BIRTH THROUGH THREE

A Guide for Parents Creating Parenting Plans For Young Children

Prepared by Multnomah County
Family Court Services

In collaboration with the Parental Involvement & Outreach Subcommittee of the Oregon Statewide Family Law Advisory Committee

September 2017

The Developers

Family Court Services

Family Court Services is a social service agency under the Department of Community Justice. Family Court Services provides assistance to Multnomah County Oregon parents going through divorce or separation. ***Our Mission*** is to help children by helping parents reduce conflict related to separation and divorce. Our services include:

- assistance with creating parenting plans
- mediation for parents that disagree about schedules for children
- court ordered custody evaluations
- supervised visitation services for families with a history of domestic violence
- parent education classes for parents with custody and parenting time issues before the court
- help for parents that are having difficulty seeing their children and do not have a court order

The Parental Involvement & Outreach Subcommittee of the State Family Law Advisory Committee (SFLAC) of Oregon

The Parental Involvement & Outreach Subcommittee of the SFLAC is a multidisciplinary group comprised of family law judges, child custody mediators & evaluators, parent educators, and family law attorneys convened by the SFLAC to examine information and resources that support the meaningful and safe involvement of parents in the lives of their children after divorce or separation.

Special thanks goes to Tracy Vogeltanz for compiling, organizing, and editing much of the contents of the Birth Through Three Guide.

Foreword

We Honor All Parents & Families

What parents and families look like is diverse. Children are being raised and doing well in homes headed by opposite-sex parents, same-sex parents, grandparents, parents who are living apart and co-parenting, and parents who are parenting alone. Wherever possible, we are committed to using inclusive language that respects all parents.

We Recognize Solo Parents

We know that many separated, divorced, and single parents are parenting without the help or involvement of the other parent. We refer to this as ***solo parenting*** rather than single parenting, because many single parents still have a co-parent who is helping to raise their child. While some sections of this handbook focus on things that co-parents should consider, we hope that much of the material will be helpful to solo parents as well.

We Focus on Strengths and Resiliency

One of the most important research findings on families dealing with divorce and separation is that the majority of children are able to bounce back after family change. There are many things parents can do to help children do well during and after divorce or separation.

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Introduction

Why have a special handbook focused on children age birth to three?

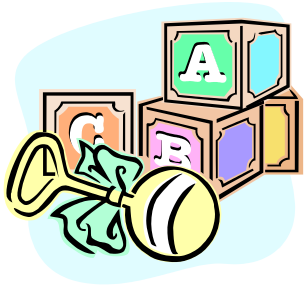
The first three years of a child's life are critical for their future health, happiness and growth. During these years, a child is learning much more than how to walk, talk and follow directions. Her brain is actually growing in very important ways that will help her deal with stress, learn, be healthy, and have close relationships with others in the future.

Parents ending their relationship during this time in their child's life face difficult choices about what schedule will work best for their child. It is hard to balance the needs of a young child with each parent's wish to have as much time as possible.

Experts on children have spent a lot of time studying young children whose parents are not together. They have tried to identify what are the best plans and schedules for young children in these situations. Sometimes the experts do not agree, and this can be confusing.

The good news is that experts do agree on some important things. Young children need:

- safe, predictable care from a warm, responsive adult(s)
- frequent and meaningful contact with two safe parents
- protection from tension, conflict, and violence
- comfort from an attachment figure when they are upset
- schedules that change when their needs change



How can this handbook help me and my child?

This handbook will help parents of young children who are divorcing, separating or never lived together make informed decisions about parenting time schedules.

- We will talk about **attachment** and the importance of each parent in a child's life.
- We will look at overnights for young children and things to think about when deciding on overnights.
- We will explore signs of distress in young children and the difference between normal and concerning responses to stress.
- We share sample plans and resources so that you have a place to start.

This handbook often talks about research. You may notice that sometimes the research finds different answers to the same questions. There are many reasons for this. Mostly it shows that there is **no one size fits all** plan that will meet the needs of every child.

Keep in Mind: *This handbook gives a broad overview of things to think about in developing your plan. It may not describe a plan that meets the specific needs of your child. You should always talk with your child's doctor or a child therapist if you have questions about the special needs of your child. In addition, you should ask an attorney if you have questions about how this information might affect your legal case.*

Attachment

The bond a child makes with a primary attachment figure is the building block for nearly all other important steps in growing up.

What is attachment?

A baby cannot survive without someone to provide food, safety, and affection. Because of this, human babies are born with a very strong need to bond with a caregiver. ***Attachment*** is the word used to describe the deep and lasting emotional bond between a child and at least one caregiver. In their first year, children develop a strong ***attachment bond*** with the person they first experience as consistent, safe, and comforting. This is usually a parent or a person who takes care of them most of the time.

Babies can have a strong attachment to more than one person, but they usually prefer one attachment figure over another at different points in their lives. In this hand book we sometimes call this person a ***primary attachment figure.***

Why attachment is important…

The bond a child makes with their first attachment figure is the building block for nearly all other important steps in growing up. Early brain development depends on secure attachment. Baby brains double in volume between birth and 12 months. During this time, the back-and-forth interactions between a baby and attachment figures are key. These interactions stimulate many parts of the developing baby's brain.

Secure attachment helps a child feel trust and self-confidence. It helps them be ready to learn and to connect with others. It helps them understand their feelings. Secure attachment makes for ***resilient*** children who are able to "bounce back" after tough situations, recover from hurt feelings, and take on new challenges.

Research tells us that securely attached children are better able to:

- trust and feel close to others
- handle difficult feelings
- feel good about themselves
- care about other people's feelings
- learn and do well in school
- be curious and creative
- be flexible, problem-solve and adjust to new situations
- think before acting on impulse
- be more independent
- have better social skills

How does a parent create secure attachment?

Secure attachment happens when a parent ***consistently and predictably*** provides warm, responsive care to their child, *especially* when the child is excited or upset. Secure attachment comes from the give-and-take between the child and the parent. The child sends a signal for attention, like crying or smiling. The parent reads the signal right and responds in a way that gives the child what she needs.

Responsive behaviors that help form secure attachment include feeding, holding, smiling, cuddling, comforting, soothing, bathing, and other care giving behaviors. Children with secure attachments know they can depend on the attachment figure to help when they are upset and be happy with them when they are excited.

What does secure attachment look like in babies?

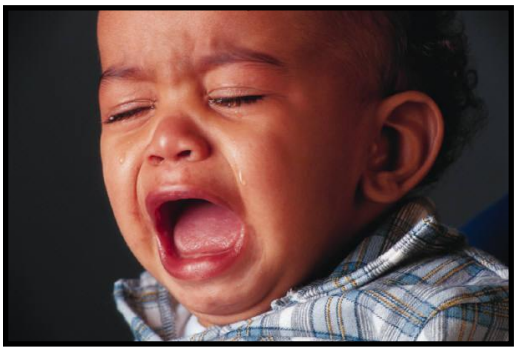
Around the age of eight months, a securely attached infant starts to get upset when their attachment figure is out of sight. This response is called ***separation anxiety***. Separation anxiety at this time in life is ***normal***. Also, a securely attached infant is happy and can accept comforting from the attachment figure when they return from being separated. In other words, an infant with a secure attachment has a strong enough bond that they are upset when the attachment figure leaves. And they have enough ***trust***, that they can relax and be comforted when the attachment figure comes back.

