



Dating Tips for While in a Co-Parenting Situation

I have been working with so many clients on the issue of co-parenting and the struggles that families are facing. Managing the different structures, emotional and physical barriers that children must deal with when living between the two worlds of parents that are divorced can be daunting for adults, let alone children!

As adults and parents, we can overlook the fact that a divorce took place because the adults in the family could not work out relationship differences as partners, yet there is an expectation the children will pick up and continue to live between the two families. This can entail moving their "stuff" each week and managing alliances, households, rules, behavior differences, relationships, half siblings, dealing with faith (in some families), secrets, scheduling issues; just to name a few of divorce and blending issues that children of all ages must face when put in the situation of a divorced family or blended family environment.

This month, I have a guest blogger that I believe has a great resource for some families working on scheduling between families and a wonderful website that could be helpful. This site is not the only of its kind, but one to check out!

Please read an interesting blog that Tim has written for my site and my clients that I hope you will find helpful when dealing with this unique situation for your family and children.

Tim Backes is the senior editor for Custody X Change, a custody calendar software solution and has contributed the following blog to Collaborate Counseling's site.:

Divorce is not something that most children take lightly. Aside from the friction between their parents, major changes in their day-to-day lives can take time to get used to.

Then, just when they seem to settle into a new normal, one or both parents start dating and upset their balance all over again. But, there are ways to minimize the shock of your children seeing you with a new partner.

Three Tips for Dating as a Single Parent

Getting back into dating after a failed marriage is not the easiest of thing to do. It's often difficult to jump headfirst into being single for recently divorced men and women who aren't parents. When you add children to the mix, it's that much more challenging.

However, as much of a lifestyle change as it is for you, it's often a total shock to your kids, [no matter their ages](#). Here are three ways to make this new adventure easier on both you and your children.

Foreshadow

Springing your new partner into your children's lives like it's a big surprise is a terrible idea. It can leave them feeling vulnerable and betrayed.

As a parent, you're their pillar of strength. Blindsiding them with something major is like pulling the rug out from under their feet.

Instead, even before you start dating, but when you feel you're close, drop little hints. Let them know you are considering going on a date.

Don't make a big deal out of it, but mention it several times over a few weeks. The repetition will let them know you're serious, and the time will allow them to prepare themselves mentally and emotionally.

Take is Slow

For you, it might not matter how fast you jump into a new relationship, but as far as your children are concerned, they should feel it's moving at a snail's pace. This is especially true for how they get to know your new partner.

When you first introduce everyone to one another, try and keep it brief and simple: 5 – 10 minutes is a good goal to aim for.

While this may seem way too short to you, it gives everyone a chance to meet plus time after to absorb things. Children get time to realize your foreshadowing wasn't just lip service. You and partner get to feel out how he or she truly feels about dating a single parent.

And, this short introduction takes pressure off of everyone from feeling they need to impress during a first meet.

Set Boundaries

Your new dating life should not be as free-wheeling as when you were a teen. You are older and [have children depending on you](#). That doesn't mean they can completely run your life though.

After the brief introduction between your children and new partner, it's a good idea to lay down some ground rules. These rules of course depend on how many children you have, their ages, and many other factors.

The main idea is to let your children know that you'll be there for them, but that they need to respect you as well.

In Summary

Dating when you are half of a co-parenting duo is possible. But, the number one rule is to remember that while you are responsible for the well being of your children, you have to respect their feelings as much as you need to provide safety and sustenance.

By slowing getting them used to the idea of you dating, and slowly getting them used to your new partner, you let them ease into the transition. And, by providing a set of ground rules, you let them know you're serious about respect being a two-way street, and you also give them a framework for what is expected of them moving forward.

By Tim Backes