or divorce solutions.
- You may produce an agreement better suited to your own unique needs now and in the future.
- You will find the Collaborative Family Law Process more engaging, more informative and less stress than other methods of resolving your divorce or separation issues.
- You will have control over your own decisions when you participate in the Collaborative Family Law Process.
- You may improve communication between you and your spouse. You and your spouse will focus on creative problem solving, not blaming and revenge.
- You will have skilled legal advisors at every stage of the process. Both collaborative lawyers understand how to reach creative settlements. Your collaborative lawyer is at your side, explaining issues and helping you to achieve goals by mutual participation and agreement.
- You, your spouse and both collaborative lawyers will agree in advance to work only toward a settlement acceptable to both clients. Going to court (litigation) can never be threatened. Neither you nor your spouse will be permitted to play games or take advantage of each other.
- The collaborative lawyers share with their clients a financial incentive to make the Collaborative Family Law process work. The collaborative lawyers have not succeeded unless they help you create a win-win solution. They are “out of a job” if the process breaks down.
- Clients and collaborative lawyers work together as members of the settlement team rather than working against each other as “opposing parties”.

D. How do I Find a Collaborative Lawyer?

You can:

- look in the yellow pages of the phone book under “lawyers”
- go to www.collaborativelaw.ca
- ask your counselor to suggest a collaborative lawyer

When choosing a collaborative lawyer, ask if she or he is a member of the Association of Collaborative Family Lawyers in their area.

Section X - Suggested Readings

For Parents

Ahrons, Constance R. *We're Still Family: What Grown Children Have to Say About Their Parents' Divorce*. 1st ed. New York: HarperCollins, c2004.

In 1979, sociologist Ahrons randomly selected 98 pairs of divorced parents in Wisconsin for a five-year study. As she reported in 1994's *The Good Divorce*, while everyone handles the divorce process differently, "divorce doesn't destroy families," even if it rearranges and expands them to embrace new members. This reassuring viewpoint has been attacked by researchers like Judith Wallerstein, who argue that divorce's damage may not appear for a decade or more, when ACODs (adult children of divorce) struggle unsuccessfully to bond with partners. In response, Ahrons went back to her original research panel to learn how their children fared. Her team managed to interview an astounding 90% of the original cohort's children. Approximately three-fourths of these 173 "children" (now 30-somethings) thought their parents' divorces were a good idea, and that parents and children were better off than if they'd stayed together. Their comments on what made a difference to them when their parents were divorcing are instructive. Kids are very tuned into-and upset by-parental warfare, so "how parents relate to each other" is key. Parents battle over joint custody schedules, oblivious to how stressful the transitioning between parents can be. Ahrons reminds parents it's not the quantity of time they spend with their child, but the quality of relationship they establish: reliability, consistency and genuine interest in their lives are what matter most to children. More prescriptive than descriptive, Ahrons's supportive guidebook should aid anyone trying to make a "good divorce" better.

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Berry, Diane M. *Child Friendly Divorce : A Divorce(d) Therapist's Guide to Helping Your Children Thrive*. Diane M. Berry 1st ed., Manitowoc, Wis.: Blue Waters Publications, c2004.

A straightforward examination of the crisis and trauma that divorce brings to children's lives, and what divorcing parents can do to ease the burden. From helping children adjust to long-term difficulties; to forming a co-parenting partnership with the "other parent"; to when and how to introduce children to a new partner, *Child Friendly Divorce* is a quality guide, practical and intuitively written. If you are considering or involved in a divorce where there are children involved, then you need to give a careful reading to Diane Berry's *Child Friendly Divorce* - Midwest Book Review.

Beyer, Roberta 1951. *Speaking of Divorce: How to Talk With Your Kids and Help Them Cope*. Roberta Beyer and Kent Winchester, Minneapolis, MN : Free Spirit, c2001.

Designed to help you find balance during this difficult time and respond effectively to your kids' needs, questions, and feelings. Each chapter is a communication tool, providing the reassuring words you can use to help your children make sense of the situation and cope with change. You'll learn how kids view divorce at different ages and stages, and how to offer support. You'll also discover that, with honesty and empathy, you can help your kids not only survive, but thrive during one of life's most difficult transitions.

Bode, Janet. *For Better, For Worse: A Guide to Surviving Divorce for Preteens and Their Families*. Janet Bode; Illustrations by Stan Mack. 1st ed., New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2001.

Divided into two parts, the first "For girls and boys," the second for parents, *For Better, For Worse: A Guide to Surviving Divorce for Preteens and Their Families*, by Janet Bode and Stan Mack, offers quotes from children who have lived through their parents' divorce and encourages parents to talk with their children with practical tips. Some children give anecdotes in the form of cartoons, some through poetry, and there is a recurring "Kid problem, Kid solutions" section. By keeping the focus on children, often in their own words, the authors present a variety of situations and experiences to validate the reader's own predicament. (Feb.) Copyright 2001, Cahners Business Information.

Burrett, Jill. *Parenting After Separation: Making the Most of Family Changes*. Sydney: Finch Publishing, 2003.

Helping separated and divorced parents focus on the one goal they need to share-the care of their children-this book encourages them to make the most of the changes in their lives, rather than living with bitterness or regret. Addressed are issues such as learning to co-parent while living apart, forming new relationships, and understanding the pressures on children. Also discussed are the importance of fathers' contributions to children's lives; how to successfully blend families and assume new and unexpected roles, such as stepmother or stepfather; and how parents can learn to move forward with their lives in a positive way.

