

Co-parenting

How it works



The mini-guide for all separated parents who want to know what co-parenting is all about and how to make it work



Catherine Henry,

Lawyer and family mediator



“The dislocation of families has become commonplace in our societies. It nevertheless remains a source of suffering for adults and trauma and incomprehension for children. Dialogue between parents often becomes difficult.

While children may understand and accept their family's reorganization, they often suffer from the impression that their parents are no longer present, available, and attentive to them.

To avoid suffering and disturbances, keeping the 'parental bridge' open is vital. Now, how does one communicate with an estranged partner without, at the same time, injecting one's own pain, distress, feelings, and emotions into this communication?

This concise guide is a good starting point for constructive communication... ”

Ten rules

for healthy co-parenting

1. Don't force your children to choose between their two parents.
2. Opt for a positive tone when you talk to your children about your ex.
3. Spare your children all the details.
4. Don't make your children your messengers.
5. Detach yourself from your ex-spouse.
6. Set limits and expectations for your children.
7. Remain open to communication.
8. Become a responsible adult.
9. Get your children to trust in you and feel secure.
10. Learn to rebound!

“Allow and encourage your children to maintain ties with your former in-laws.”



1 Don't force your children to choose sides

Asking your children to cut all ties with your former in-laws is often the first crack that leads to divorce.

Allow and encourage your children to maintain ties with their grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins on both the mother's and the father's side. This can help bolster their self-esteem as well as their feelings of security and belonging.

When a child comes back from a visit, be it with the other parent or the latter's close friends or relatives, avoid making comparisons and sparking competition. Children have just as much need of the parent who supervises their homework better as of the parent who makes great spaghetti!

2 Opt a positive tone when you talk about your ex to your children

It's true that it's tempting to downgrade your ex. Your marriage has not met your expectations and you are doubtless wounded, disappointed, and angry. Still, remember that you're an adult. Children need to respect their parents. That helps them to respect authority in general and to grow up being respected by others.

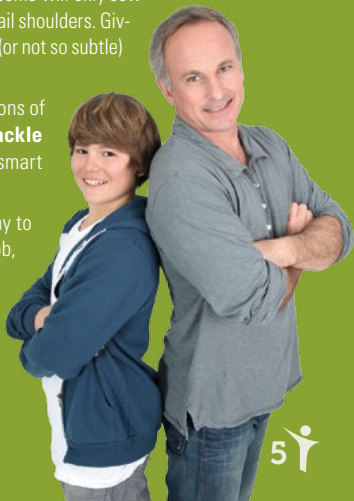
Even if your ex denigrates you, don't answer; don't give tit for tat. That will only undermine your child's respect for you. You may say that if you don't defend yourself, your child will see you as weak. Actually, ceaseless hostilities are what gnaw away at respect.

3 Spare them the details

Telling your children how hard your life has become will only sow more confusion and put more weight on their frail shoulders. Giving them too much information can be a subtle (or not so subtle) way of asking them for help.

Rather than launching into lengthy explanations of why there is no money in your bank account, **tackle the subject more simply:** "We have to be smart about how we spend our money now".

As an adult, you will have to find the best way to pay your bills, even if that means getting a job, taking out a loan, or asking someone to help you financially until you can make the necessary changes.




4 Don't make your children your messengers

There are many ways for ex-spouses to communicate. Some choose the telephone; others send text or e-mail messages. Still others may continue to communicate through their lawyers. All these messages can work more or less well. Using children as "messengers", however, does not work.

Today we have access to many tools to make communication and organization easier. 2houses.com is an example. It offers a platform that organizes the practical aspects of co-parenting without clashes.

So, the rules in your home may differ from those in your ex-spouse's home. That's normal. If you are at ease with the rules that you set – "That is the way Mum/Dad has chosen to do things. We are going to do things differently here" – then your children will be more likely to accept them, too. Explain that you are doing things for their good because you care for them.



A photograph showing a woman and two children running away from the camera on a sandy beach. The woman is in the center, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. To her left is a young girl in a floral dress, and to her right is a young boy in a white t-shirt and dark pants. The background shows a sunset over the ocean with mountains in the distance.

“Do you really want to be involved in a relationship with someone who does not appreciate you and puts you down?”

5 Detach yourself from your ex

You are divorced. That means that your marriage is over. Some people who could not live in a loving relationship continue in a relationship of hate. You or your spouse, or both of you, have given up on your marriage. If you think you had no choice when it came to divorcing, ask yourself the following question:

“Do you really want to be involved in a relationship with someone who does not appreciate you and puts you down?”

The sooner you accept your separation, the sooner you'll stop suffering. Some people believe wrongly that if they suffer enough, their ex will come back (and save them)! That is a painful fantasy to live with. Even if your ex came back, that would not be the foundation of a healthy relationship.





“Listen to your children. Don't judge your children and don't tell them how they should feel

6 Set limits and expectations for your children

Set healthy behavioural limits in your home. If you are not sure about these limits in the current circumstances of your separation, ask someone competent for child-rearing advice. **Don't be afraid that your children will run away and seek refuge with your ex because you've set limits.**

Some children are very skilful at setting their parents against each other. Don't fall into this trap. Share with your children what you expect them to do when it comes to waking up, school, homework, household chores, bedtime, and so on. Your expectations must be clear and reasonable.

