

Positive Parenting From Two Homes

Session 1



Purpose of the Program

To help parents, family members & caregivers:

- ▶ Understand the impact of separation, divorce & parenting from two homes
- ▶ Reduce & eliminate children's exposure to conflict
- ▶ Understand the needs of children at different ages & stages



Purpose of the Program

To help parents, family members & caregivers:

- ▶ Understand appropriate ways to manage & resolve conflict
- ▶ Get information about legal processes and community resources



Definitions - *Family*

- ▶ Family is any two or more people who depend on each other for support, nurturing, and who have a voluntary or legal long-term commitment
- ▶ Children often have a broad & inclusive definition of family
- ▶ Parents may have been married, common law, never lived together or always parented apart



A Family may include:

- ▶ Birth/Biological Parents
- ▶ Step Parents
- ▶ Grandparents
- ▶ Elders – First Nations leaders
- ▶ Same Sex Couples
- ▶ LGBTQ2+
- ▶ Foster or Adoptive Parents
- ▶ Extended Family members
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Anyone in a caregiver role



Definitions - *Custody and Access*

- ▶ 'Custody' - the right and responsibility to make major decisions affecting the child
- ▶ 'Access' - refers to parenting time with the child
- ▶ Unless otherwise ordered by a court, parents of a child are joint guardians and are equally entitled to custody

2 Main Types of Custody

- ▶ Joint Custody means both parents have equal say in major decisions.
- ▶ Sole Custody means one parent makes all major decisions.

Fact or Fiction?

- ▶ Joint custody means that the children must live with each parent an equal amount of time.

FICTION

- ▶ Joint custody means that both parents have an equal say in important decisions such as education, healthcare and religion.

FACT

Definitions - *Separation/Divorce*

- ▶ Separation is the physical & emotional moving apart of the parenting adults when they choose to no longer live together
- ▶ This applies to parents who are legally married & those who are not
- ▶ Divorce is the legal ending of a marriage that has been recognized by law

Definitions - *Parenting, Co- & Step-Parenting*

- ▶ Parenting includes arrangements where parents live together, live apart, are single, or include others in a caregiver role
- ▶ Co-parenting is an arrangement in divorce, separation and/or two homes, where parents share legal & physical care of children
- ▶ Step-parenting is parenting your partner's child or children

Children are Vulnerable

- ▶ They may feel torn loyalties & think it is their fault
- ▶ They may be caught in the middle of continuous fighting between their parents
- ▶ They may need to adjust to different homes with different expectations, routines & people
- ▶ They may lose familiar friends, neighborhoods, activities & schools

Grief and Loss is a Process - Different for everyone

- ▶ Denial – “This isn’t really happening”
- ▶ Anger – “It’s their fault”
- ▶ Bargaining – “I’ll do anything”
- ▶ Confusion – “What is happening?? I don’t know what to do”
- ▶ Anxiety – “I feel afraid and anxious”
- ▶ Depression – “Nobody cares if I live or die”
- ▶ Acceptance – “It’s really over. I can accept it”

Children's Grief & Loss

- ▶ Children go through a grief and loss process as well
- ▶ They often express feelings through behavior
- ▶ Just because kids say they are okay doesn't mean they are



Children's Grief & Loss

- ▶ Denial – “This isn't happening”
- ▶ Anger – “I hate you! It's your fault!”
- ▶ Confusion – “I don't know what is happening with my parents or where I'll be”
- ▶ Anxiety – “I feel afraid and anxious”
- ▶ Bargaining – “If I'm extra good, they will come back”
- ▶ Depression – “Why bother”
- ▶ Acceptance – “I don't like it, but this is the way it is”



Children's Secret Wishes

- ▶ Parents will get back together
- ▶ Parents will stop fighting
- ▶ Love me & let me love both of you



Children's Biggest Fears

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- ▶ Not getting to see a parent
- ▶ Not being loved or cared for



All Children Need

- ▶ Love, Affection, Predictability & Respect
- ▶ Consistent *Time with Parents*
- ▶ To be told – and shown - the separation was not their fault



Please see the booklet “A Guide for Parents” for more info

Ages & Stages

▶ Let's look at Age & Stage information in four categories:

- ▶ Development
- ▶ Needs
- ▶ Potential Problems
- ▶ Time with Parents



Ages & Stages - Time with Parents

- ▶ There is no “right way” to determine the amount of time a child needs to spend with each parent
- ▶ Each child is unique and each circumstance is different
- ▶ The following “Time with Parents” guidelines are suggestions only and are based on research





Meet Joe.

