

8 STEPS TO MY CHILD'S POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

STEP 8:

Cooperation or Conflict:
Co-parenting is forever

STEP 7:

All a Winner or Winner Take All:
Negotiating agreements

STEP 6:

Defuse or Light the Fuse:
Taking control of conflict

STEP 5:

Neither Fight nor Take Flight:
Managing my own anger

STEP 4:

Make It Better or Keep It Bitter:
Choosing my personal path

STEP 3:

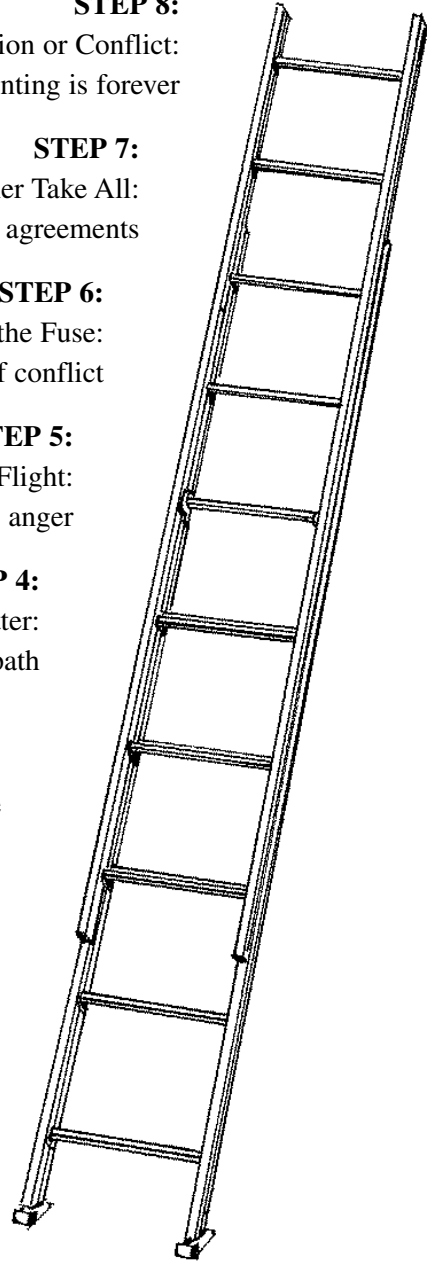
Letting Go or Holding On:
Changing my long-term role

STEP 2:

Plan for Peace or Tug of War:
Allowing my child to love both parents

STEP 1:

Child Focused or Out of Focus:
Making the commitment to caring

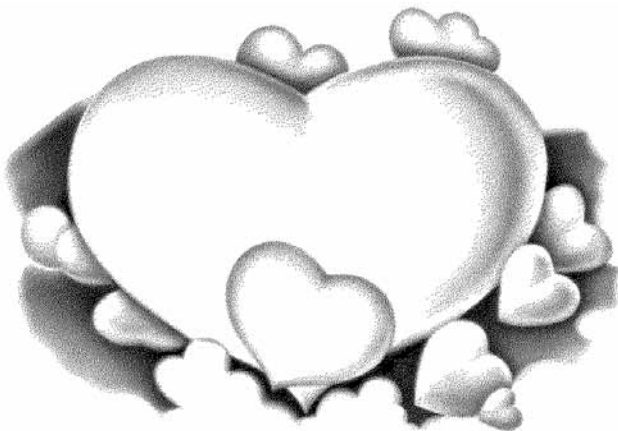




Love Isn't Easy.....How Far Will You Go?

Directions: Slowly read each question asking yourself, "How far will I go?" Answer honestly. You will notice that the first five questions present easier decisions because they indicate eminent physical danger while the last five present emotional danger. Are you willing to risk placing your child in danger of any kind?

