



Advisory Council on Family Care

Monthly Parenting Tip from the ACFC

April 2021

Co-Parenting During COVID



FREE LIFE-CHANGING ONLINE PARENTING COURSES

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One of the most important aspects of co-parenting is allowing the child to love both parents. Every step should be taken to avoid the child from getting "caught in the middle." At those times children can feel like they are in a tug of war between two arguing parents and sometimes have to choose sides. Children should never be put in this situation. They're not emotionally equipped to deal with this. This becomes even more important when time spent with each parent is limited due to the COVID restrictions. Many of the outlets for them to be away with friends or on their own away from both parents have been taken away. The tension and pressure can be extreme at times.

Hopefully, you are both aware of how you can prevent putting your child into the middle. One of the most common and frequent occurrences is when one parent criticizes the other. Put-downs, criticisms, name-calling and even sighs and eye-rolling force the child to side with one parent against the other and are experienced by the child as a direct psychological hit. It's virtually impossible for the child to stay neutral. Remember, whenever you attack the other parent, you hurt your own child.

Another situation where the child is caught in the middle is when they are asked to deliver a note or message to the other parent. If the message is likely to upset the parent receiving it, the child will usually be pulled into the resulting fallout.

Other ways that a child is put in the middle is when they are pushed to choose sides when one parent plays the victim or "poor me" role. This parent uses guilt to get the child on their side of the disagreement. This is the parent who talks about how sad they are or how lonely they are when the child isn't there. The child not only feels hurt but tries to make the parent feel better. The "loser" parent is manipulating the child into fulfilling their own emotional needs. Parents can also concentrate too much on making things "equal." When the child is forced to keep track of hugs, kisses, time, attention and material goods in order to equalize their distribution between the parents, they can't freely demonstrate the love they naturally feel. Every action has to be judged or measured in equal shares. They can't love both parents with their own free will.

It's important to find ways to express your anger and negative emotions without involving your children. You may need to rely on friends or family members, or a support group for separated or divorced parents. Counseling can provide a safe place to find ways to work through your difficult times.

You can also take a FREE online parenting class from Active Parenting. These interactive, video-based classes are provided by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting.

Helpful videos and online classes are offered free of charge by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting. To access more invaluable parenting resources, visit the [ACFC website](https://www.acfccares.com) and click on the Active Parenting tab on the left-hand side of the home page.