

Checklist for Parents

While the vast majority of parents are able to protect their children from the conflict of divorce, and very few children become alienated from one of their parents, most parents inadvertently participate in behaviors that tend to create conflict in the child toward the other parent. The following is a checklist of such behaviors that parents may wish to avoid

- Letting children decide whether they will participate in scheduled visits with the other parent - if the visitation is part of the court order, there is no decision to be made
- Arguing with the other parent in the child's presence, especially at times when the child is being exchanged from one parent to the other
- Always being early or late for scheduled transfer times
- Discussing the marital relationship with the children - it can be harmful to children to hear from one parent anything, good or bad, about the marital relationship
- Making the child a confidante, especially about the other parent's wrongdoing
- Refusing to allow children to have cherished possessions that go back-and-forth with them to both homes
- Resisting the other parent's access to school or medical records, or schedules of extracurricular activities
- Blaming the other parent for financial problems, for breaking up the family, or for changes in lifestyle
- Using the child as a message bearer to the other parent
- Becoming jealous or possessive about the other parent having a new significant other
- Criticizing or denigrating the other parent's lifestyle, job, choice of friends, living arrangements, intelligence, looks, behavior, etc.
- Refusing to be flexible with the visitation schedule in order to respond to the child's needs
- Being overly fearful that the other parent will physically abuse the child
- Asking the child with whom they would rather live
- Suggesting to the child that the child's name be changed
- Asking a child to spy on the other parent
- Setting up fun activities for the child during the other parent's visiting time
- Suggesting or reacting with hurt or sadness to a child having a good time with the other parent
- Asking a child about the other parent's personal life
- Being hyper-vigilant about the child's safety when with the other parent
- Making demands on the other parent that is contrary to court orders
- Listening in on the children's phone conversations with the other parent
- Making promises to a child that cannot be fulfilled