Joe is crawling faster now and likes to empty the lower kitchen drawers when he can. He likes music and trucks and he loves to laugh.

Infants and Toddlers (birth - 3yrs)

Joe's *Development*

Like other infants and toddlers (0 - 3yrs) Joe develops trust and attachment in his first year. He requires lots of affection and attention. After his first year, he will begin to develop more Independence.

Joe *Needs*

Joe needs consistent schedules and routines. He needs frequent contact with both parents where possible.



Infants and Toddlers (birth - 3yrs)

Potential Problems

Joe may cry a lot and be extra fussy and irritable. He may not be able to do some things as well, e.g. toilet skills he has learned. He may experience stress, anger, depression and long-term psychological harm from loss of attachment.

Time with Parents

Infants & toddlers generally benefit from overnights with primary caregivers. Consistency is the most important factor. If there has not been frequent contact with a parent, begin with short visits and gradually lengthen the time.



Infants & Toddlers (birth - 3yrs)

Dr. Joan Kelly



Pre-Schoolers (3 - 5yrs)

Meet Aya.

Aya is becoming more independent and can do more things on her own. She has a big imagination. She loves drawing and baking with her mom

Aya's Development

Like other preschoolers (3-5yrs), Aya likes to take initiative & have more control – “*I can do it!*” She likes to help out and is learning to manage her impulses.

Aya Needs

Lots of encouragement for trying new things and the efforts she makes. She needs assurance that both parents love her. She may benefit from rehearsing transitions.



Pre-Schoolers (3 - 5yrs)

Potential Problems

Aya may be more anxious and fearful than usual. Her reaction to conflict is strong and she may feel responsible for the separation. She may also resist going to visit the other parent.

Time with Parents

Pre-Schoolers benefit when the length of separation time from either parent is minimized.

Gradually increase time to the point where children may be okay with split weeks.



Pre-Schoolers (3 - 5yrs)



School Age (6 - 8yrs)

Meet Chloe.

Chloe has always been cautious but now is making more friends at school. She likes birthday parties and visiting her cousins. Her favorite special time with dad is when they go walking in the woods.



School Age (6 - 8yrs)

Chloe's *Development*

Chloe is getting better at regulating herself. Her self-esteem is growing as she spends time with peers, at school and trying new activities.

Chloe *Needs*

She needs to be involved with both parents as much as possible, while still making time for friends and new activities, like her dance class. She needs to be reassured that she will be loved and cared for.



School Age (6 - 8yrs)

Potential Problems

Chloe may be very emotional at times. She may cry or become angry at school and at home. She may sometimes be sad and withdraw from regular activities. She may also resist going to visit the other parent.

Time with Parents

Chloe can be okay with alternating weeks as long as she has regular communication when she is missing the other parent. She may be okay with one full month away during summer holidays.



Meet Sarah.

Sarah loves spending time with her large extended family. Her culture and community are very important to her. She is outgoing with family and friends but can sometimes be quiet and serious.

School Age / Pre-Teens (9 - 12yrs)



Sara's *Development*

Like other School Age / Pre-Teens (9 - 12yrs) Sarah is becoming more confident and competent socially, in her school work and extracurricular activities.

Sara *Needs*

Like all children, Sarah needs basic information about her family situation that is appropriate to her age. She may want input into time with parents - she can have her say, but not her way.

School Age / Pre-Teens (9 - 12yrs)



Potential Problems

Sarah may be idealistic and judgmental. She may blame one parent. Her confusion & distress may be reflected at school. She may become one parent's friend or confidante. This is very unhealthy for Sarah.

Time with Parents

Sarah can be okay with up to 2 weeks per household. She also needs continued access to school, friends and extended family.

School Age / Pre-Teens (9 - 12yrs)



Teenagers

Meet Emily & Liam.

As brother and sister, Emily & Liam have always been close, but now spend more time with friends and other activities.

Emily & her mother like sports, while Liam sometimes clashes with his father about the amount of time he spends playing video games

Emily & Liam.

Development

Like other teenagers, they are establishing a sense of self & separate identity from their family

Needs

Emily & Liam need more freedom and choice. They need continued support & love from parents - even though they may seem to prefer peers



Teenagers

Emily & Liam.



