

## How To Get Along With Your Ex

Like it or not, if you have children with your ex you will need to speak to him or her from time to time. Good communication is clearly in the best interest for you and your children. If you can learn to get along with your ex, especially in front of your children, it will reduce your stress and set a valuable example for your kids.

### Don'ts

1. Don't "push their buttons." Making jabs or harsh comments will only pour gasoline on a burning fire.
2. Don't resort to insults or name calling even if they do. This is important even when your ex is not around—NEVER insult or put down your ex in front of the children. Remember, your children are watching you and may hear you even when you are talking with other adults.



3. Don't get into power struggles over who is right or wrong. When you have heated arguments again and again everyone loses, especially your children who witness these arguments. Agree to focus on what really matters.

4. Don't continue the discussion if you are too angry or it begins to escalate. In that case, it is best to end the interaction as soon as possible. Explain that you are too upset to talk right now but that you would be glad to discuss it at another time. If your ex believes you are just trying to avoid the issue at hand, this will not work. Reassure your ex that you will have the discussion as soon as you are calm and thinking rationally. Perhaps even offer a particular day or time, such as, "Let's talk about this on Thursday."

5. Don't discuss heated issues at your children's activities, such as a baseball game or school play. That is not the time to bring up sensitive topics like child support or the visitation schedule. Instead, focus on having positive interactions with your ex while you watch your children grow and play. Set another time, when the children are not around, to discuss important issues or concerns.

### Do's

1. Take a deep breath before, during, and after your interactions with your ex. In fact, it can be very helpful to practice this on a regular basis. Take a few deep breaths and repeat a calming phrase to yourself, such as, "It's not that big of a deal" or "Getting upset will not help anything."
2. Keep interactions short. There is no benefit in digging up old hurts or betrayals. Be sure to focus on the question or problem at hand. If things are very heated it can be helpful to meet in public places such as at a park or restaurant.
3. Be sure you are taking care of yourself and dealing with your own emotions around the loss of the relationship. This may include getting more exercise or picking up an old hobby. If this is a struggle, you might consider individual counseling to help work through your own issues.
4. Consider using a professional mediator for "hot topics" like issues around child support and visitation.
5. Remember what really matters, *your children*. Everyone benefits when you put your personal issues aside and remain pleasant when you are around one another. Even though you are not together as a couple, your children will see that both of you care and want to be involved in their lives.

