Kids Come First® Separated Parent Support Workshops

Co-Parenting: Important Principles

Children need to maintain a positive, loving and open relationship with both separated parents and it's your job to promote and encourage this - provided it is safe to do so. Remember, you may be separated from each other, but children need to know that they are not being separated from either of you.

Co-parenting with a child-focused vision requires both parents to agree to and put into practice the following principles:

- To always reassure our children that our separation is not their fault.
- To tell our children that both parents always love them no matter what.
- To listen to our children and make time to hear their views.
- To allow our children to express their thoughts & feelings and ask questions about their family transitions.
- To never ask our children to take sides or choose between their parents.
- To never criticise or devalue the other parent in front of our children.
- To explain what is happening to our children in an age-appropriate way and not 'overshare' any adult information with them.
- To share information about our children the other parent in a respectful, open and honest way, trying hard to avoid any misunderstandings.
- To allow our children to love their other parent, regardless of my personal feelings towards them.
- To not make children feel guilty about spending time with the other parent.
- To avoid arguing or escalating conflict in front of our children.
- To express any negative emotions only when children cannot hear or see.
- To never ask our children 'probing' questions about the other parent.
- To never use our children as messengers, mediators or negotiators.
- To ensure our children not left out of key family events by being flexible and willing to compromise with my other parent so they can join in.
- To nurture and care for our children and not rely on their support.
- To make clear arrangements for our children in advance and stick to them.
- To maintain high standards of behaviour, whatever my ex-partner does.
- To place our children and their needs before all others i.e. new partners.
- To avoid rushing our children into accepting any significant changes to their lives, including new partners, moving homes, etc.
- To accept that the other parent may have different 'rules' in their home.
- To avoid spoiling our children and try to 'normalise' their lives where possible.
- To always treat the other parent fairly for the sake of our children.
- To negotiate and agree 'core values' for our children with my co-parent.
- To draw up a plan as to how you will share responsibility for your children.