

Lesson #23: *Standards of Conduct For a Working Relationship (Overview)**

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

Standards of Conduct:

1. Maintain your territory, independence and autonomy. The households are separate, and should be regarded and respected as such. Maintain your own boundaries, and remember that you cannot dictate what happens at the other home.
2. Make your children more important than your territorial rights or your independence. Expressing your new-found independence in terms of parenting philosophies can be damaging to the children if it causes too many changes too soon. Children need routine to help them with the transition, and don't typically do well with big differences in routines and parenting philosophies.
3. Respect the other parent's time with the children. Do not make plans for the children during a time they're scheduled to be with the other parent, without consulting the other parent first. For instance, do not say "Guess what? I know you're supposed to be with mom this weekend, but I can take you to Disneyland if you want to go," thereby putting the other parent and the children in a difficult situation. This also means not scheduling activities for the children during their time with the other parent without consulting that parent first. If your child is scheduled to be with the other parent this weekend, and asks if he/she can spend the night at a friend's house this weekend, tell the child it needs to be discussed with the other parent first.
4. Interfere if you child needs your protection. Try to learn the difference between inexperienced parenting and neglect/abuse. Interfere if there is neglect or abuse occurring, as it is your duty as a parent to protect your child's health and safety. If your child is in danger, act immediately, and do so by using outside help (police, CPS, doctor, hotline or therapist). Emotional neglect can be different. Talk with the other parent, with a possible goal being finding out if the other parent will participate with you and/or the child in family counseling.
5. Respect the other person's parenting style. All parents can use improvement and further education in parenting, but you cannot appoint yourself as "teacher" for the other person's parenting style and techniques.
6. Follow good communication guidelines. Check your own communication style. Direct or indirect? Direct communication is more effective and appropriate. Check the characteristics of the responses you get from the other parent, and use that information to improve your communication skills. Review your communications, past and present. We will go into greater detail on this point in a later lesson.
7. Use basic business principles when relating to one another. Doing business with people isn't always easy, but we can take pride in doing so under difficult circumstances. We will spend a couple meetings going over this area within the next few weeks, as it's an important and involved topic in itself.

* from "Mom's House, Dad's House" by Isolina Ricci 1980, 1997

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