

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

AN MINI COURSE ON
ATTACHMENT-BASED
PARENTING AFTER
SEPARATION



Welcome and Getting Started

Welcome to ‘Where Do We Go From Here?’, a mini-course on parenting *with attachment* after separation. I will not start by saying I’m sorry for your situation for I have no idea if your new world is better or worse than what you were in. For some of you, having to think about this new reality is adding salt to an already devastated wound. For others, it is something to be considered in the midst of sweet relief. And for most, probably it lays somewhere in between. I say this because how you feel about your new situation will have an impact on the entire process of how your child interprets it and how you approach handling situations with your now-ex. As you work through the sections in this course, I urge you to also take time to see how *you* are affected and how that may play out in your choices.

Given the highly variable nature of how separations happen and the situations people find themselves in, this course is general in nature, but the activities listed and (if you choose) the office hours can help you personalize the information for your specific situation. The first thing I often ask families/parents who I have worked with on separation and arrangements is: Do you have a lawyer? Most of us hope to get through the separation process relatively amicably, but often legal aid is essential these days (unless you both are on the same page in which case this is wonderful!). Lawyers who specialize in separation will help you draft agreements and help you understand your legal rights, which is especially helpful if the two of you are not getting along as you’d hoped you would.

If you don’t have a lawyer, I urge you to ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is there a history of abuse or other maltreatment?
2. Do you trust your child with your ex?



3. Do you trust your ex to negotiate honestly?
4. Are you able to speak to each other politely?
5. Does your ex agree in person then do what they want?
6. Do you fundamentally agree on arrangements for your child?
7. Were you on the same page parenting-wise when you were together?

If you answered ‘yes’ to question one or ‘no’ to any of the rest, then you probably should consider retaining a lawyer. I understand there is a cost involved here that not everyone can afford. If you cannot, please consider speaking to legal aid where you live to see if that is something that you can qualify for. When we discuss making arrangements for your child(ren) that maximizes attachment, we will discuss when parents are not on the same page, but it is helpful to know your legal rights in this manner. For example, in the United States, there is a huge push towards equal time regardless of any other factors, but this is not the case in other countries like Canada or the UK. Knowing what the courts will expect of you can help you navigate this system.

I often find that the hardest part of separation is the fear of the when the legal requirements will contradict your moral beliefs, especially if you are an attachment-oriented parent to begin with. The courts often ignore things like breastfeeding, co-sleeping, and homeschooling, things that many families find essential for the well-being of their children. This course will hopefully help you find ways to overcome what may be morally difficult, but legally required, so you can remain the ever-attached parent you have always been.

Which brings me to my final welcome point – please know that in almost all situations, attachment *can* happen, even if it’s not the idealized version you would like. There is a particular concern when we are parenting a higher-needs/sensitive/orchid child in terms of separation/divorce as this is considered one of the “adverse childhood events” that are known to be difficult for them. As such, we will discuss these unique children specifically in each relevant section so that if you have one, you can know more of what needs to be done to mitigate the negative effects.

In almost all sections you will have an ‘activity box’ which is how you will work through the ideas and cater them to your situation. As always, I am available in the office hours to help you navigate the more difficult scenarios and help you come up with ideas if they aren’t readily coming to mind.

Activity: Getting Started Checklist

In order to maximize your takeaway from this course, please take a moment to figure out where you are starting from and what knowledge you have to help you integrate the information here to your own situation.

- Have you separated yet or is it a possibility? If it is a possibility, consider the advice herein as things to plan as much for in advance.
- Is it acrimonious? If so, do you have a lawyer?
- Do you know your legal rights for your country/state/province?



- Is your child coping well with the separation thus far?
- Is your child a higher-needs/sensitive/orchid-type child?
- What changes have happened/will happen as a result of the separation in terms of living arrangements and work?

Creating a list of the key factors that will impact your development of a plan and how you work on attachment is crucial. Have this handy as you work through the other activities in the rest of this mini-course.



