

## Lesson #6: Guidelines for Moving Away From Intimacy in two parts

Divorced Fathers Network  
Advocates Of Shared Parenting  
'Because Children Love Both Their Parents'

### Moving Away From Intimacy, Part I

**First Step:** tell yourself this is a businesslike relationship. It can be characterized in many ways: two parents who are in the business of raising their children; partners in parenting; having a good working relationship with the other parent. Understand that divorce, separation and rebuilding can often feel unfair. Many think that their feelings of anger (or dislike, bitterness, etc.) are so intense; they will not be able to conduct a business relationship with the other parent. It can be helpful to remember that attempting to seek justice or emotional satisfaction might feel natural, but will hinder the process of moving away from intimacy. Self control, patience, and a focus on the children can all help to get you through these moments, and onto the business of raising kids.

**BIG IMPORTANT REMINDER:** The better you do at creating a business relationship with the other parent, the better your children do. One or both parents can begin to move away from intimacy, whether positive or negative intimacy. If one parent starts the process, and the move is away from positive intimacy, the other parent may feel hurt and rejected. It can help to be understanding, but firm about the shift needing to happen. If the move is away from negative intimacy, it's often a matter of deciding not to do battle, which means refusing to be drawn into battle and trying to avoid sparking one.

*Here are some questions you can ask yourself to determine where you are in the move away from intimacy:*

1. Do you often refer to the other parent as "my wife" or "my husband"?
  2. How often do you mention the other parent, positively or negatively, to other people?
  3. Do you ask your former partner or others about him/her?
  4. Do you depend on the other parent to support your needs in your new life?
  5. How often do you think about the other parent?
  6. Are there currently major problems stemming from unresolved issues?
  7. Are you two currently involved in any legal action with one another?
  8. Do either of you have a key to the other's home?
  9. Are either of you storing possessions in the other's home?
  10. Do you keep memorabilia of the other parent in a prominent place (home or office)?
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## **Moving Away From Intimacy, Part II**

1. Change your vocabulary (as discussed in Lesson #21).
2. Begin to think of your relationship with the other parent as a business relationship.
3. Help yourself to privacy, people may ask you questions about the other parent. Respect that parent's privacy when speaking with other people. Do not discuss your sex life with the other parent, or ask them about theirs.
4. Treat your time with your children as valuable "together time," and not as baby-sitting.
5. Display common courtesy and respect to the other parent. Avoid rudeness, sarcasm and threats.
6. Act like a guest in the other parent's home. This means waiting to be invited in, asking every time to use the restroom, etc. This is good for building respect with the other parent, and the children will see the respect you have for him/her, even if their instinct is to invite you in.
7. Don't expect support, approval, appreciation or praise from the other parent. Look to your friends, family, and support groups for this type of reinforcement.
8. Be explicit with the other parent, and very detailed with agreements and arrangements.
9. Expect that this new relationship might feel strange or awkward at first. There is often a mismatch between your actions and your feelings during this stage, which is completely normal.
10. Keep up your effort, and refuse to give up. It will come to you, and quite possibly the other parent, if you keep practicing good habits. If a conversation doesn't go well, remember that you have the option to end it and reschedule for another time.

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