

The Pro Child Way

Parenting with an Ex

A stylized illustration in grey tones shows a woman and a child. The woman is on the right, reaching up to hold a large heart. The child is on the left, also reaching up to hold a smaller heart. The hearts are positioned between the words 'Pro' and 'Child' in the title above. The woman and child are positioned below a thick, dark horizontal bar that contains the subtitle 'Parenting with an Ex'.

*Lucky for your child, it only takes **you** to make a significant impact on the divorced-parenting tone.*

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to

Sarah and Acadia

You're so important to me
that my love for you
forced me to figure it out and keep doing it.

*I plead on bended knees for them.
They will suffer and when they do
we will be the ones who are guilty
for not having done all in our power
to protect and love them.*

– Mother Theresa

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BEFORE GETTING STARTED

The Author's Assumptions

I write this book as a mother who has an ex and a daughter. If you are a father with an ex, read "Mom" where you see "Dad." If you have a son, read "he" instead of "she." The advice is universal, regardless of the pronouns.

I write this book assuming that you are a good parent. Like me, you wake up in the morning thinking how you and your child can have a good day. Like me, you lie in bed at night thinking of the choices you made that day as a parent, wondering if you could have done better. You are the type of good parent that would pick up a book on divorced-parenting and read it.

I write this book assuming that your ex is a good parent. Sure the two of you may have been awful as husband and wife, but as a parent, your ex was fine. Might you have some complaints about his parenting skills? Probably. But if he loves his child and if he is concerned about her well-being, then he classifies as a good parent. Would he pick up a book on divorced-parenting and read it? Probably not. Lucky for your child, it only takes **you** to make a significant difference on the divorced-parenting tone.

I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a psychologist. I'm a mom who was stressed, exhausted, and disappointed as I frantically looked for a book to help me raise my child through divorce. This is my response to not finding what I was looking for. My insights and advice are only based on my own experience and bolstered by my spiritual convictions. I feel that when love for your child is the motivator, you can never go wrong.

Now let's get started!



*Lucky for your child, it only takes **you** to make a significant difference on the divorced-parenting tone.*



SECTION 2

**PARENTS TOGETHER:
Out and About with Your Child
and Your Ex**



A Few Words About “Parents Together”

Given the choice, would you choose to spend countless days with your ex? Of course not. That is why your ex is your ex. The choice has already been made: it is called “divorce.” When you say that you are “divorced,” people automatically assume that spending time with your ex is not your ideal day. This is most likely the reason why divorced couples who don’t share a child part ways for good. People get it. Divorced couples aren’t the best playmates at a social gathering. Outsiders don’t need a flow-chart, PowerPoint demonstration, or dissertation. They get it. Everyone gets it. Divorced couples are generally divorced because they didn’t enjoy each other’s company.

But here you are, divorced with a shared child. You are a divorced parent and the world “gets it.” The world realizes that divorced parents, like divorced couples, would rather not spend any moments together. Again, the world doesn’t need you to yell it from a blow-horn. It’s kind of understood that there were past issues and problems between the couple that led to the divorce. People even assume that at least one within the couple was a jerk. A jerk? Shocking. Hence: divorced. Public events aren’t your opportunity to share this tedious information. They already know. And so does your child.

Get over yourself. Get over the pre-divorce stuff. Move on. Here you are **now**. How are you going to act **now**? For better or worse (don’t you hate that phrase?), your divorce is decided and what you have in your control is how you choose to act **now**. Every day, every situation, every phone call: you have the choice as to how you’re going to act with your child’s other parent. With the whole world assuming the animosity between the divorce couple, you have your work cut out for you. It is up to **you** to choose to stop showing your child the anger, hate, and stress of a divorced marriage and instead show her the love that two parents have for their very special child.