Canada. Health Canada. *Helping Children and Youth Live with Separation and Divorce: A Guide for Parents*. 3rd ed.,. Ottawa, Ont.: Health Canada, c2000.

A publication intended to reach out to Canadian families in need of information and resources to help their children to live through the process of separation and divorce. This booklet is also designed to assist professionals in such fields as social services, health, justice and education, in their work with children and their parents.

Cantrell, Deborah, 1958. *A Mother's Guide to Divorce: Practical Tips for Women with Children*. Deborah Cantrell, Victoria, B.C.: Trafford, c2003.

A Mother's Guide to Divorce answers basic questions associated with divorce preparation. This book is not meant to be used as legal counsel, but is full of practical advice which provides the reader with the information needed to seek and receive adequate legal representation. The vignettes are intimate, intended to help the reader relate to her own circumstances.

Children and the Changing Family: Between Transformation and Negotiation. Edited by An-Magritt Jensen and Lorna McKee. London; New York: Routledge Falmer, 2003.

Families have always been at the center of sociological research, but there has been a tendency to focus on an adult perspective and narrative - children are rarely seen as subjects in their own right. Jensen and McKee assert there's a compelling need to explore the child's role in major familial decisions such as divorce, moving, employment or childcare, and this edited collection researches family change from the child's point of view.

Clavel, Phil. *Dad Alone: How to Rebuild Your Life and Remain an Involved Father After Divorce*. Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2003.

Both the practical and emotional challenges that newly single fathers must face are discussed with candor in this guide to positively establishing a new family unit and rebuilding self-esteem. Ways in which fathers can create a new home, find strength in a support system, and maintain an active and enriching.

Davis, Akeela. *Your Divorce, Your Dollars: Financial Planning Before, During, and After Divorce*. North Vancouver, B.C.: International Self-Counsel Press, 2003.

A complete guide to divorce-related financial planning, demonstrating in a step-by-step manner how you can overcome the financial challenges of divorce and lead a financially healthy life. This book addresses everything from dividing the assets to retirement planning. By using examples of common scenarios, Akeela Davis demonstrates how you can handle the financial challenges of divorce by using careful planning and money smarts.

Divorcing Children: Children's Experience of Their Parents' Divorce. Ian Butler [et al.]. London; New York: Jessica Kingsley, 2003.

Drawing on a three-year multidisciplinary study of the children of divorced parents, the authors, leading academics in their fields, present a much-needed guide to working with children who are experiencing parental separation. Providing an in-depth picture of the effect of divorce on children both during and after the proceedings.

Emery, Robert E. *The Truth About Children and Divorce: Dealing With the Emotions So You and Your Children Can Thrive.* New York: Viking, 2004.

In *The Truth About Children and Divorce*, Robert Emery applies his twenty-five years of experience as researcher, therapist, and mediator to offer parents a new road map to divorce. Dr. Emery shows how our powerful emotions and the way we handle them shape how we divorce - and whether our children suffer or thrive in the long run. His message is hopeful, yet realistic: while divorce is invariably painful, parents can help promote their children's resilience. With compassion and authority, Dr. Emery explains, step by step, how this new understanding can help parents manage the potentially toxic feelings of their divorce and deal more effectively with the necessary daily tasks; from talking to children and creating a workable parenting schedule to dealing with legal issues. With compelling research on the emotional experience of divorce and its effects on our children and practical strategies and advice, this book is an essential tool for all parents who are considering a separation or going through the process. *The Truth About Children and Divorce* combines the guidance of a renowned expert and the sensitivity of a practicing therapist and divorced father to help parents and children emerge strong, independent, and ready to move into a new, fulfilling phase of life.

Frieman, Barry B. *The Divorcing Father's Manual: 8 Steps to Help You and Your Children Survive and Thrive.* 1st ed., Harriman, Tenn.: Men's Studies Press, c2005.

A self-help book that teaches both custodial and non-custodial fathers to cope successfully with their divorce in a way that is healthy for their children. This book guides a father through all steps of the emotional healing process while enabling him to maximize his role as a productive, involved dad. The Manual helps him to focus on a non-adversarial divorce and to establish a lasting business-like relationship with his ex-wife. Dads are also given practical hands-on skills that they will need in order to be successful divorced fathers as well as a strategy to incorporate his children sensitively into his new relationships.

Gerlach, Peter K. *Build a Co-parenting Team: After Divorce or Remarriage.* Philadelphia: Xlibris corp., c2002.

This guidebook is part of a "Stepfamily information" series intended to help co-parents and supporters overcome five common hazards that combine to (1) promote epidemic U.S. re/divorce, and (2) pass on significant psychological wounds to vulnerable children. The hazards are:

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- co-parents shared unawareness's and ignorance of key information; plus...
- unseen psychological wounds from low-nurturance childhoods; plus...
- blocked grief in kids and/or adults, which inhibits new bonds and adult intimacy; plus...
- courtship neediness and romantic illusions; plus...
- little informed stepfamily help in the media and local community

Hannibal, Mary Ellen. *Good Parenting Through Your Divorce: How to Recognize, Encourage and Respond to Your Child's Feelings and Help Them Get Through Your Divorce*. Mary Ellen Hannibal; foreword by Ina Geymant. New York: Marlowe & Co.: Distributed by Publishers Group West, c2002.

This guide for divorcing parents helps them to recognize, encourage, and respond to their child's feelings and help them make a healthy transition through this change in their lives.

Hess, Lisa Lawmaster. *Diverse Divorce: 18 Situation Stories for Use with Children of Divorce*. Written by Lisa Lawmaster Hess; illustrated by Marie Garafano. Warminster, PA: Mar*co Products, c2004.

