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Tips for Navigating the School Year With Your Ex Spouse

BY DEBBIE MARTINEZ, DIVORCE COACH



NAVIGATING THE SCHOOL YEAR IS TOUGH ENOUGH, BUT when you are divorced and trying to co-parent with an uncooperative ex spouse, your job as the primary parent gets even more difficult and stressful. Here are some tips to lessen the stress of dealing with your ex:

1. Make sure the school has your ex's email and mailing address so that they can mail things directly to him. This takes you out of the picture.
2. Any school papers that need to be given to your ex should be scanned and emailed or mailed. Don't get the children involved by making them the messenger. Provide the teachers and coaches your ex's email so they can email him directly whenever possible.
3. Make sure the child has a set of uniform clothes at your ex's house. Even if you have to buy it. That way that set becomes his responsibility and one less thing for you to worry about.
4. Money is always an issue with exes. If you are dealing with an ex that feels since he pays you child support, you should cover ALL costs right down to book fair money, accept it and move on. Don't make the child feel uncomfortable because he/she has to ask for book fair money. If the child will be staying with your ex on the night before the book fair, make sure they have money before they leave.
5. Set up a calendar with your ex that clearly outlines days the children will be with him and times of pick up and drop off. This avoids any daily confusion. Its best to have a calendar set for at least 3-4 months.
6. Have a set of books and school supplies at your ex's even if you have to buy them. This way your child doesn't have to worry about remembering where a certain book is, or lug things back and forth.
7. Try to plan school projects ahead so that they are at one parent's home and you're not realizing the night before it's due that your child will be with your ex.
8. Take the emotion out of any emails or texts or phone conversations. Don't get caught up in what is "right" or "fair". The goal here is that your child is not worried or stressed and that the school year runs smoothly for you. It's the daily drips and drabs that can unravel us as primary parents. With a little planning and acceptance of the way things are, it will be a better school year for you and your child.
9. Talk with your ex regarding the consistency of staying in one home during exam weeks.
10. And this last one is for the kids. Develop a Command Center. This is set up in a location where the kids will pass by it everyday. Have a whiteboard where the kids write down what they need three days in advance of needing it, an in and out box with their names on it. As the kids unpack their book bags, they put any papers you need to read or sign in the in box and in the morning, they go to the out box and take whatever is in there. Also, have a calendar so they see what their activities are and any special things they need for that day. This system accomplishes several things. Children thrive on structure, they have the security of knowing where to look for information and it teaches them responsibility.

Model stress free living as best you can. Remember, your mood sets their mood.

Debbie Martinez, MA is a certified, mindful life coach specializing in divorce (aka: heartbreak coach). She professionally coaches clients on how to avoid the breakup backlash and live better, not bitter. As a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator trained in collaborative divorce, Debbie gives clients the tools they need to successfully untie the knot and stand strong in the wake of adversity. She brings her formal training and life experience into her coaching practice to empower and educate clients through their divorce journey and onto new beginnings. You can contact Debbie at debbie@thepowerofdivorcecoach.com.