Teenagers

Potential Problems

Power struggles, mood swings & unpredictable behavior may be a problem. They may experiment with alcohol/drugs and be untrusting in relationships

Time with Parents

They want input & flexibility in their time with parents. They like easy access to peers and activities, but also need encouragement to spend time with each parent

Typical Reactions of Children

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- ▶ Transition Problems
- ▶ Testing Behaviour
- ▶ Parental Competition
- ▶ Rules & Limits



Children Need to:

- ▶ Express feelings of anger, hurt, & sadness
- ▶ Be free of self-blame
- ▶ Be given lots of understanding & time to adjust
- ▶ Not be put in the middle & know parents love them
- ▶ Communicate with both parents

Positive Parenting Is

- Respect & Dignity
- Trust
- Support
- Reasonable limits
- Non-threatening behavior



Positive Parenting *Is Not*

- Threats
- Using & Controlling
- Isolating
- Blaming them or the other parent
- Ignoring their needs
- Ignoring your own needs



Positive Parenting

CHILDREN FEEL

SUPPORTED WHEN..

- ▶ Parents give basic information without blaming the other parent
- ▶ Parents reassure them it's not their fault
- ▶ Parents keep promises & maintain relationships
- ▶ Parents don't communicate through the children

STRESSED WHEN..

- Parents don't tell them anything about the family changes
- Parents make them take sides
- Parents lose touch with them or use them as a way to hurt the other parent
- Parents use children as messengers or spys

Positive Parenting

CHILDREN FEEL

SUPPORTED WHEN..

- ▶ Parents take care of their own emotional needs
- ▶ Parents are available to listen
- ▶ Parents are positive & consistent in their own approach to parenting

STRESSED WHEN..

- Parents are very sad or angry for a long time
- Parents criticize the other parent / step-parent / family
- Parents use them to control the other parent's behaviour

Options / Alternatives to Court

- ▶ Going to court is sometimes necessary
- ▶ However, court can be extremely stressful & expensive
- ▶ The judge may make decisions you did not expect or hope for
- ▶ There are other options that give you more control and can cost less



Options / Alternatives to Court

“Alternative Dispute Resolution” – ADR

Topics covered in this section:

- ▶ On Your Own
- ▶ Help from a Mediator
- ▶ Help from a Lawyer
- ▶ Collaborative Law





On Your Own Agreements

Community Legal
Information - PEI
legalinfopei.ca
902-892-0853
1-800-240-9798

- ▶ RESOURCES TO HELP
- ▶ Parenting Plan Guides
- ▶ Info – Online, In-Person, Phone, Brochures & Docs
- ▶ DIY Uncontested Divorce Kit
- ▶ Lawyer Referral Service



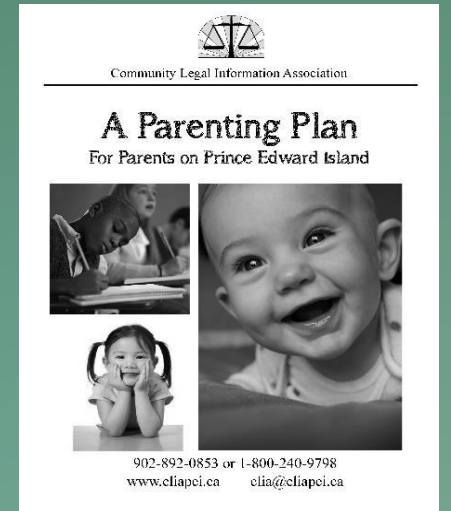
On Your Own Agreements

ANOTHER RESOURCE

- ▶ Charlottetown Courthouse
Clinic – by appointment 902-
368-6000

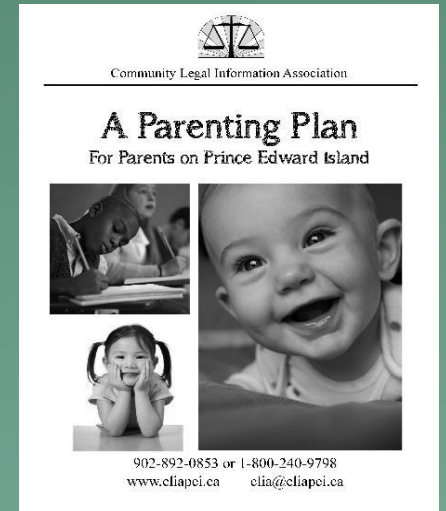
What is a Parenting Plan?

