



THREE MODELS OF CO-PARENTING

Co-parenting Works! Helping Your Children Thrive After Divorce
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Dr. Mavis Hetherington developed another way to identify the categories of co-parenting: conflicted, cooperative, or parallel.¹ The following is an excerpt from Dr. Hetherington's book, *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*.



Conflicted co-parenting is when former spouses make nasty comments about each other, seek to undermine each other's relationship with the child, and fight openly in front of the child. Aside from being damaging, constant put-downs of the other parent may backfire, producing resentment and a spirited defense of the criticized parent by the child. One ten-year-old said, "When she goes into her usual routine about what a loser my dad is, I just hate her. I can't stand it. Last night I yelled at her to stop and threw my dinner plate on the floor and locked myself in my room. She tried to make up but started with, 'But you know your dad's really irresponsible.' I cried all night."

Cooperative co-parenting arrangements are where parents put the well-being of their children first and it is often difficult to attain. These parents talk over the children's problems, coordinate household rules and child-rearing practices, and adapted their schedules to fit their children's needs. Two decades later, the couples who cooperated were glad they did.

Parallel co-parenting is a mixed blessing. It is the most common form of co-parenting (according to Dr. Hetherington) and is the easiest to implement. These parents simply ignore each other. They do not interfere with each other's parenting or make any coordinated parenting strategies. They usually send communication through their children. The lack of parenting communication opens the door to problems and as children get older monitoring can be difficult. Children can also manipulate or play one parent against the other due since they are the messenger.

I hope that these two categorizations of co-parenting models helps you identify where *you* are in the system—and where you might want to grow toward.

What would it take to get from where you are to where you want to be?

What action steps can you take to improve your co-parenting relationship (for those who are conflicted) or to establish more appropriate boundaries (for those who are perfect pals)?

Are your children worth the extra effort? Yes! Of course they are and they will benefit from the self control and hard work that you BOTH put into raising them as a TEAM. They need you both. They love you both... Please, do whatever it takes to let them live freely between both Mom and Dad!

For more information, please visit: www.CoparentingInternational.com

¹ Hetherington, M., and Kelly, J. (2002). *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*. New York, London. W.W. Norton & Company.