

# Parenting Together

## OBJECTIVES:

1. Review the benefits and ways of co-parenting
2. Discuss the role of kinship networks

## HANDOUTS:

1. *My Hopes and Dreams For My Children*
2. *10 Tips For Co-Parenting*
3. *My Co-Parenting Commitment*
4. *Take Home Message for This Session*

## ITEMS NEEDED FOR THIS EDUCATIONAL SESSION:

- Handout materials for participant workbooks— *My Co-Parenting Commitment* is optional
- Workbook or scrapbook materials
- Flipcharts and markers
- Pens and pencils

### GETTING STARTED

Please re-introduce yourself and tell us about an important person in your child's life who is not his or her mother or father. Or, please tell us about an important person who helped raise you.

### ACTIVITY: Co-Parenting

Prepare flipcharts to define the term "co-parent" and the importance of co-parenting.

In an earlier session, we discussed how different people define a family in many kinds of ways. We discussed how a "family" might include our children, our parents, our siblings, or our aunts and uncles. This is the kind of family into which we are born. We also said that a "family" could include our girlfriends or boyfriends, our wives or husbands, our friends, our neighbors, or the people in our places of worship. This is the kind of family we make for ourselves. No matter who we call our family, we all share one thing: **family** includes people we love and who love us, people we are connected to through history and experience.

Your child or children include both parents in his or her definition of family. Because of this, it is a gift you can give to him or her to make every effort to successfully co-parent with your child's other parent. Doesn't your child deserve both parents if possible?

In this program, we define **co-parenting** as both parents sharing the responsibility for raising and parenting their children. Parents who live in the same house or apart can co-parent. While it may not always be easy to do, co-parenting is important for you and your child's wellbeing.

A mother or father needs to become a parenting partner with his or her child's other parent to help children grow into healthy, happy people. If the parents are not involved in a romantic relationship, this will take the form of a businesslike, cooperative relationship focused on what is best for the children. This is a process that will take time, so it is important to be patient.

Parents are better able to cooperate when:

- Both parents decide to do what is in the best interest of the child,
- Each parent respects the other's right to participate in parenting,
- Agreement is reached about some basic parenting rules,
- Angry feelings and resentment are let go of, and
- Each parent is committed to parenting the child in a warm, loving manner.

A good co-parenting relationship requires all of your best communication skills, which we will be learning in later sessions of this program. When in conflict, remind yourself that your child loves this person, and the outcome you want is for your child to be able to have all of you in their life...sometimes focusing on "being right" can get in the way of this goal.

### **ACTIVITY:** **Positive Co-Parenting**

Let's look at the handout **Ten Tips for Co-Parenting**. Not all of these tips may apply to you or your family right now but may apply in the future as your children get older. In small groups, discuss these ten tips. Decide as a group what three tips are most important. Discuss the reasons why you think these tips are most important. Be ready to share your thoughts with the rest of the group.

After discussing the tips in small groups, bring the group back together and ask them to share what they discussed in their small groups. Write key points from their discussions on a flip chart and talk about their responses.

### **ACTIVITY:** **My Hopes and Dreams for My Child**

Complete **My Hopes and Dreams for My Child**. (Walk participants through the directions and answer their questions. This activity will be placed in the memory book.)

Turn to the person next to you, introduce yourself if you do not know each other, and talk about your answers and show your picture(s) to each other. If another person, such as your child's father, came with you, share your answers with each other.

(Have whole group discuss together. Write answers on flip chart.)

- What kinds of pictures did you find or draw to show your hopes and dreams for your children?
- What things do you want to make sure that your child has? (security, love, a family, health, etc.)
- What kind of things do you want to protect your child from? (crime, drugs, abuse, poverty)

- What do you hope for your child when he/she grows up? (happiness, education, a good job, health, marriage)

After looking at the answers on the flipchart and hearing others talk about their hopes and dreams for their children, would you add anything to your handout? Take a minute now to add this information to your sheet.

### **OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:** **My Co-Parenting Commitment**

To reinforce the tips for co-parenting, participants can sign the form **My Co-Parenting Commitment**. Introduce the pledge with this question:

*What kind of co-parenting relationship do you need to have with your child's other parent in order for you to realize these hopes and dreams?*

### **HOMEWORK:**

Have participants identify one action step they will take this week to apply what they have learned in this lesson. Have them write this step on the insert for their refrigerator magnet.

### **CLOSING:**

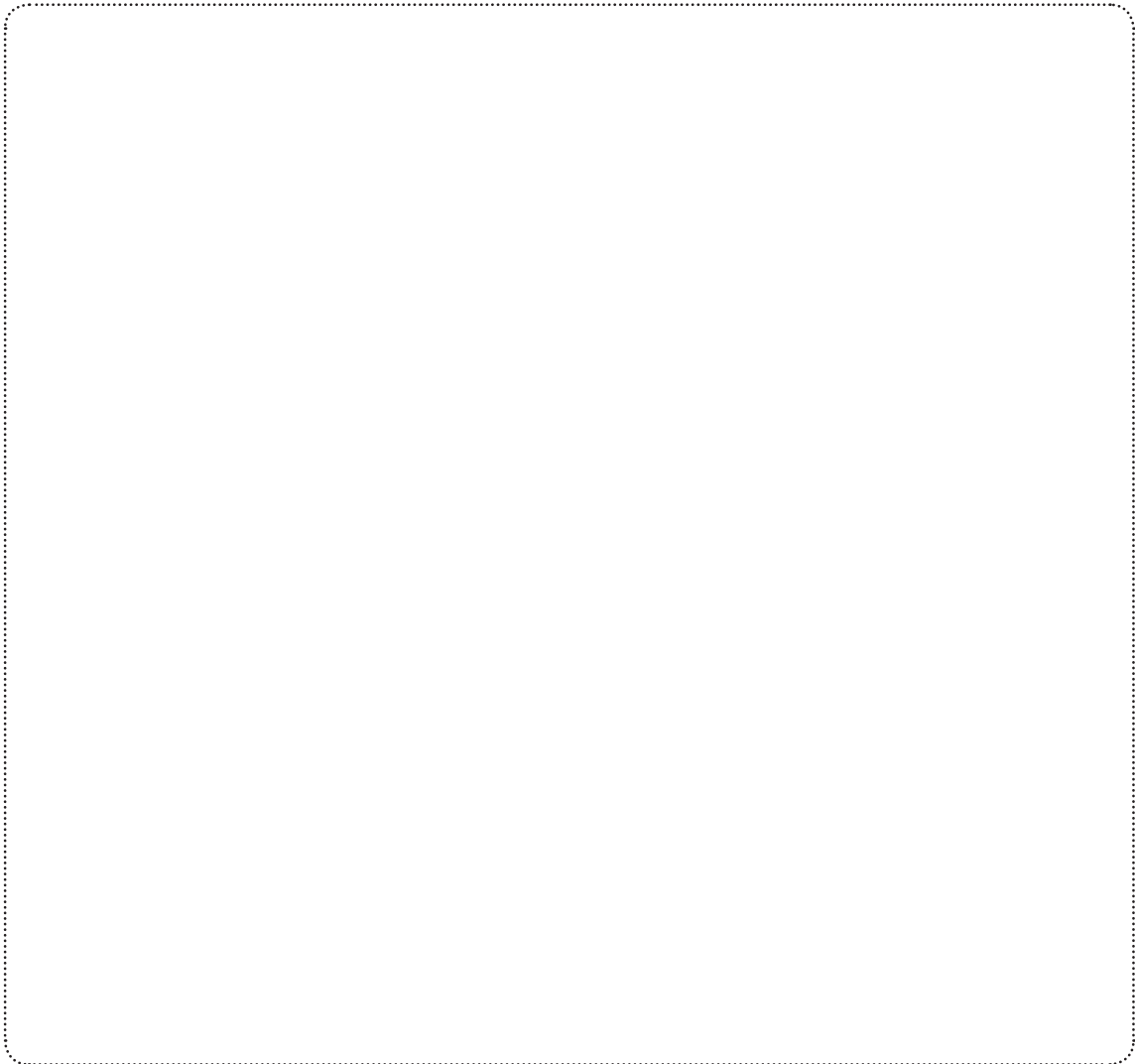
*In this lesson we discussed co-parenting and the importance of having a positive relationship with your child's other parent. Even though you may not be romantically involved with your child's other parent, you are still parents together. Families can be quite complicated in many ways, yet they are the best environment for children's growth and development. Your child will appreciate your effort to surround him or her with love and support through a strong, cooperative family.*





# My Hopes and Dreams For My Children

Using magazines, glue, and other art materials provided, please select or draw a picture or a series of pictures that show your hopes and dreams for your child or children. When you are finished with the picture, complete the sentences on the next page.





# My Hopes and Dreams For My Children

If I could make sure my child (or children) has one thing, it would be . . .

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.....

.....

I want most to protect my child (or children) from . . .

.....

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.....

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When my child (or children) grow(s) up, I hope . . .

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## 10 Tips For Co-Parenting

1. Make your child's happiness and well-being your number one goal.
2. Treat the other parent in "a business-like manner."
3. Treat your child as a child.
4. Encourage your child's relationship with the other parent.
5. Communicate directly with the other parent.
6. Make visitation exchanges pleasant and happy.
7. Take a parenting class.
8. Pay your child support on time.
9. Be patient and flexible.
10. Get counseling if you need to.

Adapted from: Cauley, M. H., Davis, J. and Barnes, M. *From Parent Wars to Co-Parenting*.  
Arkansas Bar Association. Retrieved from the Internet at URL:  
[http://www.arkbar.com/pdf/pw\\_pamphlet.pdf](http://www.arkbar.com/pdf/pw_pamphlet.pdf)





# My Co-Parenting Commitment

I commit to my child and myself that I will do everything within my power to enable my child to have the happiest and best childhood possible. In order to reach this goal, I promise to do the following:

1. I will treat my child as a child and not use him as a spy.
2. I will speak positive about the other parent to avoid hurting my child.
3. I will encourage my child to love both of his or her parents.
4. I will talk about adult problems with other adults and not my child.
5. I will pay my child support on time.
6. I will not use my child as a pawn.
7. I will encourage and support my child's visit with the other parent.
8. I will communicate directly with the other parent and not use my child as a messenger.
9. I will treat the other parent with respect and courtesy so my child will do the same.
10. I will remember that raising a child requires patience, tolerance, and flexibility.

I pledge to my child and myself that I will do my best everyday to remember these promises and help my child have a healthy and happy childhood.

.....  
SIGN HERE

.....  
DATE



# Take Home Message for This Session

**Directions:** Think of one step you will take before the next session and write it down in the space provided. In addition, write down the time, date, and location of the next session.

**Put the interests  
of your child at the  
center of co-parenting.**

My Action Steps:

.....  
.....

The Next Session:

.....  
DATE

.....  
TIME

.....  
LOCATION

