

SUMMARY OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS

WHEN EXPLAINING THE SEPARATION CHILDREN NEED:

A SIMPLE NO BLAME EXPLANATION

- Tell your children this was an adult decision.
- Children can't understand complex adult issues.
- The temptation to tell your story is great.
- If children hear these stories, they will feel they have to choose between parents.
- Children feel bad about themselves when they hear bad things about their other parent.

TO KNOW THEY ARE LOVED BY BOTH PARENTS

- Children do best when both parents stay involved.
- In certain situations supervision may be required.
- It is unusual for no contact to be in a child's best interest. Usually only considered if there is a risk for the child.
- If one parent does not stay involved with children, they need to know it was not their fault.

TO KNOW THEY WILL CONTINUE TO SEE BOTH PARENTS

- Children need to know that they will have time with both parents.
- Children need to know the time-sharing plan as soon as possible.
- Children need to know that they will be taken care of.

TO KNOW THAT THE SEPARATION WAS NOT THEIR FAULT

- Unless told otherwise, children no matter what their age, tend to think the separation was their fault.
- Children need to be told directly that they did not cause it, nor can they change things now.

TO KNOW THAT THEY HAVE EACH PARENT'S PERMISSION TO LOVE BOTH PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

- Children cannot choose between parents – they love both.
- If a child is speaking badly of one parent, doesn't want to see them, the reasons need to be explored. The child may need help.
- Children may be feeling caught in the middle between parents, and between families.

CHILDREN'S ONGOING NEEDS

- Regular/continuous contact with both parents.
- Reduction in parental conflict.
- Parental cooperation, where possible / non-interference where cooperation is not possible.
- Help working through their feelings of loss.
- To be informed about the separation and reassured that it was not their fault.
- Know what arrangements are being made for their care and for contact with both parents.
- Know that decision-making is not their responsibility.
- Permission to love both parents.
- Consistency and structure.
- Clear boundaries.
- Reassurance.

EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON CHILDREN

Child experiences high levels of fear, anxiety. May regress, have difficulty concentrating. Will also act out anger.

Child may act “watchful”, sensitive to parents’ moods. May attempt to please/may still act out.

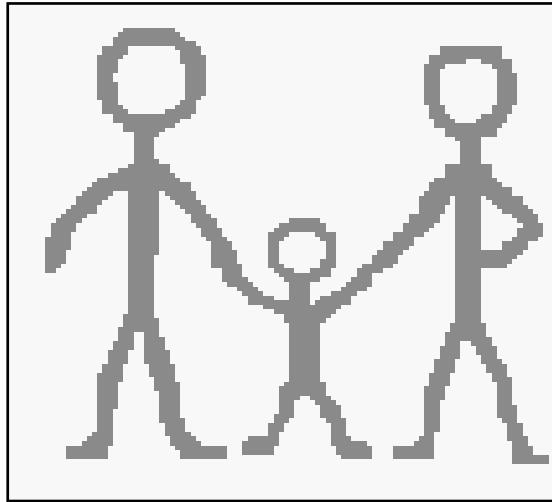
Child may show signs of sadness, confusion, and act withdrawn.

Begins to trust that they are safe. Increased ability to concentrate. Focuses more on own growth and development.

HIGH

LEVEL OF CONFLICT

LOW



For the Sake of the Children

PARENTING PLANS

A program of Family Conciliation, Manitoba Families;
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MAKING A PARENTING PLAN

Creating a parenting plan is a helpful way for parents to set out how they will carry on with their parenting responsibilities following a separation. The sooner a parenting plan can be put into place, the better, even if it is a temporary one. This way everyone knows what is supposed to happen and when. You might want to consider having a written parenting plan. This is a good way to avoid misunderstandings.

A good parenting plan will usually include:

- How a child will spend time with each parent and the extended families
- How major decisions about a child's health, education, religion, culture and activities will be handled
- How parents will communicate with each other about the needs of their child
- How parents will negotiate future changes based on their child's developmental needs
- How parents will work out differences that might arise in the future

Parenting plans help adults and children most when they have a lot of detail. A detailed plan is especially necessary for families where there are higher levels of conflict. A plan that describes time-sharing as "reasonable", "generous", or "as mutually can be agreed upon" is too loose and open to different interpretations, especially when you and the other parent are not getting along. Even for families where there are lower levels of conflict, a detailed plan is something parents can fall back on during times of higher stress.

One of the key issues to work out in your parenting plan is how your child will spend time with each of you. Even if you can only plan ahead for the next two weeks or two months, this will be helpful for your child. When working out time-sharing issues, remember that it is important to look at what fits for the child and for his or her age and stage of development. Other important things to consider are your child's:

- Temperament and personality
- How s/he adapts and copes with change
- Any special needs
- Gender
- Relationships with the extended families
- Friendships
- Sense of belonging and comfort with respect to their home, school, neighborhood, community and culture
- Activities

The plan has to fit for you and the other parent too, given your work schedules and the distance between homes. One cannot stress enough how important it is for parents to try and keep the conflict low. Even a time-sharing plan that is based on a child's developmental needs will not be able to guarantee stability and good adjustment for the child, if the conflict between parents is high and the child is exposed to that conflict.

PARENTING PLAN CHECKLIST

Here is a list of things you may wish to include in your parenting plan. Some things might apply to your parenting situation now. Other issues may need to be decided later as your child's needs or your situation changes.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A good way to begin a parenting plan is to state the importance of both parents and the extended families in your child's life/children's lives. This helps to set the tone for your new relationship as separated parents. This is also a good place to state your shared values, goals and how you wish to work together.

For example: *"We, the parents of CHILD/CHILDREN, enter into this parenting plan to affirm our on-going commitment to our child/children. We want our child/children to have the best possible relationship with each of us and our families. We both love our child/children and want what is best for him (her/them). We recognize that our child/children wishes to love and respect both of us and that his (her/their) well-being can be better served by working together as parents and families."*

DECISION-MAKING RESPONSIBILITIES

- This is the part of the plan that many people call "custody." *Remember you may not have to use the word "custody" or "access" at all.*

- How will major decisions, such as living arrangements, daycare/schooling, religious training, medical/dental care, and activities be made?
 - Can we do this together? If we are not able to agree on some things, will one parent have final say? Do we use mediation or some other help?
 - Will one parent assume most of the responsibility? How will that parent keep the other informed?

- How will day-to-day decisions be handled?

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS

- About the day-to-day needs of the children ♦ For the purpose of making decisions
 - When?
 - How? *Will you communicate directly (phone, email, communication book, text message, internet tools or through another person, someone who will not add to the conflict - not a child)?*
- Special considerations for an infant/toddler - providing each other with information about the child while in your care.
 - Usual routines, such as naptimes, bedtimes, bath times, meals or snack times
 - What a child has eaten and likes to eat
 - Behavior (mood)
 - Health concerns (e.g. ear infections, fever: When did it start? How has the parent /family member looked after this?)

