

Parenting Plans From a Kid's Eye View

Parents have been telling the kids to get along, play nicely, share and not talk bad of others, their entire lives. Then the parents **announce their separation** and the **conflict, hostility and upset** between them, perhaps previously hidden from the kids, is now in the open. Their tension spills throughout the house.

For the children of separating parents their

1. First wish is for their parents to **get back together**. If that is not possible, their
2. Second wish is for their parents to **get along**. If their parents cannot even get along, their
3. Third wish is for their parents to **leave each other alone and quit fighting**.

The level of conflict whether **Low, Medium** or **High** and the kids three wishes are the clue to parenting plan solutions.

Low conflict situations: (Parents get back together)

Parents get along well enough to:

- Stay in the same house.

The parents may regard themselves as high conflict.

- This is **high tension** rather than medium or high conflict.

High tension: (Parents get back together)

Stress and bad feelings between the parents.

Concern for eruption of conflict.

Parents manage their behavior/curtail open hostility.

Children in these situations get their first wish.

Children remain together with their parents under one roof.

Scheduling and parental responsibilities generally remain the same.

Open hostility or antagonism differentiates high tension from conflict.

Medium conflict: (Parents do not get along).

There is still a level of civility

- Subtle denigration, making faces, sniping or sarcastic comments.

Parents able to: (Parents get along)

- Distinguish their issues from the needs of the children
- Keep the children's interest forefront.
- Kids in these situations would like their parents to be neighbors.
- Parents live in houses side by side or at least within walking distance of each other.

- Kids have peace of mind.
- Kids can have a close and loving relationship with both parents.

High conflict situations.

(Leave each other alone and quit fighting)

- Hostility between the parents in view of the kids.
- Allegations of abuse:
 1. between the parents
 2. parent towards the children.
- Issues of alcohol or drug use/abuse.
- Mental health issue affecting at least one parent.
- Parents are deadlocked about ongoing care of the children.

The children shudder at the thought of their parents:

- remaining in the same house,
- remaining in neighborhood.

Kids seek to maintain a close relationship with both parents.

- Realize that they must be kept far apart.

These kids want parents to:

- Leave each other alone.
- Enjoy their own relationship with each parent, free from the intrusions of the other.
- Children need some physical distance between the parents.

Kids subject to parental separation do live with some level of hypocrisy.

We tell kids to get along, play nicely and the like, yet and certainly during the separation process, many parents do anything but.

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