

## **Coparenting Solutions Co-Parent Education (COPE) Program**

Successful Co-parenting A Child's View  
- Ohio State University  
<https://youtu.be/qZrAYif2cOw>

### **Who We Are**

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[www.andfs.com](http://www.andfs.com)



### **Understanding Trauma**

Why what you say and do matters forever

#### **Trauma:**

- Trauma is an exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person's capacity to cope. Trauma is different from stress. An exceptional experience is a powerful, shocking, and extraordinary event — not a typical part of life.  
(Excerpted from the ZERO TO THREE publication *Hope and Healing: A Caregiver's Guide to Helping Young Children Affected by Trauma* by Kathleen Fitzgerald Rice and Betsy McAlister Groves, in press.)

#### **How Bad Could It Be?**

"Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults"

- **The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study**

- A collaborative effort of Kaiser Permanente and The Centers for Disease Control
- Vincent J. Felitti, MD & Robert F. Anda, MD

#### **What Was the ACEs Study?**

- The largest study of its kind ever done to examine the health and social effects of adverse childhood experiences over the lifespan.
- Over 17,000 participants.
- The majority of participants were 50 or older (66%), white (75%), and had attended college (75%).
- 54% were female. 46% male.

Want to read more? Use this link to read more detailed information about the original study.

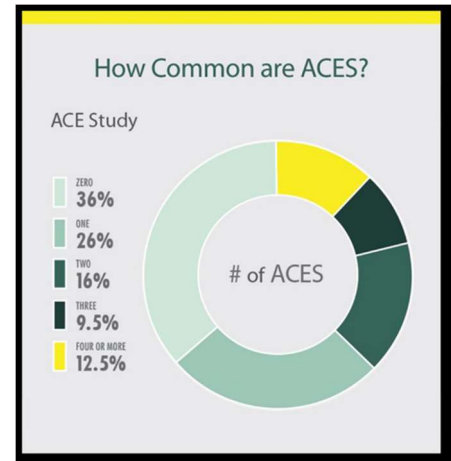
<http://www.ajpm-online.net/article/PIIS0749379798000178/abstract>

or for the most current information: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces>



## What Counts as an ACE?

- Emotional Abuse (11%)
- Physical Abuse (28%)
- Sexual Abuse (21%)
- Emotional Neglect (15%)
- Physical Neglect (10%)
- Substance Abuse (27%)
- Mental Illness (19%)
- Parental Separation/ Divorce (23%)
- Mother Treated Violently (13%)
- Imprisoned Household Member (5%)

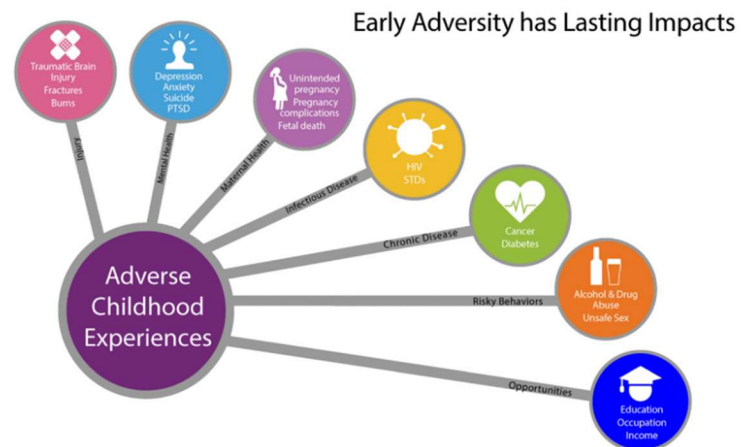


## What Did They Find?

- Almost 2/3 of the population reported belonging in at least one ACEs category. One in four was exposed to two categories. One in sixteen to four categories
- ACEs Rarely Occur in Isolation... They come in groups. Given an exposure to one category, there is an 80% likelihood of exposure to another. As the number of ACE increases, the number of co-occurring or “co-morbid” conditions increases.

