

Commitments

Sometimes an ex-spouse will not follow through on commitments and will wound your child's heart. Dr. Leman advises against getting caught in the triangle between your child and your ex. Talk to your child about the situation, allow him/her to express how he/she feels, and offer comfort and love to the child.

Stable Consistent Home Environment

Children thrive in a stable, consistent home environment. Continual change, upheaval, and unpredictability create stress and contribute to regression in children's behavior. Think about your current home environment. How would you characterize it?

- Calm, peaceful, easy going.
- We have our ups and downs, but life is fairly predictable.
- We frequently have to interrupt our schedule to handle minor emergencies.
- Every day is a crisis. We're hanging on by a thread! Things are chaotic!

Bringing some amount of order and calm to your home without becoming a "control freak" is an art and a science. Kids need freedom to play and let off steam, but they also need boundaries and consistency. If your home is not as stable and consistent as you would like, what changes can you make in your life and your schedule that could contribute to a more stable home? Think of ways to simplify or change your daily routines, step back and look critically at all of the activities in your life.

Defusing Your Ex-Spouse

Spouses know our "hot buttons." They know how to provoke us. After divorce, an ex-spouse can take delight in "getting your goat" or provoking you to wrath. But losing your temper and resorting to a shouting match puts you at the mercy of your spouse. Your anger puts him/her in control.

Here are four tips for defusing your ex-spouse by relating to him/her with an olive branch instead of a hammer.

1. Maintain your cool.
2. If possible, agree with your ex-spouse on one aspect of his/her statement.
3. Calmly and firmly reassert your point of view.
4. Ignore or do not respond to your spouse's most inflammatory comments.

To create harmony with your ex-spouse, Dr. Leman advises single parents to:

- (1) speak positively about your ex-spouse in front of your kids
- (2) keep kids out of the middle - don't put them in a position where they have to choose between their parents
- (3) don't play the martyr
- (4) ask your parents/in-laws not to denigrate your ex-spouse in front of the children
- (5) find ways to knock down barriers to communication with your ex-spouse
- (6) pray for your ex
- (7) be as flexible as possible in agreements related to visitation and custody
- (8) remember that children need freedom to have a relationship with your ex