



## **TIPS AND TRICKS FOR DIVORCE/CO-PARENTING**

When parents divorce or separate, it is hard on all family members. A central focus for parents needs to be a focus on what is best for their child or children in an effort to promote and assist their adjustment to the new family structure during such a stressful time. As such, the following co-parenting guidelines are offered:

- Your child needs to know that it is okay for him/her to love both of you and to want to spend time with both of you. Thus, allow your child to love both of you and see each of you as much as possible.
- Realize that your child now has two homes, not just one. Allow him/her to take items back and forth between homes.
- Do not use guilt to pressure your child to love you more and ask him/her where he/she wants to live.
- Do not speak negatively about the other parent in your child's presence, which includes when he/she is in ear-shot of hearing what you are saying. Similarly, do not allow others to talk negatively about the other parent to your child, and be the role model for others about what is an acceptable way to speak about the other parent in front of your child.
- Do not argue with one another in your child's presence, whether it is on the phone or in front of her/him.
- Do not communicate with one another through your child or place him/her in the role of messenger or mediator.
- Do not place your child in the middle of your disagreements with one another.
- Be sure that other adults around your child, including your significant other, maintain appropriate physical boundaries.
- If your child is with you and he/she expresses a desire to call the other parent, allow him/her to do so or schedule a time when it would be convenient for him/her to call him/her. Obviously, there would be an exception to this if he/she asks to call the other parent while receiving consequences for an infraction.
- Do not place or force your child to be in a situation that he/she is not comfortable with as it pertains to being with your significant others or friends.
- Respect, or at least tolerate, the other parent's parenting decisions. If you disagree with something, talk to the other parent about it but do not criticize the other parent's decision to your child, put him/her in a position to defend the other parent, or ask him/her to justify the other parent's action/choice.
- Do not press your child for information about his/her visit with the other parent. Do not make your child feel like he/she is on trial or being grilled about what happens at the other parent's house. Simply, ask him/her how the time was with the other parent and let him/her share what he/she wants.
- Do not ask your child to keep secrets from the other parent or spy on the other parent.
- Avoid treating your child as if he/she is an adult or your confidant. Thus, speak with your own family, friends, and/or therapist about your feelings about the divorce and other parent.