

**Divorcing With Kids:  
Dismantling a Marriage Without Dismantling Your Children  
...You are divorcing your spouse - NOT your child!**

- 1) Remember – your child has ½ of the person you are divorcing in their DNA...when you say anything derogatory about your spouse, you are attacking their very being!
- 2) Remember – most children are egocentric...they truly believe everything is about them. If you continually fought over your child's grades, or the fact that you were always the one at the teacher's conferences, etc., your child hears "themselves" as the problem.
- 3) TELL THEM EVERYDAY THAT YOU LOVE THEM – THAT THEY WERE CREATED IN LOVE AND THAT THE DIVORCE IS NOT THEIR FAULT!!!
- 4) Your child is not a spy....do not ask them interrogating questions about what happens at the "other" house. No matter how clever your questions are disguised, your child sees right through it.
- 5) When your child shares information about the "other" house, ask yourself what their motivation in sharing this with you is? (Children are clever...and if Dad's house has a late bedtime and mom allows for ice cream after breakfast, you bet they're going to work the angles to get both!)
- 6) You probably didn't agree on parenting when you were married, don't "force" the issue now. You are not going to change your ex-spouse (if that were possible, you would most likely be married still ☺).
- 7) Your child will inevitably remind you of some of the qualities you least like about your ex-spouse. Remember, they are not doing this on purpose – they have inherited certain qualities...don't punish them for that (or continually tell how much they are like the other parent).
- 8) Do NOT talk badly ever about the other parent. If you need to process your feelings, choose a counselor or trusted friend when your child is not around (yes, they hear you on the phone!)
- 9) When your child shares information, try to listen with your heart and not your head. Remember, you don't have to agree with someone to fully hear them, validate them and allow them to have their feelings.
- 10) Don't threaten your child with "sending them away" if they express a desire to live with the other parent.

The following is an "Un-Married" Decree for individuals with children.  
"Ground Rules"

We \_\_\_\_\_ (Mommy) and \_\_\_\_\_ (Daddy)

do hereby solemnly swear to the following:

Lisa Smith, Ph.D.

[www.monsterproofyourchild.com](http://www.monsterproofyourchild.com)

[Lisa@monsterproofyourchild.com](mailto:Lisa@monsterproofyourchild.com)

**MORE THAN ANYTHING, WE WILL REMEMBER WE LOVE YOU MOST OF ALL! WE BOTH WANT AND COMMIT TO WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU – OUR CHILDREN! (EVEN IF THAT MEANS WE WILL HAVE TO SET ASIDE OUR DIFFERENCES SOMETIMES)**

- 1) We'll agree on a reasonable bedtime: \_\_\_\_\_. We want our child to be adequately rested for school.
- 2) We'll agree to provide support (including a time/place) for homework to be completed. \_\_\_\_\_ (time/place).
- 3) We'll agree to communicate to the other adult (not through the child) about anything that directly affects the child and any changes to the schedule that need to be made.
- 4) We will remember that the "schedule" was made up for our convenience – not our child. They might not find it "convenient" all the time...if at all possible (and reasonable), especially in the beginning and particularly when our children are small – we will accommodate THEIR need to change the schedule ("I miss Daddy/Mommy right now and I really want to see her"). It is not our child's fault that there are now 2 houses...we are not punishing our ex-spouse by withholding the child...we are punishing our child. If it's not possible to accommodate the child, we can accept the feeling ("I hear you that you miss Mommy/Daddy. That must be hard for you. Do you want to call her/him?") You can hold them and let them know you understand this is hard (remember they didn't choose this, so it's ok for them to have sad feelings about this – it is not a reflection of a preference of one parent over the other).
- 5) We will set aside our differences and coordinate significant events (our children's birthdays) so that everyone who loves them can be there! We know that children who know how loved they are fair better in the world!
- 6) We'll agree to notify the other parent before introducing our child to a new "significant" other. (We will not ask for details, but just don't wish to have the 'deer in headlight' look when our child tells us).
- 7) We'll agree to a self-care routine (bath/teeth-brushing/hair) and write it down so our child is clear.
- 8) We will strive to provide our child with healthy foods, adequate exercise and outdoor time, no-excessive use of electronics and accommodate their unique needs.
- 9) We agree that if discussions get too heated, we will communicate via email/texts.
- 10) We agree that if our child tells us something we have bad feelings about, we'll clarify it with our ex-spouse before jumping to conclusions and/or over-reacting. We are aware that children tend to work the angles in order to get the "best of the best" of all situations and we will try to "assume the best" even when it sounds like the worse.
- 11) We agree to reasonable, sound, compassionate and respectful discipline. If our child has difficulties, we will seek outside expert advice.
- 12) We will continue to hold the highest and best for our ex-spouse as we know that when they are happy and healthy that this will spill over to our child.
- 13) We agree NOT to discuss difficult issues (nor involved them) in front of our children!

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- 14) We agree to suspend our judgment and grievances regarding the ex-spouse so that our child 1) can love ALL aspects of themselves and 2) sees that adults can truly “play nice” and get along...just like we teach them and expect them to do!
- 15) Lastly, we commit to our own well-being and to ensure that we are caring for ourselves (and seeking appropriate support when necessary) as to not burden our children with our emotional needs.

**Witnesses: (aka – the children – remember – they truly do SEE everything!)**

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Dated: \_\_\_\_\_