

Co parenting Tips

Being a single parent is full of many different challenges. Besides the expected challenges that come with raising children, single parents have the extra responsibility of learning how to co parent with their child's other parent. Co parenting may come easily for some families and others may struggle, especially if there are communication difficulties or conflicting parenting styles.

It is a child's right to have the best relationship possible with both parents. Children need to feel loved by both parents and need to know that they do not have to choose one parent over the other. When parents can work together as a team without conflict, children can flourish. Parents need to work together for the rest of their lives - not just until their child turns 18. Having co-parenting skills benefits everyone.

Taking the time to learn how to successfully parent your child as a team is a great way to ensure that they will receive a positive upbringing. Here are some tips that I have found on the internet that I'm sure you will find helpful.

- Keep a flexible routine and leave room for spontaneity. Help your children feel that they are fortunate to have two homes, mom's and dad's. Live as close to each other as possible.
- Help prepare your child for visits. Be positive about the experience.
- Share information. Have a calendar with all the family engagements written on it and let the other parent know of any changed plans.
- Set up a system for monthly phone calls or meetings with a specific list of required issues to discuss.
- Do not schedule your child for activities during the other parent's time without the other's parent's consent.
- Talk to each other and keep focused on the subject of your children. Children should not serve as the direct line of communication between parents.
- Take the anger out of your communications. Do not use your child as a way to get back at each other or validate your anger with each other. Learn to communicate in a less reactive, more proactive way.
- Never talk badly about the other parent in front of your children.
- Never allow other family members or friends to talk badly about the other parent in front of your children.
- Do not try to win your child over by being more lenient or buying the child gifts.
- Set similar rules and disciplinary tactics. It is important that your children understand that their behavior will be rewarded/punished the same no matter which parent they are with.
- If you have ongoing difficulties dealing appropriately with the other parent, seek counseling to learn ways to effectively co-parent your child.

By Rosanna van Gunst. Rosanna is a Healthy Families Home Visitor at Family Services of Central Alberta. For information on parenting, call 403-343-6400 or go to www.fsca.ca