How many times have children come to you with a tale about their divorce or separation situation and you wished you had a story that they could relate to? *Diverse Divorce* doesn't have every situation but it does have eighteen different stories that are based on situations presented to the author in her role as school counselor. The program includes eight stories for young elementary-age children and ten for older elementary/middle school-age children. Each story focuses on a different marital situation and includes suggested questions for post-story discussion. The stories for younger students also include a related activity.

Hetherington, Mavis and John Kelly. *For Better or for Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*. Mavis Hetherington and John Kelly. New York: W.W. Norton, 2002.

University of Virginia psychology professor Hetherington and writer Kelly offer a "primer" on the "post nuclear family experience." After studying more than 1,400 families and 2,500 children over three decades, Hetherington sees divorce as part of a series of "interconnected transitions" in life rather than a one-time event. While destructive in the short-term, divorce can also be positive, creating new opportunities for long-term personal growth. The authors begin by looking at the character of the marital relationship, which is like a bank account: each partner makes "deposits" of strengthening factors (like mutual support and intimacy) and "withdrawals" that debilitate the relationship. The emotional base of the marriage erodes if there's an imbalance of "deposits" and "withdrawals" for too long, resulting in divorce. Depending on their "protective" factors (maturity, autonomy) vs. "risk" (impulsiveness, antisocial), ex-partners will weather the stormy first year after divorce with varying degrees of resilience. After six years, most are happier. While the general picture is fairly positive, the detail can be unnerving. Children may be adjusting, but after six years, a quarter of them see their noncustodial father once a year or less. One fourth of ex-spouses are still having conflicts after six years. Most stepfathers give up the struggle to connect with resisting stepchildren after two years. With these darker realities in mind, the authors offer a series of practical suggestions at the end of each chapter.

Leibel, Craig, 1973. *Within a Child's Heart: The Real-life Journey Children Face When Their Parents Divorce*. St. Albert, Alta.: Inspire Media Inc., 2001.

Offers an insightful glimpse into the journey that the author faced when his parents divorced. By disclosing the intimate details of his personal story, he provides readers with powerful revelations on dealing with the life-altering experience of divorce.

It is sure to help children of divorce learn to handle the confusion and adversity they are faced with. At the same time it presents parents with a valuable opportunity to explore how children might experience the “trauma of divorce”. (book description)

Long, Nicholas James, 1929. *Making Divorce Easier on Your Child: 50 Effective Ways to Help Children Adjust*. Nicholas Long and Rex Forehand -- Chicago: Contemporary Books, c2002.

Making Divorce Easier on Your Child arms you with 50 effective strategies and action steps for helping your kids cope with divorce, packaged in a convenient, quick-bite format. It is based on the authors' years of clinical experience dealing with the children of divorce, as well as their extensive research into the causes and cures of divorce-related emotional problems.

McClure, F. Daniel. *Wednesday Evenings and Every Other Weekend: From Divorced Dad to Competent Co-parent: A Guide for the Noncustodial Father*. F. Daniel McClure, Jerry B. Saffer. Charlottesville, Va.: Van Doren Company, c2001.

Help noncustodial fathers get beyond the issues of divorce to the most important job they will ever do: co-parenting their children. With humor, compassion, and toughness, they address two of our most important needs; nurturing children of divorce and supporting caring, competent fathers. “Ten Reasons Why Court Is the Last Place You Want to Find Yourself” is worth the price of the book. Family Law News, Fall 2001

Newman, George, 1936. *101 Ways to be a Long-distance Super Dad or Mom, too!* Tucson, AZ: Blossom Valley Press, c2000.

Your relationship with your children doesn't have to deteriorate if you are physically separated. Here are some ingenious ways to make every moment count!

Prall, Robert C., 1918. *The Rights of Children in Separation and Divorce: The Essential Handbook for Parents*. Robert C. Prall. Kansas City, Mo.: Landmark Editions, c2000.

Presents the rights that children should have when their parents separate or divorce. Dr. Prall discusses the reasons for each right and he tells ways that parents can prevent and solve many of the problems children have during these traumatic experiences.

Pryor, Jan. *Children in Changing Families: Life After Parental Separation*. Jan Pryor and Bryan Rodgers. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001 (2002 printing).

This book supplies much-needed insights into why some children survive change in families better than others. Sifting through international research on families undergoing change, the authors consider what can be learnt about children's experiences and well-being. The book starts by documenting demographic changes across North America, the UK, Australia and New Zealand and by outlining known outcomes for children affected by parental separation and stepfamily formation. It then goes on to address in detail children's own perceptions of family change, what happens when family transitions occur, children's experience in stepfamilies, and the hotly-debated issue of the involvement of fathers in children's lives.

Raising Children of Divorce: Practical Help for Parents [video recording]. Paraclete Video Productions. Brewster, MA: Distributed by Paraclete Press, c2002. 1 videocassette (30 min.).

Children often become casualties in their parent's divorce, but they don't need to...this video helps both parents and other caregivers find concrete ways of helping children walk through one of the most difficult times they will ever face.

Royko, David, 1959. *Voices of Children of Divorce*. New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000, c1999.

In this collection, children talk eloquently about their experiences with divorce. Based on interviews with more than 1,000 kids, this book fills the gap in parents' understanding of how their children may be experiencing divorce and helps them avoid common mistakes.

Stahl, Philip Michael. *Parenting After Divorce: A Guide to Resolving Conflicts and Meeting Your Children's Needs*. Atascadero, Calif.: Impact Publishers, c2000.