- ▶ A Parenting Plan is an agreement between parents on how they will raise their children from two homes
- ▶ A guide to help parents work through the details
- ▶ The best interests of the child guide all Parenting Plans. It can include:
 - ▶ Residential Schedule
 - ▶ Decision-Making Authority
 - ▶ Dispute Resolution



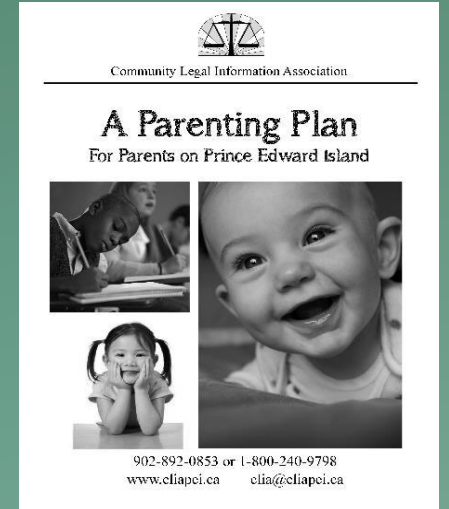
Why Do the Work of Creating a Parenting Plan?

- ▶ Maintains children's emotional stability
- ▶ Agreements are in writing – can reduce disagreements & conflict
- ▶ Facilitates both parents staying involved
- ▶ Clarifies roles & responsibilities
- ▶ Focus is on the children



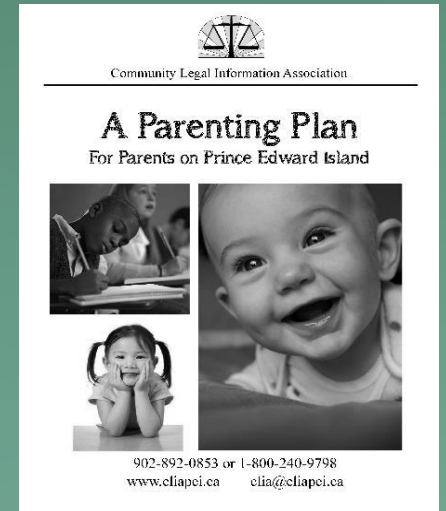
Residential Schedule

- ▶ Specifies when and how long the child will be with each parent
- ▶ Includes holidays and special occasions



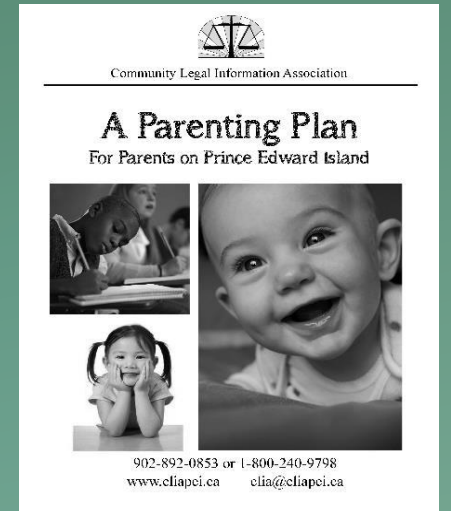
Decision-Making Authority

- ▶ The plan specifies who can make decisions affecting the child
- ▶ The major areas are education, religion, health care, extra-curricular activities
- ▶ One or both parents may be involved in different situations or areas



Dispute Resolution

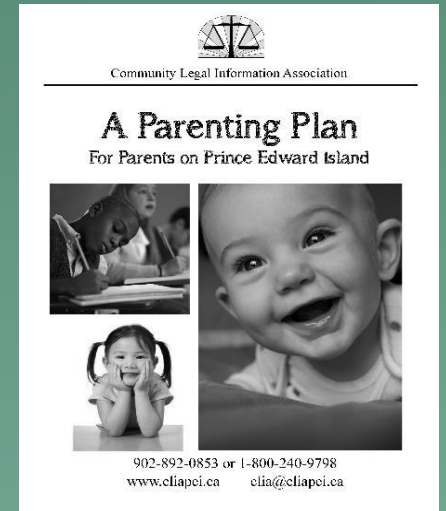
- ▶ Dispute resolution can include a specific process to follow in the event of disagreement
- ▶ e.g. return to a mediator, lawyer, Collaborative Law or other third party for help



Factors to Consider ...

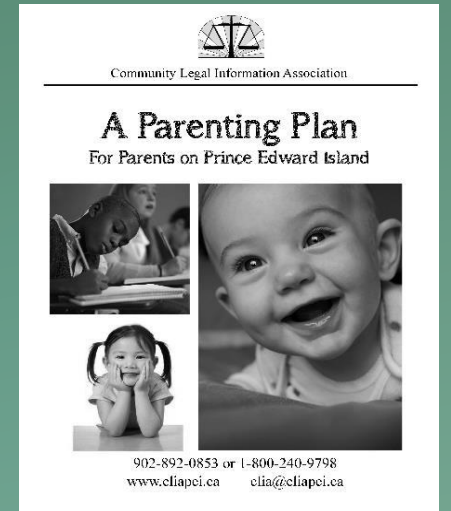
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- ▶ What's already working?
- ▶ Who has performed what role in the past? e.g. dentist, sports, etc.
- ▶ Child's relationship with siblings, friends, and relatives
- ▶ Child's environment
- ▶ Child's wishes – age appropriate
- ▶ Get legal advice after agreement is reached