Explaining Separation to Children and Helping Them Cope with Change



One of the hardest parts of separation is worrying about how our kids will handle this huge upheaval. Even in cases where there has been abuse or neglect, young children (and sometimes older) can *still* feel negative effects as their entire worlds get turned upside-down. There are two main reasons why children struggle so much with separation: predictability and blame. We will discuss each in turn as well as talking about specific strategies you can employ to help your child with each of these areas in the activity boxes.

Predictability

Most of us don't quite realize how important predictability is for our young children. They do best when they know what to expect in their worlds and it is why change can be so frightening and anxiety-provoking. Even think of yourself and how you handle big changes (like moving cities or a new job) – you probably get nervous and worry. Our kids do that, but exponentially more. Sometimes we think change will be good for them (or even know it will be) and yet they seem wholly resistant to it; this need to know what is coming that is what is causing that distress.

To highlight how important predictability is, I want to share some insights from Dr. Bruce Perry, a world-renowned expert on childhood trauma. In his work with children that have been abused, he has spoken about how people get confused when a child who is removed from an abusive home and placed with loving adults will continue to act out. Why can't the child see that they are loved and respond in kind? The answer lays with predictability. As Dr. Perry points out, the abuse the child suffered was still the world they knew and could live within. The child learns how to navigate that world and as awful as it is, they have their coping mechanisms and know what to expect. It's as the old saying goes,

"The devil you know is better than the angel you don't"



So children act out in hopes of creating the environment they have grown to know. They don't have to love it, they just know it. Digging deeper into this, it's not just psychological, but likely has biological elements as well. When we don't know what's coming, we stay on high alert, ready to wait for that proverbial ball to drop, and this has effects on our health and well-being. Being on high alert is linked to higher levels of cortisol and adrenaline and a dysregulation of the vagus nerve (which controls heart rate, digestion, and more); basically, our sympathetic nervous system is sent into overdrive.

This effect can be greater for certain children, namely those kids we consider 'higher-needs' or more sensitive or who may be labeled as orchid children. These children often struggle with stress regulation anyway, given they are so sensitive to stress and can react much stronger to it, and for these kids, the effects of separation may be greater. If you have a child like this, you will need to be extra careful with respect to do what you can to help your child find their new routine and reduce their stress, but know that routine is often the antidote to their stress so make it happen as much as possible. If you are in court and facing a resistant ex to creating a stable schedule, I recommend bringing in the work of Dr. Thomas Boyce who is well-respected and highlights the crucial role of routine in his work for these children. Courts tend to like seeing evidence-based recommendations so keep that name handy.

Activity: Helping Kids Find Predictability

The following is a list of things that have been found to be helpful for children who are struggling with change. Not all children will respond to all of the suggestions, so you may need to try certain ones and see what works for *your* child. Obviously, the more both sides implement these, the better, but even having them at one house can make a big difference. I recommend the following strategies whenever possible:

- Have as normal a schedule as possible. Sometimes we want to be more flexible for parents' needs, but the more of a routine there is with respect to when the child is seeing each parent, the better it is for your child.
- Use a visual schedule. If the child is spending some time in each household or even if there are just visiting days with one parent, having a visual schedule can help your child to see the whole week and know when things are happening without having to ask. Even young children (like toddler-age) can benefit from a visual schedule.
- For back and forth visits, chunk days together. It can be hard to be apart for more than one night, but if there is a schedule that involves overnights, the more they are together, the easier it can be. Children can struggle when they go between homes and so if you have lots of back and forth, you will often end up with more struggles.
- Create a welcome home routine. Having a little ritual that involves connection when your child returns to you (after a visit or overnight away) can help ease the transition and struggle that comes with the change. Often more active play is good as it helps them release some of the anxiety that comes from the change. Write out what the routine will look like for the 10-15 minutes that you have it (longer if you like though shorter is often more doable) and have that pinned up somewhere so you remember it.



Identify the areas here you would like to implement and then spend the next week working to implement them. Something like the visual schedule is an easy way to get started whereas finding a welcome home routine may take a bit longer to develop as you work through trial and error as to what works best for your child.