PARENTING TIME / TIME - SHARING ARRANGEMENTS

- Weekday plan for the child between parents' homes. Days? Times?
- Weekend plans for the child. Days? Times?
- Transportation
 - Who does what?
 - Costs - who pays if distance is involved?
 - If plans need to change, how much notice do we need to give? How much flexibility can we expect? Can a family member help?
- When a parent is late
 - How will we notify each other?
 - By when?
- Contact with child by parent
 - How: Phone, text message, e-mail, letters, pictures, videos, video chat i.e. Skype? (especially if there is distance)
 - When?
- Contact with parent by child.
 - How: Phone, text message, e-mail, letters, pictures, drawings, videos, video chat

VACATION PLANS WITH THE CHILDREN

- Summer school break
- Christmas break
- Mid-term break
- Giving each other notice of holiday plans

- Decided by when?
- Contact with the other parent for child during these times
 - How? When?
- Phone number where you and your child can be reached, if need be

SPECIAL DAYS & OCCASIONS

- Birthdays - child, parents', extended family members', etc.
- Mother's Day
- Father's Day
- Long Weekends
 - Louis Riel Day
 - Victoria Day
 - July 1st
 - August Civic Holiday (Terry Fox Day)
 - Labour Day
 - Thanksgiving
- Religious Holidays
 - Christmas, Hanukkah
 - Easter, Passover
 - Others
- Special family events
 - Weddings
 - Reunions
 - Birthdays/Anniversaries
 - Other Celebrations
 - Funerals
- Cultural Events or Activities
 - For Example: First Nation Traditional Activities such as:
 - Fish Camp
 - Boy's First Hunt
 - Pow-wows

SICKNESS

- When a child or parent is sick:
 - Who cares for the child?
 - How will this be decided?
 - How does this affect the regular schedule?
 - What arrangements if any, are made to make-up time with the other parent?

EMERGENCIES

- Involving the child
 - Notifying the other parent - when?
- Involving the parent
 - Unexpected change to parenting plan in the event of a parent's or family illness or death, work or travel schedule
 - Child care - Who does it?
 - How is this decided?
- Phone number where you can be reached when out of town, in case of an emergency

DAILY CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

- Daytime care, before and after school care - other parent, day care, extended family, private babysitter?
 - Who decides?
 - Who pays?
 - Who can pick up the child from day care and when - consent given?
 - Who will be listed as a contact in case of emergency (at day care or school)?

ALTERNATE CHILD CARE

- Other parent as first choice?
- Use of extended family and babysitters - When?
- Who is responsible for arranging alternate care? Who pays?

CLOTHING / HAIRCUTS / TOYS / PETS

- Who decides what is needed? When?
 - Who pays for what?
- What clothes can be shared between households?
- Laundry
- Toys
 - Do we keep our own supplies?
 - How will parents handle the purchase of large items such as bicycles, video games/systems and computers?
 - Do pets go back and forth?

HEALTH

- Doctor, dentist, eye doctor, orthodontist, speech therapy, occupational therapy, counselling, etc.
 - How will decisions be made about what is needed?
 - Who chooses the doctor, therapist, etc.?
 - Who makes these appointments?
 - Who takes the child?

- How will information be shared about these things with each other?
- If costs are involved for a health service, who pays?
- If your child has special medical needs, whose advice will you follow as parents?

Health Card / Medical number shared

Medication

- Who is responsible for obtaining?
- Who pays?
- How will information be shared re: when and how the medication needs to be taken?

Medical Insurance

- Who has a dental plan, vision care or extended coverage?
- How will the necessary forms (paperwork) get to the doctor's, dentist's office, other parent?

Consents

- Who can/needs to give consent to certain medical/dental procedures?

Special Considerations

- Any special diet, allergies, preferences of a child, i.e. diabetes, asthma, vegetarian. How will that be handled in each parent's home?

▪ **For an Infant**

- Weaning
 - When?
 - How?
 - Who decides and how is this communicated to the other parent?
- Potty training issues
 - When?
 - How?
 - Who decides and how is this communicated to the other parent?

SCHOOLING

- What do parents want and value for their child's education?
 - Who decides?
- If changes need to be made about where a child goes to school, how does that get decided?
- Information sharing - How does this get done?
 - Report cards
 - Monthly school calendars
 - Parent-teacher meetings

- Sharing of school pictures
 - Who gives permission and pays for field trips?
- If a child has special learning needs, how will parents handle the flow of information between themselves and the school?
 - If your child has special needs, whose advice will you follow as parents – i.e. resource teacher, psychologist, pediatrician or psychiatrist?
 - If your child gets sick or has an accident at school, who will pick up the child / stay at home with the child?
 - If one parent is more involved with the school, how will the other parent keep in touch with the school?
 - Do you need to discuss how future educational costs such as university or college will be handled?

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

- Parent -Teacher Meetings
 - Who attends - Do parents attend together or separately?
 - Who makes these appointments?
- Special Events - assemblies, school picnics, concerts, participation in field trips, other volunteer activities at the school
 - Who attends?
 - Where will we and family members sit?
 - Who volunteers?
- In-Service Days - Early Dismissal Days
 - Who cares for the child on these days?
 - How is this decided?
- Clothing and School Supplies
 - Who buys?

RELIGIOUS TRAINING AND CULTURAL UPBRINGING

- Choice of faith
 - How is this decided?
 - Level of child's involvement?
 - How will parents be involved?
- Learning another language
 - Who decides?
 - How will parents, grandparents and extended family members be involved?

OUT OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES / LESSONS

- What activities and when?
 - How is this decided?
 - How and when is information shared?
 - How will this affect the child's time with each of his/her parents?
 - Who registers?
 - Costs - Who pays? How?
- Transportation - How? Who?
- Parent attendance – Can both attend? What about other family members?
- Who buys the necessary sports equipment / musical instruments, etc?
- Friendships**
 - Spending time with friends - how is this arranged?
 - Invitations to birthday parties, sleepovers, etc.
 - Who transports? Who buys the gift?