Care giving behaviors help infants form secure attachments.

Securely attached children can be comforted by other people they feel close to, but they usually prefer to be comforted by their ***secure attachment figure***.

Trust = Emotional Regulation…

Each time a baby gets upset and is comforted by the attachment figure, he has the experience of calming down. As this happens over and over again, he starts to learn the ability to calm himself and handle his own negative feelings. ***Emotional regulation*** is a term for this ability and it is very important. Emotional regulation allows a child to understand and accept his own feelings, use healthy ways to handle them, and keep going even under stress. Emotional regulation leads to good mental and emotional health later in life.



What does secure attachment look like in toddlers?

As your child enters the second year of life she becomes more physically and emotionally independent. Parts of the brain involved in talking become active during the second year. Most children have begun to talk and deal with toilet training by the end of the third year. This is a busy and challenging time for children and their parents.

Exploring (getting into everything!) and testing your patience by saying "No!" are some of the ways a toddler tries out his new skills and develops independence. Toddlers have a strong desire to do things "by myself!" At the same time, they still need to feel close to their attachment figure. This creates stress and can lead to strong emotional outbursts. This is why people sometimes call this stage the "terrible twos."

Securely attached toddlers can usually explore their environment with excitement and curiosity. But they also want frequent contact with their attachment figure. The attachment that created ***trust*** in the first year now becomes the ***secure base*** toddlers can rely on while exploring the world and their own feelings and wishes.

Think about how children this age play on their own, want to feed themselves, and so on… But, they still bring every toy to you to look at and want you to hold them when they are tired, hurt, or upset. They also want you to share their joy and excitement about the world around them!

Children can have more than one attachment figure

Attachment develops over the lifespan, from before birth into adulthood. We know that babies bond with a secure attachment figure in the first months of life. Some experts now believe infants can bond with other caregivers as early as two to three months of age.

These other attachments are usually with people who spend a lot of time with the infant and provide warm, responsive care. This is often the other parent. Sometimes it is a grandparent, sibling or other caregiver. These bonds give a child the chance to have positive, loving interactions with others. Infants will show serious grief and upset if they lose contact with a primary attachment figure. But, they also feel grief if they lose contact with other important attachment figures.

The attachment bond that created trust in the first year now becomes the secure base a toddler can rely on while exploring the outside world and their inside feelings and wishes.

Attachment & Parenting Time Schedules

How does attachment factor into decisions about parenting time schedules?

Some of the brain development that happens in the first years of life can **only** happen when a child is very young and his brain is still forming. There seem to be "windows" of time when a young child can learn that are not open later. For example, children who do not hear language spoken during their early years may not be able to learn to talk later.

The child's attachment system is very important during this period of brain growth. Children learn from people they are attached to at two or three times the rate they learn from others. Experts believe that disturbing attachment during the first years may harm children more than future negative events.

For a young child whose parents are separating, there are many possible sources of stress. The child may be separated from her primary attachment figure for periods of time. If those periods happen too often or last too long, it may have a negative effect on secure attachment. During the parents' separation, the child may be exposed to more parental conflict, tension, or in some cases, violence. The child's parents may be stressed and less emotionally available.

There is also the possible loss of contact with the ***nonresidential parent*** (the parent that has less time with the child). Even if the nonresidential parent is not the primary attachment figure, the child will grieve the loss if the bond with that parent is strong**.**

Research shows that the involvement of both parents in a child's life, with the exception of a dangerous or abusive parent, is an important factor for children to thrive. We also know that while primary attachment is a critical developmental process, attachment to the other parent is equally important as children grow older.

There is a lot you can do to protect your child during a separation or divorce…

If your child already has a secure attachment, he is in good shape to tolerate some of the changes that come with divorce and separation. Years of observing parents in separated households show that many things protect infants and young children during the separation process. ***For example***…

- commit to protecting the child's developing attachment system by making sure infants have lots of opportunities and time to connect with their primary attachment figure and regroup emotionally
- work to reduce conflict and tension during transitions
- decide to be flexible in shaping the schedule around the child's needs
- get support so that you are emotionally available to respond to the child
- support and encourage the child's bond with the other parent
- focus on the child's developmental needs rather than what's "fair" to the parents

Keep in Mind: *In cases where there is domestic violence, serious untreated mental illness, or an absent co-parent, these steps are difficult, maybe even impossible to accomplish. Parenting plans may look different. We will talk about some of those scenarios later in this handbook.*

Gender and Parenting

Children almost always do better when they have access to two safe, involved parents. This section looks at some of the benefits of having two parents involved in a child's life.

A lot of research has focused on "moms" and "dads." When we talk about research that looked at just moms or just dads, we use those terms. We otherwise try to use gender-neutral terms wherever possible.

Studies of mothers and fathers looked at large groups of parents. The results are broad statements about male and female parents. Remember that gender is ***not the only factor*** in parenting. Mothers and fathers have unique abilities as individuals. They may or may not fit the patterns described below.

How do mothers and fathers each contribute to a child's development?

Research shows that mothers and fathers interact with their child in somewhat different ways, each of which can help healthy development. Female parents tend to use warm, calming, and soothing behaviors more often. They are often better at reading body language and connecting with the child's emotional state. These ways of connecting increase right brain development in babies. Right brain development is very important for social and emotional relationships. Mother-child attachment seems to have an impact on a child's ability to be close to others and handle anxiety.

Fathers tend to be more physical and stimulating when interacting with young children. They often hold their babies facing out and allow more freedom for them to explore. Male parents often use more practical, educational activities, and use toys in ways that expand a child's world. Fathers' play with children may be a model for self-control that helps children read the emotional cues in others. Attachment to the father also seems to have a positive impact on how toddlers deal with aggressive behavior.

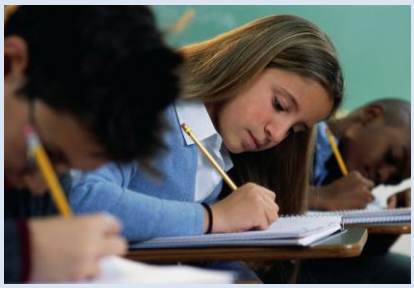
On average one-third of children in separated households lose contact with a parent, usually a dad.

Mothers more often stay physically close to their child while watching over and helping them with tasks. Fathers tend to take a step back and be less anxious about safety, though many will offer reassurance and encouragement. This combination of parenting behaviors helps children develop both independence and sense of safety.