Not only should you encourage moments where you and your ex are together with your child, but also you should be smiling throughout the event. This is why it is called “Parents Together.” As Parents Together you choose to silence the world (and your ego) and tune into your heart and your child’s needs. Your child needs both parents to love, support, and guide her. Put on the blinders, and even a muzzle if you have to, but stay focused on your child and be nice to your ex. Choose to show your child that her two parents can finally focus on her. With every opportunity, choose to parent the Pro♥Child Way. With every visitation exchange, choose. With every phone call, choose. With every event where you know your child will see you interacting with her other parent, choose to parent

the Pro[♥]Child Way. It only takes one to make a significant impact on the divorced-parenting tone. It only takes you to choose it to be so. Choose carefully – your child is watching. Choose to tend to her heart and spirit.



*It only takes one to make a significant
impact on the divorced-parenting tone.
It only takes you to choose it to be so.
Choose carefully – your child is watching.*

Divorced Situation 16

PARENTS TOGETHER: Plan for It Now and Do It

Here is a fact: throughout your child's life, you and your ex will be together in the same room. Whether you encourage this joint participation or whether you try to avoid it, it will happen again and again. You can't control that. What you can control is you. When you and your ex are together, will you resist and cause tension in front of your child, or will you be Parents Together?

The Old Way

Your ex and you are forced to be in the same room together. He is being rude and condescending to you. You are angry and miserable to him. Everyone around you is uncomfortable, and the tension in the air is thick. And why should it be any other way? Your divorce was messy. He doesn't like you, and you certainly don't like him.

Instead of focusing on your child's event, you are preoccupied trying to cope with your ex's presence. All of your attention is on your ex: where he goes, what he does, who he talks to. Everyone around you becomes aware that they are in the presence of a warring couple. You make excuses for both of your behaviors. All of the attention is on two divorced people. By the end of the event, you're stressed and have a headache.

Your child had her own expectations of the day: a great event where she would be the center of attention. And the best part would be the two most important people in her world, her mom and dad, would be there to share it with her. Imagine her disappointment. She hopes that another event never arises where her parents will have to be together with her again. Instead of looking forward to birthdays, graduations, and her wedding, she is already learning that her "non-divorced friends" will have wonderful events, while she will have events to avoid. And this is all because you and your ex can't get over your divorce and focus on your child. At the end of the day, after witnessing your theatrics, she is crushed.



*Let her know that you will both
always be there to support, help,
and celebrate with her,
free of conflict or tension.*

The Pro♥Child Way

The reason that you and your ex are forced into the same room is because of your child. Being a parent is forever, so being in the same room with your ex is something that you need to get used to.

As a child, the happiest moments should be the times that the child, her mom, and her dad are together. This should not change just because her parents aren't married. There will be times, scattered throughout your child's life, that the whole family should be together. Your child should be able to make plans for happy days when both of her parents are present. Don't rob your child of these nurturing experiences. You may be divorced, but you are still parents. And parents do things with their children, together.

In any circumstance where your child is also present, the reason as to why the two of you need to be beyond cordial should be obvious. Your child needs to see that the two most important people in her life like each other. Yes, like each other.

Discuss the important day or event with your child, mentioning her dad's inclusion in a positive way. Assure your child that you are both looking forward to spending the day with her. Let her know that you will both always be there to support, help, and celebrate with her, free of conflict or tension.

You both should help with the planning and the day's events. You both should be next to your child at the event. You both should ask questions and be concerned for your daughter's happiness and well-being. You both should thank guests for coming. And, you should make sure that pictures include all of the people who are important to her. Commit to being "Parents Together" on this day and throughout her life.

Divorced Situation 17

PARENTS TOGETHER: The Birthday Party

The birthday party – there are two ways of looking at it: from the perspective of a divorced parent or from your child's perspective. The one way is sure to be filled with tension, bitterness, and accusations. The other way will be bursting with laughter and balloons. Which type of birthday will you choose for your child?

The *Old* Way

It's your child's birthday and that can mean only one thing: an ex disaster. No way are you going to spend your child's birthday with your ex. A stressed-out day fighting with your ex is not the type of birthday party that you had in mind. It's hard enough decorating, corralling a pack of kids, distributing party favors, keeping track of gifts, and serving cake. You *really* can't handle your ex's judging presence on top of all of that!