PARENTING VALUES AND RULES

- Safety and Supervision Issues
 - When is it OK for child to play in the neighborhood park on his/her own with friends?
 - Stay at home alone
 - Ride the bus on their own
 - Go downtown or to the shopping mall on their own or with friends
 - Use cell phones, access social networking devices and Internet sites
 - Ride a motorcycle, snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle
 - Learn to drive/Use the car
- Non-negotiable safety issues - How do you wish to affirm these?
 - Use of car seats
 - Life-jackets
 - Use of helmets for bicycles, snowmobiling, etc.
 - Not drinking and driving when transporting children
- Other Safety Issues
 - Photographs – Can the child's picture be posted on a parent's social networking site?
- Discipline
 - Kinds of consequences for what behavior
 - What will be handled the same or differently in each home?
- Curfew times
- Bedtimes (naptimes)
- Time for homework
- Chores and responsibilities
- Amount of screen time - video games and computer time
- Movie, music, TV and video game choices

- Sleeping arrangements - when OK to sleep with a parent, not OK
- Bathing routines, OK or not OK to bathe with others?
- When OK for child to date - wear make-up - dye hair
- Ear and body piercing, tattoos
- Clothing choices
- Smoking
- Allowance
- Part time employment
- Use of alcohol - What will be permitted or not permitted in the home(s)?

PARENT-TO-PARENT EXPECTATIONS

- Offering three meals a day to your child
- Making sure a child has own sleeping space and a place for belongings in each parent's home
- Ensuring the child is reasonably clean when he or she goes to the other parent's home - clothing, face, hands, new diaper, bathed or showered etc.
- Making sure any "adult" magazines and video/electronic materials are put out of reach/blocked from the children.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE EXTENDED FAMILIES

- Who is special and important to the child?
 - How will those relationships grow and be kept up?
 - How can the extended families and grandparents support the healthy growth and development of the child?
 - How can the extended families and grandparents support the parenting roles of both parents?

DATING AND ROLE OF NEW PARTNERS

- How will parents keep each other informed regarding this new step?
- When do parents plan to introduce new partners to children and the other parent?
- Role of the new partner
 - Child care responsibilities
 - Discipline, setting of rules
 - Relationship and communication with the other parent
- How will you balance the children's relationships with the new extended family members and the children's significant relationships with the extended families they already have?
- How can the grandparents or extended families assist with important information about kinship and clan relationships so that inappropriate relationships (blood lines too close) can be avoided?

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD

- How to handle a child's complaint about the other parent?
- How do you plan to deal with a child's wish for a change in time-sharing?
- When does it make sense to have family meetings to talk about issues (parents and children together)?

OUT OF PROVINCE / COUNTRY TRAVEL

- Informing each other of plans or possibilities - giving notice
- Written consent given for child to travel out of country (For a Sample Consent Letter check the Passport Office's Web site: www.ppt.gc.ca)
- Child's passport – Who prepares the paperwork? Who pays? Who keeps the passport?
- Medical coverage/insurance
- Contact by the other parent with child (When? How?)
- Number given where can be reached in case of an emergency

CHANGE OF A CHILD'S NAME

- Is there a need?
 - How will this get decided?

MOVE OF A PARENT

- When to inform each other of this possibility or plan?
- How will distance affect parent-child relationships and time-sharing?
- Transportation issues and who pays?
 - How will all this get decided?

CHILD SUPPORT

- What are a child's expenses and how are these taken care of?
- Amount - How does the Child Support Guidelines apply to your parenting arrangement? Will there be regular payments? Will costs be shared?
- What costs does child support cover? What other costs do you need to be aware of and how will these be handled?
- Are there any special expenses, such as child care or health-related costs, extraordinary expenses for education, expenses for post secondary education or extraordinary expenses for extracurricular activities?
- How are special expenses to be shared?
- If changes need to be made to child support or the payment of special expenses, how will this be handled?

DISABILITY OR DEATH OF A PARENT

- What financial and childcare arrangements have been made in these events?
- Ongoing contact with the extended family of the deceased parent
- Who will have Legal Guardianship if both parents are deceased or incapacitated in some way? How will this get decided?

REVIEWING THE PARENTING PLAN / MAKING CHANGES TO THE PARENTING PLAN

- When and how?

HOW WILL PARENTS RESOLVE FUTURE DIFFERENCES?

- Mediation
- Use of Counsellor / Family Therapist
- Lawyers
- Court

Developmental Considerations And Timesharing

Contents

Birth to Six Months

Six Months to Eighteen Months

Eighteen Months to Three Years

Three to Five Years

Six to Nine Years

Nine to Twelve Years

Thirteen to Eighteen Years

Options for Timesharing

DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

BIRTH TO SIX MONTHS

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

- major task is to learn to trust
- learning to love – “attaching” to their caregivers, usually family members
- attention on physical needs being met

POSSIBLE EXPERIENCES DURING PARENTS’ SEPARATION

- due to complete dependency on parents, baby is stressed if parents are not able to care for them
- baby is able to sense parents’ distress
- is distressed if needs not met consistently i.e. if routines always change

BEHAVIOURS THAT INDICATE DISTRESS

- baby may cry more, seem upset, fidgety (especially when she/he senses that a parent is upset)
- baby may not learn new things like vocalizing(making sounds), reaching for things, sitting up, crawling, as soon as they would if not distressed
- changes in sleeping and /or eating habits
- baby may become very quiet/limp/unresponsive (especially when needs are not attended to over prolonged period) – medical attention should be sought
- baby may not grow as he/she should – **THIS WOULD REQUIRE IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION**

CHILDREN’S NEEDS

- good quality care - smooth and consistent routine - quick and nurturing response to upset
- to have all their physical needs met – regular medical attention
- social and emotional interaction with caregivers (hugs, talking to baby, smiles, holding, rocking, playing)
- frequent contact with both parents
- low levels of conflict between the parents/low levels of stress
- parents/caregivers who are supportive of each other in their baby’s care and who are emotionally available to attend to baby’s needs.

TIME SHARING CONSIDERATIONS

- daily contact or every other day is ideal, as long as baby is not exposed to conflict
- baby can manage longer periods of time with important caregivers when contact is more frequent
- short, regular overnights can be considered provided - parents lived together before the separation and there are no concerns of parenting i.e. good enough parenting in place and, sleeping and feeding routines are the same between homes, and parents can communicate with each other about their baby's routines (as well as how to comfort and soothe child).
- baby's temperament must also be considered – some infants need to learn how to fall asleep and it may take some time before parents find out what rituals or routines work.

PLEASE NOTE THAT CHILDREN AGES SIX MONTHS TO EIGHTEEN MONTHS HAVE BASICALLY ALL THE SAME NEEDS AND BEHAVIOURS, AND THAT THE SAME TIME-SHARING CONSIDERATIONS APPLY. HOWEVER, CHILDREN IN THIS AGE GROUP (AND SOMETIMES EVEN OLDER CHILDREN) BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE SOME “SEPARATION ANXIETY” I.E. THEY DO NOT LIKE TO LEAVE THEIR PARENTS (PREFER FAMILIAR CAREGIVERS). IN SITUATIONS WHERE PARENTS ARE SEPARATED, THIS DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE MAY BE DEMONSTRATED THROUGH THE CHILD HAVING MORE DIFFICULTY GOING FROM ONE PARENT TO THE OTHER. THIS IS ESPECIALLY LIKELY TO OCCUR, IF THE CHILD DOES NOT HAVE CONSISTENT CONTACT WITH ONE PARENT.