Stressing the need to let go of anger toward the other parent, to do one's personal best regardless of the other parent, and to choose the best for the child, Stahl, a psychologist, therapist, and divorced father, offers solid advice for everyone involved. First and foremost among his suggestions is the development of a detailed parenting plan, often worked out with a mediator, to help avoid many day-to-day conflicts between ex-spouses. Recognizing the need to make changes to the plan as children grow, Stahl suggests reviewing it each year. Children should not be treated like property, he advises, and the percentage of physical custody for each parent is not as vital as a working arrangement that enables the child to develop in an age-appropriate fashion, with friends and extracurricular activities... Recommended for all public libraries. Kay Brodie, Chesapeake Coll., Wye Mills, MD Copyright 2000 Cahners Business Information.

Sember, Brette McWhorter, 1968. *How to Parent With Your Ex: Working Together for Your Child's Best Interest*. Brette McWhorter Sember. 1st ed., Naperville, Ill.: Sphinx Pub., 2005.

This manual is the only book designed for both residential and non-residential parents. The book encourages both sides to understand the other's point of view, and so enables both parents to make the most of time spent with the children.

How to Parent with Your Ex provides support for the difficult situation the non-residential parent is in and practical, to-the-point advice about how to reap the most benefits from the visitation time available. Conversely, it addresses the role of the residential parent and the need to understand the changing relationships the child is going through. By focusing on the child, both parents are able to solidify a special relationship with the child and maintain necessary, positive communication with the ex-spouse.

Smart, Carol. *The Changing Experience of Childhood: Families and Divorce*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001.

This path-breaking book explores children's own accounts of family life after divorce and allows us to see these changes from their point of view. It provides a sociological perspective on how childhood may be changing and how the 'democratic' status of children in the family may be in the process of transformation. The implications for family and legal policy of listening to children's views are also set out.

Sommers-Flanagan, Rita, 1953. *Don't Divorce Us!: Kids Advice to Divorcing Parents*. Rita Sommers-Flanagan, Chelsea Elander, John Sommers-Flanagan. Alexandria, VA : American Counseling Association, c2000.

"A firsthand examination of the divorce experience through the eyes and voices of the children of divorce..." Intimate, humorous, touching and wise advice on divorce and its consequences from those most affected by it - the children of divorce. Based on interviews with hundreds of children and adult children of divorce, the book provides sensible strategies for coping with the challenges of double-households, long-distance parenting, ex-spouses, parental dating, step-parenting and the many other potentially stressful issues of divorce. For any parents who are considering divorce, are in the divorce process, or have recently divorced, this book offers valuable insights into helping children through the experience.

Teyber, Edward. *Helping Children Cope with Divorce*. Rev. ed., 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, c2001.

Named one of the 10 Best Parenting Books of the Year by "Child" Magazine, this revised edition teaches you to minimize stress during initial breakups and ultimate separation, explain divorce so children don't blame themselves, protect children from parental hostilities, and navigate conflicts of loyalty and alliance.

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Walsh, Elaine, 1955. *Tips for the Divorced Dad*. Elaine Walsh; cover designed by Ali Pizzirusso; edited by Sheree Mylo Becker. Victoria, B.C.: Trafford, c2002.

The author is a mother who watched and learned as her daughter adjusted to her parents' divorce - in particular, as her daughter and ex-husband adjusted to their new relationship. This book is the collection of life lessons learned over six years. Knowledge that was gained both first-hand and through interviews with many other families in the midst of divorce. Because this knowledge has been documented and shared, fathers and children will benefit from what others have lived and learned.

Walther, Anne N. *Not Damaged Goods: A Successful Strategy for Children of Divorce From Infancy to Adulthood*. Anne Newton Walther. San Francisco: Tapestry Pub., c2001.

Beginning with infancy and continuing through adulthood (age 30 and up), Walther explores how children in each stage of life might react to their parents' divorce. The initial chapters on early childhood are written for parents, while the next six chapters are intended for children, teens, or adults in specific age groups. The author has an excellent grasp of the psychological and emotional needs of each stage. Each chapter contains scenarios portraying typical situations children may be facing, followed by probing questions, helpful tips, and suggestions for developing self-esteem. The questions are thought provoking, but many scenarios are idealistic and feature people of above-average income levels.

Whiteman, Tom. *Your Kids and Divorce: Helping Them Grow Beyond the Hurt*. Thomas A. Whiteman. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Fleming H. Revell, c2001.

This book addresses a problem that reaches readers on every economic, social, and spiritual level. Dealing frankly with issues like anger and denial, while carrying a message of hope, *Your Kids and Divorce* may well become the definitive guide to a brighter future for single-parent and blended families.

Wittmann, Jeffrey P. *Custody Chaos, Personal Peace: Sharing Custody With an Ex Who Drives You Crazy*. Jeffrey P. Wittmann. New York: Perigee, c2001.

This empowering guide is an inspirational roadmap for the millions of men and women navigating a rocky relationship with a former spouse-while trying to maintain a healthy atmosphere for their child. The book is easy to read, provides real life examples, and summarizes the points to remember at the end of each chapter.

For Teenagers

Abbas, Jen. *Generation Ex: Adult Children of Divorce and the Healing of Our Pain*. Jen Abbas. 1st ed., Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2004.

Generation Ex will help you understand the effect of your parents' divorce on your faith and relationships, and will give you the tools you need to create a different legacy for yourself. Includes questions for reflection.

Aydt, Rachel. *Why Me?: A Teen Guide to Divorce and Your Feelings*. Rachel Aydt. 1st ed., New York: Rosen Pub. Group, 2000.