## What Conditions Are We Talking About?

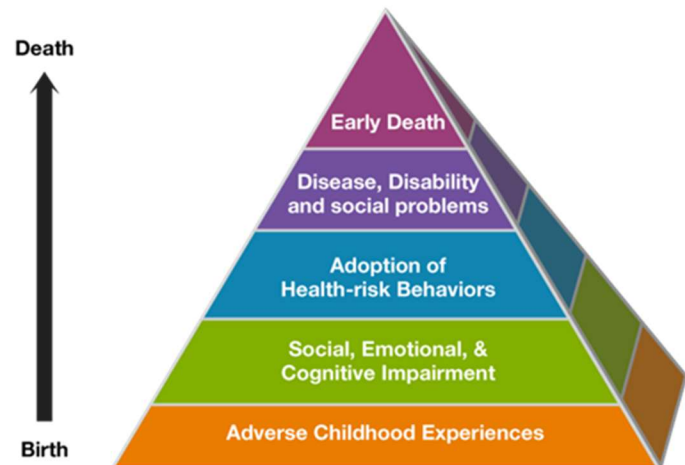
- Smoking
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism
- IV Drug Use
- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Liver Disease
- Poor health-related quality of life
- Risk for intimate partner violence
- Risk of rape
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Depression and suicide
- Unintended pregnancies
- Fetal death



## Consequences of ACEs

The underlying mechanisms by which ACEs exert their effects on health are through the development of toxic stress, a prolonged or excessive activation of the stress response system. Nearly all people experience stress, such as the stress felt before an important test or job interview. However, chronic stress sustained over time can be damaging to the body and the brain, particularly for children, because the earliest years are a critical time for

development. The accumulation of excessive stress in the body interferes with the development of healthy neural, immune and hormonal systems and can alter the expression of our DNA. Multiple ACEs over time—especially without adequate adult support—can affect the nervous, endocrine and immune systems, and have lasting effects on attention, behavior, decision-making and response to stress throughout a lifetime.



## Could You Summarize?

- While all children are at risk of ACEs, numerous studies have shown a higher likelihood of ACEs linked to the historical, social, and economic environments in which some families live. ACEs were highest among females, non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native adults, and adults who are unemployed or unable to work.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are very common, although typically concealed and unrecognized
- ACEs are strong predictors of later health risks and disease
- This combination makes ACEs the leading determinant of the health and social well-being of our nation

## How big is the problem?

- **ACEs are common.** About 64% of adults in the United States reported they had experienced at least one type of ACE before age 18. Nearly one in six (17.3%) adults reported they had experienced four or more types of ACEs.
- Three in four high school students reported experiencing one or more ACEs, and one in five experienced four or more ACEs.
- ACEs that were most common among high school students were emotional abuse, physical abuse, and living in a household affected by poor mental health or substance abuse.
- **ACEs are common.** About 64% of adults in the United States reported they had experienced at least one type of ACE before age 18. Nearly one in six (17.3%) adults reported they had experienced four or more types of ACEs.

- Three in four high school students reported experiencing one or more ACEs, and one in five experienced four or more ACEs.
- ACEs that were most common among high school students were emotional abuse, physical abuse, and living in a household affected by poor mental health or substance abuse.
- **ACEs are costly.** ACEs-related health consequences cost an estimated economic burden of \$748 billion annually in Bermuda, Canada, and the United States.

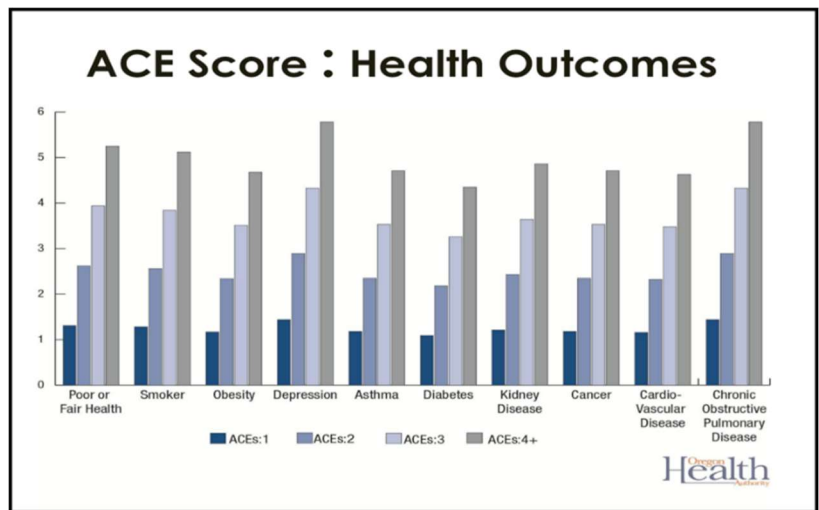
### What Does It Prove?