IN SITUATIONS WHERE PARENTS HAVE NEVER LIVED TOGETHER AND HAVE LITTLE OR NO HISTORY WITH EACH OTHER (AS PARENTS) - OR WHERE A PARENT HAS LITTLE EXPERIENCE BUT IS WILLING AND ABLE TO LEARN (OR HAS THE HELP OF AN EXPERIENCED GRANDPARENT) - SHORT YET FREQUENT CONTACTS (SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK) FOR THE CHILD IS RECOMMENDED. WHEN THE CHILD IS COMFORTABLE, THE TIME COULD BE INCREASED TO FULL DAYS AND THEN TO AN OVERNIGHT. THIS MAY TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS TO A YEAR TO OCCUR. FOR OVERNIGHTS TO BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE CHILD ALL THE SAME FACTORS NEED TO BE IN PLACE - GOOD ENOUGH PARENTING - SIMILAR ROUTINES - ADEQUATE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS - LOW CONFLICT OR CONFLICT IS KEPT AWAY.

AGE EIGHTEEN MONTHS TO THREE YEARS

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

- major task is to become “their own person”
- need to explore (away from parents)
- want to be individual, but still want to feel safe/know they are taken care of

POSSIBLE EXPERIENCES DURING PARENTS' SEPARATION

- children become anxious if exposed to conflict (they are good at noticing it)
- most children cannot explain how they feel and may act out frustration
- children still highly dependent on parents and may be afraid that they won't be taken care of/that both parents will leave them

BEHAVIOURS THAT INDICATE DISTRESS

- “regressive behaviours” – children act younger than their age e.g. may need a diaper again, want more “baby” attention, want to sleep with parent
- child may be clinging, whining, crying
- child may appear sad, lonely and will pull away from people
- child may become more fearful of common things
- child may have more nightmares
- changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- child may show more distress before and after “transition periods” - going from one parent to the other
- child may show aggressive behaviours, especially if aggression has been witnessed

CHILDREN'S NEEDS

- child needs a safe, trustworthy base from which to explore
- child needs reassurance – that they are loved, that they will be taken care of
- child needs lots of affection/do not force if child is pulling away
- child needs parents' understanding when “acting out” their upset/should not be punished for “acting like a baby”
- child needs parents to be patient, flexible – can follow the child's lead
- child needs good boundaries (limits) and for parents to stick to them
- smooth and consistent routine still important
- good supervision

TIME-SHARING CONSIDERATIONS

- still prefer their familiar caregivers - frequent contact with both parents
- child should not go longer than 3 or 4 days without contact from either parent
- child can manage overnights when contact is regular
- full weekends might be stressful – sharing the weekends and several times per week for shorter periods more suitable - if conflict between parents is low or kept away from the child

AGE THREE TO FIVE YEARS

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

- major task is intellectual development – learning many new skills
- development of conscience – knowledge of right and wrong/ability to feel guilt
- thinking is egocentric – they think that they are the cause of things
- play is everything – their thinking is “magical” – fantasy seems real

POSSIBLE EXPERIENCES DURING PARENTS’ SEPARATION

- children of this age think they are “the center of the universe”, that they cause things to happen, and therefore can feel very guilty about the separation or for their parents’ upset
- child may feel bewildered – question whether they can trust anything to stay the same ever again
- child may be afraid that when a parent leaves them (e.g. to go to work) they will never come back
- separation anxiety becomes an issue again
- child may dwell on things that frighten them such as being left alone, a parent dying
- child will often try to “wish” the separation away
- child may pretend that the separation has not happened (“Mommy, daddy and me live in a big, beautiful house”).

BEHAVIOURS THAT INDICATE DISTRESS

- child may say that they caused the separation
- child may try and “be very good” to reverse the separation
- child may attempt to control the situation – starts organizing everything – attempts to create a sense of security
- as with younger children “regressive” behaviours such as bedwetting, needing more “baby” attention, having temper tantrums, more difficulty with tasks that have been mastered, acting fearful and exploring less, ability to remember decreases
- child may stop playing with friends
- child may appear sad and lonely-child may appear frightened or confused
- child may lose their sense of fun
- child may show more aggressive behaviours, especially if aggression has been witnessed
 - girls tend to turn anger inward – overly quiet, depressed, sulky
 - boys tend to direct anger outward – bullying, fighting

CHILDREN'S NEEDS

- child needs lots of reassurance that the separation was not their fault
- child needs to be reassured that you love them and that nothing will ever change that
- child has a strong need for physical contact (not forced)
- child needs a regular routine in terms of daytime care (i.e. same daycare), bedtimes, sharing time with family and friends
- child needs to know when you'll be seeing them again (give verbal information and also set up calendars the child can check in each home)
- child needs encouragement to talk about their feelings (mad, sad, scared)
- child needs help talking about what scares them (nightmares/scary thoughts)
- child needs approval – tell them what they are doing right
- child needs parents' understanding when they are “acting out” their upset/ should not be punished for “acting like a baby”
- continues to need parents to be patient, warm, flexible – can follow the child's lead
- good boundaries (limits) and supervision

TIME SHARING CONSIDERATIONS

- child needs a very predictable schedule and to be constantly reminded of when they'll be doing what and with whom
- child needs both parents involved on a regular basis, frequent contact is preferred, if conflict between parents is kept away
- child can manage parenting plans that include full weekends with each parent
- if sharing time – splitting weekends and each week suitable = frequent contact with both parents (see “Options for Timesharing” # 7)
- some 5 year olds can manage five days between contacts
- child can manage week long periods away from one parent for the purposes of holidays, as long as this does not happen too often
- longer than one week away from either parent not recommended

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN AGES FIVE TO SIX IS BASICALLY THE SAME AS FOR THREE TO FIVE YEAR OLDS. HOWEVER, THESE CHILDREN ARE BEGINNING TO HAVE THEIR NEEDS MET OUTSIDE OF THE HOME/ARE BEGINNING THE PROCESS OF PLACING SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THEIR PARENTS.

AGES SIX TO NINE

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

- major task is intellectual development - understanding cause and effect/ability to organize concepts
- major skill development occurs

WHAT CHILDREN MAY EXPERIENCE WHEN PARENTS SEPARATE

- child may feel that they are being rejected by both parents
- extreme sadness is common, along with guilt, anger and loneliness
- longing for the parent they are not with (note: although child has transferred some interest outside the home, family is extremely important to this age group)
- increased possessiveness of parents – idea of new partners for parents can be frightening
- child may feel they do not have enough time with either parent
- child may see everyone else as having more than they do
E.g. “Everybody else has a mommy & daddy living together.”