Offers advice on the emotional aspects of divorce for teenagers whose parents are divorcing.

Bauer, Joan, 1951. *Stand Tall*. Joan Bauer. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, c2002.

In her heartfelt and humorous novel, Bauer (*Hope Was Here*) leaves teenage girl protagonists in favor of a middle-grade boy as she did also in *Sticks* (1996). But her fans won't be disappointed. At first, 12-year-old Tree, "six feet, three and a half inches and growing," only literally "stands tall." At school, Coach Glummer expects him to lead the basketball team (though he's not very athletic) and teachers expect him to act older than his age. On the home front which shifts weekly due to his parents' recent divorce and joint custody arrangement Tree is the glue of his family. He helps care for his Vietnam vet grandfather (who recently had a leg amputated) while worrying about his aging dog, Bradley, his two college-student brothers and his parents. Bolstered by his budding friendship with the outspoken new girl at school, Sophie, and by Grandpa, Tree finds an inner strength that helps him deal with just about anything including a natural disaster. Bauer once again creates a clan of believable characters scrambling to make the best of their particular brand of dysfunction. Her swiftly paced story artfully blends poignant and outright funny moments, resulting in a triumphant tale that will resonate with many young readers. Ages 10-up. (Aug.) Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information.

Bode, Janet. *For Better, For Worse: A Guide to Surviving Divorce for Preteens and Their Families*. Janet Bode; illustrations by Stan Mack. 1st ed., New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2001.

Divided into two parts, the first "For girls and boys", the second for "parents". *For Better, For Worse: A Guide to Surviving Divorce for Preteens and Their Families* by Janet Bode and Stan Mack offers quotes from children who have lived through their parents' divorce and encourages parents to talk with their children with practical tips. Some children give anecdotes in the form of cartoons, some through poetry, and there is a recurring "Kid problem, Kid solutions" section. By keeping the focus on children, often in their own words, the authors present a variety of situations and experiences to validate the reader's own predicament. (Feb.) Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information.

Burtinshaw, Julie, 1958. *Adrift*. Vancouver: Raincoast, c2002.

A timely and gritty story into which the author weaves an exciting subplot. David, 14, must assume responsibility for his younger sister, Laura, after their parents separate because his father is unable to deal with their mother's depression. When the siblings return from a weekend with their dad, they learn that their mom has been hospitalized; they are sent from Toronto to live with an aunt at her isolated, rustic home on Fern Island, near Vancouver. The experience turns out to be filled with adventure (a ride in a seaplane, whale sightings), some of it dangerous, particularly after they steal a dinghy and take off for a deserted island rather than go to live with their father. By book's end, the youngsters have developed a better relationship with one another, and their troubled family has found new ways to cope. With its quick pacing and interesting detail about island life, this book will be popular with children, including reluctant readers.-Susan Cooley, formerly at Tower Hill School, Wilmington, DE Copyright 2003, Cahners Business Information. Gr. 6-8.

Calhoun, Florence. *No Easy Answers: A Teen Guide to Why Divorce Happens*. Florence Calhoun. 1st ed., New York: Rosen Pub. Group, 2000.

Focuses on the thoughts and feelings of teenagers who are experiencing their parents' divorce and offers guidance as to how to respond and what to expect from the situation.

Fitch, Sheree. *One More Step*. Victoria, B.C.: Orca Book Publishers, c2002.

A title in the new Orca Soundings series aimed at reluctant teen readers. Still angry and hurt over his parents' separation, which happened when he was a baby, 14-year-old Julian is wary of his mother's relationship with Paul. Julian realizes he and his brother must allow their mother to find happiness. But on a road trip with his mother and Paul, Julian finds that love and happiness comes in many guises.

One Divided By Two: Kids and Divorce [video recording]. Produced by Illumination Magique Inc.; producer, director, animator, Joyce Borenstein [Montréal]: Illumination Magique, 1998. 1 videocassette (ca. 24 min).

Focuses on 13 young people (aged 8-18) whose parents have been through a divorce. Each child's story begins with footage of the child talking. Then, the vehicle changes to animation as the thoughts and feelings being discussed are shown in line animation, both in color and in shades of black, white, and gray. The animation is excellent, seamlessly flowing from idea to idea and from child to child. Block color highlights the feelings being described. Because the sections for each child are very short, the video does not get bogged down. No lessons or morals are given. Rather, viewers have to interpret the ideas, thoughts, and feelings described by each youngster.

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Price, Elizabeth. *Divorce and Teens: When a Family Splits Apart*. Elizabeth Price. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers, c2004.

Coping with a parent's divorce is not easy at any age, but for many teens it is a reality they have to face. In *Divorce and Teens: When a Family Splits Apart*, author Elizabeth Price helps teens find constructive ways to deal with this difficult situation. She provides comfort and understanding, along with quotes from teens in many different divorce scenarios.

Reilly, Natalie June. *My Stick Family: Helping Children Cope With Divorce*. Natalie June Reilly and Brandi J. Pavese; illustrations by Natalie June Reilly. Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press, c2002.

Billy learns that just because his parents live in separate houses, it doesn't mean that the strength and love of a family has been taken from him. Billy discovers what matters most is the love for each other that lives inside our hearts.

Riordan, Pat, 1941. *There and Back*. Pat Riordan. Powell River, B.C.: Electric eBook Pub., c2003.