Good Will & Mutual Goal

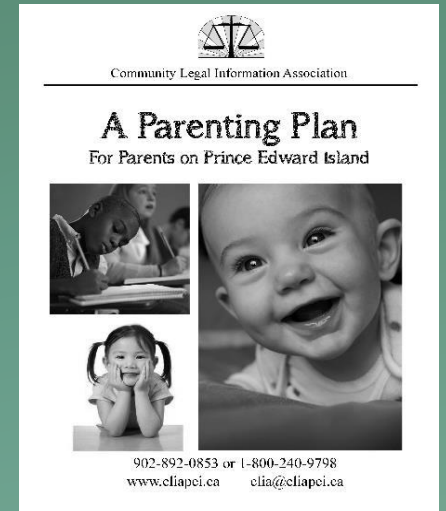
- ▶ Meet at a neutral / public place
- ▶ Make & keep appointments
- ▶ Stick to the agenda
- ▶ Be polite & respectful
- ▶ Don't make assumptions
- ▶ No harm is intended
- ▶ Communication is clear
- ▶ Decisions are made & written down
- ▶ Agreements are kept



On Your Own agreements may not be appropriate when ...

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- ▶ There are safety issues for children or parents
- ▶ There are false allegations of child abuse
- ▶ One parent uses the plan to control or manipulate the other parent
- ▶ One parent has been absent for a long time





Help from a Mediator

Mediation is when a neutral professional helps parents make decisions together

▶ BENEFITS

- ▶ Avoid court & save money
- ▶ Reach agreement on some or all issues
- ▶ Decisions are in the hands of parents – not the judge
- ▶ Parents solve problems - *parents & kids win*
- ▶ Improve communication between co-parents
- ▶ Safe & supportive environment to discuss & resolve difficult issues.
- ▶ Get legal advice after agreement is reached



Find a Mediator on PEI

*There is one public
mediator on PEI and
many private
mediators*

▶ PUBLIC MEDIATOR

- ▶ No cost
- ▶ Deals with parenting arrangements only, not financial issues
- ▶ Contact: 902-368-6928 or 902-368-6655

▶ PRIVATE MEDIATORS

- ▶ Cost - Discuss with your potential mediator
- ▶ May deal with parenting arrangements, financial issues or both
- ▶ See your CLIA package or contact CLIA for a list of private mediators



Collaborative Family Law

Collaborative Practice PEI

www.cppei.ca

- ▶ Out-of-court settlement process
- ▶ Strives to preserve the emotional & financial resources of families
- ▶ Involves the two parties & their collaborative lawyers
- ▶ Contract is signed that the parties will not go to court
- ▶ This provides extra motivation to avoid court
- ▶ If agreement is not reached the parties must then hire new lawyers

Remember

Alternatives to Court



- ▶ Going to court is sometimes necessary
- ▶ However, there are alternatives
- ▶ They may take a lot of patience & work
- ▶ Can be more effective & cost much less

On the index cards ...

▶ Please complete the following statements:

- *“After this session, I feel ...”*

- *“A question I have is ...”*

Positive Parenting From Two Homes

Session 2



REVIEW



Purpose of the Program

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- Isolating
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- Ignoring their needs
- Ignoring your own needs



Family Violence

- ▶ *What is it?*
 - ▶ An abuse of power within relationships of intimacy, trust and dependency
- ▶ *Why is it important to know about?*
 - ▶ Family Violence is a widespread problem in our communities. Even if you are not directly impacted, you may know someone who is

Family Violence

- ▶ Includes many forms of abusive behavior:
 - ▶ Threats, name-calling, put downs
 - ▶ Emotional / Psychological abuse
 - ▶ Physical Abuse
 - ▶ Neglect
 - ▶ Isolating
 - ▶ Financial exploitation
 - ▶ Destruction of property
 - ▶ Injury to pets
 - ▶ Sexual Assault
 - ▶ Homicide

Family Violence may be:

- ▶ A single act of violence (possibly related to separation)
- ▶ A number of acts of violence that happen during high stress and conflict situations
- ▶ Ongoing violence that forms a pattern of abuse
- ▶ Family violence can have serious consequences for victims & for those who see or hear the violence

