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## LONG DISTANCE PARENTING

Long distance parenting is difficult, but not impossible. The younger the children, the higher the level of effort required to maintain the relationship. This effort is the responsibility of both parents. Both parents should be willing to encourage the relationship between the child and long-distance parent so that the child can grow up emotionally healthy and stable. Here are some suggestions for long distance parenting:

1. When the children are with you, help the children (even teenagers) to make audio or video tapes, art projects, letters, and pictures to send to the other parent. The custodial parent should provide stamps, envelopes and reminders even to the oldest children.
2. When the children are not with you, write, call, e-mail, send care packages, and send pictures, videos, and cassette tapes of yourself to the children as frequently as possible. For children under five this should be done weekly.
3. The custodial parent should have photos of the non-custodial parent displayed in each child's room.
4. Before the first visit to the non-custodial parent's home occurs, newspaper clippings, pictures, and even maps can help a child to become familiar with the environment he or she will visit.
5. Consider inviting the custodial parent to accompany the children on the first visit so that the transition is easier — especially for children under ten.
6. When the children visit the non-custodial parent, a transitional item (e.g., a toy, blanket, stuffed animal, favorite pajamas, etc) and photos of the custodial parent should be sent with the children.
7. The custodial parent can also maintain contact through telephone calls to the children.
8. Help children understand the concept of the passing of time by having a calendar in both homes that shows when the child will see or hear from the other parent. Stick to the schedule for stability and predictability.
9. Allow the children to talk about their "other family." Sharing stories of fun times and even not-so-fun times can help the children to understand that both parents have separate lives but still maintain their parental roles.

To grow up healthy and happy your children need permission from both of you to continue to love, and respect the other parent. None of us is perfect, but each parent has something to offer the kids. Look for those positive things as you help your child to develop a healthy and successful relationship with the other parent.