

Parenting & Co-parenting Agreements in Parenting Plan

*to be referenced in Divorce Judgment of [Insert Names]
regarding their children [Insert Names]
[Insert Date Signed]*

CHORES & ALLOWANCE IN EACH HOME

Parents agree to determine collaboratively, with the children, developmentally appropriate Self-care and Household Chores in each household, related time management and money management to prepare their children for life outside the home. Children with attention, anxiety or impulse control challenges especially need *consistency across households* – pronounced differences in consistency and reliability of parenting across households can seriously disrupt the children's ability to learn and master fundamental life skills. Both parents agree to empower both children to take independent responsibility for:

- a. **Age-Appropriate Self-Care Chores** (in each household) - e.g. By a specific time/day: pick up their own room, pick up own dishes from table, wash and load in dishwasher, wash/fold/put away own clothes, feed/care for own pets, prepare backpacks night before with homework by front door, post/schedule out prep for assignments on family calendar. This is preparation that provides self-confidence, autonomy and mastery, while being mindful of later "roommates."
 - b. **Household-Family Chores** (contributing to family in each home) in age-appropriate, family-unifying, and collaborative ways, such as: combine in-house trash and take outside; water potted plants; clear entire table; wash dishes; empty dishwasher; for family's laundry, do load, fold and deliver to rooms; vacuum, sweep, dust; plan and prep or help prep balanced meals X number of times/week (mainly vegetables, then protein, complex carbohydrates and fruit); pack own lunches (also balanced). Most 5-6 year-olds can make their own balanced lunch and make more than one lunch at a time if included in buying groceries/making a grocery list.
1. Parents agree to *get professional help as needed* to ensure children establish a reliable chores schedule that works for all household members in each home, so children are equipped to launch with confidence at 18. *[without requiring that the parents spend their lives pushing them uphill!]*.
 2. Parents agree to ensuring a modest/reasonable and regular allowance offered for Money Management (budget) learning purposes – you are *not* paying children for grades or for doing what they need to do to care for themselves and contribute reliably to their families.
 - a. Example: children learn they have X amount for after-school drinks or meals with friends, as well to buy birthday gifts for family/friends. If they don't save it or budget they don't have as nice a gift to offer their friends.
 - b. In general, both parents agree that *it is unwise to pay kids for doing what no one else would pay them for* (e.g. their self-care or family chores – *they learn to think they are doing you a favor rather than it being a part of their responsibility to contribute to the household*) *or for getting good grades*) (*they learn to get the grades for the money or to please you, instead of investing in their own learning/education which is what you need to avoid nagging and an effective investment later in college when you're not around to cajole*).
 - c. Both parents to ensure children are required to save at least some of their allowance for other expenses as well (e.g. birthday gifts for family/friends), and learn to do without, to some extent, as they learn to budget. Both parents agree not to "rescue" the child(ren) from the consequences of not saving.
 - d. When child(ren) ask to "borrow" money from a parent, both parents agree to ensure the child thinks through and agrees to *a payment schedule, ahead of loaning money*, and to follow through with ensuring the child *does* pay this amount back *on time*, or has to *earn back* the right to ask for any future loans.

4. If the child wants something “extra” or “big,” and either parent feels the child needs to invest in earning part of this, the will pay the child for “extra” work that *actually benefits the parent* (e.g. pulling weeds, mowing the lawn if no gardener, bathing and grooming pet, washing a parent’s car inside and/or out, babysitting younger sibling). Both parents agree to teach the child(ren) to do work that is *beyond* their usual responsibilities (self-care/sharing in family chores) if they wish for extra money to purchase something bigger than usual. [Suggestion: Pay extra *only* for what you would have to pay someone else to do, and pay at an age-appropriate rate - e.g. babysitting for younger sibling when appropriate, professional groomer may get \$80, whereas child will get \$10-\$15 for bathing, cutting dog’s nails and brushing.]

CHILDREN’S SELF-MANAGEMENT & AUTONOMY Both parents agree to support their children achieving and learning to *independently* manage life/work balance (e.g. social time, sufficient sleep, healthy eating habits and exercise alongside their academic and extracurricular commitments).

- For example, both parents might agree to set a bedtime, and not allow the children to finish homework past that bedtime, to ensure the children learn to manage time, and care for themselves, e.g. may involve allowing children to “fail” if homework isn’t completed on time. (Obviously earlier failures are easier for kids’ to endure, while later, not turning in homework on time can impact grades, college/trade school admission, etc.)
1. Both parents similarly agree to support their children following through with commitments and their being mindful of their impact on others, such as when they resist or “don’t feel like” finishing out a season or class they signed up for (e.g. team sports requiring players to attend practice, plays requiring actors attend rehearsals, 3 months of lessons).
 2. Both parents agree to support child(ren)’s working towards grades/report cards indicating that child is developing *at least age-appropriate social-emotional skills* (e.g. two-year old’s have age-appropriate conflict resolution skills as well as being able to verbalize what they want respectfully, rather than complaining, dysregulating or judging when they don’t like something) and independent/autonomous academic self-motivation and mastery (i.e. the ability to persist on school work independently, and to invest / take pleasure in their own learning).
 3. Both parents agree to support the child(ren)’s participation in school and extracurricular activities **using parental skills** (or *proactively learning to use skills*) that cultivate the child(ren)’s **self-motivation and self-determination**.
 4. For child(ren) to achieve age-appropriate levels of independence and autonomy, both parents agree that their children must, for their own wellbeing, ***be more invested in learning and skills-mastery than their parents are.***
 - a. Thus, both parents agree to clarify that *the child(ren), not the parent(s)*, benefit from their successful growth, education and development.
 - b. Both parents agree to explicitly affirm the children’s having an *internal locus of control* and skilled *self-affirmation*, to avoid their dependence on parents’ approval/affirmation.
 - i. **Example of Effective Verbal Reinforcer to Develop Internal Locus of Control:** Rather than generic praise/approval (“good job”), parents describe the child’s specific behaviors and how those were effective *for the child, not the parent, using an affirming voice tone/facial expression* (“You took your time, and kept at it until you figured it out! You didn’t meltdown or get frustrated, you took short breaks and came back. You proud of yourself?!”)
 - ii. **Example of Effective Verbal Reinforcer to Develop Internal Locus of Control:** “You know, I noticed that you had a different idea in your head, and when Dad and I said something different was going to happen, you were able to just ‘go with the flow’ – did you notice that? Are you proud of yourself?”
 - iii. **Ask questions (versus “bossing”)** to ensure cognitive processing, and to avoid child’s

