

## WHAT CHILDREN NEED FROM PARENTS

Dear Parent, I'm your child, so please . . .

- 1. Don't talk badly about my other parent.**  
*(My other parent is part of me. This makes me feel torn apart! AND bad about myself!)*
- 2. Don't talk badly about my other parent's friends & relatives.**  
*(Let me care for someone, even if you don't.)*
- 3. Don't talk about a divorce process or other adult relationship stuff.**  
*(This makes me feel sick. Please be the adult, and leave me out of it!)*
- 4. Don't talk about how much you each contribute to me financially.**  
*(This makes me feel like a possession, instead of your kid. It makes me feel guilty for needing you.)*
- 5. Don't make me feel bad when I enjoy my other parent.**  
*(This makes me afraid to tell you things, including sharing my joy.)*
- 6. Don't block my visits, or prevent me from speaking to my other parent on the phone.**  
*(This makes me not trust you to avoid using me as a weapon.)*
- 7. Don't interrupt my time with my other parent by calling too much, or planning activities during my time with that parent.** *(This makes me feel torn, manipulated and controlled.)*
- 8. Don't argue in front of me, not even on the phone when I can hear you!** *(This turns my stomach inside out. I can't trust you to care enough to protect me from your distress.)*
- 9. Don't use me to spy for you when I'm with or at my other parent's house.** *(This makes me feel disloyal and dishonest. You are alienating me from my other parent. I need you both.)*
- 10. Don't ask me to keep secrets from my other parent.** *(Secrets make me anxious. When you ask me to hold your secrets, you are making me too responsible for your wellbeing. YOU are the adult/parent.)*
- 11. Don't ask me questions about my other parent's life or our time together.** *(This is another kind of spying. I feel disloyal. Just let me offer to tell you if I want to.)*
- 12. Don't give me verbal messages to deliver to my other parent.** *(This is another way of putting me in the middle. I get anxious wondering how s/he'll react to ME. Leave a message or email. Your relationship with your co-parent is not mine to carry.)*
- 13. Don't send written messages with me or place them in my bag.** *(Again, you are putting me in the middle. My other parent will react to ME instead of to you.)*
- 14. Don't blame my other parent for the tension between you as parents, things that go wrong in your life, separation or divorce.** *(This puts me in the middle, AGAIN, and feels terrible! You are pulling on me to feel sorry for you and then I want to protect you against my other parent. OR, I want to defend my other parent, because I love him/her too.)*
- 15. Don't treat me like an adult friend! Please find an adult friend or therapist to talk to.** *(I can't carry your adult distress about your tension/ relationship problems/ divorce on top of my own!)*
- 16. Don't ignore my other parent or sit on opposite sides of the room during my school or sports activities.** *(I feel sad, anxious, tense and embarrassed. Please act friendly, at least civil and respectful, and like parents, even if it's just for me.)*
- 17. DO let me take items to my other home, as long as I can carry them back and forth.** *(Otherwise, I end up feeling your distrust and your not wanting to share WITH ME. You end up treating me as a possession.)*
- 18. Don't use guilt to pressure me to love you more, and don't ask me where I want to live.** *(This makes ME choose between my two parents.)*
- 19. DO realize I may have two homes, not just one. I'd also really appreciate it if you let my other parent come into our home now and then, because it's my home, too!** *(It doesn't matter how much time I spend there. I need to see common courtesy – not hostility.)*
- 20. DO let me love you both and see each of you as much as possible! Especially when it benefits me, be flexible even when it's not part of our regular schedule, for my sake.**

**THANKS!! Your loving child, xoxoxo**