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**INSIDE  
THIS ISSUE:**

**CO-PARENTING**

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### **WHAT CO-PARENTING IS ALL ABOUT**

When parties separate, and after a court order is entered granting one parent primary physical custody of a child, that begins a new relationship between estranged spouses. It is no longer a tug of war, and it should not be a chance to exert a power play - it is rather a time to focus on what the child is missing most in this strange and unfamiliar world – a family. You cannot put the family back together again, but you can create a stable social unit for your child by letting him or her get used to mommy's house and daddy's house, with a significant amount of time spent with each parent.

Do not think you have to follow the parenting plan. That is simply a default guide in the event you and your spouse cannot otherwise agree. Co-parenting is one parent facilitating meaningful time between the other parent and the child, in a cordial and non-condescending way, in order to make the child's transition between households easy. Children are generally adaptive, and given time, and consistency, and pleasant interactions, they get used to dual living situations. Co-parenting does not come naturally to parents who are in the midst of a divorce, and who harbor ill will toward each other. But it is the capacity to rise above personal anger and hurt feelings and focus on what the child needs.

There are practical ways to do this. When your child is with you and the other parent calls, let the child talk to the parent! Do not use it as an opportunity to complain about bills or discovery or lawyers or anything else. Do not put the conversation on speaker phone. Do not hover over the phone to listen in. Do not tell your estranged spouse that the child does not want to talk. Do not obstruct phone contact. Telephone etiquette may require some training. Teach your child that it is a way to talk to mom or dad when they are someplace else. If your child needs to go to a doctor, discuss it with your spouse prior to the appointment, not on the way, and not afterward. Legal custody is usually granted to the primary physical custodian, but not always. Legal custody decisions should never be unilateral, except in emergencies, and it should be an opportunity for parents to talk about the child aside from any domestic litigation issues. It's easy to text pictures of your child to the other parent, so do it! Children miss the parent they are not around, and parents miss the child. Ease the discomfort by making time with the other parent a priority.

Flexibility is another hallmark of good co-parenting. Set pick-up and return times for visitation can be disrupted by traffic, weather, and other events beyond one's control. Unless there is an automatic forfeiture of visitation in a parenting plan – which would be extraordinarily unusual – be willing to accommodate the other. Don't be a door mat if your estranged spouse continually asks for flexibility but is not willing to reciprocate. But do attempt to be courteous. It will in all likelihood be returned.

***By Patricia B. Ball***

**“A Good  
Marriage is the  
Union of Two  
Good  
Foregivers.”  
Mark Twain**

**“The secret of  
getting ahead  
is getting  
started .“**

**Mark Twain**

**“Do the right  
thing. It will  
gratify some  
people and  
astonish the  
rest.”**

**Mark Twain**

## **WHAT YOUR PARALEGAL NEEDS FROM YOU THE CLIENT**

We are paralegals, not junior associate attorneys – we cannot give clients legal advice. We are the first contact for a client to communicate with our firm. We provide litigation support service to the attorney. We draft pleadings, correspondence, assemble trial notebooks, schedule appointments, analyze and organize discovery, and get information from clients, witnesses and other sources.

To help minimize your costs and frustrations, we suggest the following:

If you need to speak with us in person, please schedule an appointment. Generally, telephone calls and emails are efficient and fast ways of communication. Stopping by the office without an appointment ties up the client’s time as well as ours.

Cooperate with the discovery process. When you are given a discovery request, asking questions or asking that you produce documents, you usually have about 30 days to respond. Write out your answers to interrogatories legibly, and in numbered order. Gather responsive documents and organize them by the number requested. Give responses to your paralegal at least a week prior to the discovery deadline. Our sorting through hundreds of pages of unorganized documents is time consuming, and this is one way you can save money.

Communicate clearly with your paralegal. If you change your mailing address or telephone number, or any other contact information, let us know immediately. If you only want email communication to a certain address, let your paralegal know. If you do not want to engage in the discovery process, let your paralegal know.

Please remember that there exists an attorney/client relationship with clients and this office. That includes us! We keep client confidences; we expect clients to do the same. It is best to refrain from discussing your case with others, as that can waive the attorney/client privilege – and please do not post what the attorney tells you on Face Book!

We are here to help you. Tension is frequently high and tempers can flare. Please do not take frustrations about the opposing party out on us.

Finally, your case is important to us too. We want the best outcome for you and your family. If there is an issue pending or question you need answered; we are working diligently to get that resolved or the information to you. Rest assured, we want to provide and will provide the information ASAP.

**By: Michelle Blanton  
Marcia Pitts  
Christy Hulsey  
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