So you rationalize that excluding your ex from your child's birthday is the best thing. Everyone would agree that it would be better if your ex stayed far away, right? So, you start to plan a grand birthday party: one that includes your friends and your family. If your ex wants to celebrate, fine; he can arrange his own party. (It had just not be better than your party!) Come on, you're divorced! It would be so awkward. "Happy Birthday!" just isn't convincing when you're gritting your teeth. Certainly nobody would expect that the two of you would be at the same birthday party.



During any moments of tension, look at your child and remind yourself of the wonderful reason that you are there.

The Pro Child Way

Well, almost no one would expect that two divorced parents would be at their child's birthday party ... except maybe your child. Let's get something clear, right off the bat: this is your child's birthday party. Not yours. Not your ex's. It is her party, with her friends and her family. You are her family. Her other parent is her family. At your child's birthday party, she should see not just you, but also her dad celebrating the day of her birth. Of course your ex should be a vital part of your child's birthday. Who else has more to celebrate than the two people that created her? Celebrating a birthday is so important. Creating a wonderful birthday celebration is a joyful obligation for parents. You and your ex are her parents. Being divorced should have no impact on your child's day.

You're right, a stressed-out day, fighting with your ex is not the type of birthday party for your child. Your child does deserve better. But the answer isn't to have two separate parties. The answer is for you to be nice. Impossible, you say? With the right planning and attitude, it is possible.

Start planning your child's birthday by sizing up the situation: the date, the time of year, age and number of guests, your child's wishes, and also the current state of your relationship with your ex. As with all issues regarding your divorce, the more time has passed, the easier it will be. But in the beginning, your child's birthday party requires careful planning to avoid any scenes between you and your ex. Communicate often with your ex, to confirm all particulars.

On what day of the week does your child's birthday fall? Will you be able to celebrate it on the birth date or does it have to be celebrated on the weekend? Does it land on "Dad's day" or "Mom's day"? If it is "Dad's day," does he still want you to plan the event or is he assuming that it is his responsibility? It's time for a phone call, text, or email to your ex. During this call be sure to establish the date of celebration, the primary planner, and confirm that you both will be there. This is not an opportunity for you to talk about or respond to any issues involving your marriage or divorce. Stay focused and positive.

Now that you are assured of the date, you can worry about planning the event. Location is usually the trickiest part of planning a birthday. In selecting a site, you should have one focus: neutral territory. Avoid your ex coming to an event at your house. It has too high a disaster potential. And you shouldn't be keen on going to his house for the same reasons. Hold the party at a location that is neutral: the playground, pool, or local pizza shop are some suggestions. You want the location to be a place that will be remembered fondly as "her birthday spot," not the scene of tension between you and your ex. Find a place that is perfect for young guests and perfect for adults who need more space. Down the road, as your relationship with your ex matures, the location of her parties can be determined by the theme, but in the beginning, careful location planning helps to lessen the stress between two newly divorced parents.

Once you have the location secured, you can plan the birthday activities. Homespun games, decorations, and birthday cake are benign issues in regards to your ex. However, if you are envisioning a rented moon bounce, a hired clown, and pony rides, the expense may be of concern to your ex. Know your budget. What, if anything, is your ex willing to contribute? Do not plan to spend his money unless he has agreed. This is not a “blank check” opportunity to test your ex’s love for his child. Think back to your married years: How were birthdays handled then? If your ex thought homespun birthdays were best back then, chances are neither his attitude nor his wallet have changed. Don’t assume that he will pay for all the incidentals. Don’t assume that he will evenly share the expense. The only thing that you can assume is that you will be financially responsible for the event. If you are not able to afford the entire bill, then don’t plan an expensive party. Plan the party that you can afford. If he is able to contribute to the expenses, then it will be a surprise benefit to your checkbook. At all times, be considerate of both of your financial situations when planning events. It’s time for another phone call to your ex. Which scenario fits the party that you are envisioning?

