
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED?

1. Children adjust better to break-ups when their parents are not hostile toward each other. Conflict between the parents creates problems for the children because of the tension, anger, and loyalty battles it generates.
2. More contact between children and parents is generally better than less contact. Contact should be planned with the child's developmental needs in mind.
3. Parents who live at a greater distance from each other will need to make more effort to maintain a close relationship between the non-custodial parent and the child (See "Long Distance Parenting"). As the child matures developmentally, longer periods of time away from the primary residence are possible.
4. Children have different temperaments and these need to be considered. Some children adjust well to change, are easy going, and can move back and forth between parents and homes easily. Other children have a more difficult time with change and are slower to adjust. For these children, change creates so much anxiety that it often undermines the beneficial effects of more visitations, especially in younger children. As infants, children require frequent visits of shorter duration (example: 4 - 5 times per week for 2 - 4 hours each time). For the toddler to older child who has trouble with change or travel, the transition to less frequent, longer visits should occur slowly. Never use a child's inability to take changes well as an excuse to limit contact with the other parent.
5. Children should not have to make decisions about with whom they should live. Asking them to choose creates enormous guilt, anxiety, anger, and fear. In fact, in California children are not legally allowed to choose with which parent they want to live. This decision can only be made by parents or judicial officers, not by the child.
6. The child's needs should take precedence over the adult's need's. Part of being a good parent involves putting your own needs aside and doing what is best for your children. Children need a strong relationship with both parents. Contact with each parent should be planned with all of the children's needs in mind.