- tuning you out:** “So where does that go?” versus “Put that in the closet;” “What’s next on your chores list?” versus reminding and repeating what the child needs to do *for* the child.
- c. Both parents agree to avoid attempting to motivate the child(ren) by using bribes, fear, threats or leveraging their need for parental approval, as such methods obstruct self-motivation, as well as autonomy and independence, and make their child(ren) vulnerable to exploitation by those offering approval or delivering threats. Both parents similarly agree to ban any corporal punishment for their child(ren).
 5. When either parent notes power struggles over school learning, self-care or family chores, timeliness, or other day-to-day matters for **longer than 2 weeks**, each parent agrees to pursue professional parenting guidance independently to ensure they’re equipped to empower their children to be self-motivated and autonomous (e.g. any of the therapists on the team, or those they refer). When this parenting guidance involves in-home parental guidance, the other parent shall give and not unreasonably withhold consent to have the child(ren) present during such sessions. **[Without parents spending their lives pushing, nagging and cajoling their children uphill, and the children learning to habitually protest.]**

CHILDREN’S ACADEMIC LEARNING

Both parents agree to support the child(ren)’s academic learning, in developmentally-attuned and empowering ways.

1. Both parents consider that, barring learning or other disabilities, straight “A’s,” for example, do not make a child smarter or necessarily more successful financially, in the long run. At the same time, the child’s access/entry to desirable or reputable schools and colleges/trade schools (**i.e. those with big endowments able to provide substantial/sufficient financial aid**) depends highly on their having the *skills*, focus, persistence on tasks and motivation to give teachers what they want for an “A.”
2. Both parents agree that the skills needed for academic autonomy and mastery are most easily learned *very* early, ideally when there is limited homework in the early grades.
3. Throughout K-12 schooling, both parents agree that children typically need parental support to create a peaceful time to focus and learn at home, and to strengthen independent learning skills at home (e.g. ability to focus, persist on tasks, invest in the quality of work, manage time/projects).
4. Both parents understand that straight “A’s” are *the norm* for children being considered for admission at a UC or a highly desirable private college/trade school, given that college/trade school tuition is rising at challenging rates, funding is limited for new UC and California State colleges/local trade schools, and competition is significantly greater for spots in reputable/desirable schools with generous scholarships and/or financial aid. **(There are great books about how to get your kids into private colleges/trade schools that take kids with lower grades, although you’re likely to pay a higher tuition rate and get less financial aid because these schools are *not* as well-endowed, even if they’re a perfect match for your child.)**
5. Both parents agree to provide and share the cost of tutoring for their child(ren), for an agreed-upon period of time, whenever the child(ren) fall below grade level (B- or lower) or struggle for **no longer than 2 weeks** in a particular subject.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

1. Both parents agree to support the child(ren) participation in **extracurricular activities in the categories below** during grade school through pre-college/trade school years.
 - a. Without early experience (e.g. grade school, middle school), children are *not* likely to qualify in high school for activities/positions of interest.
 - b. Similarly, without those interest-related experiences and internships during middle and high school, children in college/trade schools who are receiving financial aid must participate in “work

study,” and will not qualify for “work study” experiences aligned with their interests and future employment goals (e.g. stuck working a cashier job in the cafeteria for work study, instead of work study with a school-affiliated Art Center if “Art” is their love). Without such internships/work experience in their areas of interest, children will struggle to be employable in their areas of interest at the time of graduation from college/trade school.

2. **Parents understand and agree that participation in the activities listed below is needed for admissions** to reputable/desirable schools, and later to college/trade schools, which heavily weigh and inquire about the following cumulative skills and time invested in interest-based learning experiences.
 - a. **Leadership** - e.g. Boy/Girl Scouts, Student government, Debate Team, Model United Nations participation, Peer Mediation at the Western Justice Center (Middle School students), ACLU training for high school students in different areas of advocacy. For elementary school children, leadership activities may involve, for example, a 10-year old enrolling all school classrooms in Trick-or-Treating for UNICEF at Halloween, raising funds to that end, ensuring classrooms have what they need, and counting the money after Halloween. NOTE: Colleges/Trade Schools want to see a child's ongoing commitment to make a difference and contribute to his/her community, and to demonstrate leadership in their ability to solicit and enroll stakeholders within a community to do the same. They want kids who will invest in and reflect well on their institutions.
 - b. **Volunteer Learning/Internships** - e.g. Red Cross certifications obtained to provide emergency assistance at the Rose Parade, becoming Red-Cross certified to babysit in Middle School, volunteering to provide regular tutoring for after school programs, internship working for local vet/animal shelter, (for older kids: Suicide prevention center/rape crisis hot line training and volunteer work, unpaid/minimally paid internships at an auto-mechanic shop or on construction site), Peer mediation training/provision through Western Justice Center (grade and middle school children), reading to children in Domestic Violence shelters, Homeless shelter soup kitchen service, candy-stripping for kids wanting to enter medical professions, kids interested in art or the computer sciences can build websites or provide marketing flyers for non-profits, etc.
 - i. As children approach high school, they need help pursuing “high yield” volunteer experiences that align with their specific interests and talents so that they have some viable “work experience” *before* they reach college/trade school. They will need this work experience to pursue “work-study” jobs after high school graduation, on college/trade school campuses that are also linked to their interests and talents, rather than being assigned to say, being a cashier in the cafeteria for “work study” during college.
 - ii. These college/trade school “work study jobs” and/or “internships” during college/trade school are the basis for their work-place preparation after graduation. Kids who graduate with a degree or certificate without solid work experience in their field prior to graduation, are far less likely to find or qualify for viable jobs after college/trade school.
 - c. **Sports/Physical Activities** (more than one/seasonal, for all 4 years of high school, based on their various experiences prior to high school) - e.g. swimming, competitive horseback riding, dressage, seasonal team sports, track and field, fencing, martial arts.
 - d. **Arts Activities** (more than one, ongoing) - e.g. dance, choir, drama, fine arts, mastery of an instrument.
3. **Consistency of Participation and Mastery Over Time** in above interests – Admissions typically look for the *demonstrated, historical ability* to persist on tasks, with the independent motivation to achieve mastery *in multiple arenas* beyond the classroom, while also investing in making a difference in their communities. (Basic recipe for success in any arena.)