What is the impact of the involvement of a safe, nurturing father?

Few parents going through a separation or divorce decide to cut off contact with the father. Yet on average one-third of children whose parents have separated lose contact with a parent, usually a dad. This is why studies have focused on dads. When safety is not an issue, children with safe, involved fathers are more likely to have:

- ***Higher educational achievement across the lifespan*** – They are ready for school sooner and stay in school longer; overall school performance is better; one study found that children with significant father involvement were 43% more likely than other kids to get mostly A's and one-third less likely to be held back a grade.



Children with involved fathers are more likely to earn "A's"

- ***Better performance in mental skills*** such as language, thinking, and problem-solving.

- ***Higher levels of social/emotional functioning*** – They tend to make stronger, longer-lasting friendships in life and show more ability to care about other people's feelings; girls have higher self-esteem and more belief in their ability to maintain long-term relationships; boys have fewer aggressive behaviors.

- ***Fewer behavioral problems*** – They use drugs and alcohol less; girls are less likely to experience teen pregnancy; boys are less likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.

- ***Greater financial security*** - Involved fathers are more likely to support their children financially and to pay child support on time.

Keep in Mind: *Even less than perfect parents benefit a child's life. However, the risks of harm from a parent that uses violence, has serious drug or alcohol problems, or untreated mental illness may outweigh the benefits of their involvement.*

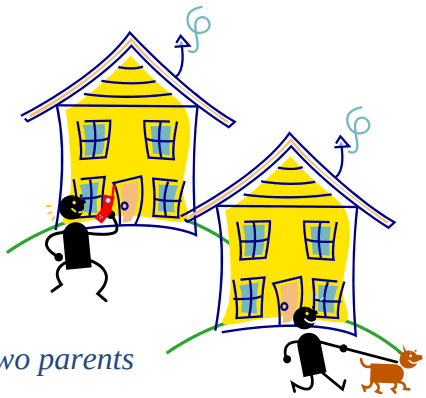
What about other kinds of parenting scenarios?

Studies of the benefits of two-parent involvement have mostly focused on comparing male and female parents. However, many studies have compared children raised by same-sex parents to children raised by opposite-sex parents. ***Overall, the research shows that children raised by warm, caring, same sex parents do as well as children raised by caring opposite sex parents.*** Unfortunately, there is very little research that compares separating/divorcing same-sex parents to separating/divorcing opposite-sex parents. We hope that many of the benefits of having two opposite-sex parents involved in a child's life after separation will also be true for children of same-sex parents that separate or divorce.

There have been many studies of children raised in solo parent homes. These studies often have negative things to say about how children with only one parent do as adults. As experts look closer, they find that some of the "problems" for children raised by a solo parent may be related to the financial difficulties of raising a child alone. In addition, many studies of solo parents included solo parents with other kinds of problems (like addiction or untreated mental illness) that may have a negative effect on children.

Solo parent

Vs.



Two parents

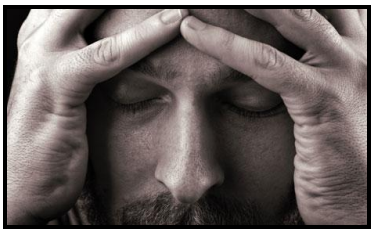
More recently, researchers have taken a fresh approach. They looked at resiliency (protective) factors for children in solo parent homes. They found that ***many children with solo parents are healthy and well adjusted***. These studies show that children who do well in solo parent homes have some of the following:

- positive relationships with other safe adults who support or mentor them
- strong commitment to school involvement and education
- parents with good parenting skills
- secure attachment to the parent that is raising them
- involvement in positive peer and extra-curricular activities
- communities that are safe and free from violence
- parents that have good social support networks

Staying Connected When Your Child Does Not Live with You

Why do some nonresidential parents drop out of a child's life?

We know that parents love their children, so why do some parents "drop out"? Parents report several common reasons for why they drop out…



- ***Feeling guilty or not confident as a parent*** – Fathers ending traditional relationships may feel less confident in childcare roles. They struggle to find ways to take part in the school and social lives of their children. Mothers who leave their children when they end a relationship feel intense guilt. Family and friends may judge them harshly.
- ***Remarrying/re-partnering within the first year*** – It can easily take children a couple of years to adjust to their parents' divorce or separation. They often need a parent's undivided attention during this time. Seventy-five percent (75%) of divorced fathers remarry within 3 years. Those who remarry when children are very young are more likely to lose contact.
- ***Moving more than 75 miles away*** – When a parent lives more than an hour's drive away from their child, logistics and schedules are challenging. Children may not like being uprooted from their neighborhood and friends. Nonresidential parents may feel less connected with the child's everyday lives.
- ***Ongoing conflict with the other parent*** – Over time the emotional and mental stress of constant battle takes a toll. Nonresidential parents may decide children would be better off if they do not come around.
- ***Roadblocks*** – The residential parent or others talk bad about the other parent, move away, or try to limit contact.
- ***Problems in life*** – If the nonresidential parent has untreated addiction or mental illness, or is homeless or in jail, regular contact can be a serious challenge.

What nonresidential parents can do to <u>strengthen attachment…</u>

Nonresidential parents worry about their ability to bond with their child if they have no or few overnights. How often and how valuable the time spent with a child is important, whether or not he spends the night. Remember, infants develop attachments to caregivers who consistently provide safe, calm, nurturing and responsive care.

Parents who regularly use ***responsive behaviors*** with their child will build stronger attachment.

Responsive behaviors include:

- taking care of your child's basic needs – feeding, bathing, changing, dressing
- soothing your child when they are ill or upset – cuddling, holding, rocking
- helping your child get ready for bedtime or naps – reading, teeth-brushing, and other bedtime rituals
- holding and talking to your infant; or engaging in imaginative play with your toddler

It also helps to be sensitive to the residential parent's concerns about being separated from the child. This can be hard to do in the middle of a divorce/separation when trust is low and bad feelings may be high. Ultimately, it is worth the effort. Studies show that when a residential parent trusts the child to be well cared for by the other parent, they are more likely to support the relationship. Trust allows the residential parent to relax and let the child know that it is safe for the child to spend time with the other parent.

Here are some ways to build trust with your co-parent:

- **Take a parenting class** such as "The Incredible Years" to develop better knowledge and skills for the care of a young child.
- **Be open to receiving information from the residential parent** about your child's routines, needs, and likes.
- **Provide the residential parent with information** about how your child did when he was with you, such as feedings, nap times, medications given, or changes in health.
- **Make sure your space is safe for a small child** and allow the other parent to visit and see that it is ready for your child.

What nonresidential parents can do to stay connected…

A first step to staying connected to your child is to develop a respectful working relationship with the other parent. This usually requires that you separate feelings about the other parent from those for your child. Treating the other parent with respect and working out problems together teaches children healthy behaviors. Research shows that when respect for a primary attachment figure is lacking, children are more likely to be anxious, withdrawn or antisocial. If conflict is low and the residential parent feels respected, there are more opportunities for communication, involvement and connection.

Important ways to stay connected to your young child's everyday life, even when they are not with you include:

- attending doctor's appointments
- joining in play-groups or pre-school activities
- dropping off and picking up from daycare/preschool
- offering to help the residential parent whenever possible by providing relief care, transportation to appointments, or other support
- avoiding over-involvement in work or a new relationship
- being dependable – missing scheduled visits sends a message to your child and the other parent that time with your child is not important

Parents who live far away or are otherwise unable to have a lot of in-person contact with their child might consider:

- Scheduling regular phone calls or Skype/Face Time sessions – even speaking a few words to an infant or toddler helps them learn to recognize you. Children this age have a very short attention span. Just because they cannot spend more than 30 seconds on the phone *does not* mean they do not want to connect with you.
- Providing photos for the other parent to share with the child.
- Providing a stuffed animal with a voice chip recording of you saying "I love you," or other short messages.
- Mailing your child cards, letters, videotapes of yourself and other mementos that let them know you are thinking about them. You may think about your child every minute of the day, but your child will not know this unless you show her.

Supporting the Nonresidential Parent's Bond

What residential parents can do to strengthen nonresidential parent involvement…

Residential parents must separate negative feelings about the other parent from their child's to stay connected to that person. Below are some ways that residential parents can support the child's bond with the other parent and at the same time help themselves feel less worried when their child is away from them.

- **Share your knowledge with the parent with less hands-on experience**. Instead of criticizing, "They've never changed a diaper in their life!" try sharing your skills and information about your child's needs and preferences.
- **Encourage frequent contact with the nonresidential parent** to increase your child's security and attachment to them.
- **Treat the other parent with respect**; they are more likely to take your advice if they feel respected.
- **Get support to deal with your fears** about being away from your child.
- **Get information about normal and abnormal child distress** so that you do not over-react to normal distress during transitions.
- **Avoid conflict in front of your child**; conflict makes your child more anxious about transitions.
- **Try not to jump to conclusions about the other parent** based on what your child does or tells you. Check out a concern with the other parent first. You may find there is a normal reason for why a child was upset. Maybe they couldn't have ice cream for breakfast!
- **Include the other parent as a contact** on medical, dental, childcare, and school forms. By law (Oregon Revised Statutes 107.154) both parents have the right to information about their child's school, medical and mental health, and juvenile records *regardless of who has custody*, unless a court orders otherwise.
- **Consider using a notebook to communicate** important information back and forth about your infant or young child's day. *There is a Sample Co-Parent Communication Log included in the back of this handbook.*

Separate negative feelings about the other parent from the need of a child to stay connected to that person.

The Question of Overnights

Why all the fuss about overnights?

Most parents know how important secure attachment is to a child's development. They often worry about separating a child from the attachment figure that has provided the child's primary care.

A child's ***attachment system*** (the need to be close to the attachment figure for safety and comfort) is triggered by threats of danger. Separation from the primary attachment figure or being alone and in the dark, like at bedtime, can be scary for a child. Both of these may happen when a child spends the night away from the residential parent.

If care-giving is not warm and responsive or if the child is not able to reconnect with the primary attachment figure often enough to be comforted, the child may feel more stress. Chronic stress can harm a child's developing brain. Parents must be sensitive to how a child is handling time away from a primary attachment figure.

It is helpful to have stable, calming bedtime routines for children. Sensitive parenting and supportive routines help a child relax, feel safe, maintain attachment, and get the sleep they need to be healthy and happy (instead of grumpy!).

Should infants or children under three have overnights in the other parent's home?

This is a question researchers have spent a lot of time studying. Some experts believe that it is not harmful for infants to have overnights with the nonresidential parent. They believe that overnights can increase the bond to the nonresidential parent, as well as the nonresidential parent's commitment to the child.

Other experts believe that separating an infant from a primary attachment figure for overnights too long or too often may be harmful. They point to findings that infants with frequent (once a week or more) overnights show more distress, and are more irritable and worried about being separated from their primary caregiver than children mostly in the care of one parent.

So what should parents do?

There is no clear, simple, one-size-fits-all answer for parents. At this point, we do not know for certain that overnights have either a negative or positive effect on young children. Instead, parents should think carefully about their situation when deciding about overnights and parenting time for young children.

"Top ten" things to think about when deciding about overnights…

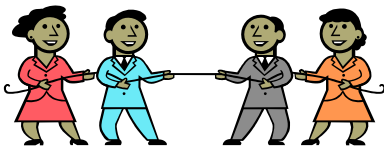
1. ***Who does your child rely on most for comfort?*** Who is your child most likely to go to when upset, hurt, sick, or woken up in the middle of the night? Does your child respond the same or differently to each of you? This is a tough question for parents. Be honest for the sake of your child.

2. ***What were your caretaking behaviors and roles before the separation/divorce?*** What were each of your roles in caring for your child in during the day and at night, things like bathing, diapering, feeding, playing with, and putting a child down to sleep? Did you live together as parents and share in the care of the child?

3. ***What are your skills as parents?*** What are your parenting strengths and weaknesses? What are you or the other parent still learning? How might you help the other parent develop skills to benefit your child? Think about making a schedule that uses the best of each of your skills.

4. ***What is your child like?*** How does your child deal with change and new situations? Some children need more routine and get easily stressed when schedules and surroundings change. Other children are more flexible and adjust to changes more easily. The less flexible child may struggle to adjust to differences in sleeping, eating, bathing and other routines between two homes.

5. ***What is the level of conflict between you and the other parent?*** Some conflict is normal during separation and divorce. However, children exposed to high levels of conflict feel more anxiety before, during and after exchanges. If there is high conflict, the stress can have lasting negative effects on a child. Parents who have conflict need to develop plans that reduce children's exposure. If arguments regularly happen during exchanges, think about ways to have less face-to-face contact, like using a third party or childcare setting for exchanges.



Many parents who have high conflict reduce children's exposure by practicing *parallel parenting* which limits the amount of contact they need to have with the other parent. Each parent does things their way on their time. Parallel parenting is not ideal for consistency, but it is much better than exposing your child to on-going conflict.

6. ***How well do you and the other parent communicate?*** Routine and consistency are important for young children. Your child will do better if you and the

other parent share information about things like bedtimes and meal times, food likes and dislikes, illnesses, toilet training, and new abilities of your child. If your communication with the other parent is not where you would like it to be, think about a notebook that travels back and forth with your child's things. The notebook can share important information and details about your child (see the "Sample Co-Parent Communication Log" in the back of this handbook).

7. ***Does your child have special needs?*** A child with colic, sensory issues, or other medical conditions can quickly sap your physical and emotional strength. If you are both skilled at meeting your child's special needs, it may help to create a plan that gives each of you a chance for a break. Sometimes only one parent has the patience and time needed to care for the child. If that is true in your situation, it is important to build a network of resources and ask for help when you need it.

   Children with special needs may be more affected by going back and forth between two homes or more at risk for attachment disruptions.

8. ***Is there a history of domestic violence?*** Young children that are around domestic violence are at risk of having their development harmed. The fear and stress that exists in a home where there is violence places the child's attachment system in danger. Some studies show that children exposed to domestic violence have more mental health problems than children who experienced other forms of abuse**.** ***In many states, including Oregon, abusing a partner when a child is present is a serious crime.***

   If you and/or your children have experienced domestic violence, safety must be the first priority. ***Safety focused parenting plans*** can help provide safer contact between a parent and a child and reduce the risk of future violence. Safety focused plans include a many options, from safe public exchange locations to professionally supervised parenting time. *More information and resources for parents that have experienced domestic violence is in the resources guide in the back of this handbook.*

9. ***Do you or the other parent have serious problems that affect parenting?*** A parent with untreated addiction, mental illness, or other serious problems with day-to-day functioning is probably not able to respond consistently to the needs of an infant or young child. In addition, a parent with these struggles may be in and out of a child's life, which damages the bond between that parent and child. Just like with domestic violence, safety-focused parenting plan options can apply to these situations.

10. ***How do you think your plan will feel for your child?*** How will your child react to sleeping in two or more homes? Is your child familiar

with both homes? Will your child need some time to get used to the new home? How long will your child have to travel to get back and forth between your homes. How does she handle these trips? What would make your child feel more comfortable and secure?

If you can answer most of these questions in a positive way, your child may be in good shape to have overnights with the nonresidential parent. We will talk more about how to transition young children to overnights away and what to watch for later in this handbook.

When a parent needs more skills or a child has problems or special needs, a parent can build skills and a child can build comfort by spending more frequent time with each other during the day.

Either way, it is important for you and the other parent to notice how your child is doing. Watch for signs of serious distress (see "Signs of Distress" in the next section). Be ready to pull back or slow down if needed, and be careful not to overreact to normal distress.

Remember - There **is no clear, simple, one-size-fits-all parenting plan!**

Signs of Distress

While normal distress is predictable and not harmful to young children, ***consistent or unusually high levels of distress can harm young children's attachment bond, emotional stability, and brain development.*** Some parenting time schedules and/or situations may expose young children to chronic, high levels of stress.

How do I know if my child's distress is normal?

Here are some signs that might help parents tell the difference between normal and problematic levels of distress.

Normal Separation Anxiety	Problematic Separation Anxiety
Child cries or expresses negative feelings when separated from you, but calms down after a few minutes once you are out of sight.	Child cries or expresses negative feelings when separated from you, but ***can not be calmed*** down after several minutes and may become increasingly upset and inconsolable.
Normal Responses to Reuniting	**Problematic Responses to Reuniting**
Child is happy when they return to you, greets you with affection, and can accept warmth and affection from you.	Child is angry, inconsolable, or flat (numb & withdrawn) when they return to you and cannot accept reassurance from you. In some cases, the child may turn her back, hit or express extreme negative feelings toward you.
Normal Reassurance Seeking Behavior	**Hyper-vigilant Behavior**
Child wants extra reassurance from you, follows you a bit more closely, wants to hold your hand, needs to be held more, have extra attention, etc. This lasts the first day or so after they return, but goes away pretty quickly once they settle back into your care.	Child is hyper-vigilant (constantly watching) about where you are, cannot let you out of their sight during times they used to be able to handle, must be held constantly (can't be put down), clings for days, follows you into the bathroom, can't be left at daycare or grandma's, can't sleep alone, etc.
Mild and Short-Term Regression	**Serious and Long-Term Regression**
Child uses "baby talk" or wants you to do things for them they have learned to do on their own, but only for a short time. They can be redirected to more age appropriate behavior.	Child looses abilities they had previously learned, like babbling, rolling over, crawling or walking, using the potty, or using language. These abilities disappear for days or weeks at a time.
Normal Expression of Feelings	**Problems with Expressing Feelings**
Child expresses a broad range of feelings, happy, sad, mad, etc., and the feelings seem to match the situation.	Child's feelings are flattened (numb & withdrawn) or way out of proportion to the event that triggered the feeling. Child loses interest in environment or activities or is chronically tearful, angry or sad.
Normal Acting Out Behaviors	**Concerning Acting Out Behaviors**
Child tantrums, says "no" more, acts irritable and cranky, does not follow directions, squabbles with peers, but regroups within a day or so.	Child has extreme acting out behavior, hurts self, others, or pets, plays with/smears feces, destroys favorite items or toys. Normal negative behaviors become chronic or start to escalate.

Preparing Children for Transitions

Children under two years have a limited ability to remember over time. This part of memory has not yet developed in their brain. They cannot predict the return of an attachment figure. Children under two are very sensitive to routines. Routines give them a sense of safety and security. In addition, children under two do not have enough language to tell you how they're doing or ask for what they need. Parents have to pay attention to children's nonverbal cues and guess right about what they need.

With children under age two, consider the following:

- ***Schedule frequent but short parenting time opportunities*** as children under two need frequent contact to bond, but may be stressed by being away from a primary attachment figure for too long. It may help to spend a few hours several times a week (ideally at least two or three) with the nonresidential parent. Young babies and children may not be able to tolerate an overnight stay away from their primary attachment figure and familiar environment.
- ***Try to match feeding, nap and activity times*** so that you reduce the amount of change your child has to handle.
- ***Share comforting items*** like a favorite blanket, a pacifier, stuffed animal, recorded song, or other things your child uses to self-soothe.
- ***If you are thinking about overnights…***
    - ***Take your time*** – Too much, too soon might actually slow the process down, especially if it causes the child to fear separation and resist overnights.
    - ***Start with naps*** – Naps allow a child to "practice" falling asleep and waking up in a parent's care without having to deal with darkness or long hours away from a primary attachment figure.
    - ***Help each other help the child*** – It is in *everyone's* interest for overnights to go well. It can be helpful if the primary attachment figure can visit the other parent's space and help put the child down for naps or bedtime at first. This may let the child know that he is okay.
    - ***Be willing to take a step back*** – Your child will let you know if things are going too fast. As hard as it may be to take a step back, it is important to be sensitive to your child's needs. A child can spend a lot of time with a parent without spending the night. Taking a step back is probably temporary and may actually help things move forward once the child has had a chance to settle down.

Children age two to four have a better sense of time and can remember more, though still not as much as older children and adults. They can spend more time away from either of their caregivers, even though they may still have separation anxiety when away from a primary attachment figure for long periods. Regular, frequent time with both parents is important. Children this age are more aware of changes in their lives and may be more resistant to change than when they were younger.