BEHAVIOURS THAT INDICATE DISTRESS

- child cries often
- child may deny his/her feelings
- child spends more time alone
- child has difficulty concentrating at school
- child tests parents’ love by acting out (“If I make you angry, will you still love me?”)
- child may show more fear – biting nails, stomach aches and headaches can be common
- child who is very distressed may have suicidal fantasies
- aggressive behaviour is common in boys who have witnessed aggression

CHILDREN’S NEEDS

- child needs parents to show understanding and acceptance/ warmth
- child needs parents to help them talk about feelings or problems
- child needs parents to say good things about each other (or at least not bad)
- child needs permission from each parent to love both
- child needs each parent to spend as much time as possible with him/her (if new partner is involved make sure child still has time alone with parent)
- active parenting by both parents -
 - involvement with the school and the supervision of homework – note: certain kinds of time-sharing arrangements help to promote a more active parenting role such as overnights midweek or the sharing of time
 - reasonable expectations, setting limits, fair and consistent discipline

TIME SHARING CONSIDERATIONS

- child is most content when they have maximum contact with both parents (child can understand the time-sharing plan)
- can manage longer periods of time away from each parent - if sharing time - recommend no more than 5 days between contacts - children eight years and older can manage every other week - if one parent’s home is more of a home base – full or extended weekends and a midweek overnight recommended if schedules/distance allow.
- child can manage longer periods of time away from parents for holiday purposes, as long as they have contact with the other parent (telephone, spend time with other parent if in same area)

AGES NINE TO TWELVE

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

- child needs to grow more independent from parents
- child develops sense of justice/code of ethics – tends to see everything as black and white – dislikes ‘grey areas’
- child’s sexuality is awakening – aware of changes in own body, aware of opposite sex / identifies more with parent of same sex

WHAT CHILDREN MAY EXPERIENCE WHEN PARENTS SEPARATE

- child may feel that she/he needs to choose between parents
- child may feel conflict over what they want for themselves as opposed to what they want for others
- child may feel intense anger – this is often directed toward parent they feel caused the separation
- child may feel ashamed or embarrassed about the family situation
- child may worry about parents, whether they are going to be o.k.
(**may become overly responsible/take on adult role**)
- child may feel rejected by the one or both parents
- child may have a shaken sense of identity

BEHAVIOURS THAT INDICATE DISTRESS

- child may act like the parental separation/divorce is no big deal
- child’s ability to concentrate may be decreased
- child may act out in school
- child may worry about a variety of issues (being forgotten or abandoned/becoming a burden/their needs being overlooked/what will happen if a parent dies)
- child may become sexually active
- girls may become aggressive
- girls are more likely to try very hard to please (caution: it is easy to think this is a good thing)
- boys may become very aggressive, especially when they have witnessed aggression or if not seeing enough of their dad
- child may have many accidents
- extremely distressed child may attempt suicide

CHILDREN’S NEEDS

- child needs to know that parents can take care of themselves/that they have friends or counselor to talk to/child does not need to be the one responsible
- child needs to know that they are not being asked to choose between parents and that they should not choose/should not be involved (separation is an adult issue)
- child needs permission to still “be a kid”

- child needs encouragement to stay involved in activities/with their friends – needs parents to work with their schedule – know who their friends are
- child needs permission to love both parents
- child needs permission to talk to parents and others about their feelings
- parents need to stay aware of/monitor what is happening with schoolwork and friends

TIME-SHARING CONSIDERATIONS

- child can manage longer periods away from each parent – if sharing time – can manage every other week
- child’s time-sharing schedule needs to consider his/her activity schedule
- child’s schedule (i.e. activities) should not interfere with relationship with either parent
- child’s own ideas should be considered HOWEVER parents must make final decision
- boys who have a close relationship with their father need more time – i.e. more than every second weekend and one or two evenings a week.

AGES THIRTEEN TO EIGHTEEN

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

- major task is to “break away” – to become " his/her own person"
- learn to understand realities of life (child is not yet fully developed either morally or emotionally)

WHAT CHILD MAY EXPERIENCE WHEN PARENTS SEPARATE

- child may think their behaviour caused the separation
- child may feel neglected or rejected/sometimes see separation as “proof” that parents don’t really love them
- child may feel embarrassed by separation
- child may feel angry/resentful towards parents for “messing with their lives”
- child may feel frightened by parents’ neediness
- child may have feelings of loss re: their view of what a family is supposed to look like
- child may feel fearful of the future and their own ability to maintain a relationship
- child may feel anxious about leaving home

BEHAVIOURS THAT INDICATE DISTRESS

- child becomes distant or withdrawn
- child becomes extremely critical of parents
- child loses interest in activities/friends
- child avoids home/threatens to leave/runs away
- child delays own goals/is afraid to leave home (“If I leave, will there be a home to come home to?”)
- child acts out: increased sexual behaviour, substance abuse, suspensions from school/drop in school performance, physical fighting, arguments with friends, lots of accidents, self injuring behaviours, trouble with the law

CHILDREN'S NEEDS

- child needs parents to show how to manage feelings in a positive way
- child needs encouragement to talk about his/her own feelings (sense of embarrassment may cause them to assume an “I don't care attitude.”)
- child needs to be encouraged to take care of self
- child needs parents to take care of themselves/to talk with others about their feelings (not child)
- child needs love, encouragement and support
- child needs to have time with each parent as well as time for their own schedule - parents need to be creative about spending time with teens
- child needs parents to understand if they spend more time at one parent's home than the other's (usually has to do with friends/school/activities)
- child needs parents to keep parenting – too early to be “friends” – child still needs limits – need to know who your child's friends are i.e.: “Where are you going? Who are you going with? When are you going to be home?”
- child needs parents to keep adult activities private – are not ready to view parents as sexual beings

TIME-SHARING CONSIDERATIONS

- child requires less time with each parent
 - adolescent girls need less overnight time with their dads
 - adolescent boys need less overnight time with their mothers
- child needs parents to create a “sense of home” in both residences – otherwise child may have difficulty spending longer periods of time
- if older children find weekend time-sharing difficult (due to part-time job/rehearsals/activities) ensure regular contact on a weekly basis
- if sharing time – changing residence every two weeks or every month might be preferred (less complicated given a teen's schedule)
- child's wishes should be considered HOWEVER parents must make the final decision

Updated and revised: October 2002

References: Developmental Considerations handout. *For the Sake of the Children*. Manitoba Family Services and Housing, 1997.

Kelly, J.B.& Emery, R. (In Press). Children's Adjustment Following Divorce: Risk and Resilience Perspectives. Family Relations.