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

1. As children enter teenage years, the children will be permitted to attend social functions sponsored

by their schools as well as other, private parties, provided:

- a. The residential parent solicits adequate information and is satisfied that alcohol and drugs are not available at those functions, and that adequate adult supervision is provided at the event.
 - b. *The residential parent shall inform the other parent regarding any such function and will be open to respectful suggestions offered by the other parent about the child(ren)'s attendance.*
2. Given that parties and dances begin in Middle School by the time the children turn 11, both parents agree to educate the children regarding *specific safety criteria and expected safety responses*.
- a. **The children will be expected to demonstrate knowledge regarding how to respond for themselves to safety concerns that will arise when neither parents is present**, i.e. Children will be able to ask themselves:
 - i. Is there adult supervision?
 - ii. Are drugs and alcohol being served or any other illegal activity?
 - iii. Is sexual/petting behavior occurring?
 - iv. Is there any social pressure to do things they could feel ashamed of later?
 - v. What are the academic/legal consequences?
 - vi. How will they respond effectively to ensure their own safety in any such situations, *verbally and in action*, in age-appropriate ways?
 - vii. How can they do this respectfully, without unnecessarily disrespecting or alienating peers?
 - viii. How do they/the parents pursue ample research about what is most effective in these situations?
 - ix. How will the children ask/ensure that at least one parent is available to pick them up in the event of unforeseen, age-inappropriate events? etc.
 - b. Both parents agree that the best preparation for the teenage years is early, ***rehearsed practice in effective judgment and parental trust the child earns*** – a trust rooted in early (pre-teen) rehearsed practice of effective judgment at the end of Elementary School and the beginning of Middle School. Both parents agree to teach their children to be thus prepared.
3. Parents will **reliably check in with child(ren) after social or extracurricular activities** to invite them to share what and whom they enjoyed, and to *first* affirm their joys. Parents agree to gingerly ask about any concerns, without interrogating or focusing on “what’s wrong” or a “problem.”
- a. Parents agree to ask in ways that communicate that parents are interested in child(ren)’s joys, as well as any concerns, so the child(ren) learn(s) to feel safe coming to each parent to express any concerns openly and honestly.
 - b. Parents will share information regarding any noteworthy incidents as soon as possible to ensure *both* parents can support the child(ren).
 - c. Parents agree to use a matter-of-fact, friendly tone and facial expression even when attending to child-related concerns, so as not to frighten or leave children feeling guilty/ “bad” for sharing.
 - d. Further, both parents agree to equally share the cost to consult with any of the collaborative clinical team members, as soon as possible, about how best to approach such concerns, if and when they occur.
 - e. Parents agree that child(ren)’s stating “I’m uncomfortable” is too vague, and not sufficient on its own to require others to stop whatever they’re doing and do something different.
 - i. Parents agree to support and ensure child(ren) know how to articulate their feelings, to distinguish these from the thoughts (including negative judgments, assumptions) that drive feelings, impulses and behavior, and to state the *specific behavior(s) they want clearly and respectfully*. (Involves both parents understanding that kids aren’t effective if they feel entitled to have the world change around them “only” because they are “uncomfortable.”)

They are also responsible for articulating what they want/need instead of whatever is occurring. Point: "YOUR discomfort is not inherently MY problem.")

4. **In the event of any disagreement about the children's attendance at social functions**, the residential parent at the time the event occurs will make the decision, in accordance, *with all of the above agreed-to provisions and preparations*.
 - a. When the residential parent makes the decision for child(ren) to attend an event, over the other's objections, the residential parent will notify the other parent of that decision, and follow up to share how it went with the non-residential parent, **within 24 hours** after the event's ending time.
 - b. The residential parent agrees to remain mindful that children need even divorced parents to *present a united front*, and to avoid granting the child(ren) the ability to divide parents on key issues.

CHILD READINESS FOR DRIVING BY AGE 16

If either parent observes that their child is impulsive, and/or experiences strong emotion dysregulation challenges occurring even irregularly and which therefore risk compromising the child's safety and/or judgment, both parents agree to enroll the child in a research-based, protocols-adherent Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) program, or a similar mutually agreed-upon evidence-based therapeutic program designed to specifically address impulsivity, emotion regulation, and distress tolerance **no later than his/her/their 15th birthday** (takes 2 years to fully gain skills mastery in DBT protocol-adherent programs). DBT, at the time of this writing, is the only evidence-based therapy that teaches kids (and adults) specific evidence-based emotion regulation, distress tolerance, mindfulness and interpersonal effectiveness skills. DBT costs to be covered as indicated in provisions under "Medical Matters" section herein. *[If either parent has impulse control challenges of any kind, the kids are likely to have it. FYI – there's a local clinic that offers DBT on a sliding scale (Choices Counseling Center). Slow as molasses to onboard even kids in crisis, and they can get the job done for cheap. This gives parents some leverage – driving is the carrot, and the child has to get some cheap, skills/research-based therapy as needed before they launch so they have a shot at launching/life, in case they've not resolved some of their current behavioral challenges by this time, and while parents still have some control (before age 18).]*

MEDIA EXPOSURE & RATING SYSTEMS

Parents agree to respect the prevailing age-appropriate rating systems regarding the child(ren)'s exposure to movies, music, TV and video games, and to provide supervision in line with current research about the impact of said media and screen time (during the week/weekends/length of screen time/nature of content) on developing brains. When the children are present, the residential parent will be responsible for advising and ensuring that any other children/adults in each household, including guests, abide by and respect screen-time, ratings and other media-related agreements approved by both parents.