“The ACE study reveals a powerful relationship between our emotional experiences as children and our physical and mental health as adults, as well as the major causes of adult mortality in the United States. It documents the conversion of traumatic emotional experiences in childhood into organic disease later in life. How does this happen, this reverse alchemy, turning the gold of a newborn infant into the lead of a depressed, diseased adult? The study makes it clear that time does not heal some of the adverse experiences we found so common in the childhoods of a large population of middle-aged, middle class Americans. One does not ‘just get over’ some things, not even fifty years later<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Weiss JS, Wagner SH. What explains the negative consequences of adverse childhood experiences on adult health? Insights from cognitive and neuroscience research (editorial). American journal of preventive medicine. 1998; 14:356-360.

<sup>2</sup> English translation of: Felitti VJ. Belastungen in der kindheit und gesundheit im erwachsenenalter: die verwandlung von gold in blei. Z psychosom med psychother 2002; 48(4):359-369.

Children are at risk for impairment across seven domains Complex Trauma in Children and Adolescents, National Child Traumatic Stress Network  
www.NCTSN.net



### How are children effected by trauma?

- Children are at risk for impairment across seven domains
- Complex Trauma in Children and Adolescents, National Child Traumatic Stress Network

**More information:** [www.NCTSN.net](http://www.NCTSN.net)

### Attachment

- Uncertainty about the reliability and predictability of the world
- Problems with boundaries
- Distrust and suspiciousness
- Social isolation

- Interpersonal difficulties
- Difficulty attuning to other people's emotional states
- Difficulty with perspective taking
- Difficulty enlisting other people as allies

### **Biology**

- Sensorimotor developmental problems
- Hypersensitivity to physical contact
- Analgesia (inability to feel pain)
- Problems with coordination, balance, body tone
- Difficulties localizing skin contact
- Somatization (psychological distress expressed as physical symptoms)
- Increased medical problems across a wide span e.g., pelvic pain, asthma, skin problems, auto-immune disorders, pseudoseizures

### **Affect Regulation**

- Difficulty with emotional self-regulation
- Difficulty describing feelings and internal experience
- Problems knowing and describing internal states
- Difficulty communicating wishes and desires

### **Dissociation**

- Distinct alterations in states of consciousness
- Amnesia
- Depersonalization and derealization
- Two or more distinct states of consciousness, with impaired memory for state-based events

### **Behavioral Control**

- Poor modulation of impulses
- Self-destructive behavior
- Aggression against others
- Pathological self-soothing behaviors
- Sleep disorders
- Substance abuse
- Excessive compliance
- Oppositional Behavior
- Difficulty understanding and complying with rules
- Communication of traumatic past by reenactment in day-to-day behavior or play (sexual, aggressive, etc.)

## Cognition

- Difficulties in attention regulation and executive functioning
- Lack of sustained curiosity
- Problems with processing novel information
- Problems focusing on and completing tasks
- Difficulty planning and anticipating
- Problems understanding own contribution to what happens to them
- Learning difficulties
- Problems with language development
- Acoustic and visual perception problems
- Impaired comprehension of complex visual-spatial patterns

## Self-Concept

- Lack of a continuous, predictable sense of self
- Poor sense of separateness
- Disturbances of body image
- Low self-esteem
- Shame and guilt

## Understanding Court Procedures - What is custody anyway?

### Types of Custody

#### Legal Custody

- Decisions
- Information
- Education, Religion, Medical

#### Physical Custody

- Shared
- Partial
- Visitation

### Custody Schedules

- 50/50
- Every Other Weekend
- Dinner Visits
- Holidays
- Vacation
- Birthdays
- Mother's/Father's Day
- School Year vs. Summer
- **As Parties May Agree**

## 6 Ways To Evenly Split Child Custody

### Every Other Week

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa

### Every Other Week + Overnight

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa

### 3-3-4-4

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa

### 2-2-5-5

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa

### 2-2-3

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa

### Every Other Day

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa

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(888) 749-7428

## **Custody vs. Child Support**

### **Custody**

- Physical Custody
- Legal Custody
- Determined in Custody Court
- Not dependent on child support

### **Child Support**

- Financial Support
- Determined by Domestic Relations
- Not dependent on custody

### **Conference/Hearing**

- With a Custody Master/ Hearing Officer
- You may have an attorney
- Can issue interim, agreed or recommended orders

