

## PARENTAL RULES IN CONFLICT AND DIVORCE

THE KIDS NEED TO HAVE READY ACCESS TO BOTH OF US (caution to 'kid manipulation' and remember to backup the other parent until proven otherwise).

WE MUST DECREASE THE KIDS' EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE. The initial divorce is only a small part of the damage that can be done to the kids over time. The most 'weight of baggage' occurs after the divorce when attitudes and relationships redevelop. Keep it simple and positive for the kid's sake. Never talk over 'adult details' with the kids. Expose them to the adult conflict as minimally as possible. (It's not their issue, and they need us to be strong!).

STAY OUT OF THE PAST unless it's reparative.

TEND TO YOUR OWN GARDEN. You need to only pay attention to *your weeds* because you have created them and need to own them. Your spouse's weeds' are *their* problem. Look within and not without for answers.

GIVE UP CONTROL OF THE OTHER PERSON. **Influencing** the spouse may be OK, but control is not. Your agreements may take time to develop. Trust first, be critical second. Back up each other often until you figure it out.

TAKE THE HIGH ROAD! And this goes *both ways*. **Pledge** to yourself that whatever it takes, *the kids come first*. Both sides will most likely 'eat crow' on occasion. Don't let it inhibit the kids' understanding of the situation.

NEVER TALK 'ADULT STUFF' WITH THE KIDS. Keep them out of it. Let them be kids. They are not adults.

PLEDGE TO THE KIDS THAT;

- I'll always love you.
- I'll always be there for you.
- Both of us are always available for you.
- I'll do whatever it takes to get along with your (parent).
- We will RESPECT each other ALWAYS.

MOVE FORWARD in a positive way for the kids' sake!

RE-READ THE CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS AND 10 COMMANDMENTS FREQUENTLY!

## **THE CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS AND 10 COMMANDMENTS IN PARENTAL CONFLICT**

Parents in conflict still must fulfill their responsibilities to their kids, and in the author's view, children should have rights in parental conflict. Here is his modified "Children's Bill of Rights in 'Conflict'". If you can give your children these freedoms, you will have gone a long way toward fulfilling your responsibilities as a parent.

Every child of parental conflict should expect:

1. The right to be loved by both parents without feelings of guilt or disapproval.
2. The right to be protected from the parents' anger with each other.
3. The rights to be kept out of the middle of parental conflict, including the right to not pick sides, carry messages, or hear complaints about the other parent.
4. The right not to have to choose one parent over the other.
5. The right not to have to be responsible for the burden of either parent's emotional problems.
6. The right to know well in advance about important changes that will affect their lives, for example, when one parent is going to move or get married.
7. The right to reasonable financial support during childhood and throughout the college years.
8. The right to have feelings, to express feelings, and to have both parents listen to how he or she feels.
9. The right to have a life that is as close as possible to what it would have been if both parents would have stayed together.
10. The absolute right to be a kid.

These rights have never been defined by law nor can they be protected or enforced by anyone but parents. To fully enforce and protect your child's Bill of Rights in 'Conflict' requires constant parental vigilance in policing *your* words and actions, *your* unflagging commitment to shouldering the burdens and masking the hard choices that insulate the children from the adult issues of conflict / divorce. It's a tall order, but your children deserve nothing less.

Reference: The Truth About Children and Divorce, by Robert R. Emery, PhD.

Other references:

- "Freeing Your Child From Anxiety," by Tamar E. Chansky, PhD.
- "Mom's House, Dad's House," by Isolina Ricci, PhD.
- "Younger Next Year," by Chris Crowley & Henry S. Lodge, MD.