Specific agreements across both households regarding **media rating systems, screen time exposure, parental monitoring of content, history and usage, as well as online safety**, will include the following.

1. The amount of time both parents agree the children may spend time watching TV, YouTube, etc. during school days, barring child's being bedridden due to illness, shall be based on **American Academy of Pediatrics** recommendations, such as:
 - a. For children **ages 6-8 years**, screen use will be limited to **30 minutes** on school nights, and will include high-quality educational programming, with parental supervision *at all times*.
 - b. Above limits will be extended when media-viewing entails special content, shared in a planned, social context with family, a parent, siblings or family friends.
 - c. **Screen time will otherwise be restricted to weekends** following completion of homework, and that day's self/family responsibilities, and activities having been fulfilled throughout the week.

2. Both parents agree to ensure media-engagement will occur usually following completion of daily responsibilities, and will not interfere with the children's: adequate sleep, physical activity, learning, social interactions, family interactions and other behaviors essential to children's healthy development.
3. In each household, parental controls will be implemented on all devices to which the children have access, including smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, smart TV's, computers, etc.
4. Parents will not permit children age **12 or younger** to access social media accounts without parental supervision, specific education and practice aimed at teaching the children to avoid bullying, grooming by predators, scams, etc.
5. Parents will preview media with children **until age 12** to ensure children learn to think critically about what they are viewing, assess the relevance/lack of relevance to reality and/or their lives, and can effectively discard information or apply it to their experiences of the world around them.
 - a. Children will be provided with consistent limits and parental supervision for time spent using media, including limits on the types of media permitted.
 - b. In each household, parents will work together with children to construct a list of multiple enjoyable alternatives to screen time.
 - c. Both parents agree to prepare ahead to specifically moderate any sexual or violent content by pausing and verbally explaining content in age-appropriate ways, or having children agree to fast forward through such parts without viewing.
 - d. Visual/audio content will be paused as needed to ensure children's tension, emotion regulation, and physical and emotional distress is assessed and respected by the parent, and that the children are supported to skillfully self-regulate emotions, self-soothe and understand film content in a way that is meaningful and healthy, before proceeding.
6. Given the inability of children **under the age of 9** to process complex, arousing images, plots and sound:
 - a. Both parents will encourage children to slow their attention to focus on details in, for example, animal/nature documentaries and educational online learning games.
 - b. Parents will join the children in these activities whenever possible.
 - c. Both parents will actively discourage the children's engaging overstimulating/arousing, mindless, and/or non-educational media/games used to distract and thereby regulate emotions (instead of developing skilled, focused attention and self-regulation of emotions). Such media activities are addictive, and interfere with healthy brain development.
7. The ages at which the child(ren) will be allowed to view **PG, PG 13, or R** movies/games/online content with adult pre-screening and/or adult supervision and discussion are: **13–16**, depending on the child's maturity and the residential parent's willingness and skill to supervise, pause and discuss content in age-appropriate ways.
 - a. When parents are unwilling/unable to supervise, promote critical thinking and discuss content, children **under the age of 16** will *not* be allowed to view media content rated PG, PG 13, or R, or to view any media content with similar ratings.
8. Parents will have full access to phones, email and technology passwords for children 13 or under, and until children are 18 and begin helping to pay for their portion of the phone bill. Both children will be expected to enable location trackers on their phones as a safety precaution through their college years. Parents may opt to obtain flip phones to help restrict screen time for children under age 15 who are unable/unwilling to self-monitor and limit their own media use on smartphones.
9. Parents agree to help their children rehearse and practice how s/he/they will self-monitor and set limits respectfully and graciously in and outside their homes, to uphold parental restrictions on exposure to specific media ratings. Parents will explicitly teach the children to monitor themselves by:
 - a. Asking friends and adults (e.g. on a play date/sleepover, or friend/adult guests in resident

- parent's home) the rating of movies/games, before watching/playing, *and*
- b. Explaining respectfully that s/he/they are "*only allowed to watch/play _____-ratings.*"
 - c. Similarly, both parents will ensure their child(ren) have alternative entertainment options for themselves, as well as for others, if, for example, the friend's family is already watching/playing a film or video game with ratings not allowed by P1 or P2. Parents will rehearse/practice with children how to independently engage alternative activities (e.g. read a book) or offer alternative activities, games, movies, etc. that are allowed at home. *(Coming prepared and ample rehearsal to offer alternatives and communicate parent limits allows children to be included and inclusive; This also avoids the child(ren)'s imposing their parents' ratings restrictions on others and engendering resentment by peers or other families towards the child(ren).)*

