

CONNECTIONS

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Rules for Co-Parenting After Separation or Divorce



This article is being reprinted from Connections Newsletter, Summer 2003, Vol 5, Issue 2. Written by Russ Webb, formerly of Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, it provides excellent advice to divorced parents.

I will not “bad-mouth” my former spouse in front of or to my kids.

I recognize that I am really hurting my child(ren) when I speak negatively about their other parent. I understand that if I bad-mouth my former spouse that, in fact, I am hurting my own relationship with my child(ren), as they will resent my bad-mouthing. I understand that keeping my personal feelings private about my former spouse helps to keep healthy boundaries between adults and children. I will endeavor to allow my kids to develop as positive a relationship as possible with my former spouse for their best welfare.

I will not send messages of any kind to my former spouse through my children.

I fully recognize that I need to talk directly with my spouse about any issues that specifically relate to our child(ren) and not pass verbal or written messages through them to my former spouse. I acknowledge that this activity over empowers children, forcing them to be involved in adult business rather than being allowed to just be kids. I will talk directly to my spouse about our children related issues to ensure healthy parent-child boundaries.

I will not quizz or dig for information from my kids about my former spouse.

I recognize how this places my kids in the middle of my relationship with my co-parent and that my kids want to keep loyalties with both parents. Thus, I will endeavor to talk to my kids about what is important to them and not “dig” for information on my former spouse, as that will hurt my kids and my relationship to them.

I will deal with my former spouse in a respectful, business-like fashion.

I recognize that we do not have to agree in order

to have a business relationship. I will endeavor to not get into personal issues with my former spouse (unless agreed upon through counseling together) but, rather, will endeavor to address issues which are about the best welfare of our children.

I will keep adult information private from my children.

I realize that telling my kids about the details of our relationship or details of the separation agreement really hurts them. I will refrain from telling them about court dates, custody issues or any money issues I may have with my former spouse, as this is adult information only and my children need experience being loved without having to try and emotionally deal with adult issues and adult information.

I will get my emotional support from other adults and not my children.

I recognize that I (as do all adults) need emotional support in my life; however, I realize that it is not healthy to try and get that emotional support from my children. They need emotional support from me, not the other way around. I will endeavor to be responsible to take care of myself by finding my own adult emotional support systems.

I will not automatically believe everything my children say.

I recognize that kids have their own agendas and that they can become over empowered when they learn how to pit one parent against another. This “divide-and-conquer” strategy may get my kids what they want from me and/or my former spouse, but I recognize that in the long run it is not in their best welfare and hurts our ability to parent effectively. Thus, I will be cautious when my kids “bad-mouth” my former spouse because they may be using it to get more out of me. I will endeavor to check out and clarify my children’s stories with my former spouse when I feel there is a possibility that I am being pulled into my child’s agenda.

How Does Three Trails Handle Emergencies?

On occasion, someone will call Three Trails insisting he/she needs to be seen immediately or as soon as possible. Although Three Trails is not designed to be an emergency service, we have devised some informal procedures to respond to these types of situations that we hope will serve our clients in these difficult times.

Our administrative assistant will speak to the counselor when someone calls with an emergency. The counselor may do one of several things. He/she may speak to the person on the phone, either at the moment or at the first possible opportunity. This allows the counselor to determine the most appropriate course of action.

The counselor may also instruct the administrative assistant to schedule the person in for that day. Since counselors' schedules are often full, this requires filling a "free hour", a time normally set aside for the counselor to catch up on administrative tasks. Another option is for us to call and reschedule a person already booked for that day, opening up a slot for the person in crisis. Since such decisions aren't made lightly, the counselor is careful to determine that the caller's needs constitute an emergency.

Oftentimes, the administrative assistant will need to ask a distressed caller if this is an emergency. If the caller perceives this to be the case, the aforementioned procedures are put into place. If the caller states this is not an emergency, the standard scheduling process is enacted, but the administrative assistant may alert the counselor to the nature of the call. We strive to be as sensitive and responsive as possible when individuals are in need.

What constitutes an emergency? Obviously, this is open to interpretation. Anyone who is considering suicide certainly qualifies. Those who are so overwhelmed that they can't seem to function or make the most basic decisions are considered emergencies as well. Depending on the situation, the counselor may direct the significant other to take the person to the ER or Wyoming Behavioral Institute for an evaluation. Rarely does this have to be employed, however.

Three Trails EFAP does not have sufficient staffing to provide after hours emergency service. There are other resources in the community for these purposes. Fortunately, emergency sessions are relatively rare at Three Trails. Nevertheless, we attempt to respond to such concerns within the limits of our resources.



STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost

“KEEPING QUIET”

Now we will count to twelve
and we will all keep still.

This one time upon the earth,
let's not speak any language;
let's stop for one second,
and not move our arms so much.

It would be a delicious moment
without hurry, without locomotives;
all of us would be together
in a sudden uneasiness.

Fishermen in the cold sea
would do no harm to whales
and the peasant gathering salt
would look at his torn hands.

Those who prepare green wars,
wars of gas, wars of fire,
victories without survivors,
would put on clean clothing

and would walk alongside their brothers in
the shade, without doing a thing.

What I want should'nt be confused
with final inactivity;
Life alone is what matters.
I want nothing to do with death.

If we weren't unanimous
about keeping our lives so much in motion,
if we could do nothing for once,
perhaps a great silence
would interrupt this sadness,
this never understanding ourselves
and threatening ourselves with death,
perhaps the earth is teaching us
when everything seems dead
and then everything is alive.

Now I will count to twelve
and you keep quiet and I'll go.

Pablo Neruda

THREE TRAILS EMPLOYEE & FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Three Trails Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) is a counseling agency designed to respond to the needs of eligible active and retired employees, spouses, and dependent family members of participating businesses and organizations.

Our mission is to provide professional assistance early and in a timely manner so that problems do not worsen. Such concerns may include workplace stress, marriage and family tensions, alcohol and drug abuse, and other difficulties that may impact individuals. Counselors at Three Trails assess the scope and nature of the presenting concerns and will either provide counseling or refer the individual(s) to specialized services as necessary.

Three Trails EFAP is staffed by three counselors and an administrative assistant. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 237-5750 or stop by the office at 812 South David Street.

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday & Wednesday	9:00 to 6:00 pm
Tuesday & Thursday	9:00 to 7:00 pm
Fridays	12:00 to 5:00 pm

We are closed through the noon hour, although noon sessions may be arranged.

REMINDER.....

Three Trails Lending Library is available for all employees and family members. Included in our library is a wide variety of reading and audio material. You may view this list by visiting our web site at www.threetrailsefap.com and clicking on the Library tab at the top.