Blame

The second element that often comes into play is blame. This can manifest in a couple different ways. First, the child may blame themselves for the divorce and feel that they were not good enough or something of the sort for the parents to stay together. So many families I know feel that their child couldn't possibly feel this way, but it doesn't stem from bad parenting or anything parents might do, but just because kids aren't logical in their thinking. We all tend to overestimate our own control with things and children are no different; they feel they have far more power over life than they do. Because this can be a natural state of affairs, you need to be on the lookout for it and even pre-emptively deal with it.

The second way in which this manifests is by blaming one or both of the parents. Sometimes this stems from one parent making comments to a child about the divorce and this is completely, totally wrong. Parents should remember that their child is *not* someone to discuss the personal details of divorce with, but not all parents remember that. If you are doing this, please stop. If you are on the receiving end of this and you are comfortable talking to your ex about it, please do. If you know it will fall on deaf ears, you may need to speak to your lawyer about it. In the worst case scenario where you may not have any options, I recommend using stories to help your child understand what they are hearing isn't something to internalize. Stories are discussed in the activity section below so you will have a better idea of how to use them to help your child.

But what if it's not coming from the other parent? This is quite normal as children – especially older children – can feel like the parents are to blame for not working hard enough to avoid the disruption to their lives. Typically, children who are struggling more with that change are prone to take part in the blame game. When this happens, parents often try to debate or negotiate their way out of this, but this probably won't get you anywhere because the feelings your child has aren't based on being logical. You must remember that this blame comes from their own sense of hurt and anger along with their struggle to cope with the new reality. So the first thing to do is to see this as a symptom, one that's telling you your child is struggling with the transition more than you'd like. This means you may want to revisit the predictability section for your child.

The second thing to do is take a look at how much control your child can have in their new world. Often we set schedules based on parents lives, but especially for older kids, having a say in what their week looks like can be helpful. Now because they may be angry, we have to balance this control with what is still best; that is, a child who is angry may say they don't want to see the parent who may have moved out, but we know that isn't healthy for their relationship in the long-term (unless there is abuse going on



in which case you are hopefully already engaged with the police and a lawyer). However, being able to pick which days they see a parent may be helpful in mitigating some feelings of blame.

More than anything else, you must focus on acceptance and connection. At what is likely a trying time for you, I am going to say you have to bear a bigger burden of taking on those negative emotions and letting them roll off you. When you remember that your child isn't really blaming you, but expressing their inner turmoil, you can hopefully allow them to do so without trying to change their mind. Accepting their emotions is a huge help for them; it doesn't mean accepting blame, but rather accepting the negative feelings they have. You will have lots of time to talk about the thoughts behind their blame and counter them in an appropriate way, but in the moments of lashing out, you need to focus on accepting then validating the emotions behind the thoughts and then connect with your child. After all, when we think about attachment, it all begins with that validation and connection.

For many parents this is so hard so I urge you now to make sure you have support for those really hard times. Knowing that you can sit with your child while they lash out at you is easier if you know you have someone to turn to after. This may be a family member or a friend or if you've got an amicable separation, it may even be your ex if you're both going through it. Having that person is like you putting on your oxygen mask first on the plane – if you don't care for yourself, you will not be able to be that stable force your child needs.

Activity: Helping Kids Accept and Move Away From Blame

Helping our kids often requires a multi-faceted approach here. Your strategies will also depend upon your child's age and developmental level. For children under 3 years of age, they may lack the capacity to vocalize what is wrong as their world changes so I recommend the following strategies:

- Use stories (and lots of them). Young children understand the world through stories so the more you are able to tell your child stories about separation, the better. There are stories written that you can read regularly, but you can also create your own. The reason children love stories so much and why they help is that the focus on someone else helps keep their anxiety at bay. When we are talking about them in particular, it can actually raise their stress levels, but hearing stories will still elicit a self-focused understanding through mirror neurons, but without the associated stress so they actually can learn even more. The following are the crucial parts to include when coming up with your own story and you can absolutely come up with multiple stories to tell your child in order to include all elements in a short story:
 - It should be about a child a similar age to them.
 - It should involve emotions and behaviours that your child is experiencing. You should also explicitly link the emotions and behaviours in the story to help your child start to learn how our emotions dictate our behaviours.
 - It should always be clear about the emotions of the parent too. You need to make clear the parent loves the child even when the parent doesn't say it or isn't there (like when a child is visiting the other parent).
 - It should include some reasons behind the separation that are appropriate for a child to



understand and should include that the child did not do anything to cause this.

- It should include some of the ways you hope your child will cope, like talking to you about the change when stressed out.
- Have a special toy or blanket (or something) that your child can have with them when they are apart from you. This can help keep that connection that is so important to our kids feeling loved and validated. Very young kids may struggle with understanding this so you may need to keep trying.

For older children, the use of stories is still quite powerful so I do recommend it, but the older they are, you may need to move towards anecdotes over stories. Our children benefit greatly from hearing that they aren't alone in their experiences and so you can share times when you may have gone through something similar (even if it wasn't your own parents getting divorced, but any big change). Older children can also benefit from something special to connect you while apart though it may be more abstract. In addition to these, I also recommend:

- Set times to talk and process. Create a time each week where you expect to sit down and process the emotions and events of the week. Knowing this time is a safe space where your child can say anything can be helpful and also make it easier for you as you know what this time will involve.
- Therapy. Older kids can benefit greatly from talking to someone outside the situation who can help them with whatever they are experiencing. If you have access and can afford it, it is a wonderful pre-emptive measure.
- Do not become permissive. Sometimes parents overcompensate during this stage by handing over more control to their child than they are ready to accept. In these cases we actually can increase our child's anxiety and stress. Being in charge of your emotions and reactions will help you avoid this.
- Talk through the blame thoughts away from the emotional moment. When your child is calm, ask them to process their cognitions around blame. For each thought, you can ask why they believe that and then offer a counter and explain any misconceptions they may have. This can take a while to work through and you'll need to note the things they say when they are upset so you can bring them up outside that moment to process.

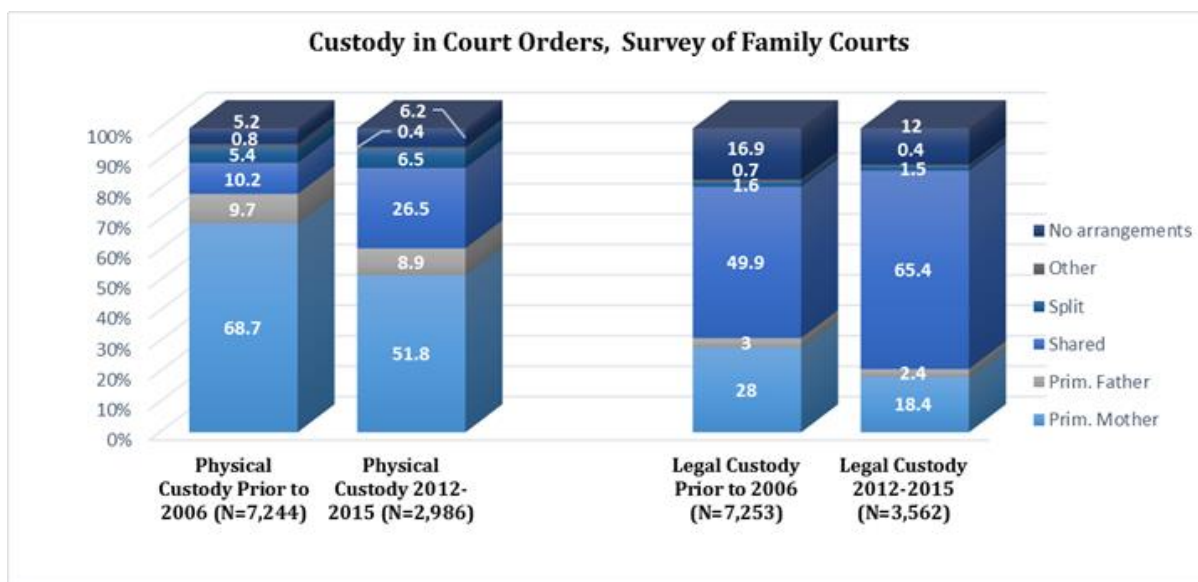
For more sensitive children of any age, I also strongly recommend introducing guided meditations, yoga, or something that can help them balance their emotions as needed. These kids struggle with being reactive to stress and may be more prone to experience it as they go through this so having strategies they can use regularly can help.

Take time to write out 1-2 strategies to include over the next couple weeks. If you are planning on creating your own stories, it can help to practice them ahead of time, write them out, or even record them so you can play them to your child or listen back to hear what you would want to change. Over the course of the next week, see how your child responds to what you implement, but do keep it up for a week. Sometimes when we try something once, it doesn't seem to do anything, but our kids are still processing so always judge over the course of the week.





What Is Your Baseline?



Source: Justice Department of Canada

Before we begin looking at all of the elements of devising a plan that highlights attachment for *your* particular situation, we need to start by understanding the baselines that the courts tend to look to. Unfortunately, there is not universal agreement on what is the best course of practice across countries or even amongst researchers. However, you can bet that depending on where you are, the courts either fall towards favouring the mother more *or* favouring joint custody. Of course, this only matters if you and your ex are on different pages and asking the courts to make the decision for you. If you two have an agreed upon situation based on your and your child(ren)'s needs, you likely won't have to face any changes (and even if there are court-ordered changes, if you're both in agreement you may not need to worry about them).

The concern for most families is when there's disagreement. In these cases, there is typically a baseline for what will be awarded and you will need to talk to someone who is aware of the tendencies in your geographical location (it can vary within countries as well) so you will know what kind of information you will need to provide to make your case (whatever you believe is best for your child). In this section we'll review the two baselines for you to better understand the research behind them and then a third view which I admit is my own take on the research that we do have (along with a big dose of logic). The activity in this section is to help you identify the ideal baseline and, if relevant, how your current situation varies from it or may vary in the case of court-ordered plans.

The Joint Custody Baseline

This is the most common scenario in the United States where there is a big push to consider joint custody with overnights as a given unless evidence is presented that would counter this. (In contrast, however, this is not the baseline in Canada where those who provide guidance have interpreted the evidence quite differently.) The push for joint custody is based on the belief of many researchers on



divorce that shared parenting is to be considered a positive causal effect for child outcomes. There is quite a bit of research on the positive effects of having paternal involvement in a child's life (barring abuse or any risk to the child) and thus the idea is that the earlier this is implemented, the better it is for the child.

In a summary paper of a panel of shared parenting experts that took place in May 2017 (Braver & Lamb, 2018), the general consensus was the joint shared custody should be a de facto situation and that no parent should have veto power over a situation or planned parenting scenario. One review has been used to support the de facto argument for shared parenting. Nielsen (2014) reviewed the research on shared parenting and found that the balance of evidence was that shared parenting benefitted everyone, regardless of age or the amount of conflict. (However, it's worth noting that the studies were predominantly with older children, though there were some with younger children.) It is worth noting that the typical situation of shared parenting includes overnights. This is not mandatory though and it may be that if you are in a situation where you don't believe overnights are a good idea that you can still reach that 65-35% threshold that defines "shared parenting". (We'll discuss overnights specifically in a later section.)

The main counter to joint custody has been the risk of insecure attachment with the primary carer (typically the mother) and the joint custody experts have argued that the risk is overstated. They have based their position on a couple review/position papers from Warshak (2000, 2014) who used daycare data to suggest the risk was not real. This has become a very powerful argument (one not without its critics, myself included, and we'll discuss that in the other baseline discussions) and one that can be used in court to argue against any perceived favouritism for the primary parent. The shared parenting advocates also argue that without exposure to taking over certain parental duties, the other parent will never learn how to bond with their child in these ways and this can cause attachment fractures.

The Primary Parent Baseline

The counter to the joint custody baseline is the primary parent baseline and this was the historical norm – perhaps to a fault – for many years. It used to be one parent (typically the father) would leave and have limited access to their children. The stability of one relationship was thought to be beneficial for the child, but as research has caught up with the effects of a lack of paternal involvement, the very one-sided view has been replaced with a view that still favours one primary parent, but does involve regular contact with the other parent.

The premise behind this – which can be rejected by many, as is seen in the USA – is that the child has a primary attachment figure and especially for the time that they are young (the first 3 years), they require more contact with that primary attachment figure, especially in times of stress, which is exactly what separation or divorce is. Of course we do know that children do form multiple attachments, but may have one primary attachment figure in their younger years and this is typically the parent who spends the majority of the time caring for them (this can be either parent). It is likely for this reason that the primary support for this baseline view comes from attachment researchers (e.g., Soloman & Biringen, 2001).



Further support for this baseline comes from research which has found that shared parenting time in high-conflict separations was associated with poorer child adjustment many years later, *but not during the divorce proceedings*, which may impact how others have previously interpreted this data (Mahrer, O'Hara, Sandler, & Wolchik, 2018). That is, the child seems fine during the divorce proceedings with shared parenting, but long-term this can cause poorer outcomes when there is high conflict between the parents.

As mentioned, in Canada (where I live) the presumption of shared parenting is rejected and a recent review found that that the lack of this presumption should be maintained (Bala, Birnbaum, Poitras, Saini, Cyr, & LeClair, 2017). The reasons for this position include:

- Most families are not characterized by equal time or care when parents are cohabitating;
- Work schedules and other practical issues often make shared parenting impractical;
- Social science research does *not* support the enactment of equal parenting time, especially the arguments used regarding daycare; and
- Given the unique nature of each family, any presumption is unwarranted.

The reasons given here are the main reasons why I take a third position which I will now outline...

The 'As-It-Was' Baseline

My particular view is that, as Bala and colleagues (2017) identified, the unique nature of each family precludes any baseline that sets precedent. My family should not be held to findings for another family whose situation is unique and distinct, even if there are similarities. When you look at the number of factors to consider when developing your unique plan here, you (and possibly your lawyer) can hopefully appreciate why no two families are the same.

I firmly believe in the importance of regular contact with both parents to build healthy attachments (again, assuming there is no risk to the child) and some of the findings and consensus points from researchers should be considered, including:

- More frequent contact with a parent is generally more beneficial than longer chunks that are further apart;
- Joint legal custody has positive effects even without joint shared custody. This is more symbolic in that children and parents each benefit from knowing the other parent has shared decision-making and parenting, especially as it allows each parent to continue the type of involvement that existed while they were co-habiting (if at all);
- Parental involvement in daily activities like helping with homework and dropping kids off at school has a positive effect in their ability to build bonds and be involved in the child's daily life; and
- The situation prior to separation should hold the most weight in a child-centered plan.

This last point is crucial. One of the counters to *both* types of baselines that are often in use is that they fail to account for what the situation has been prior to separation. In the case of the primary parent



baseline, if the other parent was actively involved in elements like homework or putting the child to bed, the more disruptive approach would be to force the child to abandon that which would have a negative impact on the attachment with that parent. In the case of the shared parenting baseline, if a child (especially a young child) is used to having one parent do bedtimes, forcing the other to take over can cause anxiety and trauma if the child is too young to comprehend what is happening and why.

My view is that what the child is used to is what should be the norm as much as that is possible, but that all arrangements are not set in stone. When a separation occurs, you will need to identify short-term plans, transition plans, and longer-term plans (something we'll discuss in depth in the Developing a Plan section later). The short-term plan should be to keep things as steady as possible for your child and there are various ways of doing this. In the activity box below you can find the questions to ask to help you identify your baseline *and* your longer-term goals for the plan you devise. If you have already separated, you can *still* implement this by using the baseline as what it is for you now and what your longer-term goals are. Or you may want to use it to compare the current situation with pre-separation baselines so you can find out how to best help your child cope with these differences.

A special note here on change with orchid or high-needs children. As previously mentioned, these children are highly susceptible to the effects of their environments and do not handle change very well. The change that can follow a separation can be far more devastating for these children and so hopefully both of you can be on the same page to provide the type of stability they need as they *slowly* transition to this new normal. However, if your ex is not on that page, this can be very hard and I strongly recommend focusing on the ideas about predictability for your child listed in that activity box and also on some of the ideas below in this section's activity box.

Activity: Identifying Your Baseline

This is a hugely important step to take when considering or first separating. The anxiety that can be caused for kids when facing the change of separation can be mitigated by keeping things as steady as possible while the child adapts to the new reality of co-parenting. As such, you want to go through the following areas and do a realistic check as to who has been engaged at each step and look at some of the ideas presented as to how to create a sense of normalcy in the face of change. For each section, focus on who *regularly* does this or if it truly is split, note that. If you have already separated, you will want to create a list of the 'as-it-was' baseline *and* the new separation plan baseline so you can better see where the real changes are for your child and help them find ways to overcome this loss of predictability.

Morning

- Who gets your child ready in the morning?
- Who feeds your child in the morning?
- Who takes your child to any activities or school?

Daytime

- Where does your child spend their days? Who are they with?



- Who picks your child up from any daytime activities?
- What is the post-activity/pre-dinner routine and who is in charge of it?
- Who helps with homework (if relevant)?

Evening

- Who handles dinner and who eats with your child?
- Who handles bath time/shower time?
- What is the evening routine and who is a part of it?

Sleep

- Who gets your child ready for bed (e.g., brush teeth, PJs, any diaper changes)?
- Who puts your child to sleep?
- Where does your child sleep and who does your child sleep with?
- Who handles any night wakings?

If you have not separated, you can use this baseline to start thinking about how you can maintain most of these steps in the short-term and present this to your ex or your lawyer when devising a co-parenting plan. I also recommend knowing the baseline in your area and seeing what it *might* look like to identify areas that may be more different if you were forced to accept the court's baseline. If, however, you have a new plan in place that you see varies from the original baseline, please take a look at some of the suggestions below to help in each area of the day.

Morning

- Whoever is no longer taking part in this on the regular basis, have them leave notes or morning messages for the child to create a sense of continuity. Video recordings or letters (for older children) can be helpful in reminding them the other parent is thinking of them during this changing time.
- Have favourite breakfast foods that the child has regularly (so long as they like them) so the element of eating becomes part of a routine. Even having a morning menu for the week can be helpful.

Daytime

- If there is any change to the daytime routine (e.g., starting a new daycare as a parent has to return to work or for days with another parent), make sure the transition is done with attachment to the new caregiver as the focus. If you are taking this course, let me know if you want a copy of my ebook on daycare and I would be happy to provide it free of charge to help you navigate this new situation.
- Use a transition object to help your child remember you if they are now apart during the day.
- When your child is with you, make sure the post-day/pre-dinner routine involves time to get physical energy out as this is often how stress is manifest in young children.
- If your child is school-age, do not prioritize school over connection. During the transition periods, you will want to do more to connect with your child when you are with them than worry about



school assignments, especially for younger children. If you need to talk to the school about the changes and the effects on your child, please do so they can provide a bit of leeway as you navigate this transition.

Evening

- If you have typically done the evening routine and now your ex is doing it part of the time, you will want to talk to your child about how now they get two routines. Have them take part in identifying how you do the routine with them (and hopefully your ex does the same and you can offer suggestions, but you cannot control it) and focus on making sure your evening routine meets their needs when you are with them.
- As much as possible, eat dinner together. That time at night can be very helpful, especially if things get more hectic because you're taking on more of the load as a solo-parent on your days.

Sleep

- The most common problem here is when a child is used to co-sleeping or nursing overnight and this is now removed part of the time. Using stories, transition objects, and mementos of you can help when they are away, but most of what you will need to do is provide support and allow your child to express all the emotions.
- If your child is used to co-sleeping, suggest your ex co-sleep as well.
- Create a video of you that can be played to your child overnight if they miss you (and your ex is willing to show it) and are struggling.
- Remember that you should continue to do what you were doing when your child is with you. If your child is used to nursing to sleep with you, continue! If you co-sleep, continue! Even if there is a change for part of the time, the more you can maintain that continuity, the better.

This is the end of Where Do We Go From Here? Week 1. Next week we will look at how to devise a plan for you - including all the elements that should be considered - that focuses on attachment as well as some tools that may be helpful in navigating co-parenting, especially in times of higher conflict.



Relevant References

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