



GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS IN
THE BEST INTEREST OF
THE CHILDREN

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Although the Court does have the power to dissolve the bonds of matrimony, the Court does not have the power to dissolve the bonds that exist between you as parents and your children. Both of you, therefore, are to continue your responsibility to emotionally support your children. You are to cooperate in the duty and right of each other to love those children. By love, the Court means the training, the education, the disciplining and motivation of those children. Cooperation means to present the other party to the children with an attitude of respect either for the mother or the father. Neither of you should in any way downplay, belittle or criticize the other in the presence of those children; because you may emotionally damage your children and/or you may develop a disappointment or hatred in the minds of those children for the party that attempts to belittle or demean the other in the presence of those children. It is utmost importance that you both recognize your children's right to love both parents without fear of being disloyal to either one of you.

In support of this admonition, the Courts have drafted written guidelines on your future conduct relating to the best interest of your children. I sincerely urge that you preserve them, periodically read them and always be guided by them.



GUIDELINES FOR SEPARATED PARENTS

As you know, your children are usually the losers when their parents separate. They are deprived of the full-time, proper guidance that two parents can give – guidance and direction essential to their moral and spiritual growth.

It is highly desirable that you abstain from making unkind remarks about each other. Recognize that such remarks are not about a former spouse but are about a parent of your child. Such comments reflect adversely upon the children.

It is urged that both parties cooperate to the end that mutual decisions concerning the interest of the children can be made objectively. Parents should remember that the mother that has custody should urge the children to find time to be with the father and encourage them to realize that their father has affection for them and contributes to their support. The father should recognize that his plans for visitation must be adjusted from time to time in order to accommodate the planned activities of the child. Visitation should be a pleasant experience rather than a duty. Cooperation in giving notice and promptness in maintaining hours of visitation are important to avoid ruffled feelings.

Although there is probably some bitterness between you, it should not be inflicted upon your children. In every child's mind there must and should be an image of two good parents. Your future conduct with your children will be helpful to them if you follow these suggestions.

I. DO NOT'S

- A. Do not poison your child's mind against either the mother or father by discussing their shortcomings.
- B. Do not use your visitation as an excuse to continue arguments with your spouse.
- C. Do not visit your children if you have been drinking.

II. DO'S

- A. Be discreet when you expose your children to any member of the opposite sex with whom you may be emotionally involved.
- B. Notify your spouse as soon as possible if you are unable to keep your visitation. It's unfair to keep your children waiting – and worse to disappoint them by not coming at all.
- C. Make your visitation as pleasant as possible for your children by not questioning them regarding the activities of your spouse and by not making extravagant promises which you know you cannot or will not keep.
- D. Minimize the amount of time the children are in the care of strangers or relatives.



E. Always work for the spiritual well-being, health, happiness and safety of your children.

III. GENERAL

- A.** The parent with whom the children live must prepare them both physically and mentally for the visitation. The children should be available at the time mutually agreed-upon.
- B.** If one parent has plans for the children that conflict with the visitation and these plans are in the best interests of the children, be adults and work out the problem together.
- C.** Arrangements should be made through visitation to provide the mother with some time "away" from the family. She needs the time for relaxation and recreation. Upon her return, she will be refreshed and better prepared to resume her role as mother and head of the household. Therefore, provide for extended periods of visitation such as weekends and vacations.

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN IN DIVORCE

1. The right to be treated as important human beings, with unique feelings, ideas and desires, and not as a source of argument between parents.
2. The right to a continuing relationship with both parents and the freedom to receive love from and express love for both.
3. The right to express love and affection for each parent without having to stifle that love because of fear or disapproval by the other parent.
4. The right to know that their parents' decision to divorce is not their responsibility and that they will live with one parent and will visit the other parent.
5. The right to continuing care and guidance from both parents.
6. The right to honest answers to questions about the changing family relationships.
7. The right to know and appreciate what is good in each parent without one parent degrading the other.
8. The right to have a relaxed, secure relationship with both parents without being placed in a position to manipulate one parent against the other.
9. The right to have the custodial parent not undermine visitation by suggestion tempting



alternatives or by threatening to withhold visitation as a punishment for the children's wrongdoing.

10. The right to be able to experience regular and consistent visitation and the right to know the reason for a cancelled visit.

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