

HOW TO



EFFECTIVELY



CO-PARENT



Table of Contents

How to Effectively Co-Parent

Part 1 • Introduction to Co-Parenting

- What is Co-Parenting?
- What is “Maternal Gatekeeping”?
- Why Gatekeeping Matters
- What You Can Do About Gatekeeping

Part 2 • Tips on Co-Parenting

- 6 Tips to be a Successful Co-Parent
- 9 Tips on Co-Parenting for the Sake of Your Child
- Differences in Parenting Styles vs. Parenting Approaches
- 10 Tips on How to Solve Parenting Differences
- How to Walk a Mile in Her Shoes
- 12 Things to Include in a Co-Parenting Plan

Part 3 • What are Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities?¹

- Child Support
- Custody
- Establishing Paternity
- Why Should You Establish Paternity?

Part 4 • The Importance of Visitation

- Why are Visits with My Child So Important?
- 7 Tips for Successful Visits with Your Child
- 10 Questions to Ask Yourself Before Each Visit
- 8 Things Courts Look for in Visits
- Age-Specific Ways to Connect with Your Child During Visits

1 • The authors drew on the following source for the accuracy of the information in Parts 3, 4, and 5: Bringing Back the Dads: A Model Curriculum for Non-Resident Father Engagement (2008, April. Morley, L., Wilmot, L., Bruce, L., Frankel, P., & Berdie, J. Englewood, CO: American Humane Association. You should periodically check with your local or state child support office/ agency to determine if any of these facts on child support have changed.

Part 5 • How to Handle Child Support²

26 Facts about Child Support

3 Kinds of Programs Can Help You Co-Parent

Cash Help

Medical Help (Insurance)

Food Help

Conclusion

Want More Resources on Co-Parenting?

The Incredible Importance of Fathers

This eBook is Based on Four Principles

The Promise of This Guide

About The Authors

About National Fatherhood Initiative[®]

Contact National Fatherhood Initiative[®]

Give Us Your Feedback

2 • The authors obtained the information on federal government assistance in Part 5 from the following sources: (1) Social Security Administration (2012). Retrieved November 16, 2012, from <http://ssa.gov/pubs/10101.html>; (2) The Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services. Retrieved November 26, 2012, from <http://www.medicaid.gov/AffordableCareAct/Provisions/Provisions.html>; (3) United States Department of Agriculture/Food and Nutrition Service. Retrieved November 26, 2012, from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd>. You should check this and other sources periodically to determine if the information on government assistance has changed.

Part 1 • Introduction to Co-Parenting



Parents who live apart, and who don't have a good plan and habits for raising their children together for the sake of their children, face an uphill battle in being good parents. Dads are usually the parents who are separated from their children, and they often lack the knowledge and skills they need to be effective co-parents.

In this section of *How to Effectively CoParent*, you'll learn helpful tips on co-parenting, your legal rights and responsibilities, the importance of visitation, and how to handle child support.

What is Co-Parenting?

The terms “co-parent” and “co-parenting” refer specifically to situations where parents are separated by divorce or who were never married to each other. “Shared parenting” is a more recent term used to describe the same situations.

What is “Maternal Gatekeeping”?

A **gatekeeper** is someone who supervises and maintains boundaries for a person or place. Someone who acts as a gatekeeper of a secured building, for example, monitors the access to this building and makes sure that only authorized or legitimate persons are allowed in. The gatekeeper's job is to make certain no one enters who will act in ways that hurt the members inside the building, increase the likelihood of a theft, or gain access to information to which they have no right.

Gatekeeping is not always designed to protect people against those who would threaten or hurt them. The courts and public buildings are not the only places gatekeeping occurs. Sometimes people engage in gatekeeping because they believe it is part of their job (as a parent, for example) to look out for a child whom they feel or know can't protect himself or herself. Gatekeeping thus applies to childcare and the fact that

Part 2 • Tips on Co-Parenting

In this section of *The Ultimate Guide to Co-Parenting*, you will learn tips to be a successful co-parent, how to handle differences in parenting styles and approaches, how to “walk a mile in her shoes,” and the things you should include in a co-parenting plan.



6 Tips to be a Successful Co-Parent.

Use these six tips to be a successful co-parent.

1. Value and be thankful for what the mother of your child offers your child.
2. Respect the mother of your child as a parent despite your differences and feelings about her.
3. Put past disagreements and conflicts aside and concentrate on the child.
4. Share control over your child’s life with the mother of your child and respect her style of parenting.
5. Communicate and negotiate with the mother about your child (e.g. how to help your child succeed in school).
6. Live with the differences in how to raise your child without seeing those differences as harmful. See which differences are important and unimportant so you can communicate and negotiate about the important ones.

Which of these tips will be the hardest for you to use? Why will it be the hardest one? What can you do to make it easier to use (or at least to prevent you from not using it)?

when parents have a different way to go about being parents and solving problems—that is they have different approaches—it can create problems.

The key to understanding differences in parenting approaches is that differences in beliefs, morals, and values lead to different approaches. Values, for example, are the things people think are important and have worth. If parents believe that different things are important and have worth, it's easy to see how differences in what they value can affect how they parent and cause problems.

