

POST-SEPARATION COMMUNICATION DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

- ◆ Communicate directly with your ex-partner.
- ◆ If you are meeting with your ex-partner, do so in a safe, preferably public place.
- ◆ Schedule difficult conversations for times when the children won't hear them.
- ◆ Be prepared before conversations with your ex-partner, especially if you anticipate you may not agree with one another.
- ◆ Keep a record of your communication.
- ◆ Take the time to think carefully about what words to use. Avoid words and language that you know will hurt or anger your ex-partner or that will just make emotions run even higher than they already are.
- ◆ Think carefully about the timing of difficult messages so you communicate them at a time when your ex-partner will be the most receptive.
- ◆ Be focused, clear and precise.
- ◆ Set communication boundaries. If your plan is to communicate only by email, when he calls you, respond by email so at least you are being consistent.
- ◆ Focus your communication on the issue at hand.
- ◆ Remember **BIFF**: brief, informative, friendly, firm
- ◆ Use a respectful or at least neutral tone of voice, whether in written or verbal communication.
- ◆ Take time to really listen to what your ex-partner has to say.
- ◆ Bring an open attitude, assuming the best.
- ◆ Be polite, honest, kind or at least neutral.
- ◆ End conversations that are not healthy or productive, and if necessary, come back to the subject at a later time or in a different way.

DON'T

- ◆ Don't use your kids or other family members as messengers between you and your ex-partner.
- ◆ Don't meet with your ex-partner in your or his home.
- ◆ Don't have difficult conversations or arguments when the children can hear.
- ◆ Don't rush into conversations with your ex-partner. You are more likely to get backed into a corner and agree to an outcome you don't want if you are unprepared for the conversation.
- ◆ Don't throw out any written communication or delete abusive phone calls or texts.
- ◆ Don't communicate in haste. Responding quickly to something your ex-partner has said might feel great in the moment, but if your anger or frustration come through in your communication, you could have more problems down the road.
- ◆ Don't send a communication to your ex-partner that you think will make him angry when the kids are with him or if you are about to see him in person.
- ◆ Don't let yourself get sidetracked.
- ◆ Don't break communication boundaries that you and your ex-partner have agreed on, unless it is an emergency. For example, if you have agreed to communicate by email, don't suddenly call him.
- ◆ Don't use communication to raise every little thing you don't like about your ex-partner.
- ◆ Don't ramble or raise unrelated topics that you know will be contentious.
- ◆ Don't use vulgar or aggressive language, no matter how you are feeling.
- ◆ Don't do all the talking.
- ◆ Don't make assumptions.
- ◆ Don't be rude, dishonest, cruel.
- ◆ Don't continue conversations that are abusive, disrespectful or harmful.