

Co-Parenting Teenagers in the Summertime



By Lisa LaBelle

Co-parenting and planning summer visitation with teenagers can be challenging and emotionally draining. Hopefully, plans can be worked out peacefully with your ex-spouse – consider Reese Witherspoon and Ryan Phillippe for a celebrity example – but there are many who are not so fortunate. The error comes when parents choose to not give their teenagers a voice in planning their time. They don't stop to think about the consequences that occur when their teenagers aren't able to participate in activities and events that are important to them, through no fault of their own.

The solutions are simple. Here are some tips to help with co-parenting during your teenager's summer plans:

Related Link: [Keep Talking to Your Kids After Divorce](#)

Give your teenager a voice:

It's important to sit down one-on-one with your teenager and simply ask what they want their summer to look like. Does your teenager have scout camp, sports camp, music and art classes, academic work, dance camp, team sports, or a summer job? Remember it's not about you; it's about your teenager. Next, have your teenager write out their summer goals, responsibilities, and commitments. Give your teenager a voice in both the verbal and written word.

Be your teenager's true advocate:

Listen to your teenager and offer supportive input. Do your best to work around their activities. Talk with your ex about your teenager's summer commitments peacefully. Encourage your ex-spouse to come and attend any events too. For example, it may be a scout camping trip that he could chaperone with your son or coming to cheer for your teenager in a dance competition.

Encourage your teenager to use their voice:

Encourage your teenager to respectfully use their own voice with both you and your ex-spouse. It's important for your teenager's self-worth to speak directly to both parents concerning their summer plans. It may take some time for your ex-spouse to adjust to your teenager making their own plans, but it will increase mutual respect.

Be supportive of your teenager *and* ex-spouse:

You, as the custodial parent, will have the role of being supportive to your teenager and your ex-partner as they work out their summer plans. If your ex attempts to bring you into the decision-making process, you simply remind them you are there to offer support, cheering them on in making their plans "together." After a few times of responding in this peaceful, supportive manner, your ex-spouse will not feel the need to

reach out to you for assistance.

Related Link: [How to Cooperatively Co-Parent After Separation or Divorce](#)

Remind your teenager you're there:

Verbally remind your teenager that you are there to be a support as they make summer plans with their other partner. Knowing you are there will naturally build confidence in your teenager's ability to communicate directly with your ex-partner. You are there to be the main support and to reinforce the importance of your teenager's voice as plans are being made.

As a co-parent, stay close to your teenager, cheer them on, and encourage them to use their own voices for all summer and year-round planning. The results will be worth it. Communication between you and your teenagers will increase, and a long-lasting, healthier relationship will be the outcome. Your teenager's own self-respect will improve knowing they do have a voice and that they matter.



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