

Co-Parenting Survival Guide

Protecting your peace, your kids, and your future.



brought to you by



Co-parenting is not a competition. It's a collaboration of two homes working together with the best interest of the children at heart. Work for your kids not against them.

— Anne Brown

Navigating a breakup is tough; navigating it while trying to raise healthy, happy kids across two different households is a whole different ballgame. In South Africa, the law focuses on the "best interests of the child." This guide is designed to help you stay legally aligned, emotionally grounded, and practically organized.

Legal & Structural Foundations



Before you can co-parent smoothly, you need a clear, enforceable framework. Relying on "gentlemen's agreements" during a divorce/breakup usually leads to conflict.

- **Draft a Formal Parenting Plan:** Don't wing it. Ensure you have a comprehensive Parenting Plan drafted under **Section 33 of the Children's Act**. It should be registered with the Family Advocate or made an order of the court. Upload your parenting plan to Jointly, our AI will setup your contact calendar, maintenance and a breakdown of important agreement points, that you can both easily access when needed.
- **Define "Major Decisions" vs. "Daily Decisions":** Under SA law, both parents usually retain parental responsibilities and rights. Ensure your plan explicitly states who decides on schooling, major medical procedures, and religious upbringing.
- **Establish a School & Extracurricular Protocol:** Inform the school administration of the separation. Ensure *both* parents are on the relevant school app, receive report cards, and are invited to parent-teacher meetings. Use Jointly to store all school and extracurricular related information.
- **Set Boundaries for New Partners:** Agree on a timeline or a set of rules for when and how new romantic partners are introduced to the children.

Communication Rules of Engagement



Create **emotional standard operating procedures** (SOPs) to prevent text messages from turning into emotionally draining arguments.

- **Move Off WhatsApp:** WhatsApp increases urgency and passive-aggression. Move all child-related messages to a co-parenting app like Jointly, where messages cannot be edited, can be easily tracked with the ability to list important conversations as formal notices and star messages.
- **The "BIFF" Communication Standard:** Keep every single message Brief, Informative, Friendly (or neutral), and Firm. If a message from your ex doesn't contain a direct question about the kids, you do not need to reply. Jointly's AI Tone checker and writing assist helps you keep messages positive and on point. You can also include your mediator/lawyer in conversations.
- **The 24-Hour Rule:** Unless it is a medical emergency, give yourself 24 hours to respond to triggering messages. Never text out of anger. Use Jointly's **SOS** feature for emergencies.
- **Create a Shared Digital Calendar:** Use a co-parenting app like Jointly to log school terms, public holidays, extra murals, special days and doctor's appointments. Reduce confusion, arguments and disappointment for your children.

Financial Clarity (The Maintenance Safety Net)



Money is the number one trigger for co-parenting breakdowns. Accurate tracking and transparency is crucial when it comes to child related expenses.

- **Separate the Emotional from the Financial:** Child maintenance is for the children, not a reward for good behavior or a punishment for bad behavior. Never withhold access to the kids over a missed payment, and never withhold payment over a missed visit.
- **Define "Extraordinary Expenses":** Your basic maintenance order covers food, rent, and basic clothing. Create a clear, written agreement on how "extras" (school tours, tech devices, braces, sports kit) are split and approved before the money is spent.
- **Create a Dedicated Expense Folder:** Keep receipts for everything. Use an app like Jointly to easily keep track monthly maintenance and once off shared expenses.
- **Medical Aid Alignment:** Clarify who is responsible for the main medical aid premium, who pays the gap cover, and how day-to-day medical shortfalls (out-of-hospital costs) will be settled.

House-to-House Logistics



Kids thrive on predictability. While rules don't need to be identical in both houses, the core structure should feel familiar.

- **Align Core Routines:** Try to loosely align bedtimes, homework routines, and screen-time limits between both households so that things are consistent and predictable for the kids.
- **The "No Messengers" Rule:** Never use your children to pass logistical or financial messages to the other parent. If you need to talk about money or schedules, do it directly.
- **The Travel Pack Checklist:** Create a permanent checklist of what travels with the child (e.g., chronic medication, school blazers, favourite comfort toys) to avoid frantic late-night trips back to your ex's house.
- **Travel Documentation:** Remember that South African law requires specific documentation (Unabridged Birth Certificates, parental consent affidavits) if one parent wants to travel across SA borders with the children. Keep these documents organized and accessible.

With Jointly you can store your travel checklist, care routine and important child related information in one central place where both parents can easily access this info when needed.

Emotional Safeguards (For You & The Kids)



Co-parenting isn't just about logistics and finances; it's about carefully managing the emotional aspects too.

- **Protect the Kids from the Conflict:** Never badmouth the other parent in front of the children or within earshot. A child is 50% mom and 50% dad; criticizing the ex tells the child that half of them is bad.
- **Allow the Kids to Love Both Parents:** Give your children permission to enjoy their time at the other house. Don't grill them with detective-like questions when they return. Instead, ask simple, positive questions: "Did you have fun?"
- **Build Your Own Support Village:** Find a therapist, a specialized divorce coach, or a support group to process your anger and grief. Your children are your kids, not your therapists or confidants.
- **Choose Peace Over Being Right:** Ask yourself during every argument: "Is this a hill I want our co-parenting relationship to die on, or can I let this go for the sake of peace and our kids emotional wellbeing."

This checklist was brought to you by Jointly

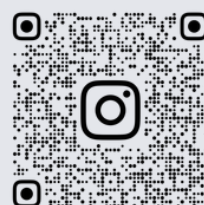


Jointly The Co-Parenting App

That will change co-parenting for good.

jointly.co.za

Follow us on social media for more great co-parenting tips



@JOINTLYCOPARENTINGSA