### **Trial**

- In front of a Judge
- You may have an attorney
- Judge makes decision in matter based on evidence presented
- Considers 16 Factors

### **No One Wins In Custody Court**

### **Coming back to court**

#### **Modification**

- To change an existing order
- Changes to legal custody provisions
- Changes to physical custody schedules
- Any order can be modified by the court until the minor child is 18

#### **Contempt**

- To enforce an existing order
- When someone is not complying with the order
- Can be for either legal custody or physical custody issues
- Punishments can be issued by the court

#### **Relocation**

- Must petition for permission to move if the other parent does not agree
- The location or area is defined in your court order
- Examine the proposed move and how it will impact your child

#### **Special Relief/Emergency Custody**

- Only in exceptional circumstances where there is imminent risk of harm to the child.
- Expedited evidentiary hearings are held
- Prioritize the child's immediate safety and wellbeing

## 16 Factors for Child Custody in Pennsylvania

### Title 23 § 5328

- (1) Which party is more likely to ensure the safety of the child.
- (2) The present and past abuse committed by a party or member of the party's household, which may include past or current protection from abuse or sexual violence protection orders where there has been a finding of abuse.
  - (2.1) The information set forth in section 5329.1(a) (relating to consideration of child abuse and involvement with protective services).
  - (2.2) Violent or assaultive behavior committed by a party.
  - (2.3) Which party is more likely to encourage and permit frequent and continuing contact between the child and another party if contact is consistent with the safety needs of the child.
- (3) The parental duties performed by each party on behalf of the child.
- (4) The need for stability and continuity in the child's education, family life and community life, except if changes are necessary to protect the safety of the child or a party.
- (5) The availability of extended family.
- (6) The child's sibling relationships.
- (7) The well-reasoned preference of the child, based on the child's developmental stage, maturity and judgment.
- (8) The attempts of a party to turn the child against the other party, except in cases of abuse where reasonable safety measures are necessary to protect the safety of the child. A party's reasonable concerns for the safety of the child and the party's reasonable efforts to protect the child shall not be considered attempts to turn the child against the other party. A child's deficient or negative relationship with a party shall not be presumed to be caused by the other party.
- (9) Which party is more likely to maintain a loving, stable, consistent and nurturing relationship with the child adequate for the child's emotional needs.
- (10) Which party is more likely to attend to the daily physical, emotional, developmental, educational and special needs of the child.
- (11) The proximity of the residences of the parties.
- (12) Each party's availability to care for the child or ability to make appropriate child-care arrangements.
- (13) The level of conflict between the parties and the willingness and ability of the parties to cooperate with one another. A party's effort to protect a child or self from abuse by another party is not evidence of unwillingness or inability to cooperate with that party.
- (14) The history of drug or alcohol abuse of a party or member of a party's household.
- (15) The mental and physical condition of a party or member of a party's household.
- (16) Any other relevant factor.

**23 Pa. C.S. § 5328 – See:** <https://casetext.com/statute/pennsylvania-statutes/consolidated-statutes/title-23-pacs-domestic-relations/part-vi-children-and-minors/chapter-53-child-custody/section-5328-factors-to-consider-when-awarding-custody>



## **Understanding our Children's Emotional Responses and Needs**

How can you help your child

### **When To Know You Need Help: Behaviors and Feelings To Look For**

Kid Stress – Georgia Witkin, PhD

<https://youtu.be/yZql-CPCIIs>

#### **Normal Reactions of Children**

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Mild Depression
- Splitting
- Annoyance
- Transition Issues

#### **Red Flags for More Serious Problems**

- Sleep problems
- Poor concentration
- Trouble at school
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Self-injury, cutting, or eating disorders
- Frequent angry or violent outbursts
- Withdrawal from loved ones
- Refusal of loved activities
- Reports of Abuse

#### **Signs You and Your Coparent Need To Ask For Help**

- High conflict
- Inability to make decisions together
- Refusal to engage in discussions about children
- High emotion in communication
- Frequent filings in court
- Inability to resolve small issues without court intervention
- All blame on other parent
- History of separation between child and one parent

#### **What Help Is There?**

##### **Mediation**

- Sometimes offered by the court
- Privately available
- Outcome determined by the parties

- Mediators can be attorneys or therapists
- Available for any case where both parties want to try to settle their differences themselves, without court intervention
- Order has same full force and effect as any other order from the family court

### **Individual Therapy**

- Aimed at helping one person address areas of their life that they are struggling with.
- Can address emotional, cognitive, and behavioral issues.
- For adults and children.

