

Divorce, Separated Parenting Fundamentals – Through years of family law practice, I've heard many sayings from Judges, other lawyers, the internet, or just wise folks when it comes to parenting children of separation. Amazingly, these concepts consistently need repeating. Accordingly, I specify a few:

- Win the war, don't worry about the battles: Ideally, in raising children with separated parents, there would be no battles, everyone would get along and focus on what was best for their child, but this is not often the case. Like the Russians kept Napoleon from winning the war for their homeland, one need not focus on winning any battles, but gracefully trust that time will decide a victor (as the Russians delayed Napoleon from reaching the capital until winter struck). Similarly, separated parents must focus on great relationships with their children as the child will eventually be wise enough to make their own decisions, understand their upbringing and behave according to their opinions and possibly resent their parents if they try to disrupt or sabotage the child's relationship with the other parent. Traditionally, children go to college and must decide where they call "home" for the first holiday, Thanksgiving. This is a likely indicator of who "won the war". Make "home" at your place.

- Some people get divorced FROM one another, others are divorced TO one another: There are differing ways that people cope with the adversity of separation. Some people move on with their lives. Others seem to perpetuate discord with their "Ex". Modern entertainment blur the distinction between Justice and Vengeance and makes some think that a Judge will give Vengeance for our sufferings, but this perspective ignores the entire point of an independent finder of fact to hear the varying perspectives and determine the "middle ground". Judges are swamped with cases to move along and resolve. If a Judge gives one party Vengeance, it is fair to assume that the "losing" party will look for retribution, modification, or some other basis to run back to Court or get pay back from the other. Judges would always prefer that parties put themselves in an agreement than the Judge speculate what will work best for the parties. Judges must consider the long term consequence of their rulings to bring about resolution and avoid further conflict, if possible.

- Voodoo Parenting: A phrase used to make clear to separated parents that they have no real business knowing what happens with the other parent's time with the child, so long as there is no abuse, neglect or endangerment of the child. The US Constitution provides religious freedoms and parties cannot discuss religious beliefs in custody matters, except as such beliefs effect the best interests of the children (one could point out that the other parent "does not believe in blood transfusions" as to medical decision authority of a child, but you can not point out the other parent is a "Jehovah's Witness" as not all aspects of the parent's faith reflect directly upon a child's best interests). A parent that is fit to date, have children with, etc. is fit to be a parent as they choose unless they "abuse, neglect or endanger" the child (and Judges don't take kindly to disputes that distort the truth or make big deals of little issues). Accordingly, instead of going to church on Sunday morning, a parent has the right to practice voodoo, slaughter animals, Ouija board, witchcraft or anything else they like and the parent without parenting time is best to mind their own business unless the behavior amounts to abuse, neglect or endangerment of the child. Before "making an issue" with the other parent, decide if the child is being abused, damaged or put in danger: if not, get over it/drop it/let it be and if so, call your lawyer or the authorities.

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