

Co-parenting Meetings

Co-parenting meetings can be a helpful way to talk with your co-parent in a low-stressed environment. Scheduling ahead of time will allow you to come prepared with a specific plan. This should be a time you've set aside, without your child. See some key things below to help prepare for your next co-parenting meeting.

Set Boundaries

It is really important to have a good communication process in play. The fact is, you know that you must communicate, so try to **know when, how and what topics you'll communicate about. Agree on the topics that are off limits to talk about.** When it comes to co-parent communication, you will be dealing with someone you decided not to stay married to so understandably it can be uncomfortable. By setting boundaries ahead of time, everyone will be on the same page and you can avoid future confrontations.

What About Discipline?

You need to try to be on the same page with discipline, because if kids get mixed messages, maybe at one house, there's rules and consequences and expectations, and at the other house, there's no rules whatsoever. In the long run, kids need to know that mom and dad both have boundaries. Discuss those boundaries and how you will both handle it when they are crossed.

Setting Schedules

An important topic to discuss at your meetings is schedules. The schedule of going back and forth between mom's house and dad's house, or anyone else for that matter. Then there's other things like extra-curricular activities, sports, and spending time with friends. You really need to look at the big picture, will this work? If you have them part of the time, I have them part of the time, can we both make the commitment to help the child succeed? Of course, there are other scheduling issues like holidays. The more you can sit down and plan ahead, and when mom and dad both know what the plan is, the less stress for kids.

Finances

The #1 reason people divorce is finances, which is why it's important on the list of topics to discuss. This may have been a very uncomfortable discussion while you were married, so understandably it could also be uncomfortable post-divorce. Coming up with a game plan will reduce stress for both parents and the children. Keep your child as the focus, don't allow personal preferences to get involved. You want to be sure the child doesn't have to be worried or concerned about money in the midst of divorced parents.

Handoffs

How co-parents handle the handoff is important because **kids need to know that when mom and dad are transitioning them between mom's house, dad's house, that there is nothing to be worried about.** Part of handling the handoff is preparing the child. The parent that has the child should prepare them with positive words about where they're headed next, so that they know there's a transition coming. The flip side is the other parent that's coming to pick the child up, whether it's at the front door of a home or another location, should come prepared for a little bit of an adjustment period. Coming to that handoff with a positive attitude, with a plan, and to assume the best about the other parent is what's best for all during these transitions.