### **Family Therapy**

- Helps the family system figure out how to handle problems within the system
- Aimed at improving the functioning of all family members
- Can include the whole family or specific people within the family

### **Reunification Therapy**

- Child focused
- Moves at the child's pace
- Aimed at helping a parent and child reestablish a relationship after a period of separation or trauma.
- Aimed at identifying and processing issues that have occurred as a result of or leading up to the lack of contact.
- Helps the parent understand their child's needs for an ongoing relationship

### **Coparent Counseling**

- Helps provide both parents the opportunity to learn how to better coparent through cooperation, communication, compromise, and consistency.
- Can be court ordered or by agreement by the parties
- Addresses issues that interfere with their ability to interact with the other in a respectful way that may have carried over after a romantic relationship has ended
- Stress between parents impacts children living in the middle – Co-parent counseling aims to reduce that stress and improve family functioning, even if that family has two, or more, homes

### **Supervised Visits**

#### **Onsite and Offsite Visits**

- Staff supervise all contact very closely
- Redirect behavior or communication as necessary
- Child's physical and emotional well-being are always the focus of the visit

## Therapeutic Visits

- Allow parents in high-conflict or high-risk situations access their children in a safe and supervised environment with licensed mental health professional
- Protects children from potentially dangerous situations while allowing parental access with support for the parent-child relationship

## Monitored Exchange

- Custody exchanges at the office or another location supervised by staff

## Drug Testing

- If you are concerned that your child's other parent may be engaged in drug or alcohol abuse, and thus creating an unsafe environment for your child, you have the right to request that they be drug and/or alcohol tested.
- Urine, hair, nail or blood tests can be ordered



## Understanding Coparenting

How can we make this work?

### Coparenting Can Work: Creating a Plan That Works for Your Family

Voice of the Child of Divorce

<https://youtu.be/IbTFZ9cHo4>

## What Is Coparenting

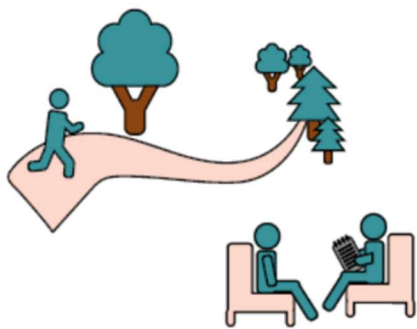
- The term "co-parenting" was coined to describe a parenting relationship in which the two parents of a child aren't romantically involved, however still presume joint obligation for the upbringing of their child.
- Sometimes, social experts likewise utilize the term to describe any two people who're jointly raising a kid, regardless of whether they're both biological moms and dads
- or have ever been romantically linked (i.e. a single mama raising a kid with the aid of her own mother).
- In coparenting plans, both parents choose to put aside their personal differences to establish and execute a plan that they feel is in the best interest of their kid's development.
- Needs recurring communication, troubleshooting, and mutual duty

[www.creditvisionary.com/what-is-co-parenting-definition-and-tips-for-custody-agreement](http://www.creditvisionary.com/what-is-co-parenting-definition-and-tips-for-custody-agreement)

## Advantages of Healthy Coparenting

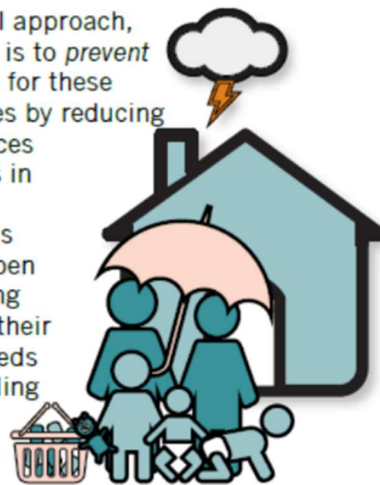
- Stability
- Limited parentification
- Solid relationships
- Limited Splitting
- Conflict Resolution
- Ultimately, effective coparenting assists in alleviating the social and psychological consequences of a separation or divorce.
- Coparenting doesn't take away all of the discomfort of a split, but it does reduce the damage and offers a safe environment where youngsters can successfully incorporate the sadness of the break up into their development

## WE CAN REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF ACEs AND TOXIC STRESS.



For those who have experienced ACEs, there are a range of possible responses that can help, including therapeutic sessions with mental health professionals, meditation, physical exercise, spending time in nature, and many others.