Family Violence

- ▶ Whether you used abusive behavior or you are the person who was abused, you risk carrying the pattern into another relationship
- ▶ Learn how to live without violence for your own well being *and* your child's
- ▶ If any form of abusive behavior has been a part of your relationship or family, get help to break the cycle

Family Violence

- ▶ In some families it may not be possible to resolve the problems between the parents alone
- ▶ Sometimes a third party is needed to make sure the children are safe and the abuser gets help
- ▶ There are community resources that can help - see the *Family Violence Resource Guide* in your CLIA packages

Childhood Exposure to Family Violence is:

- ▶ Seeing & Hearing
- ▶ Observing the aftermath of violence in the home, and living in fear
- ▶ A child's well-being is damaged by an unhealthy environment of fear, anxiety, anger & tension

Witnessing Violence can affect a Child's:

- ▶ Trust in adults to keep them safe
- ▶ Ability to learn & social, emotional & cognitive development
- ▶ Ability to manage their feelings & behaviour
- ▶ Self-esteem

Children Exposed to Family Violence – Ages & Stages

Prenatal to Infants/Toddlers

- ▶ 40% of violence begins during pregnancy
- ▶ Can affect brain development & predispose individuals to more impulsive, reactive, & violent behavior



Family Violence – Ages & Stages

Toddlers to Preschoolers

- ▶ May become very distressed
- ▶ May imitate abusive behavior by lashing out at playmates & siblings
- ▶ May be extra clingy, disruptive, & difficult to manage



Family Violence – Ages & Stages

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School Age

- ▶ Often show their distress with aggressive and/or withdrawn behavior
- ▶ May be labeled as ADHD without being asked about what they may be witnessing at home
- ▶ Often try to intervene and help protect the parent being abused
- ▶ Often have difficulties with friends/peers



Family Violence – Ages & Stages

School Age

- ▶ Often have low self-esteem & feel insecure, angry, scared & afraid
- ▶ May begin to imitate disrespectful, defiant & abusive behavior in others
- ▶ Often have difficulty focusing at school



Family Violence – Ages & Stages

Adolescents

- ▶ May have poor attendance at school, drop out, run away from home
- ▶ May become involved in criminal activity
- ▶ May try to escape through drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, and/or pregnancy



Family Violence – Ages & Stages

Adolescents

- ▶ Depression & suicide are common
- ▶ Often become involved with a negative peer group
- ▶ Often unable to focus on future plans along with an avoidance style of coping



Family Violence – What Children Need 1

- ▶ For adults to understand there is *always* a reason for their behavior – children act out their feelings
- ▶ To know the fighting is not their fault
- ▶ To be given permission to talk about the fighting
- ▶ To know it is not their responsibility to protect adults

