HOW PARENTS CAN USE

The CoParenting Toolkit

By Isolina Ricci, Ph.D.

The Goal of Healthy CoParenting
Is For You and Your Child to Thrive

Healthy coparenting should give you and your child the chance to thrive, not just cope. It is more than setting up two homes and a schedule. It is also about how you build a life for yourself and your child, your relationship with the other parent, and your individual relationships with your children. As coparents, you’ll be solving problems, communicating, networking, making decisions, settling disagreements, and hopefully building a strong coparent team. This Toolkit and the Mom’s House, Dad’s House books were written exactly for these situations.

TOOLS FOR YOUR SUCCESS
What Are They?

In this book, “tools” are a selection of the best tips, strategies, ideas, quizzes, lists, guidelines, and checklists that have helped many people with different situations over many years. Each chapter will have tools for you to try. Some amplify and update the classic frameworks in Mom’s House, Dad’s House while others are relatively new. You can count on at least some of the tools in this Toolkit to give you ideas and options.

You Already Know a Lot

You probably use your own version of some tools in this book for your everyday life already. But coparenting often means “re-tooling” or retrofitting ways we act. For example, you know that you have to communicate with the other parent, but with coparenting you’ll learn there are certain words you can choose to get your point across instead of other words which could shut things down. You’ll find specifics about these words in Chapter 6: Try These Tools to Side-Step Communication Potholes. Knowing the best words to use is one of the important adjustments for effective coparenting.

Perfect coparenting is not realistic. Instead, set your sights on your “best possible” type of coparenting. Make it good enough so that it helps you and your child thrive, not just survive.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

You don’t have to try everything in this Toolkit. There’s enough here to give you plenty of options. If you just choose one idea or action every few weeks, it could help to relieve your stress and guide you toward more success as a coparent.

Go ahead and skip around from chapter to chapter. But first read about the CoParenting Highway in Chapters 1 and 2. This can help you focus on what you want from the other chapters.
Keep this Toolkit as your private copy. You may want to keep your answers to certain questions confidential. The other parent needs his or her own private copy. Keep this Toolkit in a secure place. Your children should not read your answers.

Share some Worksheets. You decide which worksheets you fill in by yourself, which you share with the other parent, and which you work on together. You might share some worksheets with your counselor and your attorney since they contain useful information that can help them understand your situation better.

Dedicate a confidential notebook or journal to your coparenting experience. You may want to make notes on your feelings or experiences but also your answers to different Quizzes or your notes about the various suggested Guidelines.

If you are parenting alone right now, you may still find some useful tools in this book. Even though parenting solo is a really tough job, it can also be very rewarding and successful. If you are a solo parent who still has some communications with the other parent and his or her family members, Chapters 4 through 10 may help you set limits, pick tools and strategies for communications, make decisions, and keep strong for yourself and for your children. Ideally, no matter what your circumstances, you have or can build a support group and a sense of community with your friends, church, and extended family. Check out Chapter 11 of this book about Parenting Plans, and certain chapters of Mom’s House, Dad’s House, especially if the absent parent does come back into the picture.

Do you have any of the Mom’s House, Dad’s House books? If yes, there are NOTES at the end of each chapter in this Toolkit with the exact pages in those books where you can find additional information or the original perspectives.