



At The Law Office of Brigid A. Duffield, P.C., we appreciate that planning for Mother's Day during or after divorce and during the COVID-19 pandemic can cause stress or tension between parents and extended family members.

Mother's Day, Sunday, May 10, is right around the corner, Memorial Day, Monday May 25 is not far behind and Father's Day, Sunday, June 21, will be here before we know it...and is anyone thinking about 4th of July, Saturday (which is 9 weeks away)? The Illinois Governor's 'Shelter in Place' (or 'stay-at-home' order) will end somewhere between those three dates and new and different challenges await. Consider these tips on navigating these weekend parenting times during the next few weeks!

1. Shelter in place orders, social distancing and 'stay-at-home' orders don't affect prior court orders, including parenting orders. A current parenting plan or custody agreement should be followed. If you and your ex agree (and we all know "agree" is subjective) to an alternative parenting plan on your own, great!!! If you need the help of a mediator, Illinois has some fabulous mediators who can help planning and resolving issues as they arise. So many of us now use the convenience of the "Zoom" platform making your mediator that much more accessible to your schedule. While County and state courts are closed (except for legal emergencies), formal changes to existing agreements may be delayed so use those professionals in a way that works best for your family!

2. Consider virtual platforms. "Meet up" options like FaceTime, Skype or Zoom provide a way to spend time with your family,

Upcoming Events

Mother's Day
Sunday, May 10, 2020

Memorial Day
Monday, May 25, 2020

Father's Day
Sunday, June 21, 2020

4th of July
Saturday, July 4, 2020

Serenity is not the absence of *conflict*, but the ability to *cope* with it.

your children and other relatives. If face-to-face time is limited, and there are a host of reasons why it might be, propose or offer "make up" time to include in-person time when the "shelter in place" orders expire to make up for real (or perceived)lost parenting times now.

3. *Keep your expectations realistic.* Many of the usual places where you might exchange your kids, such as at work, school, parking lots, may not be accessible or may no longer be good options. What makes sense for your family given the age of your children, the proximity of the parents and the ability to succeed, inspires creativity. If you are reading the amazing and creative things families are doing to make life workable has broken traditional thoughts on how things ought to be...what's your best suggestion? Send it to us. My favorites are birthday "drive-bys" with horns blaring and impromptu coffee parties in a yard using the portable chairs and perhaps a tray table I keep in my car for just such a pleasant surprise.

4. *Focus on the best, rather than the worst.* This is a time when our trust issues are really tested. Does your ex take social distancing as seriously as you are? Of course not. Is your ex (and/or their new partner) are taking the necessary steps to ensure your child isn't at risk or infected? Not in the way you would. The truth is, this is a time for trust. Trust that the other parent loves your child and though will do things differently, OK VERY differently than you, does not make it risky. While these are legitimate and natural questions...it's also important to remember and trust that like you, your ex-spouse has the best interests for health and safety of your child at heart...and probably knows and trusts that if they don't, you will make life miserable for them.

5. *Lead/Teach by example.* We have all seen great acts of kindness to neighbors, strangers, and the elderly. This is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to take the High Road and model our values like doing the right thing first and foremost. This is a great time for our children to see how we respect the relationship between them and your co-parent. Make a concerted effort to avoid the potential for conflict that can come up. Now is the time to plan the Mother's Day and Father's Day surprises that will be unexpected, appreciated and welcomed...even if the motives are not "trusted".

6. *Reminder: children worry too.* Parents are worried about work, about paying bills, about keeping food in the house, about keeping everyone safe and healthy...and children worry too. They worry about their friends, their teachers, their grandparents and you. Talk openly, honestly and ***age appropriately*** with them as you reassure them they're safe - that you've got this and you are in charge.

Basic regular routines create stability, consistency and hopefulness and isn't that good for all of us!



Happy Mother's Day!

You Know You're a Mother During COVID-19 When...

1. **You've said**, "Yes, you STILL have to brush your teeth even though we aren't going anywhere!"
2. **You've developed** a new appreciation for live-streaming chats with your siblings, old movies and church!
3. **You've overheard** your kids talking about how weird their teacher is...and you're the teacher!
4. **Your love the fact that in your "school"**, your kids are doing their homeschooling work in their Christmas pajamas or their swimsuits!
5. **You appreciate** that this is your kids "2 mile uphill walk in the snow to school" story which they will someday share with your grandchildren when that generation complains they're bored and want to go somewhere or do something. Your kids will tell their kids about the time they couldn't go anywhere for two months because of a pandemic and the great things you made them do to get through it!

And...you know you're a Mother ANY time when...

You say at least once a day "I'm not cut out for this job," knowing all the while you wouldn't trade it for anything!

"All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel Mother."

Abraham Lincoln

*Sending our best wishes to one and all for a safe, healthy
and Happy Mother's Day!*

Brigid A. Duffield
Attorney/Mediator/Speaker/Author
The Law Office of Brigid A. Duffield, P.C.
630.221.9300
brigid@brigidduffield.com
www.brigidduffield.com

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