The ideal approach, however, is to *prevent* the need for these responses by reducing the sources of stress in people's lives. This can happen by helping to meet their basic needs or providing other services.



Likewise, fostering strong, responsive relationships between children and their caregivers, and helping children and adults build core life skills, can help to buffer a child from the effects of toxic stress.

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University

For more information: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/ACEs>

### Please Remember...This Is Your Kid's Life

- This was not their choice – It was yours
- Your choices impact them – Your behaviors affect them
- What you say and do matters
- Most important thing to them – That they are loved by their whole family

Elizabeth Marquardt, *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*, Harmony, 2006.

## Create a Coparenting Plan

- Legal Custody
- Healthcare, Religion, and Education
- Physical Custody
- Discipline
- Ongoing communication
- Activities, Sports, Events
- Emergency Preparation
- Future Relationships
- Finances and Child Support
- Making changes
- Resolving Disputes

### You can also check out:

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/co-parenting/Pages/Statewide-Resources.aspx>

<https://getgoally.com/blog/printable-co-parenting-agreement-template/#how-to-create-the-best-co-parenting-agreement-plan>



HelpGuide.org



[divorce.com](https://www.divorce.com)

## Online resources

- Our Family Wizard
- Talking Parents
- AppClose
- 2Houses
- WeParent
- coParenter
- Squarehub
- Fayr
- Coparently
- Truece
- dcomply
- Cozi Family Organizer



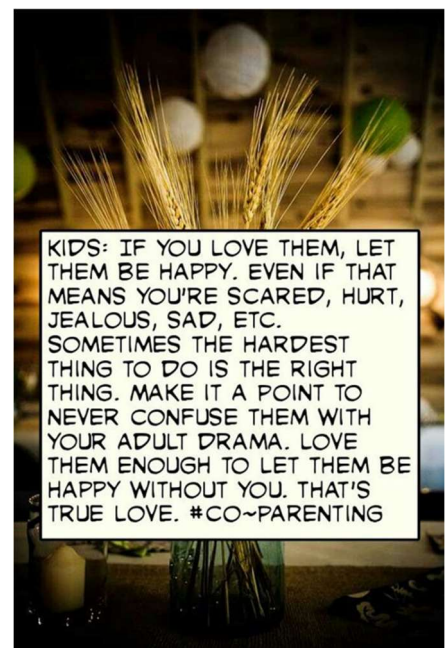
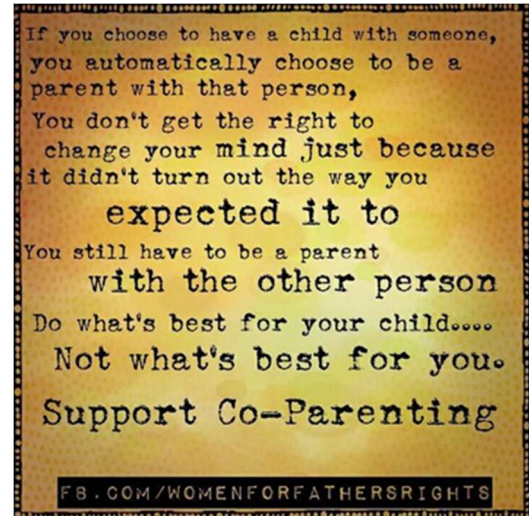
## Types of families

- Marriage
- Separation
- Divorce
- Adoption
- Cohabitation
- Multigenerational
- Foster
- Blended
- Created

**You will always be your child's family.**

## Tips for Coparenting

- Speak positively about (don't badmouth) the other parent
- Know and use "emotional etiquette" when talking to the other parent within earshot of a child
- Keep negative feelings about the other parent to yourself – don't make them choose sides
- Learn to work with your ex – cooperate with respect
- Never make assumptions
- Communicate through phone and email
- Ask for his/her opinion
- Listen
- Check with the other parent(s) about clothes and needed supplies
- Think quality over quantity
- Keep reviewing logistics
- Children should not be pumped for information about the other parent after visits
- Children should not be used as messengers for anything
- Focus on the kids
- Tell the truth and stay age appropriate
- Don't try to one up the other parent with gifts and trips
- Find an outlet for your frustration
- Keep your side of the street clean
- Take ownership
- Stay positive about the future
- Tame your temper
- Cope with loneliness
- Enjoy your time off
- Don't despair, accept
- Apologize
- Keep promises to children
- Keep promises to the other parent
- Set clear boundaries and maintain structure
- Maintain your values and live them from integrity
- Have and keep an exact schedule of visitation hours
- Be on time
- Remember that parenting is forever



