

Commandments for Getting Along

Words of wisdom from those who are doing at least some things right

1. **Don't bad-mouth your former spouse, even subtly.** In fact, says E. Mavis Hetherington, Ph.D., the continuing goodwill of parents is one of the most important factors in ensuring that children grow up to be happy in love and life. Those who divorce well realize that, while they may not be partners forever, they are parents forever and, as much as possible, work hard to separate marital issues from parental ones.
2. **Heal yourself.** You can't have a joyful life if your psychic energy is drained year after year by fighting with someone. One mother of two in New York City reached a turning point when she gave herself permission to be happy: "I was so focused on my fury at my ex-husband that I couldn't see that he was the one person who could share the joy and pride in my kids. I took a chance and allowed myself to feel that joy- and there it was."
3. **Plan ahead for change.** Will your daughter be leaving a familiar preschool to start kindergarten? Is your teen lobbying for a later curfew? Figure out in advance how you and your ex will handle the minutiae as well as the milestones of family life. Randi Rabin and Kris Grant talk every Sunday to discuss the girls' plans for the upcoming week and make sure schedules and rules are in sync. "No big decisions about the kids are made unless we all agree, which of course doesn't always happen. When there is disagreement, the majority prevails."
4. **Remember that kids need time with their dads.** Though most people have joint custody agreements, in reality, dads often spend far less time with their children than mothers do. In good divorces, that is less likely to happen. "Kids have to know that there are two caring adults dedicated to their well-being," says Dr. Hetherington.

(This article was taken from an excerpt in Ladies' Home Journal, January 2003 issue)