Tips for Effective Co-Parenting (Parenting as a Team):

Communication is key to a strong team.

- Be polite and respectful. Sarcasm and put downs, even as jokes can hurt people’s feelings and make them stop listening.
- Use I statements. Avoid “you” statements—they sound like an attack. For example, “YOU let Sara get away with too much.” Instead, focus on what you feel about a certain behavior and why. For example, “I worry that Sara is getting mixed messages from us.”
- Be an active listener. When your co-parent is talking: Stop what you are doing. Look at him or her, and nod or say “uh huh to show you’re listening. Pay attention. Try not to focus on what you’ll say next. Finally, check your understanding. Restate what you heard—for example, “so you’re saying that…”
- Pick a good time to talk. Choose a time when you’re both calm and things are quiet. You may want to wait until your child is asleep, for example.
- All parents have disagreements. It’s how you work them out that makes the difference. Solving problems together helps make you child feel safe and learn how to resolve conflicts.

Work as a team with your co-parent by:

- Creating a “united front”. Try to agree ahead of time on general discipline strategies, rules and consequences. Then be sure to support each other’s decisions (unless safety is at risk).

- Avoid sending conflicting messages or decisions. They can confuse a child. Children also quickly learn which parent to go to for the answer
they want. You might want to have your child get a yes from each of you for certain requests, like going out.

- **Call a parents time out when you disagree with your co parent.** Let your child know you have to discuss it. Go to another room, talk it over, and come back with your decision.

- **Stay involved and active in your child's life.** It let's your child know you care. Work together so that one or both of you can meet with teachers and attend school functions, for example. Keep each other updated on what's going on.

- **Be good role models.** Be aware of how you treat your co-parent and your child. Your child will learn how to get along with others by watching you.

- **Give each other a chance to learn.** It can be frustrating when one parent becomes the main source of care or discipline. Each of you should spend the time to care for your child, make decisions, and enforce rules—and have fun with him or her.

- **Learn more about parenting together.** Share books or other resources. Discuss what you learned. You could even take a parenting class together.

- **Be polite to your co parent.** Watch how you talk to and about your co-parent around your child. If it's hard to deal with each other, limit communication to talking about your child's needs.
• **Try to keep lines of communication open and healthy.** Talk regularly with your co-parent.

• **Respect each other’s rules.** Encourage your child to respect your co-parents rules, even if they aren’t the same as yours. Doing this tells your child that his or her parents are working together and cannot be manipulated.

• **Don’t use your child as a weapon.** Try not to compete with your co-parent by “bad-mouthing” him or her or being extra lenient, either. You undermine his or her authority and your own in the long run.

(Source: excepts from “Co-parenting, whether you live together or apart.” Prevent Child Abuse America, 2002, pages 6-14)