- 1. Would you jump into an ice-cold stream to save your child from drowning?**
- 2. Would you give up one of your kidneys if it would save your child's life?**
- 3. Would you sell all your worldly possessions for costly life-saving surgery for your child?**
- 4. Would you change your diet if your child's doctor diagnosed your child with diabetes?**
- 5. Would you give up smoking if your child had a high risk of lung disease or asthma?**
- 6. Would you forgive your child's other parent to help your child develop a healthy self-esteem?**
- 7. Would you let go of the past to give your child a positive future?**
- 8. Would you let go of bitterness/anger if your child developed anxiety symptoms?**
- 9. Would you use impulse control if it would teach your child to think before he acted?**
- 10. Would you give up being right so your child wouldn't feel caught in the middle?**



**Love is action . . . not words!
If you really love your child,
it is time to ACT like it.**



What to Do to Improve Realignment

To help you base more of your decisions on your child's best interests rather than your own, use the following method. It's called the STP-A technique. It stands for Stop, Think, Pause and Act.

STP-A Technique



Step 1. STOP

When a situation suddenly occurs, such as your child's other parent calling and saying he/she wants to change the visitation schedule this month, the first thing to do is to STOP yourself from reacting immediately. Try to block out any thoughts and just get yourself to stop temporarily. Take a breath and focus on calming yourself. Try saying to yourself, "Oh, a chance to practice STP-A."

Step 2. THINK

Now is the time to start thinking. Think about the long-term goal for your child. Envision the words "long term" in front of your eyes as you consider the situation. Next think about what you'd do in a business relationship. Picture how you'd act if you were both in business suits in the middle of a group of business people. Now double-check your thinking by then asking yourself, "Am I trying to get something for myself here or can I put my interests aside temporarily to put my child's interests first?"

Step 3. PAUSE

Now take another breath while you pause. Let it out slowly. Keep yourself from reacting. A fast comeback is not useful. Act as if you are almost in slow motion. The pause will seem longer than it really is. Clear your head by exhaling your emotions.

Step 4. ACT

Now you are ready to take action. You may want to ask for time to consider the situation if you are unclear or if you are concerned with your ability to handle your emotions. If in doubt ask for time. Request an appointment to discuss the matter. If you choose to respond, just remember to use non-blaming "I" statements. If you choose to wait, plan to meet in a public place. Consider alternative actions and problem-solving techniques. Then when you've decided what is truly in your child's best interest, take action.

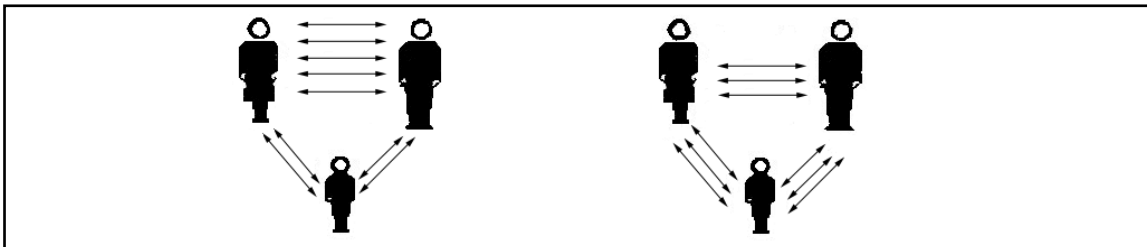
In chapter 3 we looked at the importance of letting go of the old marital relationship. In this chapter we examined the realignment of a new relationship as co-parents. In order to create this realignment as co-parents, you will need to let go and disengage emotionally from the co-parent. It is extremely difficult, and sometimes almost impossible, to use business skills when you are emotionally charged. Use everything you've learned so far in this book and add new tools to your toolbox as you read the remaining chapters in this guide.



Child-Rearing Decisions Activity

Directions: In the space below, list ten of the decisions you make about your child's life when he/she is with you. Think about daily care, discipline, health issues, school, etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



Now read over your list and put a check by those items that your child's other parent makes when your child is with him or her.

In this activity, you saw how each parent makes decisions about the welfare of your child independently. You no longer confer with your child's other parent about the minor decisions which affect your child. But as the diagram below shows, some decisions are still made by both parents.

Married With Children

Single (Divorced) With Children

The diagram on the left shows the relationship between the parents and a child during the marriage. The diagram on the right shows the relationship between the parents and the child

