Coparenting After a Break-up or Divorce

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A good coparenting relationship can be tricky when you're no longer in a romantic relationship with your coparent. However, learning to get along helps children feel safe and secure. Working together to raise a child (or children) is a process that takes time. Here are some tips:

KEEP THE FOCUS ON YOUR CHILD.

Even though your relationship has changed, you still have to get along with and speak regularly to your coparent. Aim to keep things focused on your children and their needs.

LET GO TO GROW.

Anger toward your former partner can damage your coparenting relationship. Try to let go of any old frustrations. Seek out counseling or other support if you can. Choose your battles carefully. Try to take a deep breath before reacting strongly or disagreeing. Conflict is hard on you, your coparent, and your child.

KEEP FIRM BOUNDARIES.

There are lots of issues (housecleaning, chores) that are no longer part of your relationship with your coparent. Now you only have to discuss decisions about the children. New roles and limits can be difficult. But they are part of creating a healthy coparenting relationship.

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LET YOUR CHILDREN LOVE YOUR COPARENT.

Try not to say anything bad about your previous partner in front of your child. Babies understand more than they can say. Hearing bad things about the other parent they love is confusing and scary.

PREPARE FOR DISAPPOINTMENTS.

What will you do if a coparent doesn't show up for a scheduled visit? Try not to blame or complain. You can discuss what happened with your coparent later. Focus on your child's feelings and tell them it is not their fault. Tell them, "This is really disappointing!" You can also consider counseling for your child if that is an option. These moments are harder if your coparent lets your child down often and you may need to have follow-up conversations about how to avoid them in the future.

FIND GOOD WAYS TO COMMUNICATE.

Try a notebook that goes back and forth (or an online diary app). This approach can help keep feeding, routines, and activities similar between homes. Talk about routines and limits to see if you can agree. Consider screen use, bedtime, and mealtimes. When things can't be consistent, children can adjust to distinct rules in each home. Speak clearly about differences. Say, "That's the rule at Dad's house and this is the rule here."

All these suggestions are hard to do if you are feeling really angry and/or sad. Your feelings and stress could be overwhelming. It's especially important to take good care of yourself if the situation with your coparent is challenging. Talk things through with a friend, family member, or counselor. Ask your HS Specialist for a referral if you are struggling.

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

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