Seventeen-year-old Maxine Walker is beginning to find out who she really is, and what she wants out of life. Her life, not easy since her parent's separation, has been fraught with problems; her parents' bitter divorce left her and her brother devastated. Their lifestyle changed dramatically when they plummeted from wealth to a life of rented homes and subsistence, and Maxine finds herself more and more relied upon by her family members. Maxine, finding herself very much alone, seeks friendship; first from her diary, then from Amanda, a girl she meets at school. As the girls grow into womanhood, they share experiences of love, laughter, despair, sorrow, and finally happiness.

Rodowsky, Colby F. *Clay*. Colby Rodowsky. 1st Harper Trophy ed., New York: Harper Trophy, 2004.

After their parents divorce, eleven-year-old Elsie and her mentally challenged younger brother, Tommy must deal with a terrible secret that causes them to move from place to place and stay in hiding.

Wagner, Heather Lehr. *Understanding and Coping with Divorce*. Heather Lehr Wagner; Marvin Rosen consulting editor. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, c2002.

Divorce is a devastating prospect for any family, but it can be especially difficult on the children of divorcing parents. This title examines some of the issues that are often involved in divorce, and tries to help children adjust to the many changes that may occur in their lives. Each chapter has problem-solving tips and advice on coping with the aftermath of divorce.

Walther, Anne N. *Not Damaged Goods: A Successful Strategy for Children of Divorce From Infancy to Adulthood*. Anne Newton Walther. San Francisco: Tapestries Pub, c2001.

Beginning with infancy and continuing through adulthood (age 30 and up), Walther explores how children in each stage of life might react to their parents' divorce. The initial chapters on early childhood are written for parents, while the next six chapters are intended for children, teens, or adults in specific age groups. The author has an excellent grasp of the psychological and emotional needs of each stage. Each chapter contains scenarios portraying typical situations children may be facing, followed by probing questions, helpful tips, and suggestions for developing self-esteem. The questions are thought provoking, but many scenarios are idealistic and feature people of above-average income levels.

Zimmerman, Jeffrey. *Adult Children of Divorce: How to Overcome the Legacy of Your Parents' Breakup and Enjoy Love, Trust, and Intimacy*. Jeffrey Zimmerman, Elizabeth S. Thayer. Oakland, CA : New Harbinger Pub., c2003

The first ever step-by-step guide to teach adult children of divorce how to identify their inherited distrust of relationships and go on to have rich, fulfilling, and lasting relationships of their own.

Suggested Children's Reading

Adams, Eric J. *On the Day His Daddy Left*. Eric J. Adams & Kathleen Adams; illustrated by Layne Johnson. Morton Grove, Ill.: Albert Whitman, 2000.

Like many children, Danny fears his parents' divorce is somehow his fault. But his teacher, his friend, and his mother and father assure him the divorce is not his fault. In this simple and poignant story, the authors focus on the misplaced guilt commonly felt by children of divorcing parents.

Beyer, Roberta. *What in the World Do You Do when Your Parents Divorce?: A Survival Guide for Kids*. Roberta Beyer. Free Spirit Publishing, 2001.

This book deals with all the common fears children have. It can be read from cover to cover or simply one chapter at a time. This book gives children examples of ways to talk to grown-ups about their worries. It's also a great book for parents who can see what might worry their children.

Brown, Marc Tolon. *Arthur and the 1,001 Dads*. Text by Stephen Krensky; based on a teleplay by Peter K. Hirsch. 1st ed., New York: Little, Brown, c2003.

It's time for the annual Father's Day picnic, and Arthur is worried about Buster. Ever since Buster's parents got divorced, his father hasn't been able to come to the picnic. Will Arthur and his friends be able to give Buster a happy Father's Day? Illustrations.

Parenting After Separation Participant's Manual

Bunting, Eve, 1928. *The Days of Summer*. Written by Eve Bunting ; illustrated by William Low. 1st ed. San Diego: Harcourt, 2001.

As summer ends and they get ready to go back to school, two young girls try to deal with the news that the grandparents they love are getting a divorce.

Burtinshaw, Julie, 1958. *Adrift*. Vancouver: Raincoast, c2002.

A timely and gritty story into which the author weaves an exciting subplot. David, 14, must assume responsibility for his younger sister, Laura, after their parents separate because his father is unable to deal with their mother's depression. When the siblings return from a weekend with their dad, they learn that their mom has been hospitalized; they are sent from Toronto to live with an aunt at her isolated, rustic home on Fern Island, near Vancouver. The experience turns out to be filled with adventure (a ride in a seaplane, whale sightings), some of it dangerous, particularly after they steal a dinghy and take off for a deserted island rather than go to live with their father. By book's end, the youngsters have developed a better relationship with one another, and their troubled family has found new ways to cope. With its quick pacing and interesting detail about island life, this book will be popular with children, including reluctant readers.-Susan Cooley, formerly at Tower Hill School, Wilmington, DE Copyright 2003 Cahners Business Information. Gr. 6-8.

Carter, Kelly. *Family Changes: A Workbook for Families During Divorce & Separation*. Written by Kelly Carter; illustrated by Kelly Emeren Tynan. Charlottetown, P.E.I.: Kidz First Productions, c2004.

In this educational workbook for children ages 6 to 12, clinical social worker Kelly Carter deals with the painful realities of separation and divorce to help children and families heal after such a life-changing event.

Charles, Norma. *The Accomplice*. Norma Charles. Vancouver, BC: Raincoast Books, 2001.