AGREEMENTS REGARDING EFFECTIVE CO-PARENTING BEHAVIORS

1. Parents understand and agree that the goal of any effective parenting plan is for children to have satisfying, healthy relationships with *both* their parents. More specifically, children need contact with stable, reliable parents (as long as there is no physical or emotional danger to the children). Consequently both parents agree to abide by the following behaviors, as both parents agree that children need co-parents who:
 - a. Are skilled or willing to learn to be skilled at regulating their own emotions effectively,
 - b. Can keep themselves from sharing adult concerns and feelings that flood and overwhelm children,
 - c. Protect children from feeling responsible for (or guilty about) a parent's wellbeing,
 - d. Protect children from a parent's depositing their own negative views, feelings and thoughts about the other parent, and
 - e. Are skilled or demonstrate a *commitment to learn to be skilled* at communicating effectively and respectfully with each other, modeling skills that positively impact their children, and their relationships with their children.
2. Parents agree that, in the long run, well-adjusted and resilient children become young adults who take responsibility for who they become, i.e. what they do with whatever is / isn't given to them by their parents – either materially, by teaching or modeling. Consequently, each parent agrees to:
 - a. Aim for their children to learn to accept themselves and their parents for who they are, and who they are not, with respect, and without demonizing or blaming either parent.
 - b. Support their children taking responsibility for their own decisions and the consequences of those decisions.
 - c. Understand that accepting a parent is not the same as "accepting" that parent's ineffective or destructive behaviors, and will ensure the child(ren)'s right to protest respectfully and request specific, effective behaviors (e.g. "Mom/Dad you sound really mad - will you please use a kinder tone with me?"). *[Essential for kids to be able to set respectful limits with parents, to avoid their feeling coerced/pressured into sex, being bullied by peers, feeling inclined to "go along" with risky/illegal behavior when teens are in a group, etc. The vague, "I'm uncomfortable," isn't going to cut it in these situations.]*
 - d. Consequently, teach their child(ren) to protest respectfully *with him/herself as a parent*, to identify and *respectfully request the specific effective behaviors* the child(ren) want, and to set effective limits with each parent. *Purpose: if children cannot do this with trusted parents, they will not be able to preserve their self-respect, safety and wellbeing elsewhere.*
3. Parents agree to remain mindful that how they model, teach *and expect* their children to express themselves is how parents are teaching their children to relate to their own friends, future partners, peers, teachers, future employers and colleagues. Consequently, parents understand and agree to

provide for their children's healthy development, by "mutually supporting" their co-parent, in the following specific ways. Both parents agree to:

- a. Copy, print out and share this section and other "parenting" sections of this agreement with child(ren)'s primary caregivers.
- b. Avoid disparaging their co-parent *in any way*, across all contexts where child(ren) might hear or later be exposed to said disparagement by another.
- c. Even when parallel parenting (only limited interaction between parents), support and encourage the child(ren) to have as respectful, loving and healthy a relationship with the other parent as possible.
- d. Actively find specific, positive things to say about the other parent to the child, and about how each child may be like the other parent in those positive ways.
- e. Support the child(ren) by affirming the half of the child that "comes from" the other parent, remembering that half of child(ren)'s DNA and half of their ways of being are derived from that parent.
- f. As empathy is learned, *not innate*, model, teach and encourage their ability to lean in and understand another, to ask "curious questions," even when we/they have different views, or find a person's behavior unpleasant or upsetting.
- g. Model and teach the child(ren) to avoid quick or blanket negative judgments about themselves or others, as research affirms these are ineffective in life – they alienate us from ourselves and from others, and actively block self/other understanding.
- h. Communicate an understanding of your children's *experience* with the other parent – *without* directly or indirectly agreeing with or endorsing negative judgments about your co-parent! (Parents agree to seek help implementing this, when unclear about how to proceed.)
- i. Understand and respect that your children do *not* experience the other parent in the same ways a co-parent does as a co-parent or former spouse.
- j. Respect that your children have an entirely different *kind* of relationship with the other parent than co-parent does/did.
- k. Grant the children the right to have a relationship with the other parent that is free of and unencumbered by parents' adult feelings, perspectives, histories, insecurities and experiences.
- l. Trust self by allowing your children to have their *own* experiences and draw their own conclusions with and about the other parent, while blocking and redirecting negative judgments.
- m. *Reframe* negative judgments the child says about the other parent, to open dialogue that helps the child get clearer about what's upsetting (e.g. "Mom/Dad's so mean!" Translation: "There's something you didn't like about what s/he said? What could you have asked for instead?" Or "Hmm. There's something you didn't like about how s/he said that – what do you think s/he meant?").
- n. Even when child/ren may disagree with the other parent, encourage their ability to understand the other parent's view(s) (e.g. "Hmm. I wonder what Mom/Dad may have been thinking and/or feeling when s/he said that . . .," "I wonder what would happen if you asked him/her directly?" "Do you have any sense of what triggered that reaction?" "What would happen if you said: 'I have a different idea about that, are you interested?'"
- o. Communicate clear understanding of the child(ren)'s struggles, while also redirecting him/her them to focus on what s/he/they *can* do, express and/or ask for more effectively, and actively hold child(ren) responsible for *their part* in the quality of their relationships with each of parent (and others), in age-appropriate ways (e.g. "Do you think you could have said that in a kinder way? How? Let's practice that.").
- p. Expect/require child(ren) to learn to communicate their needs and wants verbally, requesting specific effective behaviors from others in respectful ways that serve them in *and outside* their

parents' homes (e.g. at school, with peers, in future jobs). Model the same with each other and with children. Empower any caregivers to *require* the same.

