

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	7
Stephen's Story	8
Steps to Prevention	10
STEP 1: Keep Your Child out of the Middle	12
How Conflict Hurts Your Child	13
Danger Zones: Ways a Child Can Get Caught in the Middle:	15
Open Conflict	15
Negative Talk	15
Family Members' "Support"	16
The Silent Treatment	16
Using Your Child as a Messenger	17
Putting Your Child in a Loyalty Bind	17
Burdening Your Child	17
Interrogating Your Child	19
STEP 2: Allow Your Child to Love Both Parents	20
Value both parents.....	20
Positive Qualities Activity	21
Two teachers are better than one.....	21
The Greatest Danger.....	21
Avoid negative assumptions and actions.	21
Respect your child's need for the other parent.	22
Show acceptance for two homes.	23
Respect the parent-in-charge.	24
Activity: Parent-in-Charge vs. Joint Decision.....	24
Ease your child's transition process.	24
DOs and DON'Ts for Parent-to-Parent Transfers.....	25
Minimize changes in your child's life whenever possible.	26
STEP 3: Work on Your Own Recovery	27
Giving Yourself Permission to Grieve	28
The Stages of Grief	28
Letting Go of Your Pain	29
Recognizing Positive Memories	30
Memories Activity	30
Disengaging from Your Former Partner	31
Focusing on Getting Even	31
Focusing on Winning	32
Focusing on Control	32
Playing the Victim	32
Managing Your Anger	34
Choose responsibility over anger.	34
The S.T.O.P. Technique	34
Anger DOs and DON'Ts	35

STEP 4: Develop New Communication Skills	38
<i>Joint Legal Custody Defined</i>	39
<i>Agree on a method of communication.</i>	39
<i>Decide on the frequency of communication.</i>	39
<i>Agree on a communication format.</i>	40
<i>Select the topics.</i>	40
Learn new communication techniques.	41
<i>Use a respectful tone of voice.</i>	41
<i>Use respectful body language.</i>	41
<i>Select your words with care.</i>	41
<i>Avoid “you” statements.</i>	42
<i>Avoid knee-jerk reactions. (Defending, Withdrawing, Blaming/Counterattacking)</i>	43
<i>Activity: Blaming Cost/Benefit</i>	43
<i>Practice “I” statements.</i>	44
<i>Use reflective listening skills.</i>	45
<i>Reflective Listening Practice</i>	46
Learn to negotiate differences.	47
The 7 Steps of Negotiation	48
#1. <i>Name the problem.</i>	48
#2. <i>Give opinions; Reflect opinions.</i>	49
#3. <i>Brainstorm solutions.</i>	49
#4. <i>Choose a solution.</i>	50
#5. <i>Review who does what by when.</i>	50
#6. <i>Put the solution into action.</i>	50
#7. <i>Re-evaluate.</i>	51
STEP 5: Create a New Relationship as Coparents	52
Task 1: Realign as coparents.	53
Task 2: Minimize negative influences.	53
Task 3: Use a business relationship as a model.	53
Task 4: Clarify boundaries.	54
<i>Clarifying Boundaries Activity</i>	55
Task 5: Be dedicated to the future.	55
<i>Encourage shared activities.</i>	55
<i>Maintain joint financial responsibilities.</i>	56
<i>Shield children from financial stress.</i>	56
<i>DOs and DON'Ts for Handing Coparenting Finances</i>	56
<i>Embrace your child's extended family.</i>	57
<i>Prepare for change.</i>	57
<i>Give the gift of a strong coparent relationship.</i>	58
<i>Activity: Your Legacy</i>	59
In Closing	59
Appendix	60
Children's Typical Reactions to Divorce	61
Divorce and Separation Rules	64
Commitment to Caring Contract	65
Disengagement Contract	66
Coparenting Rules	67
DOs and Don'ts for Coparent Dating	68
DOs and Don'ts for Coparenting Teens	69
Bibliography and Resources	70