

9 Effective Communication Strategies for Co-Parents

Accept that you are now a co-parent with your ex-spouse.

If you have just gone through a contentious divorce or split, you may have raw feelings toward your spouse. However, if you share children, it is time to separate your feelings as an “ex-spouse” and view your partner as your children’s other parent. When you and your ex both prioritize parenting, you can work together to create a positive environment for your children.

It is never too late to have a direct conversation with your ex about putting your kids first and co-parenting together. You and your ex will remain “parenting partners” as long as you share children and then grandchildren – so start this new chapter on the right foot.

Focus on your kids when you communicate.

When you do talk to your spouse, keep your focus on your kids’ and their well-being. Do not use the conversation as a chance to bring up past issues or current complaints about your ex. If you are dealing with a situation related to your kids, stick to the facts and propose realistic solutions. Try not to engage in emotionally charged language and use “I” statements. When your ex shares their perspective, listen actively without passing judgment or lashing out.

Set boundaries with your ex.

When you begin your co-parenting relationship, talk with your ex on how you will communicate with each other, such as avoiding certain topics, name calling or yelling. Realize also that your ex has a separate life now and it is a better idea not to try to interfere with their activities. Talk about how you will handle a conversation that escalates, such as immediately stopping the talk and postponing it to another time.

Agree to focus on your kids’ needs.

A key to positive co-parenting communication is keeping the focus on your children’s needs rather than your own. This means setting aside any personal conflicts or frustrations with your ex and prioritizing what is best for your kids. When making decisions, whether it is about schooling, extracurricular activities, or medical care, ensure that both parents are working together to support the children’s well-being. By consistently putting their needs first, co-parents can create a stable and nurturing environment that fosters healthy emotional development for their children.

Choose the right time and place for tough topics.

Even if you are not rehashing the past, some conversations about your kids will be sensitive or difficult. That is why you should connect when neither of you are stressed, tired or rushed. If possible, choose to meet in person in a neutral location or use email or text if things might escalate.

OurFamilyWizard App allow parents to share calendars, exchange messages, track expenses, and document key information without the emotional baggage that can accompany phone conversations. It also monitors the tone of messages and gives a warning if the tone is too harsh.



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Do not complain to your kids about your ex.

Even though it might be tempting to vent about your ex to your kids or in front of them, just do not do it. While your marriage may not have lasted the test of time, your kids still need two parents they can depend on to focus on their best interests. Your children, even as adults, will want two active parents in their lives, so it is a good idea to start that positive co-parenting relationship now.

In the here and now, it is OK to tell your kids that you feel upset or sad, but do not go into specifics about your divorce. Your kids also have their own struggle with the new family dynamic, and they need to rely on you for support – not you going to them.

Many divorced people do need support, especially in the beginning, so look for support groups, a therapist or a trusted clergyperson. Children also may need outside support so do not hesitate to talk to their pediatrician for recommendations.

Keep things consistent for better communication.

Set and agree to similar rules and consequences in both of your homes so that your child enjoys stability while spending time with you and your co-parent. Stick to your agreed-upon parenting time schedules as much as possible to respect everyone involved. If you do need to make a change to the schedule, communicate openly with your co-parent as soon as possible to make the adjustments as stress-free as possible. After witnessing your divorce, your kids will need a consistent routine during a time when they are feeling vulnerable.

Avoid arguing with your ex in front of your kids.

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Use communication tools to keep things cool and calm.

Online app tools can be a game-changer for co-parents, helping you conduct civil and organized communication. These platforms allow parents to schedule custody exchanges, track expenses, and share important updates in one central location. With features like message archiving and shared calendars, these tools can reduce misunderstandings and provide a neutral space for communication. Many apps also offer tools to keep conversations focused on the children's needs.

Using an app can also reduce the temptation to try to relay messages to your ex via your kids. Unfortunately, many co-parents fall into this trap, so focus on communicating directly with each other.

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