- Affirm his/her relationship with your children
- Don't treat your children like possessions either – they are "ours" not "mine"
- Something small to you may be big to the other parent
- Be consistent
- Be considerate
- Keep trying
- Show restraint
- Befriend the new love
- Stay hopeful
- Use empathy and your child's perspective
- Relinquish control and accept what's happening

**Resources Cited:**

<sup>1</sup>[web.extension.illinois.edu](http://web.extension.illinois.edu)

<sup>2</sup>[www.parents.com/parenting/divorce/children/tips-for-better-co-parenting-after-divorce](http://www.parents.com/parenting/divorce/children/tips-for-better-co-parenting-after-divorce)

<sup>3</sup>[www.goodtherapy.org/blog/5-co-parenting-tips-for-newly-divorced-parents-0421164/amp](http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/5-co-parenting-tips-for-newly-divorced-parents-0421164/amp)

**Respond Don't React (Stop, Think, Breathe, Answer)**

**Managing Communication**

- Keep it simple
- When verbal communication is impossible, email or text works – or use an app
- Reread before you hit send
- Keep the drama out of it when reading messages
- Make sure your child knows you talk to each other
- Don't degrade the other parent
- Make sure everyone knows about important events
- Be polite
- Explain

**Social Media**

- Don't air dirty laundry
- Remember your kids, their friends, their friend's parents, your family, their family, their teachers, their coaches, everyone may read what you post

Children are not *possessions*. You don't "allow" the father/mother extra time. When you say things like that you imply that you think of your children as *things*, not *humans*.

"THE MORE CO-PARENTS COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER ABOUT THE CHILDREN, THE LESS LIKELY FOR SMALL ISSUES TO GROW INTO MAJOR PROBLEMS. SELECT DAYS/TIMES FOR PHONE, EMAIL OR IN-PERSON VISITS. DISCUSS IN ADVANCE VISITATION TRANSFER AGREEMENTS. LIST WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT ON EACH DAY, WEEK OR MONTH."

  
Made with  by reverb.com



- Monitor the posts of other people in your life
- Decide together whether it is okay to share information
- If your children have social media, monitor it
- Each parent/guardian should know and have access to a child's social media
- Share the parental controls when possible

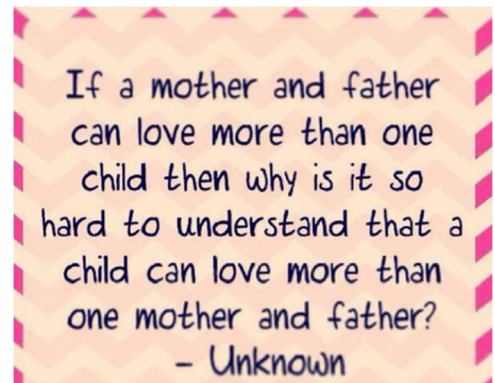


### Dating

- Tell the other parent first before introducing your child
- Wait to make sure this person will be around for a while – don't pile on losses for your child
- How long? – At least six months
- Give the other parent basic information
- Remember, you like them, but your child may not
- Don't try to replace a parent with your new love
- Don't force your child to interact
- This person is for you, not your child

### Blending Two Families

- Remember that it won't happen overnight
- Spend time letting everyone get to know each other
- Always inform the other parent before you change your child's household composition – it's not their secret to keep
- Set family rules
- Be consistent
- Be prepared for personality clashes
- Don't forget to spend alone time with your child – they need to know you still love them and they are still special



### Understanding Alienation

Alienation is abuse.

### Alienation is Emotional Abuse

Parental Alienation Emotional Child Abuse Documentary

<https://youtu.be/Ey7ud-ZiPmM>

### 8 Warning Signs of Parental Alienation

- A Campaign of Denigration
- Weak, Frivolous, and Absurd Rationalizations
- Lack of Ambivalence About the Alienating Parent
- The "Independent Thinker" Phenomenon



- Absence of Guilt About the Treatment of the Targeted Parent
- Reflexive Support for the Alienating Parent in Parental Conflict
- Presence of Borrowed Scenarios
- Rejection of Extended Family

<http://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/102708p26.shtml>

### **Types of Alienation**

- Disparaging comments about you or about your significant other or close members of your family;
- Trying to replace your role as a parent by infusing another into that role;
- Undermining your parental discipline and authority;
- Playing the role of the victim to the children, with you as the perpetrator; or
- Making false allegations of abuse against you.