What are the differences in parenting approaches between you and the mother of your child? What beliefs, morals, and values lead to those differences? What problems do those differences cause? How will you address those differences?

10 Tips on How to Solve Parenting Differences

Use these 10 tips to solve parenting differences and become a better co-parent.

- 1. Value the need to change and listen.** If you don't believe you need to change anything, you won't make the effort to listen to the need for change.
- 2. Value the mother.** If you don't believe that she might have a valid point, you won't listen to what she has to say about a change you need to make. You'll see her as nagging you.
- 3. Get in touch with your point of view.** Ask yourself: Where did it come from? What caused it? Why do I defend it? What am I holding on to?
- 4. Listen to the mother's point of view.** Ask her: Where does it come from? Why do you believe or value it?
- 5. Know that the mother's view is as important to her as yours is to you.**
- 6. Put yourself in the mother's shoes to see things as she does.**

Part 3 • What are Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities?



If you don't have custody of your child, you still have legal rights and responsibilities. Your legal rights and responsibilities center around three things: child support, access to your child (such as through visits), and other matters with being a parent (such as your access to your child's medical records).

The court decides your rights and responsibilities. It will create one court order for child support and another order on custody of your child that says how you can access your child and other matters with being a parent. Just because you pay child support, it doesn't mean you can see your child. The two court orders have nothing to do with each other. If there isn't a court order on custody, you must rely on the mother or other legal caregiver of your child to work with you and decide how and how often you can see your child and be involved in other ways as a parent.

In this section of *The Ultimate Guide to Co-Parenting*, you will learn your legal rights and responsibilities related to child support, access to your child and other issues related to co-parenting.

Child Support

You must pay child support if you are under a court order. There is no way around paying it. You can go to jail for not paying. The court uses certain guidelines to set a payment that is fair and what you can afford at the time of the order. You might also be able to arrange with the court to lower your payments by doing certain things, like going to a class to learn how to be a better father.

If changes in your life mean that you can't afford your payments, you can ask the court to lower them. You must file what's called a "petition for modification" with the court that issued your order. Reasons for lower payments include:

- Your income has decreased a lot (such as because of getting laid off from your job).
- The income of the mother or other caregiver with custody has increased a lot.

Part 4 • The Importance of Visitation



In this section of *The Ultimate Guide to Co-Parenting*, you will learn how the importance of your visits with your child, tips for successful visits, things that the court look for in visits, and age-specific ways to connect with your child during visits.

Why are Visits with My Child So Important?

Children need to see their dads even when they live with someone else. Seeing your child helps you to bond and stay close to each other during the times you are apart. When your child is bonded to you, he or she feels more secure.

7 Tips for Successful Visits with Your Child

Two keys to successful visits with your child are to prepare and reflect on how they went and to identify what can be done to make them even more successful. Use these 7 tips to prepare for successful visits with your child.

1. Determine how often you want to have contact with your child.

A child needs to see his or her dad at least once a week if possible. If you have a young child, you should strive to have more frequent visits. You can also talk to your child on the phone in addition to visiting, but not as a replacement. Remember, though, it is the court that actually sets the visits.

2. Foresee what's happening in your life that could get in the way of scheduling visits.

For example, your job schedule could change or your car could break down. Make these visits a priority and make a plan to work around things that could prevent you from making them.

Part 5 • How to Handle Child Support



In this section of *The Ultimate Guide to Co-Parenting*, you will learn important facts about child support and the programs you may need to know about to help you be a successful co-parent.

26 Facts about Child Support

If you pay child support, here are some facts you need to know

1. If one parent goes on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the law says the other parent must pay child support.
2. The law says that both parents have to support their child until the child reaches the age of 18.
3. A parent can go to jail if he or she does not pay court-ordered child support.
4. A parent must pay child support even if he or she is still in school.
5. A parent who does not pay court-ordered child support can be put on probation by the court.
6. A parent who does not pay court-ordered child support may have his or her driver's license suspended.
7. The parent not living with the child must pay child support even if his or her only income is from unemployment or disability.
8. The state's child support enforcement office reports parents who owe child support to the credit bureau.
9. Parents going into the military still have to pay child support.
10. If the custodial parent marries someone else, the non-custodial parent must still pay child support.
11. If a parent owes child support, it can be taken out of that parent's paycheck.

How to Effectively Co-Parent: The guide for learning how to live healthy and raise healthy kids

NFI has served organizations working with fathers for two decades, and now, we have made our fatherhood advice available in a downloadable PDF file. The structure of each guide allows an organization to customize a discussion with dads in any way you want; or lets any dad use the resource at his own pace! Some ideas for using the guides:

- Share the guides with as many dads as you like.
- Print the PDF and give to the dads you serve, review it with them 1-on-1 or in a small group, or email it to them to read on a computer, tablet, or smart phone on their own time. You can even give them to moms to share with dads!
- This guide can reinforce (but not replace) the 24/7 Dad® program or any other fatherhood program you currently provide.
- Give away copies of the guides to the dads you serve our skill-building resources at the tips of their fingers so that they can be great dads.

Download How to Effectively Co-Parent today!



How to Effectively Co-Parent - Download Now!

visit: store.fatherhood.org/How-to-Effectively-Co-Parent
