

What is Coparenting, and why is it important?

Coparenting, sometimes called shared parenting, occurs when parents cooperate with each other following a separation or divorce. Coparenting requires both parents to be involved in decisions concerning their children, including education, health care, religion, and social activities. Coparenting includes taking care of children's physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social needs. One of the strongest predictors of how well children do following a divorce is how well parents are able to coparent. Studies have shown that supportive coparenting is related to better school grades and higher self-esteem in children. Children need love and support from both their mothers and fathers, and supportive coparenting helps children deal with the changes that are happening following a divorce.

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- What is Coparenting, and why is it important?
- Supportive vs. Unsupportive Coparenting
- Resolving Conflicts
- How does coparenting help children?



Monthly tip for families:

Coparenting is an ongoing process and has to be worked on by both parents. Parents who practice supportive coparenting help children grow into healthy, happy people.

Resolving Conflicts Effectively

Conflicts about parental responsibilities can be hurtful for children. When conflicts are resolved effectively, children feel better and are less likely to get upset.

Tips for Resolving Conflicts Effectively

- **Use clear, nondefensive communication**

Use "I" statements when talking about your feelings. Begin sentences with "I" instead of "You," so the other person will be less likely to become defensive.

- **Listen patiently**

Focus on what the other person is saying and wait until they are finished talking before you respond.

- **Respect the other person's opinion**

Think about the other person's point of view, and try to understand their perspective.

- **Stay calm**

Take deep breaths and try to stay calm during a disagreement. If you become upset, stop talking and take a break until you have calmed down.

- **Avoid criticism**

Avoid finding fault with the other person's thoughts and ideas. Focus on what you want to change.

Supportive vs. Nonsupportive Coparenting

Supportive coparenting includes respect, forgiveness about the past, and give-and-take. Receiving the same message from both parents benefits children's well-being. Children are better able to handle difficult issues when their parents have a supportive relationship.

Coparenting Guidelines

- Both parents do what is in the best interest of the child when handling decisions
- Parents respect the other parent's right to participate in parenting
- Parents agree on some basic rules for raising their children
- Angry feelings and resentment are let go of
- Parenting is done in a warm, loving manner

Nonsupportive coparenting happens when parents do not effectively work together concerning parenting issues. Children may feel guilty, stressed, and anxious when they see their parents arguing over issues related to them. Some topics that may create conflict between parents include:

- Money
- Religious values
- Holidays
- Discipline
- Medical issues
- Educational issues
- Recreational activities



Additional Resources:

www.extension.usu.edu/stepfamily

www.healthyrelationshipsutah.org

www.strongermarriage.org

www.stepfamilies.info

www.twoofus.org

For more information, contact:

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How does coparenting help children?

- Shows children they have a home with both parents
- Reassures children that both parents want what is best for them
- Allows children to develop meaningful relationships with both parents
- Provides children with feelings of love and support
- Lowers feelings of guilt when children want to spend time with the other parent
- Reduces chances that children will be caught in the middle of disagreements