### **Focus on Hope**

Final ideas to help our kids

### **Please Remember...This Is Your Kid's Life**

- This was not their choice – It was yours
- Your choices impact them – Your behaviors affect them
- What you say and do matters
- Most important thing to them – That they are loved by their whole family

### **Advice to parents from children of divorce**

Florida State University

<https://youtu.be/qZrAYif2cOw>

### **30 Things Children of Divorce Wish Their Parents Knew**

- No matter what happens, we love you the same.
- We hate packing a bag to go between houses.
- Not every bump in the road is a result of the divorce, so stop blaming yourself for everything.
- Please don't overshare; we don't need to know every grimy detail of what our parents are fighting about, especially when we're old enough to understand what it all means.
- We're protective of you with new significant others. If they're worth it, we'll warm up.
- We want you to fight to see us . . . every other weekend isn't enough, and it hurts if you don't seem to care.
- When you try to "buy" our love with trips and gifts or to one-up the other parent, it makes us feel uncomfortable.
- . . . but don't worry, we really like having two Christmases!

- When we're at your house, we're going to miss our other parent. It's not because you're not good enough; we just love you both.
- Stop trying to get information out of us about your ex. They're not our enemy, and we're not your middleman. It's not fair to put us in that position.
- We can tell when you're deferring to the other parent for unpleasant decisions, and we'd rather just have a straight answer.
- Please answer your phone when we're not at your house; it's already hard enough being apart.
- We know that single parenting isn't easy — you don't have to do it all. You're allowed to have bad days.
- Nobody wants to grow up in an "us vs. them" situation, so please do your best to make ours a "we" situation. You don't have to be married to be a team.
- Your kids are not your therapists. Please seek out professional help or rely on one of your close friends for comfort, because we won't know what to do.
- To make the transition easier on us, take dating slow and don't introduce us to people that you're not serious about.
- We still want both of you at our sports games and school events, even if it's not "your week."
- Your unhappiness with one another rubs off on us.
- Please don't scream and fight in front of us. The whole point of your divorce was to avoid all of that nastiness.
- We know that your divorce happened for a reason, but that doesn't mean we want to know what that reason is.
- We know when your "friend" isn't just a friend.
- We hate seeing you cry. We want to make it all better, but we can't.
- The moments we have with you are precious — please don't waste them being bitter.
- When you work together and are civil toward one another, we know it isn't easy. Thank you for trying so hard for us.
- Don't use us as ammunition in your arguments, especially to hurt one another. It puts us in an unfair position and makes us feel responsible.
- After the divorce, we are upset in a totally different way than you are . . . try to be understanding when we act out or say mean things.
- We can tell when you're faking it.
- Please don't make us choose between you.
- Don't make us feel guilty for enjoying our time with the other parent. It doesn't mean we love you less . . . it means that we're not miserable. Isn't that a good thing?
- Your divorce doesn't make us love you any less.

<http://www.popsugar.com/moms/Things-Kids-Divorce-Want-Parents-Know>

## Talking to Your Kids

- Simple concrete explanations
- May ask questions over time – keep answers short and blame free
- Expect reconciliation hopes
- Name feelings they may be having – give them room to tell you how they feel
- Keep communication open
- Call them on attempts to split or manipulate
- Talk to them as a team when possible
- Watch for guilt parenting

## Questions?

- You can reach us on our website.
- We cannot provide legal advice.
- Your local family court has a list of approved therapists and providers.
- Not all services are covered by insurance.

## If you have any questions or concerns, contact:

Rana Dimmig at 610-427-0619 / rana@andfs.com (English)

Karina Guerrero at 484-632-5798 / karina@andfs.com (Español)

**Email is preferred.**

## How to get a Certificate of Attendance?

- Certificates of Attendance are processed within two to three weeks
- Lehigh County receives an emailed list the next business day following class
- You must attend the entire class – No late arrivals and no early escapes
- Sign in and Sign out sheets will be carefully checked

**Thank you for attending!**



Find us here:

