

**10 TIPS FOR
CO-PARENTING
WHEN YOU HAVE A**

TOXIC

EX

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10 TIPS FOR CO-PARENTING WHEN YOU HAVE A TOXIC EX

1. Do Not Volunteer Information

For example: If he/she asks: Can I come pick up the children at 5:00pm, and you will be on a date... Do NOT respond and say, "No, I will be on a date so that time won't work." Respond and say, "No, 5:00pm won't work today. Can we pick another time?"

Also, don't call him/her or e-mail him/her out of the blue just to let him/her know of upcoming plans (unless you are required to by agreement or court order. Why stir up a hornet's nest - if you don't have too?



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2. Do Not Volunteer The Children

(if you don't want them to go with the other parent)

Until you have a Parenting Agreement/Separation Agreement or a Court Order you both have 100% rights to your kids and if he/she wants to keep them indefinitely he/she can. Your oral agreement doesn't mean anything to law enforcement.

Don't volunteer the children or anything for that matter, it just creates problems in the long run. This means don't initiate visitation - make him/her do the initiation.

This also doesn't mean withhold. But wait until he/she asks - before you engage and don't succumb to dangerous or unreasonable requests (it makes you look like a bad parent). You would not let your children get into the car with someone who was intoxicated, why would you let your children get into the car with someone who was raging?!

Call the police if you have real safety concerns and your spouse is out of control.

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3. Make them wait!

The natural tendency for people who have been in high conflict or domestic violence relationships is to have the urge to respond to an e-mail or text message by their spouse immediately to thwart an impending attack or conflict. This many times actually makes the impending problems worse. Take some time to think about your response. He/she doesn't need instant gratification.

Unless, it is an emergency. He/she can wait!

4. Make your response brief and to the point.

When asked a question - sometimes yes or no will do. If you are engaging in e-mails that are paragraphs long - that is too long. Likewise, limit text exchanges to 3 or 5.

5. Ignore the irrelevant.

You should only be discussing three things:

1. the children (and/or family pet), the schedule,
2. your property, and
3. support.

If he/she asks about anything outside the scope of these issues - ignore it and don't respond. If they threaten you with negligence because you are not responding to overly excessive calls and/or texts - let them! He/she shouldn't be texting/calling you 30 times a day!

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6. Set boundaries

Just because they call or text 10 times doesn't mean you have to respond. Learn to ignore it or make them wait until it is a convenient time for you to respond. If the calls or texts are inappropriate, then don't respond. There is power in not answering the phone. If you can't take it anymore, turn off your ringer or send a very clear message to them to STOP! If it continues, he/she may be violating NC stalking and domestic violence statutes. You deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Domestic Criminal Trespass: N.C. Gen Stat. 14-134.3 - Likewise, they cannot come onto your property without consent (even if he/she has a key or their name is on the title to the house or name is on the lease). Once he/she moves out of the home, if you tell them to leave or that they're not allowed at your home and they continue to return, you can call the police and have them arrested for domestic criminal trespass.

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7. Seek outside help and the advice of neutrals

If you seem really confused and have cloudy judgment seek the advice of objective support persons around you or even get help from a counselor.

This is a difficult time and the issues surrounding your children and family can lead you to be irrational at times.

**GET SOME OUTSIDE
HELP**

YOU DON'T NEED TO DO THIS ALONE.

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8. Be Polite and to the Point

Regardless of his/her responses to you, be polite and to the point and then go take that kick boxing class at the local gym to get out all your aggression! Should your case ever go to litigation - you want him/her to look like the bad one. Taking out years of pent up hostility and frustration is not appropriate through e-mail at this time and could really hurt any future custody, domestic violence, or alimony claims the you have.

ANYTHING IN WRITING BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR EX IS ADMISSIBLE IN COURT. BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU PUT IN WRITING! THINK ABOUT IT BEFORE YOU HIT SEND - OR SEND A COPY BY YOUR ATTORNEY TO GET APPROVAL BEFORE SENDING.

(This includes texts and facebook posts),



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9. Defer to the Law

When in doubt tell your ex that you are going to follow the parenting agreement/separation agreement or your current court order. You can't get in trouble for following a contract or order. Deviating from your contract or order, however, can create problems for you in the future. Defer to your attorney. If your spouse is putting pressure on you to make a decision that you don't want to make - tell them to contact your attorney. If they try to "guilt" you into attorneys are too expensive - why can't we do this ourselves?

Remember, you are in your current situation, most likely, because of him/her, and following his/her advice will likely only make things worse - not better. Seek the advice of your attorney before agreeing to anything.

10. Do NOT sign anything! Unless advised by your attorney.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Tiffany Lesnik owns and operates Lesnik Family Law, a family law practice in North Raleigh with her husband Richard Waugaman.

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She practices specifically in the areas of high conflict custody and domestic violence and also is highly involved in domestic violence advocacy throughout the community.

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