Kelly, J.B & Lamb, M. Using Child Developmental Research to Make Appropriate Custody and Access Decisions for Young Children. FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS REVIEW, Vol.38 No. 3, July 2000, 297-311 Sage Publications, Inc.

OPTIONS FOR TIMESHARING**

There are many ways children spend time with parents following a separation. In general, children do better and are more content if they can have as much contact as possible with each parent provided that their relationship is a safe, healthy and positive one.

Listed below are a number of timesharing options parents may wish to consider depending on their child's age and stage of development.

Infant and Toddler (Child is attached to both parents)

**TUESDAY 4-7 PM, THURSDAY 4-7 PM
SATURDAY 10 AM – SUNDAY 10 AM**

**TUESDAY 5 PM- WEDNESDAY 8 AM
SATURDAY 5 PM-SUNDAY 5 PM**

**WEDNESDAY 5 - 8 PM
SATURDAY 5 PM – MONDAY 8 AM**

**FRIDAY 5PM – SUNDAY 5PM (WEEK 1)
SATURDAY 5 PM – SUNDAY 5 PM (WEEK 2)**

WHEN CHILD IS NOT ATTACHED TO PARENT:

- One to three weekly contacts of 2-3 hours in neutral or supportive setting – May take several months
- Information from caregiver(s) re: infant activities, soothing, feeding routines, favourite toys, health issues need to be shared – Communication needs to be open, two - way (between both parents)
- When child is comfortable, extend to full day and then overnight access – may take a year - Consultation with a child development specialist + mediation can assist parents
- If child experiencing separation anxiety (crying and clinging – this is normal, can be most intense from 15-24 months old), verbal reassurance to child is helpful re: time with other parent, return (“You are going to see your mommy/daddy today. And after lunch/your nap, they will bring you back!”) Inability to be comforted after transitions (more than 20 minutes) cause for concern.

WHEN CONFLICT IS HIGH

- Transitions at day care
- Use of babysitters or extended family
- Consult with child development specialist or mediation
- Highly detailed parenting plan
- Use of journals – parenting notebook or third parties to communicate.

*** These options are intended for parents and professionals to consider. They are not formal guidelines and may not apply to all family situations or all children.*

CHILDREN OF PRE SCHOOL AND SCHOOL AGE

1. EVERY OTHER WEEKEND (Friday 6 PM to Sunday 6 PM) 4/28*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A	A	A	A	A	B	B
A	A	A	A	A	A	A
A	A	A	A	A	B	B
A	A	A	A	A	A	A

- 12 days separation from a parent far too long for many children
- Child's relationship with parent becomes less important to child over time
- Parent is less involved in school and homework
- Parent with whom the child resides has little time off from parenting
- May need to be used for practical reasons, when parents live far apart and have limited resources. Daily or frequent contact could be maintained with phone calls, texting, the internet etc. depending on the child's age, levels of parental conflict or safety issues
- May be beneficial when a parent has angry/ rigid/ inconsistent parenting style

2. EVERY OTHER WEEKEND AND MIDWEEK CONTACT (Friday to Sunday & every Wednesday 5 PM – 8 PM) 4/28*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A	A	A	A B A	A	B	B
A	A	A	A B A	A	A	A
A	A	A	A B A	A	B	B
A	A	A	A B A	A	A	A

- Separation from a parent no more than 6 days
- Parent describes midweek contact as too rushed - no time to settle in
- Parent has little time for supervision of homework
- May be only option when parent has early work hours

* Number of overnights for child with their other parent during a four week cycle.

3. EVERY OTHER EXTENDED WEEKEND
(Friday to Monday 8 AM)

6/28*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A	A	A	A	A	B	B
B	A	A	A	A	A	A
A	A	A	A	A	B	B
B	A	A	A	A	A	A

- More expanded weekend for parent and child
- Parent drops child off at school or day care
- Opportunity for parent conflict reduced
- One less transition for the child
- Not workable if a parent lives too far from child's school
- 11 days of separation from a parent less ideal for a younger aged child; may need to be considered for some high conflict situations

4. EVERY OTHER WEEKEND + MIDWEEK OVERNIGHT
(Friday to Sunday + Wednesday 5 PM – Thursday AM)

8/28*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A	A	A	B	A	B	B
A	A	A	B	A	A	A
A	A	A	B	A	B	B
A	A	A	B	A	A	A

- Separation from a parent no more than 6 days
- Parent involved in homework during midweek
- Transition at school avoids Wednesday evening conflict
- Parent has opportunity for bedtime and waking rituals
- Residential parent has regular, weekly evening off
- Can add Monday evening contact after weekends with residential parent

5. EVERY OTHER EXTENDED WEEKEND + MIDWEEK OVERNIGHT
(Friday to Monday AM + Wednesday 5 PM to Thursday AM)

10/28*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A	A	A	B	A	B	B
B	A	A	B	A	A	A
A	A	A	B	A	B	B
B	A	A	B	A	A	A

- Same as #4 except longer weekend
- With additional 2 overnights on weekends = 36% time-sharing
- Parent assumes more responsibility for schoolwork
- Opportunities for face-to-face parent conflict in front of child removed if use school or day care for pickups and drop offs

6. EVERY OTHER EXTENDED WEEKEND AND MIDWEEK SPLIT 14/28*
Possible shared arrangement for younger preschool aged children

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A	B	B	A	A	B	B
B	A	A	B	B	A	A
A	B	B	A	A	B	B
B	A	A	B	B	A	A

- No separation from parents greater than 3 days
- More transitions
- More appropriate for preschool children than #7
- More often an interim schedule until child is 5 or 6
- Helpful if parents need to use day care or school for transitions to keep conflict low

6A. EACH WEEKEND SPLIT & MIDWEEK SPLIT- OPTION A

Possible option for a younger preschool aged child
(Fri 5PM to Sun AM; Wed PM to Fri AM)

14/28*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	A	A	B	B
A	A	A	B	B	A	A
B	B	B	A	A	B	B
A	A	A	B	B	A	A

- Parents are able to manage weekend transitions without upset

-OR-

Sat 5PM to Mon AM; Wed PM to Sat AM

14/28*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	A	A	B	B	B	A
A	B	B	A	A	A	B
B	A	A	B	B	B	A
A	B	B	A	A	A	B

6B. EACH WEEKEND SPLIT & MIDWEEK SPLIT – OPTION B

14/28*

Possible option for older preschool aged children

(Fri overnight to Sat PM; Wed PM to Fri AM)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	A	A	B	A
A	A	A	B	B	A	B
B	B	B	A	A	B	A
A	A	A	B	B	A	B

- up to 4 consecutive overnights in each home
- parents are able to manage the weekend transitions without upset

-OR -

(Wed after school to Sun AM and Mon AM or PM to Wed AM)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	A	A	B	B	B	B
A	B	B	A	A	A	A
B	A	A	B	B	B	B
A	B	B	A	A	A	A

7. EVERY OTHER EXTENDED WEEKEND WITH SPLIT MIDWEEKS

14/28*

Possible shared arrangement for school aged children

(Friday PM to Monday AM, alternating + Monday after school to Wednesday AM with Parent A + Wednesday after school to Friday AM with Parent B)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	A	A	B	B	A	A
A	A	A	B	B	B	B
B	A	A	B	B	A	A
A	A	A	B	B	B	B

- Overnight Care - 2 (Parent A) – 2 (Parent B) – 5 (Parent A) – 5 (Parent B)
- All transitions at school or day care avoids conflict
- Consistent midweek residence each week
- Five days between contacts is OK for some children ages 5 and up
- Easier on child if they can have contact with their other parent sometime during the 5 days, i.e. parent attends a child’s activity, helps with homework/project, quick supper or lunch, special one-on-one time when there are several children in the family, etc.)
- Both parents fully involved in child’s schoolwork and play

- Child is fully set up at each residence (clothing/school)
- Children generally more satisfied with shared arrangements
- May not work for child with difficult temperament, learning disabilities or other special needs

8. EVERY OTHER WEEK

14/28*

(Friday after school to following Friday AM)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A	A	A	A	A	B	B
B	B	B	B	B	A	A
A	A	A	A	A	B	B
B	B	B	B	B	A	A

- 7 day separation is difficult for children younger than 6 or 7
- Removes face-to-face parental conflict
- Least amount of transitions per month
- Parent and child can “settle” into routine
- Change in residence each week may complicate lessons, daycare arrangements
- Parents need to be able to work together to ensure that their child’s academic needs and friendships are attended to and supported
- Adolescents may desire two week or monthly blocks of time

Kelly, J.B. Ph.D., “Marital Discord and Children: Current Research & Implications for Practice”, Presentation to The Law Society Of Manitoba and Family Mediation Manitoba, 2002.

Kelly, J.B. Ph.D., “Using Child Development and Attachment Formation Research to Develop Age-Appropriate Parenting Plans”, Law Society of Manitoba, 2011.

Pruett, M.K. Ph.D., MSL “Nurturing Father Involvement Before, During, And after Divorce, Stages of Child Development” Presentation to Family Mediation Manitoba and Collaborative Practice Manitoba, 2010

MEDIUM TO LONG DISTANCE PARENTING PLAN OPTIONS

Parenting Plans after a Move Away: For Infants and Toddlers

- Monthly contact important and ideal
- With long distance, at least 3-4 visits/stays a year
- Contacts limited to 3-5 days, not weeks
- If parents shared care prior to move, child may manage longer times with their other parent
- Longer periods of care/separations may be tolerated if older siblings present and supportive
- Separations of 5-7 days usually/can be tolerated by age 3

For Preschool Children: Ages 3-5

- Contact with their other parent 4-6 times/year can work, more if distances are shorter
- Use some (but not all) school/statutory holidays
- In summer, instead of a month care period, 2 or 3 blocks of 7-10 days are preferable
- Parent comes to child's location once in summer and once in school year
- Child has 1-3 scheduled phone contacts with the parent they live with during their week away

Summer Scheduling for School Aged Children

- 6-7 years: 9-14 day blocks, two times in the summer if possible (not one long stretch)
- 8-12 years: 4-6/8 weeks, two blocks of time if possible for younger group
- Allow for special activities (camp, etc.)
- Period of care with other parent starts 1-2 weeks after school is out, returning to primary parent 1-2 weeks before school starts
- Regular communication with primary parent

Scheduling Issues for Adolescents

- Get their input into planning time and activities with a parent
- Allow for 1-2 weeks with primary parent (peers) at beginning and end of summer
- Honor important adolescent activities
- Have a friend join them for some time

General Scheduling Issues

- Age and close relationship with a parent key factor in length(s) of stay
- Build in gradual steps for increased time especially for young children
- Parent should travel to child's location once or twice each year
- Hotels are fine for contacts (if affordable)
- Alternate important holidays each year
- Balance child's weekend activities with competing need for involved parent
- International moves likely to involve one care period
- Transporting younger children more costly (need an escort)
- Mediation can be helpful to sort out issues such as: frequency, length, location of contacts and who makes the trips; age related schedule changes; details of travel; communication between child and parents

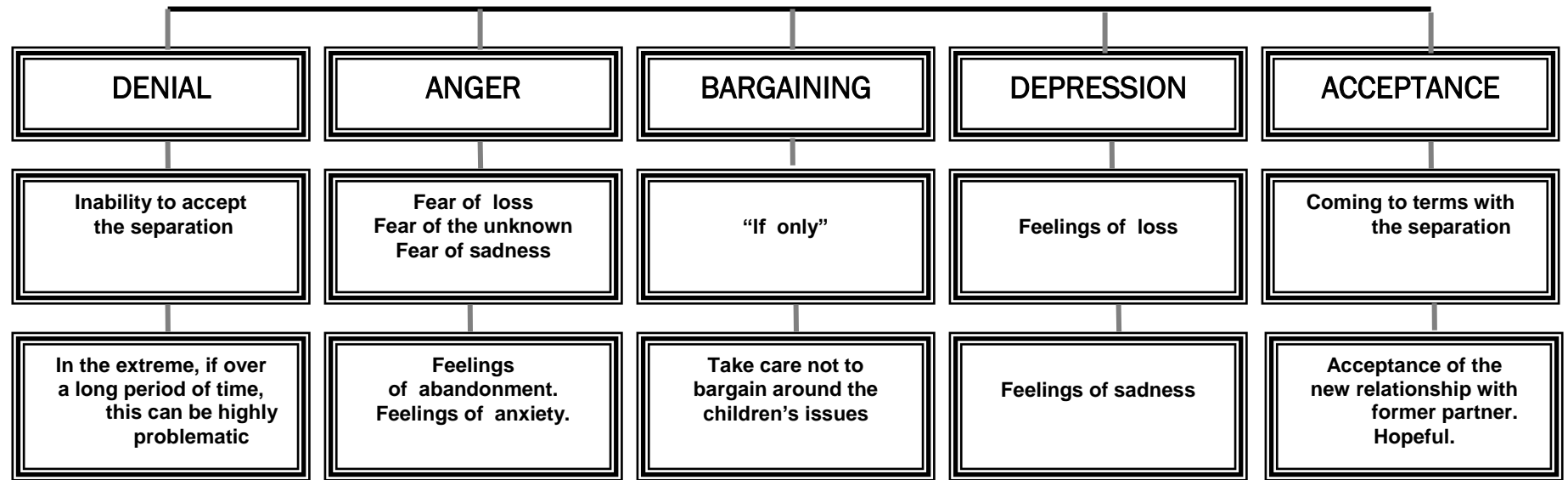
Communication between Child and Parent

- Regular phone contacts
- Email – in high conflict situations, children and adolescents have separate accounts
- Scan drawings/school reports, awards, projects, pictures for their parent
- Video chats are especially good for young children
- With infrequent contact and younger children, make videos of child doing something together with the away parent