The Accomplice is a novel about broken family relationships, trust and growing up. Focusing on Megan, Norma Charles has created a realistic world paralleling our own where divorce seems more and more common. The conflicts with which Megan must deal are similar to those any child of divorce has to reconcile. The feelings of hurt and betrayal that she feels about her parents divorce, her mother's changing their home, "throwing out the old and dragging in the new," and her father's new wife and son all are common of someone in a similar situation. For further suspense, Charles has made the cause of the divorce the father's past drinking and his temper. All in all, Charles has created a novel that is timely and characters who are believable. As an added bonus, the setting for the story is breathtakingly depicted. A good read.

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Coy, John, 1958. *Two Old Potatoes and Me*. Words by John Coy; pictures by Carolyn Fisher. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, c2003.

This funny, loving story about a single father and his daughter moving on after a divorce is told from May to September (potato-growing season) and includes all the basic steps for growing potatoes while subtly dealing with the parents' divorce. Also includes recipes. Full color.

Danziger, Paula, 1944. *Amber Brown is Green with Envy*. Paula Danziger; illustrated by Tony Ross. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 2004, c2003.

“*Amber Brown Is Green With Envy*”, a title in the popular Amber Brown series.

In this particular installment in the series, Amber Brown has adjusted to living with her father sometimes and her mother sometimes. When she's at her father's house, Amber enjoys spending time with his wacky upstairs neighbors. When she's at her mother's home, she enjoys her old friends and school. Unfortunately, this kind of perfect arrangement cannot last. Amber's mom and Max (her mom's boyfriend) are getting married soon, a fact that Amber is pleased about (and her dad is not). Unfortunately, this means that the new family is going to have to move into an entirely new house. Possibly out of town. Amber, faced with the prospect of losing all her friends, her favorite teacher, and her school is understandably upset. Fortunately, she's surrounded by caring adults that know exactly how to help her make her feelings known on this and many other subjects.

Deuker, Carl. *Night Hoops*. Carl Deuker. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

While trying to prove that he is good enough to play on the varsity basketball team, Nick must also deal with his parents' divorce and the behavior of a troubled classmate.

Doss, Bonnie. *But What About Me!: How it Feels to be a Kid in Divorce*. Bonnie Doss; illustrations by Jennifer Schroeder. 2nd ed., San Antonio, TX: Bookmark Pub., c2000.

Expresses the deep feelings of a child experiencing the trauma of the break up of his/her family.

Ely, Lesley. *When Mum and Dad Split Up*. Lesley Ely; illustrated by Mike Phillips. London: Hodder Children's Books, 2001.

This book aims to help children cope when their parents split up, by providing support and understanding. The reader will follow Jack and Em through good and bad times as their parents separate.

Eulo, Elena Yates. *Mixed-up Doubles*. Elena Yates Eulo. 1st ed., New York: Holiday House, c2003.

A new friend helps Hank adjust to his parents' divorce and fulfill his dream of being a successful tennis player.

Grindley, Sally. *A New Room for William*. Sally Grindley and Carol Thompson. London: Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2001, c2000.

When William and his mother move, he is unhappy about having a new room, but he changes his mind after he gets dinosaur wallpaper and makes a new friend.

Hess, Lisa Lawmaster. *Diverse Divorce: 18 Situation Stories for use with Children of Divorce*. Written by Lisa Lawmaster Hess; illustrated by Marie Garafano. Warminster, PA: Mar*co Products, c2004.

How many times have children come to you with a tale about their divorce or separation situation and you wished you had a story that they could relate to? *Diverse Divorce* doesn't have every situation but it does have eighteen different stories that are based on situations presented to the author in her role as school counselor. The program includes eight stories for young elementary-age children and ten for older elementary/middle school-age children. Each story focuses on a different marital situation and includes suggested questions for post-story discussion. The stories for younger students also include a related activity

Koss, Amy Goldman, 1954. *Stranger in Dadland*. Amy Goldman Koss. New York: Dial Books, c2001.

Twelve-year-old John develops a new understanding of his divorced father during an eventful summer visit to California

Kropp, Paul, 1948. *My Broken Family: A Novel*. Toronto: H.I.P. Books, 2002.

“When Maddy's parents split up, her life falls apart. She holds on to her dancing and in time, realizes how strong love is. Today's reluctant readers will enjoy this version of ‘Split Up’” Cf. Our choice, 2003

“...to write a book. The first message was pretty simple: that kids shouldn't blame themselves when their parents split up... The second idea I had was to show the predictable stages in a divorce – from anger and pain to final acceptance and a new life. I wanted Maddy to go through all those stages relatively quickly, so kids could see how they would someday get beyond the pain of a divorce. Many young people find the story quite moving. For me, it's just the way real life works.” (from the *My Broken Family Teacher's Guide*)

Kuehn, Eileen. *Divorce: Finding a Place*. Eileen Kuehn; consultant Roderick W. Franks. Mankato, Minn.: LifeMatters, c2001.

Answers questions about divorce, ideas for recovery and how to help a friend.

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Masurel, Claire. *Two Homes*. Claire Masurel; illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton. 1st ed., Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2001.

Young Alex's parents are divorced, and he spends time with each of them. He has two rooms, two favorite chairs, two sets of friends, two of everything. He loves both of them no matter where he is, and they love him, no matter where they are. The ink, watercolor, and gouache illustrations are comforting and warm. There is no sign of the child missing one parent when he is with the other or questioning his situation, and he seems quite well adjusted. This book is clearly intended to help parents tell their children that they are still loved despite their living arrangements. For a different view of how children may feel about sharing two homes, look to Judith Caseley's *Priscilla Twice* (Greenwillow, 1995). Holly Belli, Bergen County Cooperative Library System, West Caldwell, NJ Copyright 2001, Cahners Business Information.