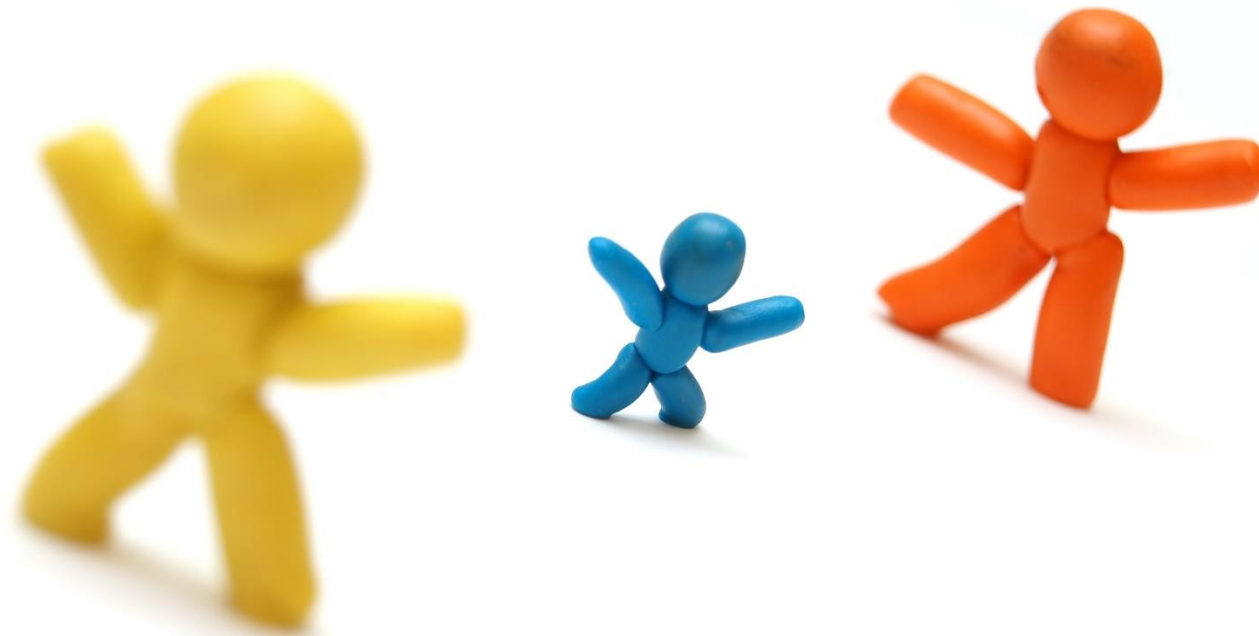


Family Violence – What Children Need 2

- ▶ To know it is not safe for them to try to stop adults fighting
- ▶ To be told it is okay to love the parent who is abusive, but not what the person does
- ▶ To be reassured that the parent will be there to listen to them



Co-Parenting





”

Don't make your child the rope in your tug of war

Anonymous

3 Types of Co-Parenting



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▶ *HIGH CONFLICT PARENTING*

- Poor Communication, Ongoing Conflict, One/both still Emotionally Involved

▶ *PARALLEL PARENTING*

- Low or No Communication, Low or No Conflict, Emotionally and Physically Disengaged from other parent

▶ *BUSINESS-LIKE or COOPERATIVE PARENTING*

- Cooperation, Flexibility, Very Low or No Conflict

If Conflicted, 1st Step is move to Parallel

Source: adapted from Fidler 2016

High Conflict Parenting is

- Arguing, yelling, name-calling & possibly physical violence, often in front of children. Also through text, email, etc.
- A form of Family Violence
- Severely damaging to children
- Pickups / drop-offs are often the setting

Reducing Conflict 1

- ▶ Keep drop-off / pick-up times short
- ▶ If possible, exchange few or no words with the co-parent
- ▶ Do not engage yelling or shouting
- ▶ Walk away, or say I would like to talk about this later
- ▶ Bite your tongue, take the high road
- ▶ If talking is necessary, only share information about the child

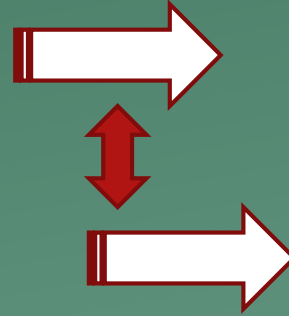
Reducing Conflict 2

- ▶ If child is old enough e.g. make a plan to walk up the driveway themselves, wave back at you to confirm the other parent is there
- ▶ When communicating through technology, be polite, respectful & don't use or respond to inflammatory language
- ▶ Get third-party help e.g. cool-headed family/friend
- ▶ Supervised Access and Exchange program

Children's Lawyer

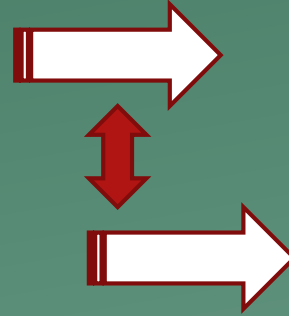
- ▶ Acts as a legal representative for individual children in custody & access cases
- ▶ Goal is to protect & advocate for the best interests of children whose parents are in conflict about custody & access
- ▶ Fairly new, role still evolving, 902-368-4631 for more info

Parallel Parenting 1



- ▶ Parents stay separate & disengaged, children go back & forth
- ▶ A firm schedule & decision making process is in place
- ▶ No changes to the schedule are made without mutual and/or written agreement

Parallel Parenting 2



- ▶ No personal information is shared with the other parent in any form, e.g. reasons for a change (unlike *Business-Like co-parenting* where this may happen)
- ▶ 3rd party help may be necessary e.g. family, friend, online/app, Supervised Access & Exchange program
- ▶ Not a legal or court term on PEI

