

Creating A Mission Statement of Your Highest Intentions for Separating/Divorcing/Co-parenting Couples -- Worksheet --

One of the best ways to ensure your separation/divorce/co-parenting work is effective is to create a Mission Statement that inspires you and reflects your “Highest Intentions and Values” about how you want to conduct yourselves before, during and after divorce. Ideally, you and your previous partner will compare notes and co-create a statement that feels right to you both. Your Mission Statement describes how you intend to apply your values as you approach your divorce goals and any challenging tasks you face together, for example: how you approach the rest of your separation/divorce matters, divide property, work together as co-parents, prioritize the well-being of your children, etc.

Divorcing couples have been successful sharing their joint Mission Statement with litigating attorneys, and asking that they hold you both to account and respond accordingly themselves.

Your Mission Statement defines the Spirit and Tone of the work ahead. Once completed, you are expected to share these with your divorce professionals who will call on these highest intentions, when either of you “get stuck.” Expect your professional to provide guidance, combine them, and get your edits/approval until it feels right to both of you. When things are stressful, *professionals understand you will each need support to increase your skills to behave in ways aligned with your stated values.*

Examples of Mission Statements follow to offer ideas. Each is different, based on your values, personal challenges, and circumstances.

Examples:

(Co-parenting & Divorcing) “We commit to work together to end our marriage with grace and good will, being amicable and transparent about finances, while communicating openly and respectfully. We commit to using our divorce professional resources to conserve our finances to create a stable, secure future for *all* family members. As co-parents, we commit to work together to put our children/adult children’s needs first and support their continued growth and development in all matters.”

(Co-parenting) “We commit to build learning the skills we need to work together respectfully and fruitfully as co-parents for our children’s benefit. We will also commit to building the skills we need to communicate effectively about our children, so our co-parenting relationship is a peaceful context for their development and sets the tone for their own future relationships. We commit to prioritizing (names of children/adult children)’s long-term wellbeing in all our divorce decisions.”

(Divorcing) “We commit to divorcing with open and honest communication, and ending our marriage with civility, respect and gratitude for the good times shared. We commit to being transparent and forthcoming with all our financial information, and to dealing honorably and equitably with one another.”

(Divorcing, no children) “We commit to ending our marriage graciously, with honest and respectful communication. We agree to be transparent with all our financial information, and to deal honorably and equitably with one another to ensure our joint wellbeing.”

MORE PHRASES/IDEAS TO CONSIDER:

WE WANT TO:

WE COMMIT TO:

WE AGREE TO:

- Resolve differences respectfully between us, aiming for win-win solutions, and free of court costs and adversarial interventions
- Protect and prioritize the wellbeing of our children and our restructured family
- An honest, respectful, kind and cooperative divorce and co-parenting relationship
- Work proactively to limit the negative economic, social and emotional consequences of the divorce on our children and on each other
- Reach an agreement that carefully considers the wellbeing of each family member

- Maintain open, respectful and honest communication throughout this process
- Put our children's needs and long-term wellbeing at the forefront of our decision-making and keep their interests as our highest priority
- Set clear limits with extended family who foster an adversarial tone/approach
- Co-parent in a loving and respectful way
- Ensure our children feel loved and safe with both of us
- Protect our children from any negative fallout from our disagreements and discord
- Maintain a cordial and respectful friendship after our divorce
- Honor and respect our differences
- Build a co-parenting relationship that will allow us to dance at our child(ren)'s weddings, and allow them to experience our united love for them at all their developmental milestones, free from any tension or discord between us
- Respect each other's needs and boundaries
- Work to be skilled at empathy and communication to consider each other's feelings and experiences in ways that serve our children
- Honor our commitments to one another as co-parents
- Reliably present a united, stable front when sharing parenting decisions with our children, to limit their playing us against each other
- Work with our coaches/co-parenting specialists to enhance the skills we need to be effective co-parents
- Be active, engaged participants in the collaborative divorce process
- **Commit to the 3 C's:** Communicate respectfully, Cooperate granting the benefit of the doubt, and Collaborate to prioritize the wellbeing of our children

Some questions to help you identify your Highest Intentions:

1. What 3 principles/values will guide your behavior as you negotiate and make sound decisions?
2. What are your hopes/dreams/desires for co-parenting your children for their lifetimes? What would you need to change to make that happen?
3. How would you/your spouse define an "equitable" settlement? What's in the way of that occurring, for you? your spouse? How would your behavior/related values need to change to make that possible?

Begin by just writing down some words and phrases that reflect your most cherished values as you imagine working collaboratively with your previous partner, now and in the future. Use bullets to be brief:

Now, try putting those values and ideas into 1-2 sentences that you are willing to *have combined with those of your former partner/co-parent*. Use "I" for now. Even if unable to co-create this Mission Statement immediately with him/her, you will have your own "Statement of Highest Intentions" to refer to and live by, with your divorce professionals' support. This can be very reassuring/grounding as you proceed: