

## CO-PARENTING THE DIVORCE WAY

Page 1 of 2

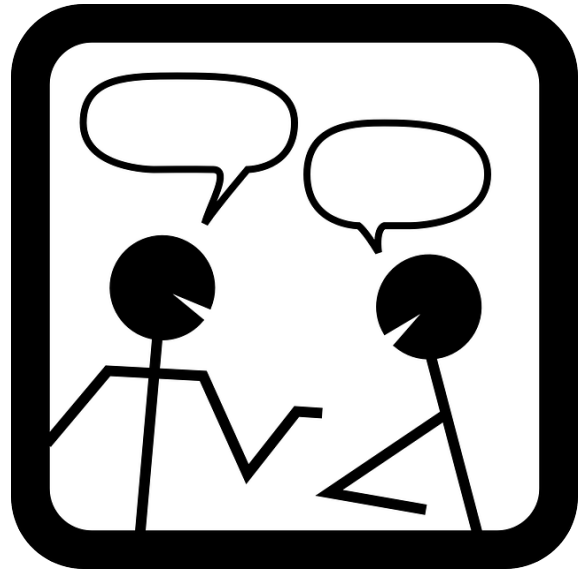
By Linda Ranson Jacobs

06/21/2013

Co-parenting is becoming the norm for divorcing couples and couples who are involved in cohabitation situations. But what exactly is co-parenting? Co-parenting the divorce way is when separating couples request the courts award legal joint custody of minor children. The marriage or relationship has ended, but the family still exists.

If both parents get along, then co-parenting works. If the adults can't get along, can't agree or are hostile to one another, co-parenting is difficult to say the least. Good co-parenting takes teamwork.

In her book, "[Co-Parenting Works](#)," Tammy Daughtry breaks co-parenting into three models:



1. **Conflicted co-parenting** is a situation when the former spouses continue to undermine each other's relationship with the child. This can cause a lot of damage to the children in this situation as the parents are still warring and in conflict.
2. **Cooperative co-parenting** is when each parent seeks to put the well being of the children first. They communicate with each other about their children's problems, coordinate house rules and adapt schedules to benefit the children.
3. **Parallel co-parenting** is the scenario where each parent does his or her own thing. They tend to ignore the other parent. They don't try to interfere with each other's parenting, nor do they try to coordinate schedules or parenting strategies. Any communication between the two adults is sent through the children. The author explains that this is the most popular type of co-parenting.

In my history of working with divorcing couples, parallel co-parenting is the most harmful type of co-parenting for children for a variety of reasons:

- It is confusing to the children.
- It keeps kids involved in a stressful life style in that they are responsible for passing messages back and forth between their parents.
- When one of the adults gets angry or upset, the child is the one that faces the reaction, not the parent for which the angry outburst is intended.
- The lack of communication between parents puts kids at risk as they move into their teen years, as they know they can get away with risky behaviors because their parents don't connect with each other.

## CO-PARENTING THE DIVORCE WAY

Page 2 of 2

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

06/21/2013

- Children learn early on how to manipulate their parents to get what they want, not what is best for them.
- Children will pit one parent against the other parent in order to get their way.
- Children must constantly figure out the rules, schedules and life-styles of two completely separate homes.

If you are a children's minister or church worker, find out if the children in your ministry from divorced homes live with a custodial parent or if they are living in a co-parenting situation. It will make a difference how you communicate with the child's parents. If it is a co-parenting situation, you will need to communicate with both parents. It will be imperative that you have both parents' contact information. You will need to understand the living arrangements and who to contact if the child become ill while at church or church camp.

Try to get comfortable and develop a relationship with both parents so you can:

- Communicate any problems the child may be having.
- Know where to send notes that need to be signed for an event.
- Know who to contact about spiritual decisions.
- Know how to proceed with spiritual or denominational education or classes.
- Communicate with a child about family events or family situations.

It can be difficult to partner with two-parent families. It may be even harder to partner with a family that lives in two separate homes, but for the welfare of the children of divorce in your church it is a must you that you learn how.

What has been your experience with co-parenting situations?

*Linda Ranson Jacobs is one of the forefront leaders in the area of children and divorce. She developed and created the DivorceCare for Kids programs. DC4K is an international program for churches to use to help children of divorced parents find healing within the arms of a loving church family. As a speaker, author, trainer, program developer and child care center owner, Linda has assisted countless families by modeling and acting on the healing love she has found in Jesus Christ. Linda offers support, encouragement and suggestions to help those working with the child of divorce. She serves as DC4K Ambassador (<http://www.dc4k.org>) and can be reached via email at [ljacobs@dc4k.org](mailto:ljacobs@dc4k.org). You can find additional articles from Linda on her blog at <http://blog.dc4k.org/>.*

*Free articles and devotions for single parent families in your church can be found at Linda's website Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids (<http://www.hlp4.com>).*