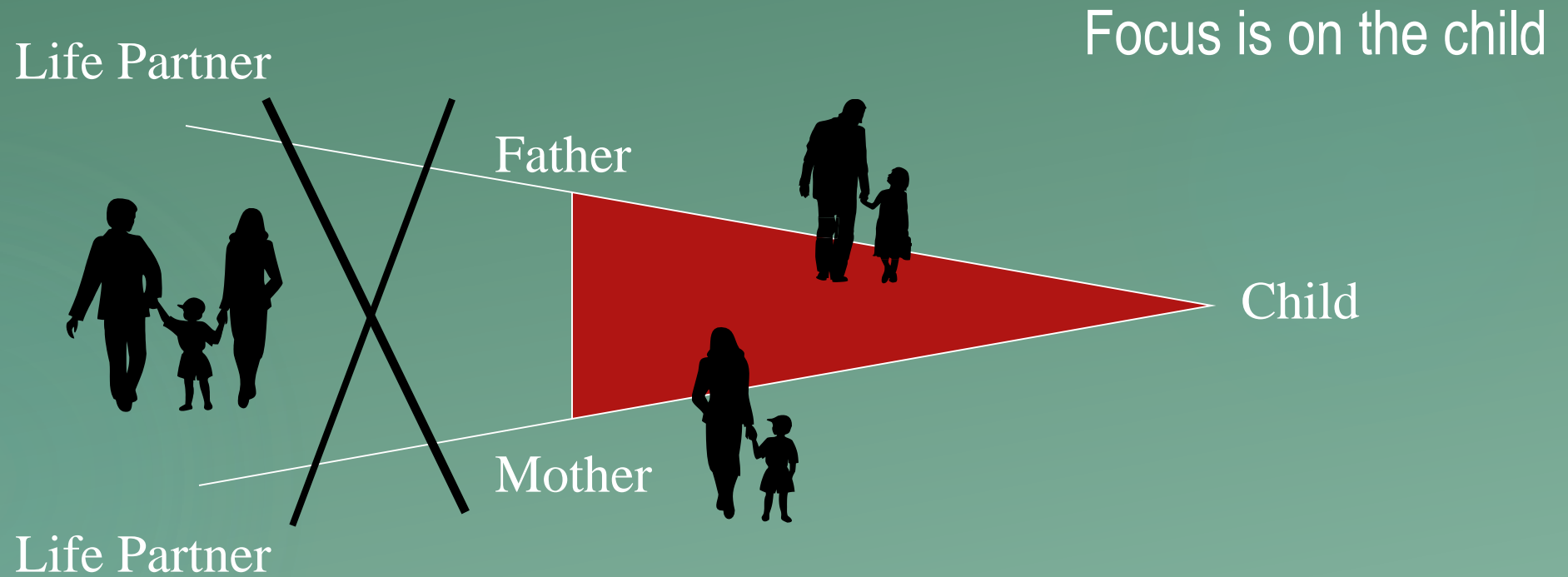
For more info on Parallel Parenting
& Hi-Conflict Co-Parenting see the
online article:

The Reasonable Parent's Dilemma
by Bill Eddy

www.highconflictinstitute.com

www.highconflictinstitute.com/free-articles/2018/3/7/the-reasonable-parents-dilemma

A Business-Like Relationship



Couples Once – Parents Forever

Communication Tips 1

Keep Your Focus

- ▶ Be brief, to the point, and stay focused on your child
- ▶ Stay focused on present or future events. Don't bring up the past
- ▶ Be positive & use a business-like tone
- ▶ Remember the reason for your communication – your child's needs

Communication Tips 2

Keep Your Cool

- ▶ Don't jump to conclusions or over-react
- ▶ Don't criticize, blame, or accuse
- ▶ Be polite & respectful
- ▶ Make suggestions or requests, not demands
- ▶ Use respectful words e.g. *please* & *thank you*

Remember 1



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- ▶ Reduce & Eliminate conflict with your co-parent, their family members, partners or anyone else
- ▶ The greater the conflict, the more harm to children
- ▶ By respecting your co-parent you are respecting your child & your child's well-being
- ▶ Children so easily get caught in the middle - you can stop it

Remember 2



- ▶ Be Business-Like in your own conduct
- ▶ Shift your relationship to Positive Co-Parenting
- ▶ Your children need both of you in their lives

Wrap Up

Children's Program



Children's Program

Positive Parenting from Two Homes: **For Kids!**

- ▶ Takes Place in Schools, at the School's Request
- ▶ 5 Sessions, 45 Minutes - 1 Hour
- ▶ Games, Activities, Videos, Discussion

Children's Program

- ▶ Guidance Counselor / School Staff Participates
- ▶ Not Group Therapy – Mental Health & Wellness Education
- ▶ Grades 1 - 3, 4 - 6, 7 – 9
- ▶ Siblings take separately

Children's Topics Include :

- ▶ Different Kinds Of Families
- ▶ Family Changes & Feelings
- ▶ Positive Ways to Handle Difficult Feelings
- ▶ Communication Tools

Children's Program

*Positive Parenting from Two Homes: **For Kids!***

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Key Messages

It's Not Your Fault

You're Not Alone

*It's Not Your Job to Fix Grown-Up
Problems*

To Register:

Contact Your School Guidance Counselor

