



## CO-PARENTING INTO THE FUTURE

### **Creating a working relationship between parents that provides for a successful future for your children.**

Welcome to your parenting course. This course is designed to create a future for your children after your divorce which might not otherwise have been expected. During the course, you will be asked to look at the relationship with the other parent and how it was that you contributed to the end of your relationship. You will hear other parents speak about their roles and the effects of certain of their actions and their spouses' actions on their children. You will hear interviews with two young women whose parents went through courses similar to this and the effect on them of their parents' willingness to be responsible and act only in the children's best interest, difficult as that may have been at times.

In order to receive the most out of this course, we ask that you commit to being fully engaged in this process. There will be pauses in the course during which you will be asked to write down your own thoughts about certain issues. Doing this will open up pathways for you to be more present and supportive of your children.

We understand that there are some circumstances which make dealing with the other parent difficult. You will receive ideas about how to make a difference in these circumstances. At the end of the course, there will be links to some proposed communications and resources that can benefit your children.

This course was designed by two parents, formerly married to one another, who, despite their divorce, were totally committed to insuring that their two children would arrive on the other side of the divorce process as healthy, happy, well adjusted young adults with a clear experience of the love and support of each of their parents.

We are each responsible for the experiences in our lives and, though sometimes difficult to see or embrace, every choice we have made in our lives has brought us to exactly this place. This course is an opportunity to take responsibility for those choices and to make ones in the future, which will support your children and enable them to have a future which might not be otherwise expected.

A successful completion of this course and the creation of a successful future for your children will require some hard work on your part. We believe that the results will be worth the work.

As you move through this course and your life after your relationship to the other parent is over, remember:

**Every arrow aimed at your ex, lodges firmly in the heart of your child.**



## Mission Statement

To support parents germinating their relationship by providing the tools necessary to be more successful and effective at co-parenting in a way that provides their children with an opportunity for a better environment and a successful future.

## The Vision

More often than not, it is possible to complete the past with the other parent, so that a new relationship and partnership of co-parenting is created for the future.

## Participant Responses

*"This parenting course should be required of both parents in a divorce."*

*"A course that gave me the tools to deal with my husband about our kids, even when he wasn't willing."*

*"If both parents took this course, the Judges would have nothing to do."*

*"A way for me to be responsible and move on in a way that benefits my children."*

*"Truly amazing."*

Please note that we recognize that there are situations for which the work we do in this course will not be effective and that people going through the end of their relationship should always consider engaging the services of a trained mental health professional.

The people conducting this course are not mental health professionals, substance abuse professionals, abuse counselors, and/or law enforcement professionals and have no expertise in these fields. This course is not a substitute for the services of a trained mental health professional, a substance abuse professional, abuse counselors, and/or law enforcement professionals, as may be necessary. There are circumstances and situations that this course cannot impact.

This course is the work of two people who have created a way of co-parenting their children after their divorce which has been found to be helpful and effective for the majority of the people who have taken this course.



In 1998, the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers wrote the Children's Bill of Rights set out below. Since then, many organizations have created similar bills. You will find links to others at the end of the workbook. We urge you to keep these principles in mind when taking this course.

## Children's Bill of Rights

When parents are not together

1. Every kid has rights, particularly when mom and dad are splitting up. Below are some things parents shouldn't forget -- and kids shouldn't let them -- when the family is in the midst of a break-up.
2. You have the right to love both your parents. You also have the right to be loved by both of them. That means you shouldn't feel guilty about wanting to see your dad or your mom at any time. It's important for you to have both parents in your life, particularly during difficult times such as a break-up of your parents.
3. You do not have to choose one parent over the other. If you have an opinion about which parent you want to live with, let it be known. But nobody can force you to make that choice. If your parents can't work it out, a judge may make the decision for them. You're entitled to all the feelings you're having. Don't be embarrassed by what you're feeling. It is scary when your parents break up, and you're allowed to be scared. Or angry. Or sad. Or whatever.
4. You have the right to be in a safe environment. This means that nobody is allowed to put you in danger, either physically or emotionally. If one of your parents is hurting you, tell someone -- either your other parent or a trusted adult like a teacher.
5. You don't belong in the middle of your parents' break-up. Sometimes your parents may get so caught up in their own problems that they forget that you're just a kid, and that you can't handle their adult worries. If they start putting you in the middle of their dispute, remind them that it's their fight, not yours.
6. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins are still part of your life. Even if you're living with one parent, you can still see relatives on your other parent's side. You'll always be a part of their lives, even if your parents aren't together anymore.
7. You have the right to be a child. Kids shouldn't worry about adult problems. Concentrate on your school work, your friends, activities, etc. Your mom and dad just need your love. They can handle the rest.

