

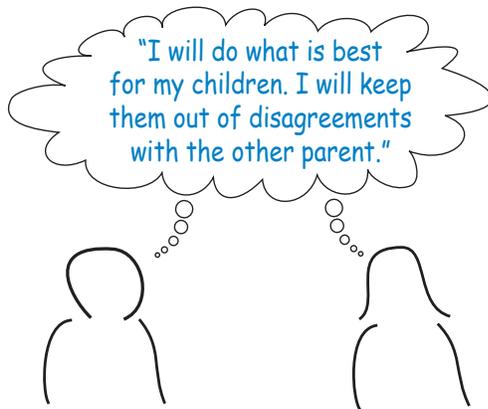
Don't Put Your Kids in the Middle

Custody problems are hard on everyone, especially children. Read this sheet to learn how to:

- Talk with your kids about custody, and
- Make things easier for your kids.

Golden Rules for Parents

- ① **Control your emotions.** Be polite when you talk to or about the other parent.
- ② **Keep your commitments to your kids.** This makes them feel more loved and secure. It also makes co-parenting easier.
- ③ **Be there for your kids.** Think about what they need from you now.
- ④ **Do not use your kids to communicate with the other parent.** It's bad for kids to be in the middle of your dispute.
- ⑤ **Do what is best for your kids.**



Do it for your kids!

How much do my kids need to know?

That depends on the child. Let your kids know that they can ask questions about custody. Tell them:

- You will answer any questions they have,
- You will do your best to make things as easy for them as you can,
- You will always love them no matter what, and
- The problems with the other parent are **not** their fault.

How to talk to your kids about custody:

- **Keep your language positive.**
- **Explain** that you and the other parent are trying hard to agree on an arrangement that will be best for the kids.
- **Tell your kids that you love them** and will be there for them. Repeat it.
- **Use kid-friendly language.** The way you express your thoughts and feelings to your kids makes a big difference in how they (and you!) deal with custody. Choose your words carefully. For example:

<i>Instead of saying...</i>	<i>Say...</i>
Has visitation with Custody and visitation	Comes over, stays with Parenting plan, agreement
Wife, ex-wife	Children's mother
Husband, ex-husband	Children's father

- **Be a good role model.** Your kids look to you to see how to cope with a tough situation. Instead of showing stress and negative feelings, be a good listener and show respect for their feelings.
- **Do not make unkind comments** about the other parent or other people involved.
- **Keep any anger and frustration away from your kids.** When you show anger, hurt, or frustration, it upsets and worries your children.
- **Do not use your kids as messengers.** Do not ask your kids to give written or spoken messages to the other parent. It is your responsibility to find a way to communicate with the other parent that does not involve your children.

What else can I do to make this easier for my kids?

- **Find them someone to talk to.** Talking to a trusted adult can help your children deal with the stresses of custody. This could be a counselor or a local support group.

Check out your county's Social Services Agency. They can give you information about free or low-cost child or family counseling in your area.