- q. Avoid "mind-reading"/anticipating their needs by instead *requiring* that they verbalize these. Purpose: our children will be hurt when others don't mind-read and will be unduly dependent on us/others. Their self-esteem is enhanced by not expecting others to mind-read, when they're able to *speak* their own needs/desires respectfully.
- r. Avoid seeking confirmation from children of your negative views about the other parent.
- s. Avoid inserting your own views, directly or indirectly, into our children's relationship with the other parent in ways that color our child(ren)'s perceptions of that parent.
- t. *Require* our children to approach the other parent to discuss any issues they may have with *that parent* (*qualify this if that parent suffers from severe mental illness, is easily enraged or presents a direct threat to the child's safety*). Examples of possible language:
 - i. "Your mother/father loves you very much and would want to know that you are feeling this way."
 - ii. "I really want to encourage you to talk with her/him about that."
 - iii. "What do you think you can say or do to express your understanding of your Mom/Dad's views, *before* making your own point?"
 - iv. "Let's practice how you might express what you're feeling/thinking/wanting/asking in a respectful, non-judgmental way."
 - v. "Rather than complaining about what you *don't* want, I wonder what would happen if you ask respectfully for the behavior you *do* want?"
- u. Present a much-needed united front by avoiding negative assumptions/judgments about our co-parent when the child(ren) present partial narratives. Both parents want to avoid his/her/their playing one parent off the other, and to move towards clear, respectful proposals and requests for specific desired behaviors from one another. As children always have their own perspectives and partial narratives, both parents agree to "check out" partial narratives by asking the other parent: "Child's Name is saying X. *I'm wondering if you'd help shed some light on this?*" (This item is similar to item presented under "Communication Between Parents" section.)

PARENT BEHAVIOR & CHILD(REN)'S

EXPOSURE TO MATURE/ADULT MATTERS

1. Both parents will conduct themselves with respect toward each other and their children to provide a loving, reliable and nurturing context for raising and co-parenting their children during transitions, and across households.
2. To that end, both parents will not speak derogatorily of the other or the members of the other's family/extended-family/friend community, will not cause the children to be drawn into any dispute regarding adult decisions and issues affecting the children, and will not attempt to curry favor with the children to the detriment of the other parent.
 - a. Both parents agree to ensure children feel free to be fully loved by and to love both parents and their extended families, knowing that each parent is likely to invest in the child(ren)'s wellbeing in different ways.
 - b. Negative narratives about the other parent will not occur, either with or within earshot of the children.
3. Whenever either parent is visible *or within earshot of the child(ren)* (including during phone calls), that parent will ensure that s/he, and her/his friends and extended family are respectful and mindful to protect the child(ren) from *any* direct or indirect exposure to mocking laughter, criticisms, contempt, complaints or similar expressions made about the other parent. Children know that half of

their DNA belongs to both parents. When such exposure occurs, the offending parent will:

- i. Take notice,
- ii. Set limits with extended family/friends *in front of the children* (e.g. “They don’t need to hear that. We need to support their feeling love and respect for *both* their parents!”),
- iii. Apologize to the child(ren) for the specific negative exposure, and
- iv. Affirm the child(ren)’s right to have both their parents respected and valued.

If the nonoffending parent overhears said exposure and points it out neutrally (e.g. “If I can hear it, the girls can also hear the mocking laughter/devaluing of me in the background”), the offending parent will immediately put 1-4 into effect, *in front of* the offended parent.

4. At all times, each parent will model effective legal behavior and judgment regarding alcohol, smoking, marijuana, CBD and drug use, sexual and aggressive behaviors toward each other or others, as well as effective self-care. The focus here is on the child(ren)’s safety and both parents fulfilling their parental duty to ensure the safety of their children, rather than finding fault or blaming the other parent. Consequently:
 - a. Both parents agree to ensure the care/safety of the residence where children abide.
 - b. Both parents also agree to protect the children from exposure to any substance abuses, intoxication, smoking and sexual/aggressive behaviors *by others*.
5. If either parent has or develops an ongoing pattern of alcohol/substance abuse, or, in the absence of any related treatment there is cause for concern regarding addictive behavior (e.g. sexual addictions), the potentially offending parent agrees to support their co-parent’s reasonable efforts to ensure necessary measures secure the child’s ongoing wellbeing and safety, including but not limited to: use of Soberlink for 6 months or more depending on alcohol sobriety records, ongoing drug testing, evidence of reliable and ongoing (daily for the first 30 days) 12-step program attendance and work with a therapist known to specialize in substance abuse or the specific area of addiction at issue, and/or in-patient or out-patient treatment as recommended by a qualified specialist in the relevant area of addiction.
6. Both parents agree to use alcohol or other legal substances only when “off-child duty” or only in very clear, unimpaired moderation when “on-child duty,” specifically no more than 2 one ounce drinks (less depending on alcohol content and drinker’s body weight), including beer. Cigarette smoking will occur outside, and out of eye-shot of the children as much as possible, with clear communication (should the child be aware) about regret regarding the addiction to cigarettes, related adverse health consequences, and why they would never want those for their child(ren).
7. Each parent will ensure that there is always *at least one* completely unimpaired, competent, and trusted adult present in case of any emergency involving the child(ren). Both parents agree not to drink/use and drive, under *any* circumstances, including when the children are present, and to inform the other parent *immediately* if a related arrest occurs.
8. If there is clear evidence of alcohol/drug abuse or other harmful exposure to addictive behavior (e.g. sexually addictive behavior) while the child resides with a parent, the other parent may request (solely for the children’s wellbeing) that the using/addicted parent subscribe to options such as those in #6 above to rebuild trust regarding alcohol/drug consumption, or any other harmful addictive behavior, and the abusing parent agrees here to provide evidence of compliance for a minimum of 6 months.

AGREEMENTS REGARDING ROOM RENTALS, PARENT DATING, INTRODUCING NEW RELATIONSHIPS & STEPPARENTING

1. Parents each agree to rent/offer rooms in their homes only to others who are known to the residential parent (not strangers), and to each carefully assess/supervise and exercise good judgment

about the effectiveness/appropriateness of potential/actual adult roommates' behavior/impacts on both children.

