

Lesson # 8: Creating Two Homes for Your Children

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

There can be two homes for your children

1. Children need a sense of belonging in each home. One sign this has occurred can be that a suitcase is no longer needed to go between homes. Making sure the children have the following can be helpful: a private space to call their own (not necessarily their own room), toiletries, a few changes of clothes, and a sense of trust that their things will not be disturbed in their absence. There may still be some items that the children wish to transfer back and forth between homes.
2. Laying the groundwork together in the new neighborhood can be important, both for safety and the children's reassurance. This means roaming around the new neighborhood together, getting familiar with the surroundings, meeting neighbors and potential playmates. Staking out the busy streets, and setting boundaries for where the children are allowed to be without adult supervision. Children gain a sense of security through this process. It shows the children and the new neighbors that you are a caring parent.
3. Establishing a sense of order in the new home is helpful during this time of transition. Children need to know what to expect in terms of meal preparation, homework, housework, buying groceries, how they'll get to and from school, etc. Developing a sensible routine can help calm fears and add stability.
4. You will need to establish a set of house rules, and develop your own parenting style. The house rules can reflect your expectations, as well as the children's. Keep in mind that children can see limits as a reflection of their parents' stability and as a sign of care for their well-being. You can use this opportunity to provide leadership, and possibly have a family meeting that promotes the health, safety and privacy of everyone.
5. The more House Rules you have in common with the other home, the less confusing it is for the kids and more supportive it is for the parents. If possible, try to have the same bedtimes, curfews, etc.
6. Try to eat meals together, and turn off the TV, This is a time for family members to be acknowledged, listened to, to listen to others, and to talk together.
7. Establish safety rules. Have a list of emergency phone numbers posted. Establish fire escape routes and natural disaster protocols.

8. Take the opportunity to turn housework into family work. Cleaning, grocery shopping, dishes, and meal preparation are all examples of things that can be done as family activities. "Children's family work can help prepare them for life as independent adults. Completing tasks helps remind children that they belong, that they are functioning family members, trusted, appreciated, and needed to keep the household running."

Taken from "Mom's House, Dad's House" by Isolina Ricci1982, 1997.

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