For children between two and four, consider the following:

- ***Schedule longer but still frequent parenting time.*** Children this age can usually handle a day or two away from a parent, but miss them and feel stressed if the time is longer. Some can handle overnights, while other toddlers are still anxious about sleeping away from the primary attachment figure.
- ***Help them prepare for transitions.*** It helps to have a routine for transitions. Also, because of their verbal and time skills, reminding children a few hours before a transition is helpful. Telling them you will see them again, that they are okay, and that they will have a good time is reassuring.
- ***Watch what you say!*** Even before they can talk, toddlers understand what you say. They also respond to your tone of voice. At this age, toddlers identify strongly with each parent. They think you are perfect. Criticizing the other parent can damage a toddler's self-esteem and trust in each of you**.**
- ***Try to match feeding, nap and activity times*** so that you reduce the amount of change your child has to handle. This is still important because toddlers can be even more sensitive than infants to change. They can become anxious, rigid, or irritable when routines are not predictable.
- ***Share comforting items*** like a favorite blanket, a pacifier, stuffed animal, recorded song, or other things your child uses to self-soothe. By this age pictures and Face Time or Skype can also be reassuring.
- ***Be ready to adjust and communicate.*** The growth and development happening in toddlers' language and memory is significant. Their progress can be rapid. What they ate yesterday, they hate today. Their favorite "blankie" is a thing of the past, but they can't let the dog out of their sight. They used to fall asleep with a back rub and now they want story after story. You have to be ready to adjust quickly and talk to each other about the changing moods, wants, and habits of your toddler.
- ***Holidays and special occasions matter.*** At this age children are becoming aware of special occasions and holidays, which are large and magical in their world. Think about these occasions when you create your plan. Older toddlers can use a calendar to circle the day they will see the other parent, or celebrate a holiday.

Research has found that by age four children with two safe and familiar homes generally do well with overnights and lots of time with each parent. Experts believe that by this age, healthy attached children can comfort themselves, ask for what they need, and understand enough about time to know they will see the other parent again soon..

By age four children with two safe homes generally do well with overnights with each parent.

Keep in Mind: *Children are more likely to show their negative reactions to stress when they are with the primary attachment figure. This is because they may feel safest with the primary attachment figure,* ***and*** *because young children believe the primary attachment figure is responsible for all good or bad feelings.*

A Warning about TV, Social Media & Young Children

Today's infants typically start to watch television by 4 months of age. Research shows that viewing TV or having lots of screen time can affect how much and how quickly children learn. Below are some important facts about your child and the use of media.

- Children under five watch an average of 4.5 hours of TV a day (40% of the time they are awake).
- For ***every hour*** of noneducational TV a child under 3 watches a day, their risk of having attention problems later increases by 10%.
- Preschool boys who watch violent TV shows (including violent cartoons) are three times more likely to have behavior problems by age seven. The risk increases with every hour watched.
- Children ages 8 to 16 months learned 6 to 8 ***fewer new words*** for every hour they watched baby DVDs and videos. In fact, children do not benefit from educational videos or shows often marketed to infants and toddlers until after age 4.
- Programs that are noneducational, entertainment oriented (and commonly fast action paced) or violent significantly increase the risk of future attention problems.
- The American Pediatric Academy (AAP) recommends ***no TV and video viewing for children under 2*** and no more than 2 hours a day of any screen activity for 3 and 4-year-olds.
- Violent and evening screen time can also increase sleep problems.

At the end of the day, children learn more from physical, interactive and exploratory play, and being read and sung to than from any two-dimensional screen device.

Keeping Your Child Safe

Little ones like to explore (and taste!) their world, and will probably slip and fall, or bang and get into things. They will get bumps, bruises, scrapes and scratches along the way. You can protect them from serious injuries. Unintended injury is the leading cause of death in U.S. children. Be aware of:

Battery Safety
Bike Safety
Boating Safety
Burn and Scalds Prevention
Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention
Choking Prevention
Fall Prevention
Fire Safety
Medication Safety
Passenger Safety
Pedestrian Safety
Playground Safety
Toy Safety
TV and Furniture Tip-over Safety
Trunk Entrapment
Water Safety and Drowning Prevention

http://www.Safekids.org has information on these issues.

There are lots of resources online and locally that can help you keep your child safe. In the Portland area, OHSU Doernbecher Children's Hospital and Legacy Emanuel Medical Center provide **Safety Centers.** They offer childproofing equipment and safety products at low cost, including:

- Appliance/cabinet and door locks
- Baby safety gates and fall guards
- Bike helmets
- Carbon monoxide detectors
- Fireplace guards
- Gun locks
- Smoke detectors
- Tub spout covers
- Window stops and guards
- Fire Safety and prevention /Poison Prevention
- Outlet safety
- Helmets and Bike Gear
- Furniture safety

The Safety Center at Legacy Emanuel Hospital also offers hands-on practice and one-on-one education for parent. The Safety Center has car safety seat, burn prevention, and home safety classes.

Legacy Emanuel Safety Center (Medical Center atrium)
501 N. Graham St.
Portland, OR 97227 (Free curbside valet parking available)
Phone: 503-413-4600
Hours: M-Th 9 a.m.-noon or by appointment. Closed F-Su and holidays.

Doernbecher Children's Hospital Safety Store

700 SW Campus Drive
Portland, Oregon 97239
503-418-5666
www.ohsu.edu/childsafety
Hours: M-F 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (or by appointment)
Free shipping for products ordered online.

On the Road

Eight out of ten children's car safety seats are not used correctly. You can get the right protection for your child, starting with a rear-facing infant seat. Keep them in it til at least age 2.

Information about the Right Car Seat for Your Child:

You can find out more about the right car seat for your child with these Car Seat Recommendations for Children:
http://www.safercar.gov/parents/RightSeat.htm

Finding Reduced Cost Child Safety Seats

Safe Kids is a state-wide organization dedicated to child safety. **Safe Kids** has car-seat check-up events throughout the state. Many areas offer reduced-cost child safety seats. You can find a **Safe Kids** coalition at:
http://www.safekids.org/coalition/safe-kids-oregon

Inspecting Your Car Seat

Many places in the state offer child **car seat inspections**. You can find a child car seat inspection at:
http://www.safercar.gov/cpsApp/cps/ak/3/findfitting.htm?q_State=OR&q_Zip=

You can also find **car seat inspection events** where professionals will inspect your car seat at:
http://www.safekids.org/events/field_coalition/safe-kids-oregon

Monthly car seat clinics are offered in Eugene:
http://www.kohlscarseatclinic.org/

Salem area Car Seat Clinics and Car Seat Assistance Program:
http://www.salemhealth.org/chec/car-seat-safety.php

Other Online Resources:

Medication Safety Tip Card:
http://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/documents/3_parent_tip_card-med_2014.pdf

Child Safety I.Q. Quiz:
http://www.legacyhealth.org/~/media/Files/PDF/Services/Children/Child%20Safety%20IQ%20Test.ashx

Car Seat Safety Tips
http://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/documents/car_seat_safety_tips.pdf

Safe Kids Facts and Research:
http://www.safekidsoregon.org/safety-for-parents/motor-vehicle-occupant-safety/

Kids in Hot Cars:
http://www.legacyhealth.org/~/media/Files/PDF/Services/Children/Child%20Safety%20IQ%20Test.ashx

On the Move

Kids on Wheels need the protection of helmets to prevent serious brain injuries.
Bike helmets are available to fit children as young as age 1 year. Emanuel Hospital (listed above) offers Health Fairs throughout the year, with reduced cost bike helmets for your child and you. They will also fit the helmet on your child.