2. Parents agree to protect and consider the psychological needs of their children regarding parental dating and new relationships. To that end, they will *not* introduce or expose the children to a new intimate/sexual partner or relationship until it is a committed relationship. The purpose of this is to model the committed, intimate relationships you want for your children. Parents will help new partners understand that this is a legal agreement designed to consider the children's wellbeing.
3. In addition, both parents agree to notify the other parent, ***before the children are informed of or*** introduced to the person as a ***"significant other" in a committed relationship***. If either parent establishes a relationship with a person who is a "significant other," s/he will *inform the other parent*, as soon as practicable, *before introducing this person as a "significant other" to the children*. This is to prevent the other parent from having negative or difficult reactions *to the children*, if the children are left to deliver the information inadvertently.
4. While both parents will introduce "friends," both will refrain: from introducing the children to casual romantic/sexual partners, and from exposing the children/adult children to related romantic/sexual behavior in uncommitted sexual relationships. The purpose is to model stable, discriminating attachments to significant others, and to prevent the children's experiencing attachments to "dates" or casual, intimate others who then "disappear" from the children's lives.
5. The children may inadvertently meet or be introduced to a person who eventually may become a "significant other." In this case, when either parent establishes a relationship with a person who may be known to child(ren), before that parent introduces this person as a "significant other" to the child(ren), the other parent will be informed (not for permission, but in order to spare the child(ren) from the other parent's possible spontaneous adverse responses – e.g. weeping, anger if the child(ren) were left to inform the other parent directly or inadvertently).
6. Children will be introduced to the significant other *gradually*, with the first introduction of this person as a significant other occurring in a *neutral public setting*.
7. In front of the children, the parent in question will use culturally-relevant discretion in displaying age-appropriate signs of affection with the person introduced as a significant other, mindful of the timing, children's developmental stages and the impact on the child(ren), while modeling what the parent will expect the children to demonstrate in their own dating behaviors.
8. Overnight stays of significant others (who have already been introduced) while the children are present will *not* occur, until there is an established commitment of **at least 1 year** with the person [Solid research indicates it actually takes 3 years for oxytocin levels to stabilize and for the "honeymoon" phase to normalize], and observable evidence that the child(ren) are comfortable with the new relationship (e.g. Child engages with and converses easily with the significant other, smiles and seeks the significant other's attention or help. Child is not sullen, disengaged and unwilling to engage the significant other). [Remember – this means that you can have sleepovers all you want when the kids aren't around!]
9. Feedback regarding the children's responses will be shared in a nonjudgmental, civil and respectful way between parents, and "checked out" with the other parent at agreed-to times during the process of introducing a new, significant adult into the child(ren)'s life. (Please see Communication Between Co-Parents section.)
10. The non-initiating parent will endorse and proactively support the child(ren) having a healthy relationship with the other parent's significant other, and the initiating parent shall scrupulously follow the agreements herein regarding parental dating and the introduction of new relationships.
11. Parents agree to consider and provide outside counseling support for the child(ren) to aid in the child(ren)'s adjustment to "significant others" in their lives, when the children are struggling in this arena. The therapist selected will be mutually agreed-upon by the parents, and will specialize in

treating children in divorce-related matters, including blended families and resist-refuse dynamics. Both parents will share payment for said services in accordance with the provisions for payment of "Medical Matters" herein. The child(ren) will continue in said therapy for at least once a week, for the length of time considered adequate and/or necessary *by the therapist*.

- a. The child(ren)'s therapist shall also be a divorce specialist qualified to assess for the multiple factors contributing to resist-refuse dynamics, including but not limited to estrangement and alienation.
 - b. When this child(ren)'s therapist determines that co-parenting work is necessary for the children's wellbeing, the parents agree to concurrently attend co-parenting therapy, with one therapist or two who work together (depending on the therapist's assessment of the degree of parental conflict), and who specialize(s) in co-parenting work.
 - c. Both parents agree to sign a release allowing the child(ren)'s therapist to consult with and exchange information with the co-parenting specialist(s) or other involved professionals.
 - d. When moderate to severe resist-refuse dynamics are formally assessed by the therapist(s) to be present, the purpose of co-parenting therapy will be to cultivate and seek to develop the favored parent's capacity to take responsibility for his/her influence on the children, and to endorse and proactively support the child(ren)'s developing a healthy relationship with the other parent and the other parent's significant other/extended family.
 - e. Only when the favored parent's responsibility for influence and endorsement are secured, the child(ren) and their therapist will work together with the initiating parent and that parent's co-parenting therapist, as well as the initiating parent's significant other, the favored parent and the favored parent's co-parenting therapist, *in combinations deemed most effective and cost-efficient by the co-parenting and child therapists*.
 - f. If the above therapies are assessed as insufficient and ineffective by the therapists, a more intense form of reunification work, such as Family Bridges, will be recommended and engaged by both parents and the children.
12. Cohabitation, engagement or plans to remarry will be conveyed to the other parent before informing the children (to increase the likelihood of the other parent's supporting the children and to protect the children from any spontaneous adverse reactions to the child(ren)'s delivering this information). It will be the right of the initiating parent to inform the children, following research into best practices/developmentally appropriate guidelines for such disclosures.
 13. Parents agree to reserve the terms "Mommy," "Daddy," "Mom," "Dad," "Mother," "Father," "Mama," "Papa," or culturally/familial equivalent terms, *only* for the biological parents.
 14. Both parents and the stepparent will make every effort to foster a respectful, supportive relationship between the stepparent and the other biological parent.
 15. Stepparent(s) will leave parenting and parenting decisions to the biological parents, with the exception of general care-giving and medical emergencies - when both biological parents will be contacted immediately.
 - i. This ensures that the biological parents retain full responsibility for a stepparent's behavior.
 - ii. While stepparents often have a "parenting role" as caregivers and trusted

attachment figures in children's lives, the nature and content of parenting decisions and the responsibility for those decisions shall rest with the biological parents.

