

The Divorced Person's Rules to Live By

Develop a long-range perspective. Keep in mind that parental efforts often are not appreciated by children for years. Yet eventually children come around to understanding and appreciating the parent who has never given up and never abandoned them even through barriers for contact.

Keep separate your issues with the other parent and your issues with your children.

Keep focused on your relationship with your children and make a commitment to direct your efforts toward what is truly in the best interests of the children. Do not allow frustration and anger with the other parent to dictate your actions and attitudes towards your children.

Emphasize to your children that you speak only for yourself and cannot speak for the other parent. Do not try to explain the other parent's behavior to the children. Refer them back to the other parent for clarification. Do clarify for children how you see the differences between you and the other parent without evaluation of the other parent.

Do not interfere with your children's relationship with the other parent. Assume that the children want a relationship with both parents and will avoid at all costs the appearance of disloyalty in the eyes of either parent. Do not place your children in the position of having to choose between parents; do not put them in the position of having to show partiality. **CHILDREN NEED BOTH PARENTS.**

Do not expect reform in the behavior of the other parent. Be realistic, accept that this person is not going to change, and go about getting the best arrangements you can get in relation to your children.

Be persistent about negotiating from a position of caring and concern for the children; show sensitivity toward legitimate concerns stated by the other parent and let the other parent know you acknowledge such concerns.

Build good will if possible. Be quick to acknowledge reasonableness and cooperation when it occurs.

Be fair and helpful when it is possible. Do not, however, accede to unreasonable demands, and do not bend over backwards to be accommodating.

Identify and avoid destructive communication with the other parent. Exercise self control to stay out of exchanges around issues you know from experience become repetitive and without productive outcome.

Be clear and definite in your communication. State your understanding of the other parent's position, make certain you have stated it accurately, and ask for confirmation. Then state your position. If you feel the exchange is becoming unproductive, state your desire to move on to the next topic.

Make clear what your objectives are in relation to your children and how you will know when you have achieved them. Do not state less than or more than what you want. Keep stating what you want and at least twice a year, write a letter summarizing how you see things and what you still want.

Do not threaten legal action.

Make clear that you intend to persevere by whatever kind of reasonable, dispute resolution methods you can.

Make clear that you are not going to give up and go away, and that the other parent will have to continue to deal with you.

Keep dialogue open about your children. Encourage the other parent to tell you about significant events, idiosyncrasies, special toys, relationships, educational, and medical problems. If the other parent is withholding information about these matters do not retaliate and do continue to keep the other parent informed without judgment.

If you must resort to litigation as a final measure, or if the other parent involves you in legal action, give warning before taking each step.

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Hawai'i Coalition for Dads

Promoting involved, nurturing, responsible fatherhood

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