It is not your fault and don't blame yourself. ----

## Possible outcomes of this course

The intended outcomes of this course are that the participants:

1. Will be more effective in dealing with the divorce process for themselves and their children.
2. Will have more freedom after the divorce to move on with their lives and to have more peace of mind.
3. Will be better able to assist their children during and after the end of their legal relationship in creating positive relationships with both parents.
4. Will learn ways to make their future relationship with the the other parent easier and more positive so that their children can know and love each of their parents without the negativity that often accompanies future interactions involving the children.
5. Will be more at ease in dealing with attorneys, their partner, friends, colleagues, and their spouse's family during and after the end of their legal relationship.
6. Will develop creative and effective ways of resolving difficult issues involving the children, such as holidays, school events, discipline, education and social events.
7. Will learn to create effective agreements and a peaceful way of interacting with the other parent.
8. Will develop an understanding of "what happened" in the relationship so that there is less likelihood that past events will impact the future of co-parenting.
9. Will look at ways to get beyond the anger and resentment from the relationship so that these experiences have less likelihood of impacting your children's futures.
10. Will learn how to deal with the breakdowns from the relationship so that these same breakdowns are less likely to reappear and affect their lives and the lives of their children.
11. Will learn how to create a successful co-parenting relationship for the benefit of their children and which is not based on the past and is not "business as usual".



## **Are there any additional outcomes you would like to create for yourself?**

This is an opportunity for you to create your own future and that of your children. Take a few moments before you actually begin watching this course and re-read and think about the intended outcomes. List any other personal ones that you are committed to, such as “learning better forms of communication with the other parent.”

# PARENT WORKBOOK



CO-PARENTING  
INTO THE FUTURE

## What happened?

There is usually one thing, or a small series of closely related events, which caused you to take a "left turn" and to decide that your relationship was not what you had hoped for.

In writing your answers to this question, also take a look at your own actions in this thing or series of events. How did or could your actions have contributed to that "left turn"?



## How was it in the beginning?

How did you believe it was going to be?

In the beginning, what thoughts, beliefs, and expectations influenced your decision to marry and have children? What values and beliefs did you share regarding marriage and parenting? What vision did you have for your future and the future of your children?



## Distinctions for producing transformation

There are four critical factors in creating transformative interactions with the other parent: responsibility, forgiveness, acceptance and integrity. Choose one past interaction with the other parent and examine and write about your actions inside each of these factors as it relates to that interaction.

A. Your responsibility (remember, this is NOT blame)



# PARENT WORKBOOK



B. Forgiveness (of yourself and the other parent)

# PARENT WORKBOOK



CO-PARENTING  
INTO THE FUTURE

C. Acceptance

D. Integrity



## Creating ground rules for discussions

Imagine that you need to have a discussion with the other parent regarding summer activities. What ground rules will make it more likely that the discussion will result in an agreement that will benefit your children? These do not necessarily need to be spoken ground rules. They can also be a framework that you have worked out by yourself and from which you operate. Some examples might be: Only have this discussion when the children are not present, or, do not try to have this discussion if you know the timing is inconvenient for the other party (like dinner time, or, do not make negative comments (such as "I hope for once, you will help with the costs."))

Choose a topic you need to discuss with the other parent and set some ground rules for yourself and, if necessary for both of you (such as, you both agree that this is a grown up decision and you will not ask the children what they want.)



## Writing out the agreements

If you have actually had this kind of discussion with the other parent, any agreements, at least in the beginning, are best in writing. Use the space below to write out the agreement you have reached. It is best to make any agreement very specific as to time and place if either of you is supposed to do something, such as deliver a child to an event, designing your plan

Most states have a framework for parenting time which will be presumed to be appropriate for your children. Most states also provide that parents can make agreements for parenting time which are different than the presumed plan. Each of you is encouraged to create agreements that work for your family. These agreements should be reviewed by a lawyer when you are complete to insure that the agreement will be enforceable and



## Designing your plan

Most states have a framework for parenting time (also called a visitation or access schedule) which will be presumed to be appropriate for your children. Most states also provide that parents can make agreements for parenting time which are different than the presumed plan. Each of you is encouraged to create agreements that work for your family. These agreements should be reviewed by a lawyer when you are complete to insure that the agreement will be enforceable and complies with state ordered minimums.