



## ***FAMILY MATTERS MEDIATE LIMITED***

### **For Parents and Guardians**



#### **❖ The Weekly Parenting Phone Call**

A time is set for one parent to call the other each week – the time needs to be convenient for both parents and also needs to be after the children are in bed, so that they do not overhear the call.

Parents follow an agenda (outlined below) and no other topics can be discussed – so if you also need to talk about child support or the house, a different time will need to be set for it.

Although it feels strange, it can be helpful if you have only recently separated to agree to avoid social niceties, for example don't ask "How are you?" unless you are prepared to deal fully with the response.

#### **❖ The Good Stuff**

It sets a positive tone for the phone call and increases the chances of smoother negotiations if you start with sharing some of the good stuff about your children that the other parent hasn't seen. This can include anything from scoring well in a test at school, riding without stabilisers, painting a picture or their room etc.

Sharing information in this way reassures your children that their parents are communicating for their welfare and also keeps a non-resident parent in touch with what's going on in their child's life and gives them things to talk about on visits rather than having to ask the children.

#### **❖ Anything Medical**

If relevant, discuss any current illnesses, approaching doctor and dentist appointments, any information about chronic or new conditions.

#### **❖ School Related Issues**

School performance and behaviour, homework, any comments that a teacher has made and school events, such as, concerts, meetings, plays, sports events can be talked about here. Often school notes only go to one parent and this will save your child having to manage the information sharing.

#### **❖ Out-of-School Activities**

Children often have out-of-school activities, such as clubs, sports and parties, which are hard to co-ordinate at the best of times. Check each week whether anything has changed and clarify who is picking up, dropping off etc.

### ❖ Care-Taking

This is especially important for the under-5s who will cope better if their routines for naps and bedtime, toilet training, diet etc. can be as consistent as possible. Issues around these areas change very quickly so it is vital that information is shared for the comfort and wellbeing of your child.

### ❖ Behaviour and Discipline

If you dealt with discipline issues differently when you were together, you can be sure you'll be dealing with them differently now! However, it is helpful for your children if each parent knows what behavioural issues the other is dealing with and how! Also sharing what works for you can be helpful to the children as consistency will give them some more stability.

### ❖ Special Events

Birthdays, holidays and special events can feel difficult to negotiate. Where possible, much of this will have been sorted out in the parenting plan and the general rule of thumb is to vary the plan as little as possible. Remember that changes to the plan are a request and should not be taken as given, no matter how much sense it makes to you! Give plenty of notice if you would like to ask for a change and help to work out any inconveniences.

### ❖ New Business

This is the space for anything not covered already or for giving news or advance warning of something.

### ❖ Clarify Date and Time of Next Call

The parenting phone call should normally be at the same time each week, for example, 9pm every Sunday. Clarifying the date and time of the next call helps to set safe boundaries and also ensures that you and the other parent can give advance warning of whether the date or time needs to be changed.

If you need to contact the other parent in between phone calls, realistically decide whether that is necessary or could it wait until the next phone call. If it cannot wait but is not an emergency, emailing or writing is usually a better option than phoning.

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