The party that doesn't require his financial participation:

“I thought a party at the playground pavilion would be best. The preschoolers will love being able to run around and play. I can make the cake and bring the decorations. I’ll buy a book for each child to take home, which I can pay for out of her child support. Sound good?”

or

The party that requires his financial participation:

“This has been such a great school year for our child. Her whole class is working together as a team and she is having a hard time excluding anyone. I think this year we should have a larger party where all her classmates can be included. I was thinking a carnival-type party where we can have games, crafts, the sprinkler running, and a rented moon bounce. Do you think we can swing that? The moon bounce is about \$300 for the day, and I figure the crafts, prizes for the games, and food will be another \$100. I can use \$100 from her child support, but that leaves \$300. Would you be able to contribute \$150 if we split the remainder? Can you come up with a game idea and be in charge of that booth? I’ll be sure to tell our child that this is an extra-special birthday party for just this year.”

Once the date, the location, and the budget are determined, all that remains is getting ready for the big day. If invitations are being sent, be sure to have your child send one to you and one to her dad. She can include a special message or drawing in these VIP invitations. As the day approaches, frequently mention how both you and Dad are looking forward to her special birthday. Not only does that get her excited, but it also reinforces positive thoughts in your mind too.

Your child's excitement should be contagious and propel you through a wonderful birthday. Start the day with a smile and continue it through the whole day. During any moments of tension, look at your child and remind yourself of the wonderful reason that you are there. Stick to your plan of being Parents Together, and you will be able to create happy birthday memories and picture-perfect occasions.

Divorced Situation 18

PARENTS TOGETHER: Your Child's Extracurricular Activities

If you're lucky, your child will be involved in many extracurricular activities. These are precious moments where you can enthusiastically support and celebrate your child's efforts. But how does your reaction change when your ex is also there? If your child's lucky, she will have both of her parents rooting and cheering her on together.

The Old Way

It's your child's soccer game. For you, it's another grueling event because you know your ex will also be attending. You have one goal in mind: to avoid your ex at all costs. You can't stop him from coming, but you sure can make it real uncomfortable for him. He needs a seat? Tough, he should have gotten there earlier like you did. He doesn't know that he's standing next to the coach? Typical, just goes to show that he is so out of touch. He thinks he can cheer and clap just to prove a point to you? Well, you can cheer and clap louder. You look around and hope that everyone else is noticing what a jerk he is.

You might as well be holding a sign over your head that says, "Divorced Parent." All those around you can clearly see that you are the "Divorced Mom" and that man over there, cheering for the same child, is the "Divorced Dad." The child is also easy to spot. She is the one that doesn't know where to look when she scores a goal: the right or left, Mom or Dad. She is embarrassed by her parents' cheering competition and wishes she could have normal parents like the other kids. Maybe, she thinks, it would be better if they didn't show up at all.



Your child needs to see both of her parents involved, interested, and participating in her activities.

The Pro Child Way

There is nothing better than rallying behind your child's extracurricular activities. What a thrill for your child to make that hoop shot or perfect dismount, then turn around to see her parents cheering for her: Come on, you and her dad are on the same team! That's your child out there, doing a great job. You and your ex should be proud of her and proud to be her parents, together. What does "divorced" have to do with anything?

You and your ex should sit together, cheer together, and give each other high-fives when your child succeeds. Is it the big dance recital? Then make sure he has a ticket and save him a seat. Is it the important away game? Then make sure he has directions. Is it yet another practice? Then make sure he gets an opportunity to be there to see her effort. If the responsibility falls on your shoulders to get your ex involved in your child's activities, then do it. Your child needs to see both of her parents involved, interested, and participating in her activities. When both of you are able to make it to an activity, be there as "Parents Together."

The sign above your heads should exclaim, "Parents who are proud of their child." In public, don't act-up; act like parents. After all, that's what you are and that is what your child needs.

**Divorced
Situation 19**

**PARENTS TOGETHER:
School Functions – Back-to-School Night**

“Back-to-School Night” is a school-wide version of show-and-tell. It is your child’s opportunity to show and tell about her accomplishments, projects, and classmates. But at this event, what do your actions show and tell? Do you tell of two divorced parents, or are you a family that shows off together?