McQueen, Cheryl, 1944. *When Mom & Dad Separate: A Colouring Workbook to Help Children Cope with the Grief from Divorce and Separation*. Cheryl McQueen. Dundas, Ont.: Bereavement Services Support & Education, c2002.

A workbook provided in the counselling program "When Mom & Dad Separate" The program is for children ages 6 to 12 whose parents have separated. Each child attending a support group will receive a colouring workbook to assist them in illustrating and expressing their feelings. Discusses basic concepts of marriage and divorce. Offers children a creative way to sort out the stressful feelings of grief caused by change.

Moss, Marissa. *Amelia's Family Ties*. Marissa Moss. Middleton, WI: American Girl, c2000.

Amelia and her notebook are back. She has finally written to her father, whom she has never met, and received a reply asking her to come meet him, her stepmother, and her half-brother at their home in Chicago. This is a big step for any child, but Amelia, feisty as ever, takes the plunge. She predictably loves baby George, hates Clara, and is unsure about her father until he finally says he's loved her all along. However, Moss does not candy coat the situation; she allows Amelia to voice her insecurities about what it means to have a father, to be angry at Clara for reading her notebook, to feel uncute in comparison to George, and even to think her dad's hairy hands are gross. The author once again has her finger on the pulse of her audience, who will appreciate Amelia's honest expression of her feelings. The text is handwritten and colorful line drawings decorate the pages.-Holly Belli, Bergen County Cooperative Library System, West Caldwell, NJ Copyright 2000, Cahners Business Information

Moss, Marissa. *Max's Logbook*. Marissa Moss. 1st ed., New York: Scholastic, 2003.

This new series introduces budding scientist Max, who records his hilarious experiments and inventions in his log book, as well as his struggle to adjust to his parents' impending divorce. Illustrations.

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One Divided by Two: Kids and Divorce [video recording]. Produced by Illumination Magique Inc.; producer, director, animator, Joyce Borenstein. Montréal: Illumination Magique, 1998.
1 videocassette (ca. 24 min)

Focuses on 13 young people (aged 8 to 18) whose parents have been through a divorce. Each child's story begins with footage of the child talking. Then, the vehicle changes to animation as the thoughts and feelings being discussed are shown in line animation, both in color and in shades of black, white, and gray. The animation is excellent, seamlessly flowing from idea to idea and from child to child. Block color highlights the feelings being described. Because the sections for each child are very short, the video does not get bogged down. No lessons or morals are given. Rather, viewers have to interpret the ideas, thoughts, and feelings described by each youngster.

Ransom, Jeanie Franz, 1957. *I Don't Want to Talk About It*. Jeanie Franz Ransom ; illustrated by Kathryn Kunz Finney. Washington, D.C.: Magination Press, c2000.

A competent piece of bibliotherapy aimed at helping children of divorce deal with their new, difficult, and conflicting emotions. Told by a young girl whose parents have just told her they are getting a divorce, the narrative then goes through the range of the child's possible emotions, as the adults suggest how she might be feeling. She, in turn, imagines herself to be an animal that would adequately express her emotions. When her father tells her that it's OK to be scared, her response is, "I wanted to be a lion with a roar so loud that everyone would think I was very brave." Assurances of her parents' continued love and that certain family rituals will remain the same make her feel better. Full-page illustrations capably portray the images in the text, especially the metaphors of the animals that the girl uses to express her feelings. The book concludes with a two-page note to parents suggesting ways to deal with their children's reactions. A worthy and appropriate addition to most parenting collections.-
Jane Marino, Scarsdale Public Library, NY Copyright 2001, Cahners Business Information.

Reilly, Natalie June. *My Stick Family: Helping Children Cope with Divorce*. Natalie June Reilly and Brandi J. Pavese; illustrations by Natalie June Reilly. Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press, c2002.

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Wagner, Heather Lehr. *Understanding and Coping with Divorce*. Heather Lehr Wagner; Marvin Rosen consulting editor. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, c2002.

Divorce is a devastating prospect for any family, but it can be especially difficult on the children of divorcing parents. This title examines some of the issues that are often involved in divorce, and tries to help children adjust to the many changes that may occur in their lives. Each chapter problem-solving tips and advice on coping with the aftermath of divorce.

Section XI - Web-site References

- 1) The Alberta Law Line: Free legal information and referrals for all callers. Free legal advice based on financial eligibility. www.albertalawline.ab.ca
- 2) For Family Justice Services visit the Alberta Justice website at www.justice.gov.ab.ca or www.albertacourts.ab.ca which includes: Alberta's *Family Law Act*, Family Law Information Centres, Parenting After Separation, What Children Need When Parents Separate, Focus on Communication In Separation, and Family Mediation.
- 3) Alberta Family Mediation Society. A non-profit organization that provides mediation services. Visit there website for more resources. www.afms.ca
- 4) Legal Education Society of Alberta www.lesa.org
- 5) Family Violence Prevention. www.child.gov.ab.ca

Notes:

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FAMILY JUSTICE SERVICES

Alberta Justice offers mediation services without charge to those who qualify. The telephone numbers are:

Edmonton

Suite 8077, John E. Brownlee Building

10365 - 97 Street

Edmonton AB T5J 3W7

Phone 780-427-8329

Calgary

Calgary Courts Centre

Suite 706-S, 601 - 5th Street SW

Calgary AB T2P 5P7

Phone 403-297-6981

or

For the rest of the Province

Phone 403-340-7187

Contact any of these offices TOLL FREE by calling 310-0000