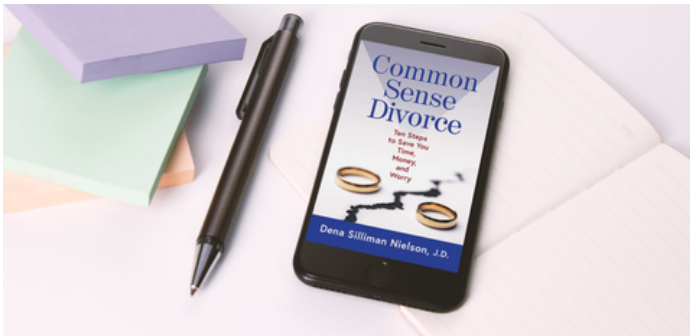


# TOP TEN TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL CO-PARENTING



For further reading by  
Dena Silliman Nielson, J.D.

Common Sense Divorce:  
Ten Steps to Save you  
Time, Money, and Worry  
**Go to [www.DenaNielson.com](http://www.DenaNielson.com)  
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Any legal advice should come from the reader's own legal  
counsel.

# Tip #1



Have a specific Parenting Plan or Separation Agreement. No matter how amicable the divorce is, the Parenting Plan needs to be as clear as possible, especially around holidays. You never know how things will change over time, and this document will determine your parenting time in the near future and long term. Plus, the less specific the Parenting Plan is, the harder it will be to determine when and if anyone violated it.

## Tip #2



When deciding between joint custody/joint decision making and sole custody/sole decision making, focus only on the child's best interest. This decision is NOT about what is in your best interest as a parent, but only about what will be best for the child(ren).

# Tip #3



Try to be flexible. Even if you have a specific Parenting Plan and holiday schedule, try to be as flexible as possible. Why? Because your children will benefit from your flexibility. Of course, both parents will have to have this attitude, or it won't be fair. And there may be times when that flexibility won't work, and in those situations, all involved will need trust and understanding.

# Tip #4



The Parenting Plan should grow with the children. A good plan is to agree that the Parenting Plan will be reviewed every two years to ensure that it is still serving the needs of the children. Often, the children will tell you when changes need to be made. Although children should not be the final authority on such things, it is good to consider their wishes and desires when possible.

# Tip #5



Be sure you are communicating effectively. Communication is the key to any effective co-parenting. Be sure your messages and conversations are clear and leave nothing to assume. Whatever the issue is, just be sure that all communication is clear.

# Tip #6



There are numerous ways to set up the parting time so that co-parenting will be effective and less stressful for everyone. In making this decision, consider the lifestyles involved, the ages, wants, and desires of the children, and the work schedules and available time for each parent, as well as other pertinent facts. Consult experts or do research to find the best way for your family.



# Tip #7



Each party should understand that holidays and vacations take precedence over regular parenting time. A misunderstanding of this principle is the source of many conflicts. Neither party should try to take advantage of this fact to skew the Parenting Plan and the schedule.

## Tip #8



Be child focused if varying from the schedule. Try to be flexible, considering what is best for the children. Sometimes varying from the schedule is necessary and, in the children's best interest. Accept this and try to work with your ex-spouse. In fact, both parties need to try to be as flexible as possible while keeping to the schedule as a general rule.

## Tip #9



Acknowledge that things are different now. This may be difficult for those that are recently divorced. However, if you can accept that things are not the same, it will provide space to create new experiences and memories with your family that you and your children will cherish as time goes on.

# Tip #10



Encourage and support your children in having parenting time with their other parent. Children have two parents that they love. Their parents should act as if that is the case. Your feelings may have changed towards the other parent, but your children's feelings have not -- in most cases. Value your children's relationship with their other parent. Your children will benefit from this.

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**THANKS!**