The Old Way

It’s Back-to-School Night? “Just great,” you sarcastically sigh. Another occasion that you’ll have to suffer through with your ex. Well no more! The solution is at hand: you divide the event in half. The first half of the evening is your turn and the second half of the event will be your ex’s turn. Yep, that’s right. Your child can first show you her classroom, her seat, her books, her poem on the wall, and her favorite classroom activity. Then it’s off to show you the way to the art room, the gym, the music room, the cafeteria, and the bathrooms. Once the whole school is covered once or twice at a jog, you can leave so that your ex can arrive.

Once your ex arrives, your child can show him the classroom, her seat, and her books. Forget the poem and her favorite classroom activity, time will be running out and Dad will still need to see the gym. He can’t see it all? Too bad. At least you avoided each other and that is most important. Given the circumstances, you fit in what you could.



*By being Parents Together,
you show her that she is important,
not the divorce.*

The Pro Child Way

When Back-to-School Night is split in two, what is usually a fun and proud night for a child turns into a burden. Your child becomes more worried about crossing between Mom's time and Dad's time, and less focused on showing off her accomplishments. The night is exhausting for your child, less than fulfilling for the parents, and the whole point of the evening is lost.

What can be more fun for your young child than for the whole family "gang" focusing on her at Back-to-School Night? Her mom, her dad, her siblings, her step-parents, her step-siblings – all there for her. For days, her classroom has prepared for the big night: cleaning up the desks, creating projects for display, and putting finishing touches on creative stories. She is proud of her work and anxious to show it off. There are teachers to meet and other kids to see. It's like a big, exciting party for your child where she is the star attraction. The more to share it with her, the merrier!

This is an event specifically designed for parents. As her parents, you should be there, together. Be sure that your ex has plenty of notice so that he can plan on attending. You should walk together, ooh and aah together, and greet the teachers together. There are usually parent sign-up sheets to register for conferences or participate in classroom parties. You and your ex should consider these together and sign up when appropriate.

You and your ex should have fun with your child and be glad that she is excited to show off her classroom activities. By being Parents Together, you show her that she is important, not the divorce.

Divorced Situation 20

PARENTS TOGETHER: School Functions – Parent/Teacher Conferences

You open up your child's backpack and there it is: the parent/teacher conference announcement. So how are you going to approach this year's conference? In typical fashion, you could be the divorced parent that expects "divorced-parent" treatment from the teacher. Or, you could be the supportive parents that your child needs and show up as Parents Together.

The Old Way

The Old Way of the divorced-parent/teacher conference is so ingrained in the teacher's routine that it is shocking to a teacher when it is any other way. Separated parents equals separated conferences. The teacher meets with the mom at one time and the dad at a separate time. Through painful experience, the teacher has learned to avoid the scene between two feuding parents. She has enough to deal with, why would she want divorced parents in her classroom at the same time?

If a single meeting with both parents is unavoidable, the teacher comes armed with two copies of all reports and articles: one for the mom and one for the dad. She arranges the seating so that the parents are well separated. After all, the child's parents are divorced, these are necessary precautions to avoid conflict. The teacher's only goal is to get through the conference without any major incidences between the parents. She doesn't have to think hard to understand why the child acts the way she does at school.



Your child can only benefit when her mom and dad are a cohesive unit, both actively participating in her school affairs.

The Pro Child Way

Stop and think about it: why does being divorced have any impact on how your child's teacher should relate to you? It doesn't. Just because you and your child's dad are divorced, don't expect that special accommodations should be made for you. Why should your child's teacher have to do extra work and spend extra time, just because you two are divorced? We are talking about the same child here, right?

Parent/teacher conferences happen. Expect it. Plan to attend with your ex. Look forward to it. Be prepared. It is the best opportunity to see your child's school environment, her progress, her areas of concern, and have one-on-one communication with your child's teacher. It is very important that both parents are listening and participating in the same conversation.