7 Remain open to communication

Listen to your children. Don't judge them and don't tell them how they should feel. Accept their current feelings, while stressing that they will not always feel that way.

Time will change things. **Make them understand that you will always be there for them.** Do not ask questions that could cause your children to point a finger at your ex. Ask your children to talk about those things with a neutral, impartial adult such as a therapist or friend of the family.

8 Be a responsible adult

Choose who you will become after this divorce. **Set short-, medium-, and long-term goals for yourself and your family.** You have the possibility to start over. Leave the past behind. No more complaining or blaming.

The present is important. Decide, starting from today, who you want to be and what is needed to get there.





“Show your children that even when times are tough you and your children together will get through the rough patches without falling apart.”

9 Get your children to trust in you and feel secure

However often you see your children, **make your dwelling a haven of peace and security.** Your home must be a place where your children are respected and taken care of, a place where love and acceptance are shown and responsibility is taught.

It matters little if you feel that your ex offers too little security. The feelings of safety and security that you create will merely take on even more importance.

10 Learn to rebound!

Resiliency is the most precious gift that a parent can give her/his child. **Show your children that even when times are tough, you will be able to get through the rough patches together without falling apart.** Teach them that nothing happens without cause. Develop each child's ability to see the good in every thing and event.



Constructive communication...



“...Here's a **solution: 2houses** provides an opportunity for clear, full, and changing communication between ex-spouses that is free from all emotional charges, in the strict interest of their children.

Children must always feel that they are supervised by parents who are attentive to and aware of their scholastic and extracurricular activities, health, and so on.

2houses is an extraordinary way to enable parents to continue managing their joint child-rearing responsibilities. It offers precise management of expenses and a customisable parenting schedule that the children may also consult.

2houses helps parents to carry out their parental responsibilities serenely, in the absence of an emotionally charged context. That, in any event is how various family dispute specialists – lawyers, judges, psychologists, and teachers – see it. ”



Catherine Henry,
lawyer and family mediator

2houses: Online tools for separated parents

2houses is a Web platform that helps separated parents to communicate and organize for their children's well-being.

It contains a full range of tools to enable separated parents to communicate and manage daily organizational matters without the weight of emotions.

This platform revolves around a **calendar** that enables them to manage their custodial tasks, events of daily life (birthdays, going out, etc.), and 2houses' other applications.

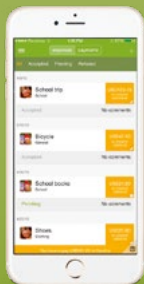


“ We liked the idea of the shared calendar for Téo's activities straight off. The calendar shows where he is staying each week, his music theory and piano lessons, birthdays, camps, and family parties at one or the other's place.

Sandrina, Newton



2houses:

 Parenting calendar, shared expenses, school and medical information, etc.

“ We now manage our shared expenses without conflict. Everything is clear and precise.

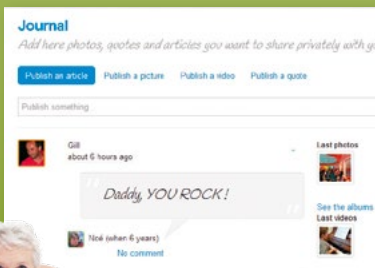
Nicole, Paris

Managing **finances** is an important part of co-parenting. 2houses offers all the functions you need for the best possible management of shared expenses.

The **journal** is a way to share information about the children: schooling, sport and recreation, health, and so on. It is possible to attach videos and to create photo albums so as to be able to keep all those important memories in one place.

“ Today, it's easy to keep up with our grandson Robin's activities.

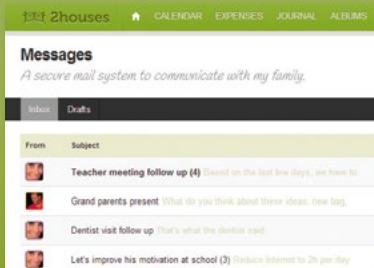
Cindy and Andrew, New-York



An **information bank** lets you organize and keep in one place all important information about your children: address book, medical information, bank accounts, etc., up to your children's clothing sizes.



We have also included a **message** service so that all your exchanges concerning your children are centralized and easy to track down. You can even programme **e-mail** or **text messages** in advance to remind yourself of important events.



“ As both a lawyer involved in family litigation for the past thirty-seven years and a family mediator, I can only confirm the advantages of this programme on all scores.

Catherine Henry, lawyer and mediator





Gill Ruidant

Founder of 2houses

Gill is the proud father of an fourteen-year-old boy, Noé. He has been separated for six years. After the separation he quickly felt the need to communicate with Noé's mother in a new way, for the good of all three. As the tools available at the time failed to come up to his expectations, he decided to create 2houses. That was in 2011.

At the end of 2011 he left his job as a manager with an international company to devote himself to developing his platform. Gill is 39 years old and lives near Namur, in Belgium.



2houses Inc.
Mail: contact@2houses.com

www.2houses.com

