***Putting Children First: Proven parenting strategies to help children thrive after divorce***

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**Tips for Successful Parallel Parenting**

1. Work to disengage emotionally from your former partner and past hurts. Separate your feelings about your former partner from your child’s needs and feelings. Stay focused on what you can control—doing the best you can for your child.
2. Contain your emotions when communicating with your former partner; maintain an attitude of respect. This includes greeting each other, especially when children are present.
3. Behave in a professional manner; use the courteous practices typically associated with more formal business interactions. Do not discuss personal issues; stay focused on the children.
4. Approach child-related concerns with a respectful, problem-solving approach. State the problem, propose solutions, avoid blame, and work toward creating effective solutions over time.
5. Use written communication if speaking in person is difficult. One particularly useful approach for parents of very young children is a shared notebook, in which both parents can make note of all the important things that need to be communicated—from fevers and fussiness to schedules for meals, naps and activities.
6. Email, notes and letters can help to keep communication child focused and professional. Make a practice of keeping them respectful, clear, and brief. If emotions are running high, save the draft and try to re-read it from the other parent’s perspective before sending it.
7. When face-to-face communication and/or negotiation are necessary to resolve a dispute, consider using a neutral third party to assist in resolving differences.
8. Follow up in writing on all agreements and discussions regarding the children, with a summary of any decisions that were made,
9. Respect the other parent’s time with the children. Do not plan activities for children during your former partner’s time with them. If an important event is to occur, make a request in writing well in advance. Maintain an attitude of non-interference with your children’s other parent, unless it is an issue of safety.
10. Pay child support on time. Studies show a strong link between regular support payments and major benefits for children, including higher academic success and fewer behavior problems.
11. Do not use your child as a messenger, spy or delivery person. Mail the check or use direct deposit. Use a phone call, text message or e-mail to share information.
12. If communication is becoming heated and emotional, defuse it by requesting time for both people to cool off, consider some alternative solutions, and agree to come back to the issue at a later time.