Before scheduling the conference, check with your ex to ensure that the time is feasible for him. You want to schedule a time that is best for both of you, where you can be focused and not rushed. Usually, conferences don't last for more than fifteen minutes, so being late is not an option; be sure to allow for traffic.

During your reminder call to your ex, take the time to discuss your child's schooling. Bring your ex up to speed on the latest projects, tests, and classroom friendships. You want him to be aware of any problems or concerns so that the two of you can address sensitive subjects with the teacher. If a classroom problem does exist, then think of possible solutions together so that you are better prepared to develop a solution with the teacher. You and your ex are a team. Your child's teacher can best teach when she knows that there is shared interest in your child.

Once at the conference, sit next to each other so that you can look at reports, journals, tests, and other notes together. If you would like copies of the materials for your separate files, then photocopy them yourself after the conference is over. Listen to the teacher's remarks and respond appropriately. Have respect for your ex's comments, and work as a team with the teacher to resolve any issues. At the end, thank your child's teacher and your ex for a successful conference. Invite her to call on either one of you if additional issues arise.

Don't let your divorce get in the way of your child's schooling. Your child can only benefit when her mom and dad are a cohesive unit, both actively participating in her school affairs.

Divorced Situation 21

PARENTS TOGETHER: Visits to the Doctor

Few things are more stressful than a trip to the doctor's or dentist's office, except maybe an office visit that also includes two divorced parents. During these stressful times in your child's life, how will you behave? Will you allow your divorced emotions to flare up, or will you nurture your child as Parents Together?

The Old Way

As you go to schedule the doctor's appointment for your child, you pause as you contemplate who to dial first: your ex or the doctor. You think about the doctor's office: a room no larger than your bathroom. A size that is certainly far too small to accommodate a doctor, your child, you, and your ex. Being in the same building as your ex is pushing the boundaries; being in the same doctor's office is out of the question. There is no way that you are going to consult with him about this appointment time.

As you're dialing the doctor's office, you're hoping that the first available appointment is convenient for you and impossible for your ex to attend. You can blame it all on the doctor's office while rejoicing in the result. Sure, you'll let him know what happens at the appointment, but as far as you're concerned, you are the one that is responsible for your child's medical care. Your attitude is this: your ex's right to involvement ended the moment you got divorced.



It is unimportant if the doctor knows that the two of you are divorced. It is only important that the doctor knows that you are concerned and interested parents.

The Pro Child Way

When your child is ill or facing a surgery, it is critical for both parents to be involved in all medical aspects, including visits to the doctor. By both of you being present and involved, not only are you demonstrating your love to your child, but also you provide another “set of ears” to listen to and ask questions of the medical provider. When scheduling these specialist appointments, be considerate of your ex’s schedule. When possible, arrange appointments when both of you are able to attend.

For routine appointments, like well-child visits or dental cleanings, it may be difficult to determine if both parents should be present. When questioning whether your ex should attend, consider how you would have handled the appointment before the divorce. If both parents regularly attended routine physicals, then that should continue. If Dad only attended specialist appointments, then that should continue. But certainly if an emergency or serious illness occurs, both parents should be actively involved, holding their child’s hand throughout.

During the office visits, both you and your ex should participate by asking and answering questions. If you know that your ex has unresolved concerns, then prompt him to address it. You are both there as advocates for your child. It is unimportant if the doctor knows that the two of you are divorced. It is only important that the doctor knows that you are concerned and interested parents.

When traumatic medical decisions need to be made, take time to be with your child. Both parents should explain treatment and provide loving arms of comfort. Assure your child that both parents agree on the treatment and are confident in the doctor’s decision. Let your child know that you are both there for her and that you will face all procedures together. Your words are promises to her; your actions of being there together for her is her proof.

Divorced Situation **22**

PARENTS TOGETHER: Your Child's Wedding

Instead of eloping, your child and fiancé decide to celebrate and have a wedding! When your child's dreams fill with wedding day bliss, how does she picture her parents? The video camera will be there to capture every moment. Will you and your ex only be caught in a panning view, or will you be there to celebrate this special day focused on your child?