16. The role of the stepparent will be further discussed and agreed upon between the biological parents, or parents will seek co-parenting therapy and/or mediation to resolve related matters.
17. Information and knowledge of half-siblings, pregnancies or plans to adopt siblings will be conveyed to the other parent *before* informing the child(ren).
 - a. It will be the *right of the initiating parent to inform the child*, following research into best practices/developmentally appropriate guidelines for such disclosures.
 - b. Both parents agree to provide counseling for the child(ren) with an agreed upon mental health professional, if either parent considers the child(ren) may have difficulty with the addition of a new sibling(s). This counseling will be paid for in accordance with the "Medical Matters" section herein.
18. Both parents and stepparent(s) agree to educate themselves regarding the enormous body of research on best step-parenting practices, and will research or request such information for self-study from the Mediator/Co-Parenting Specialist, or from other similarly qualified professionals (e.g. "Surviving and Thriving in Stepfamily Relationships," "The Stepfamily Handbook: From Dating, to Getting Serious, to Forming a 'Blended Family'").

RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTENDED FAMILY/FRIENDS

1. Parents agree to encourage and foster each child's effective relationships with the other parent's children, family members and extended family/friend members.
2. If either parent becomes incapacitated by reason of illness or misfortune, or if either parent dies, the surviving parent will ensure the children continue to have contact and ongoing relationships with the extended family and friends of the affected parent. Exceptions: Any relative/friend suspected of child abuse or with an arrest record.

DECISION-MAKING PROVISIONS WHEN PARENT CONDUCT or PHYSICAL DISABILITIES IMPAIR JUDGMENT

The following special provisions apply to decision-making:

1. When either parent is impaired by drugs, alcohol, fatigue, illness or any other condition that may impact parental responsibility, judgment or caregiving in a manner determined to adversely affect or seriously risk the safety and/or well-being of the children, then the other parent may assume sole decision-making authority and physical custody for the duration of the impairment, or until there is no longer a risk to the children.
2. Parents agree to consult with a neutral third party mediator **within 7 days**, or as soon as physically possible for the impaired parent, to resolve any issues regarding the particular conduct, condition or illness in question. (See "Collaboration/Mediation for Parent Conduct or Disability Issues" section for specific steps.)
3. If either parent subjects the children to harm through neglect or abuse, including the withholding of mental health treatment recommended by authorities or relevant professionals in the child(ren)'s lives, then the other parent shall assume sole decision-making authority until the situation of neglect or abuse has been fully addressed and resolved by DCFS and other professionals.
4. Both parents will ensure contact between the children and a parent who is able to invest in their safety and wellbeing. Neglect and abuse will be considered resolved when assessment and treating professionals determine that any skills that parent is missing (e.g. attuned attachment, emotion regulation, distress tolerance, sobriety, regular ingestion of needed prescription drugs) have been sufficiently learned and rehearsed to be mastered (with the help of professionals, in-patient

treatment, etc. as needed), such that similar situations or parental behaviors are not likely to re-occur.

COLLABORATION / MEDIATION for PARENT CONDUCT or DISABILITY ISSUES

1. Either parent may determine if collaboration/mediation is necessary in order to resolve *conduct or disability issues*, and such parent shall give written notice that s/he intends to invoke this clause.
2. Both parents shall meet with the Collaborative Coaches/Mediator **within 7 days** of receipt of such written notice, or earlier if appointments are available with that professional, and a physically disabled/impaired parent or a judgment/behavior-impaired parent is able to meet.
3. Parents will share the costs of all mediation meetings.
4. The Collaborative Coaches/Mediator shall discuss the matter with each parent, with a view to working out a mutually satisfactory resolution to conduct and/or disability issues. Both parents will offer win-win solutions to address a specific skills-building plan of action to remedy any conduct issues, in accordance with a course of action recommended by professionals specializing in the specific conduct or disability in question (e.g. alcohol abuse, anger management, sexual addiction, parenting, emotion regulation, medication for specific diagnosis, cognitive impairment).
5. The parents herein agree to authorize any Collaborative Coaches/Mediator to collect such information from third parties as they deem necessary, at their discretion, to assist in seeking reasonable and viable solutions.
6. In the event that their conflict involves a time-sensitive issue (for example, a medical event other than those anticipated above), the parents will consider professional advice, consider obtaining second opinions and follow the most prudent course with the child(ren)'s wellbeing as their top priority.

WHEN DISAGREEMENTS ARISE:

In the event parents are unable to resolve any particular issue, it is harder to seek agreement in the moment about who will help resolve the matter. Consequently, both parents agree to resolve the matter by sharing any cost of using one or more agreed-to Collaboratively-trained Mediators, namely:

1. To mediate or resolve legal matters regarding Conservatorship, Guardianship or Trusts & Estate matters regarding their children, both parents agree to the following collaboratively-trained Trusts & Estates Attorneys: **[We suggest collaboratively-trained T & E mediators bec. they will know how to include trained coaches/financial specialists as needed in the face of disruptive family dynamics.]**
2. For legal matters regarding Divorce/Family Law, the following collaboratively-trained Family Law Attorney(s):
3. For financial matters, the following collaboratively-trained Financial Specialist:
4. For matters regarding the children's care and wellbeing, the following collaboratively-trained Licensed Mental Health Professional with a specialty (training/experience) in children, special needs and divorce:

WHEN AGREEMENT IS REACHED VIA COLLABORATIVE DIVORCE PROCESS

The contents of this document were mediated by two collaboratively trained Divorce Coaches (licensed mental health professionals) in a Collaborative Divorce Process, and both parents have been encouraged to consult with their collaborative attorneys prior to signing. The terms of this agreement shall be included in the final Judgment submitted to the Court. Collaborative attorneys have respected the parents' language and have asked for language clarifications for the express purpose of increasing specificity, clarity and therefore the enforceability of terms.

The signatures below shall indicate that both parents agree to all the terms and conditions delineated herein and agree to execute this memorandum as the basis for their Parenting Plan (Custody) Agreement. Both parents may modify any of the terms herein by written, mutual agreement. Furthermore, this agreement supersedes all prior parenting plan agreements and divorce judgments, and shall include a "Parenting & Co-Parenting Adjunct Agreements" document attached here as an Addendum.

P1 Name:

Signature:

Date:

P2 Name:

Signature:

Date: