

How To Co-Parent Successfully after Separation and Divorce

The decision to separate from your spouse is one of the hardest and most difficult decisions you will make in your lifetime. This decision is not only personal, but affects in a most profound way, your partner, children, extended family, social network, community agencies and institutions; it has repercussions that influence four generations. As an adult you have the power and capacity to meet the challenges of separation and divorce, and move ahead with your life. However, your children are completely dependent on you. Their health and well-being depends on how well you transition from a personal, spousal relationship to a co-parenting partnership. The foundations of your co-parenting partnership are the needs and interests of your children.

In 2011, Scientific American did a Meta Analysis on effective parenting skills and found that the three most important parenting skills are:

- the parents' **unconditional love and affection** for the children;
- the ability of the parents to **manage their own emotions and stress**; and
- the parents' **modelling of healthy adult relationships**.

Managing your emotions and modelling healthy adult relationships are difficult at the best of times. They are even more challenging when separating; the spousal relationship has broken down, and your emotions are heightened and easily triggered.

Guidelines are required that give clear direction as to the qualities and skills that are necessary to build a successful co-parenting partnership. **The Co-Parenting Pyramid of Success** is a map that outlines these qualities and skills. You can see this map in the Resources section of this website. The goal of successful co-parenting is to create and maintain a harmonious personal and family relationship by successfully bridging the transition from personal relationship to a co-parenting partnership. This new partnership should allow the family to support the personal needs and interests of each person while sustaining and reinforcing each member of the family. The transition is an opportunity for all family members to learn new skills and attitudes while dealing with the many challenges and emotions of separation and rebuilding. The required commitments from the parents is to accept responsibility for the breakdown of their relationship, to acknowledge dysfunctional communication and relationship patterns, and to be willing to learn and practice more effective ways to communicate and successfully co-parent.

Separation and divorce do not have to be viewed as failure. You have the capacity to work with this major life transition in a way that can help all members of the family navigate through the changes brought about by separation. This will assist all family members to heal the wounds of separation.

In subsequent newsletters we will explain and explore the 15 building blocks of the **Co-Parenting Pyramid of Success** starting with Commitment.

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Divorce Coach and Registered Psychologist

Member of the Collaborative Family Separation Professionals

Victoria, BC, Canada