Bike Safety for Babies:

Babies around 9 months old are just becoming strong enough to hold up their necks, so it is not recommended that infants younger than 12 months ride in a bicycle seat, trailer, sidecar or any other carrier. However, when they are ready for a free ride, these safety tips can help passengers in a child-trailer or rear-mounted seat enjoy the experience.

Top Safety Tips for Babies on Bikes

- Infants younger than 12 months are too young to sit in a rear bike seat and should not be carried on a bicycle. Do not carry infants in backpacks or front carriers on bikes.

- Do not seat babies in slumped positions for long periods of time.

- The International Bicycle Fund recommends that helmets be round and not aero shaped for infants riding in bike seats and trailers, and they should meet American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) safety standards. The helmet should cover the forehead and not sit on the back of the head.

- Keep in mind that rides in the infant bike seat will be much rougher than the one you experience in the saddle so choose your ride carefully.

- Many trailers have five-point harnesses, rolling cages, reflectors and safety flags. Using a cover can also help prevent materials from flying into your infant's eyes.

Bike Helmet Fit Test:

http://www.safekids.org/video/bike-helmet-fit-test

Keep yourself safe, too and be a good model! Wear a helmet!

Summary

Attachment is the deep and lasting emotional bond between a child and a caregiver(s). It develops in a child's first years. Secure attachments create a strong basis for developing trust and self-confidence. They are the ideal for every child. Parenting plans that protect and support healthy attachments can have a significant impact on emotional development during a child's critical early years.

The involvement of both parents is extremely important for children. Even when parents are living separately, there are ways for both parents to build and maintain connections with a young child, and for each parent to support the other parent's role and relationship with a child.

The decision about when and how to start overnights in a young child's life is an important one. Several factors should be considered, including the child's experience with each parent, the child's temperament, each parent's ability to provide care, and the quality of communication between parents. Overnights spent away from the parent who has been providing the child's primary care can be difficult for some young children, particularly when there is a high level of conflict between parents or when there is a history of domestic violence. Child safety and addressing the child's needs should always come before parents' interests in fairness.

You can enhance your child's experience with each parent by working cooperatively with each other, by learning to notice your child's signs of distress, and by helping your child prepare to go from one parent to the other. Your child can thrive even when you and the other parent are not together. Parental teamwork can foster healthy emotional development in your young child.

Sample Parenting Time Plans

Keep in Mind: *These sample plans are provided as generally age appropriate schedules and may not fit the developmental needs of all children. Please see the section "The Question of Overnights" in this handbook for additional considerations in crafting your plan. Additional resources on age appropriate parenting plans can be found in the resources at the back of this handbook.*

Ages 0 to 24 months

1**. Plan A**: May be appropriate for families when one parent has not been the child's primary caregiver or has never lived with the child but wants regular contact.

- Three periods of 3 to 6 hours spaced throughout the week. Provides frequent contact to support bonding. Parents need to be able to support 6 child exchanges per week without conflict.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1-4pm		1-4pm			9am-1pm
	1-4pm		1-4pm			9am-1pm
	1-4pm		1-4pm			9am-1pm
	1-4pm		1-4pm			9am-1pm

- Two periods of 4 to 6 hours spaced throughout the week. May be more feasible for parents with nonflexible work schedules or higher levels of conflict.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		12-5pm				9am-3pm
		12-5pm				9am-3pm
		12-5pm				9am-3pm
		12-5pm				9am-3pm

2. **Plan B**: May be appropriate when both parents have been at least partially involved in day-to-day care of the child, have adequate parenting skills and have established a strong bond with the child. This plan could also be phased in after the child has successfully managed an A level plan for a period of time.

- Two periods of 3 to 4 hours and one 8-hour period spaced throughout the week.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
9am-5pm		5-8pm		5-8pm		
9am-5pm		5-8pm		5-8pm		
9am-5pm		5-8pm		5-8pm		
9am-5pm		5-8pm		5-8pm		

3. **Plan C**: May be appropriate when both parents have been equally involved in day-to-day care of the child, have been involved with medical appointments and enjoy a strong attachment bond with the child. This plan could also be phased in after a child has successfully managed a B level plan for a period of time.

- Two periods of 3 to 6 hours each week and one overnight each week or alternating weeks.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	4-7pm		4-7pm		6pm overnight to	3pm
	4-7pm		4-7pm			
	4-7pm		4-7pm		6pm overnight to	3pm
	4-7pm		4-7pm			

Ages 24 to 36 months

Any of the above plans for children ages 0 to 24 months may be an appropriate starting point if you are just now establishing a schedule. For children who have already adapted well to the above plans, have lots of practice being separated from a primary caregiver, or have two parents who have been equally involved in caregiving, the following schedule might be a consideration.

- One period of 3 to 6 hours and two nonconsecutive overnights each week.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	5 to 8pm		4pm overnight to	9am		Noon overnight to
Noon	5 to 8pm		4pm overnight to	9am		Noon overnight to
Noon	5 to 8pm		4pm overnight to	9am		Noon overnight to
Noon	5 to 8pm		4pm overnight to	9am		Noon overnight to

Sample Co-Parent Communication Log

A notebook or form that travels back and forth in the child's diaper bag or backpack can be helpful, especially when face-to-face communication is difficult. Below is a sample of one possible form for sharing information about your child with the other parent.

Parents should only use a form like this to share information, ***not*** to try to monitor or control what happens in the other parents home.

Date:_____

Toileting/Diapers: Document any toileting related issues including the child's success with potty training, concerning stools, rashes and treatments used, etc.

Foods: Document eating concerns, include adverse reaction to foods, the last time the child ate, etc.

Bottles: Document any concerns with feedings.

Sleeping: Note any concerns with sleeping issues, how long and when the child napped, if there were any difficulties getting the child down to sleep, etc.

Medications: Keep a list of both prescription and nonprescription medications administered, amounts and time given.

Media exposure: How much time did the child spend with electronic media and what was the content. For example; Susie watched Sesame Street for 30 minutes on Wednesday.

Special Moments: Share any memorable things your child said or did during their time with you including mastering a new skill.

