

Co-Parenting Tip of the Month

By Diane Dierks, LMFT, CFLE

After divorce or separation, the biggest change for kids is they are now living in two homes, but they fully expect their parents to cater to their requests as they always have and find a way to figure out the hard stuff – as they always have. Unless co-parents become business like in their execution of the parenting plan, they could create a confusing situation in which just taking care of their child's simple needs (getting them from point A to point B and paying for stuff) is a major deal. So, when a child says, "What's the big deal? Why can't I just stay here tonight?" which is a valid question from a child's perspective, the parent needs to say, "Because your mom and I don't have the same kind of relationship we used to have. It's better for you that we stick to a schedule so that you don't have to be involved in any conflict between us." That child might get angry that you can't just do what he wants in the moment, but eventually, he will get used to the idea that things are different now. This is a sad part of divorce and one of the hardest things for kids to understand. But trying to pretend that all is the same as it was will eventually have negative consequences, even for parents who try to be cooperative. All it takes is a remarriage or a new person coming into the mix, and you will quickly realize that a business-like relationship with your ex and a structured schedule is probably best for everyone.