The Old Way

Weddings are famous for being chock full of stress. Add a couple of divorced parents and you know the whole affair is doomed for disaster. Instead of a day of which your daughter dreams, it is a day that you know she dreads. Sure, she likes the groom and wedding-dress part, but the rest of it is a wedding planner's nightmare.

The complications begin with the invitation and don't stop until the last dance of the evening. Big questions become big issues. Whose names are listed on the invitation? It certainly isn't going to read, "Mr. & Mrs. Happy Parent are pleased to announce..." And, who is paying for what? You naturally thought that the expense was your ex's responsibility, and it turned out your ex hadn't thought of it at all. The end result for your child is no money, not twice the money. Who is walking the bride down the aisle? How dare your lacking ex now think that he can strut down the aisle when everyone knows how much you have been through. How are seating arrangements being handled? Your table at the reception will be far away from your ex's table, and it's for sure that yours is going to be right up front.

Of course her stepparents just complicate the situation further. Your husband, her stepdad, has practically raised your daughter, so why shouldn't he walk the bride down the aisle? Where does the step-monster fit into the wedding plans? Can she sit in a closet?

A divorced-parent wedding is complicated. You feel for your child, but divorce is what it is. She knows to expect it. All the events that have required both her parents' involvement have ended in flames, and a wedding is likely to be no different.



This day is truly a blessing and a testament to your nurturing relationship as Parents Together.

The Pro♥Child Way

Just like the birthday parties, the holidays, the school visits, and the special activities, this day is about your child, not two divorced parents. All little girls deserve to dream about their wedding day. Teenage sleepovers should be filled with girl talk of fantastic wedding plans. An engaged woman should be giddy with excitement over her upcoming "big day." She should be worried about her hair, not whether her divorced parents are going to behave.

Chances are, your child is going to get married someday. You want that to be a wonderful occasion for her. So start laying the foundation now, so that your divorce is a non-issue at her wedding. If you and your ex raise your child in the Pro♥Child Way, your divorce will naturally be a non-issue as her wedding approaches. She will see the respect and consideration between her divorced parents and naturally expect that will continue at her wedding. She has experienced special events before where her parents have acted as parents. She knows that when it comes to her, her mom and dad are not divorced parents, they are just parents. Your child's wedding is a day for you and your ex to be proud and celebrate together.

As a reminder, here is what parents do at their child's wedding. They plan together. They discuss a budget together. They sit together. They include and honor each other's friends, whether it is a boss or a girlfriend. Parents dance together with the bride and groom. They stand next to each other in the receiving line and make appropriate introductions. They take pictures together with the wedding couple. They laugh and are joyous over their child's wedding day.

When stepfamilies are involved, they should be recognized as special people in the wedding family. Throughout your child's life, loving relationships should have been fostered between your child and her stepmom and/or stepdad. These individuals are a critical part of your child's sense of being and an unmistakable part of her life. Of course they should be included. Think of treating them as you would a loved grandparent. They should be seated with the family, included in the receiving line, be adorned with flowers, participate in any family pictures, and be a welcome and natural part of the celebration.

A wedding should be chock full of love. Love between a bride and groom, parents and their child, extended family, and friends. At this happy occasion, there is simply no room for anything but love. This day is truly a blessing and a testament to your nurturing relationship as Parents Together.



www.TheProChildWay.com





Ellen Kellner has experienced how powerful the Pro♥Child approach to divorce can be. Twice. Because of this mindful approach, her two daughters are blessed to have a mom and dad, plus a whole pack of extended friends and family who love them and add smiles to their lives.

Through her speaking and writing, Ellen continues to bring the message of *The Pro♥Child Way* to parents who are looking for a transformative approach to divorce parenting. A graduate of The American University, Ellen continues to study, learn, and broaden her awareness of our greater spiritual existence and how that applies to all of our relationships, including the relationship with an ex.