Concerns: Share any concerns that presented during your time with the child, including such things as illness, fussiness, teething, problems at daycare. etc.

Appointments: Our child has a medical/dental/other appointment on (date)_____@ (time)_____ with _____.

Requests: Include requested changes to the schedule, toys or clothing to be returned,

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

The creators of this handbook do not endorse any of these services. They are provided for information purposes only.

Court Forms and Parenting Plan Resources

Oregon Judicial Department Parenting Plan Guide and Forms
http://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/children/Pages/parenting-plans.aspx

Massachusetts AFCC Guide: Planning for Shared Parenting: a Guide for Parents Living Apart
http://www.mass.gov/courts/docs/courts-and-judges/courts/probate-and-family-court/afccsharedparenting.pdf

Planning for Parenting Time: Arizona's Guide for Parents Living Apart
http://www.azcourts.gov/Portals/31/ParentingTime/PPWguidelines.pdf

Questions to help you decide if a safety-focused plan is appropriate
http://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/children/Documents/SafetyQuestions.pdf

Safety-focused parenting plan guide and forms
www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/children/Documents/SafetyFocusedParentingPlanGuide.pdf Also available in Spanish.

State forms for filing for Custody & Parenting Time, Divorce, Enforcement, etc.
http://www.courts.oregon.gov/forms/Pages/default.aspx

Multnomah County Family Court Services (FCS)
503-988-3189
http://www.multco.us/dcj/fcs

Other Online Resources

211Info.
Free information about community, health and social services can be accessed by calling 211 or the following website:
http://211info.org/

Baby Center
http://www.babycenter.com/

Center for Disease Control – Child Development and Positive Parenting
http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/default.htm

Co-Parenting Communication Guide (Published by the Arizona Chapter of the Association for Family and Conciliation Courts)
http://www.afccnet.org/Portals/0/PDF/AzAFCC%20Coparenting%20Communication%20Guide.pdf

Common Sense Media
A non-profit organization providing reviews, ratings, education and advocacy for families and children around the use of media.
www.commonsense.org

The Long Distance Parent
Information and resources for staying connected
http://distanceparent.org/

Mayo Clinic – Infant and Toddler Health
http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/infant-and-toddler-health/MY00362

Our Family Wizard
An on-line subscription service with tools for helping families manage schedules and information between two homes. Offers free accounts for children.
www.ourfamilywizard.com

Proud To Parent
A free, confidential website for never married parents providing interactive programs, articles and videos.
www.proudtoparent.org

Parenting.org – Precious Beginnings
http://www.parenting.org/precious-beginnings

Second Chances – A Guidebook for Parents Wishing to Reunite with Their Children
https://multco.us/dcj/fcs/family-court-services-help

Sesame Street Workshop
Videos, tools and resources for parents and young children.
www.sesamestreet.org/divorce

Up To Parents
A free, confidential website for divorced parents providing interactive programs, articles and videos.
www.uptoparents.org

Zero to Three National Center for Infants Toddlers and Families
www.zerotothree.org

Domestic Violence Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-SAFE(7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224

Portland Women's Crisis Line: 503-235-5333 or toll free at 1-888-235-5333 for outside Portland area

Oregon Judicial Department Domestic Violence Webpage:
http://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/family/domestic-violence/Pages/default.aspx

Oregon Department of Human Services Domestic Violence Webpage:
http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ABUSE/DOMESTIC/Pages/index.aspx

BOOKS

Books about General Parenting

Ames, Louise Bates (1976) ***Your One-Year-Old*** **(one for every year through** ***Your Ten-to Fourteen-Year-Old*****)**
Brazelton, T. Berry (1992) ***Touchpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development***
Cline, Foster & Fay, Jim (2002**)** ***Love & Logic Magic for Early Childhood: Practical Parenting***
Christophersen, Edward R. (1998) ***Beyond Discipline: Parenting That Lasts A Lifetime***
Christophersen, Edward R. (1998) ***Little People: Guidelines For Common Sense Child Rearing***
Chirstophersen, Edward R. and Mortweet, Susan L. (2003) ***Parenting That Works: Building Skills That Last a Lifetime***
Coloroso, Barbara (1994) ***Kids Are Worth It***
Crary, Elizabeth & Casebolt, Pati. (1990) ***Pick Up Your Socks & Other Skills Growing Children Need***
Dinkmeyer, Don & McKay, Gary (1996) ***Raising a Responsible Child: How to Prepare Your Child for Today's Complex World***
Dinkmeyer & McKay (1988*)* ***The Parents Handbook - STEP - Systematic Training for Effective Parenting***

Dinkmeyer & McKay (1998) ***The Parents Handbook STEP Teen - Systematic Training for Effective Parenting of Teens***
Eliot, Lise (1999) ***What's Going On in There? How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life***
Faber, Elaine (1980) ***How To Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk***
Glenn, Stephen & Nelson, Jane (1989) ***Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World***
Leman, Kevin (2000) ***Making Children Mind Without Losing Yours***
Nelson, Jane (1999) ***Positive Discipline for Single Parents: Nurturing, Cooperation, Respect & Joy in Your Single Parent Family***
Nordling, Joanne (1999) ***Taking Charge: Caring Discipline That Works at Home and at School***
Phelan, Thomas (2003) ***1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12***
Siegel, Daniel J. & Hartzell, Mary (2003). ***Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive***
Steyer, James P. (2012) ***Talking Back to Facebook: The Common Sense Guide to Raising Kids in the Digital Age***

Books For Children Pre-School and Early Elementary (Ages 3-7)
Dams, Eric (2003) ***On the Day His Daddy Left***
Boelts, Maibeth and Bladholm, Cheri (2004) ***With My Mom, With My Dad: A Book about Divorce***
Brown, Marc and Brown, Laurie Krasny (1988) ***Dinosaurs Divorce***
Lansky, Vicki and Prince, Jane (1999) ***It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear*** [also available in Spanish]
Levins, Sandra and Langdo, Bryan (2005) ***Was It the Chocolate Pudding?: A Story For Little Kids About Divorce***
Masurel, Claire (author) & McDonald Denton, Kady (illust.) (2003) ***Two Homes***
Moore-Mallinos, Jennifer and Fabrega, Marta (2005) ***When My Parents Forgot How to Be Friends***
Nightengale, Lois (1996***) My Parents Still Love Me Even Though They're Getting Divorced: An Interactive Tale for Children***
Schmitz, Tamara (2008) ***Standing on My Own Two Feet: A Child's Affirmation of Love in the Midst of Divorce***

Books For Parents on Divorce
Ackerman, Marc (1997) ***Does Wednesday Mean Mom's House or Dad's?***
Ahrons, Constance (1998) ***The Good Divorce: Keeping Your Family Together When Your Marriage Comes Apart***
Fisher, Bruce (1992) ***Rebuilding When Your Relationship Ends***
Gold, Lois (1992) ***Between Love and Hate***
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