Kelly, J.B. Ph.D., “Using Child Development and Attachment Formation Research to Develop Age-Appropriate Parenting Plans”, Law Society of Manitoba, 2011

Emotional Separation



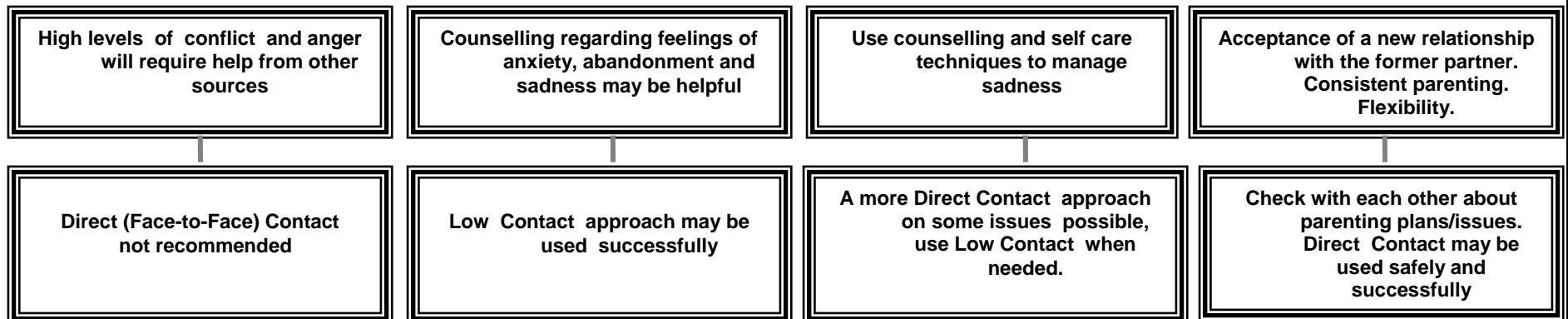
TIME

HIGHER CONFLICT

LOWER CONFLICT

LOW to NO CONTACT
Between Parents

DIRECT CONTACT
Between Parents



TO SEPARATING OR WIDOWED PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS AND EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS:

“How do we come together? How do we maintain family togetherness despite differences and wounds? First, we must decide that we want to overcome the obstacles. We must be steadfast in our determination to hold the family together no matter its shape. When there are children there is no such thing as total divorce. The children make it necessary and desirable for the divorcing couple and their families to have lifelong relationships.”

*Dr. Lillian Carson, The Essential Grandparent's Guide to Divorce.
Health Communications, Inc.: Deerfield Beach, Florida, 1999. P.57*



When parents separate, or when one of the parents dies, children need their extended families more than ever. The grandparents on both sides of the family and the whole extended families on both sides can be a resource for the parents and children. Sometimes, because of strong feelings about a former partner, parents are tempted to exclude the former “in-laws” from their life and the lives of their children. Sometimes the extended family abandons a parent and their children.

If the children were previously positively connected to all or some members of both families, these relationships need to continue. Otherwise, this can be another loss for the children. It is also important for infant children to have relationships with their relatives. The advantages for keeping these relationships are:

SELF-ESTEEM

- Self-esteem is a measure of how much a child or adult likes the person they see themselves as. We get our sense of self partly from how others, especially those closest, see us. During a separation or divorce, or after a death, children may question who they are and whether or not they are loveable and valuable human beings. They may blame themselves for the loss. They may believe that it was their fault or that they caused it by not being “good enough”.
- Parents, grandparents and extended family members can reassure children that they are loveable and worth loving. Some ways of giving children this message are: continuing to include them in family events, encouraging and facilitating communication - in person, by mail, email, or phone; and assuring them that the separation has not changed anything about how family members continue to love and value the children.

STABILITY

- Parents are separated or divorced, not the children or grandparents or extended family. If the extended family members were important to the children before the separation, they will be important after too. Even if the children are very young, members of the extended family can provide stability and continuity in the children’s lives. For example, if the family always gathered at Grandma’s house for Sunday dinners, the children still can at times (even without one of the parents). They might also go every second week, depending on time - sharing arrangements.
- If both parents are changing houses, or the remaining parent is moving, it can be very comforting for the children to go to their aunt and uncle’s house, where the children feel comfortable and have always gone.
- Summer holidays can still include a visit to the traditional fishing camp or cottage with the extended family, whomever that might include. It may not be possible for both parents to share this time with the children and extended family, but it may be alternated on an annual basis. It may make more sense for this specific activity to involve only one parent.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING:

Physical	Extended family members can help by providing nourishing meals, treats and recreational opportunities. They can give the parent or parents a break!
Mental	Extended family can help with homework, read to the children, and take the children to the library.
Emotional	Grandparents and extended family can provide opportunities for children to cry on their shoulders, get hugs, and share a happy story about a former partner that their parent may not be able to handle. When a parent has died, the extended family can help the children grieve and provide space for the remaining parent to grieve by themselves.
Spiritual	The extended family can take the children to church, temple, or synagogue, to ceremonies, to whatever spiritual practice might fit for your family. They can teach them about spiritual values, spending time in nature, sharing music and art.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

- Grandparents often are the people in the family who pass on cultural teachings and traditions, including language. Grandparents can share stories, skills, and teachings during their time with the grandchildren. This is also connected to the children's healthy self-esteem.

SENSE OF BELONGING

- After separation or death, children will wonder where they belong. They will need assurance that they still belong in both families, whatever the cause of the separation or death and even if one of the parents is not currently in the picture.

Parents

You can help the extended family and grandparents by:

Respecting the grandparents' and extended family members' roles and making it as easy as possible for them to stay involved.

Asking for help without strings attached.

Letting them know what you need and what the children need.

Listen to them without judgment or blame.

Respect their grieving process. This means allowing them to be angry, sad, in denial - wherever they are at without pushing them to be "over it".

Not asking them to take sides.

Grandparents and Extended Family Members

You can help the parents by:

Respecting their role as decision-makers regarding their children and not telling them what they should do.

Offering help without strings attached.

Asking them what they need and doing what you can to provide what is needed.

Listening to them without judgment or blame for either parent.

Respecting their grieving process. This means allowing them to be angry, sad, in denial - wherever they are at without pushing them to be "over it".

Not taking sides.