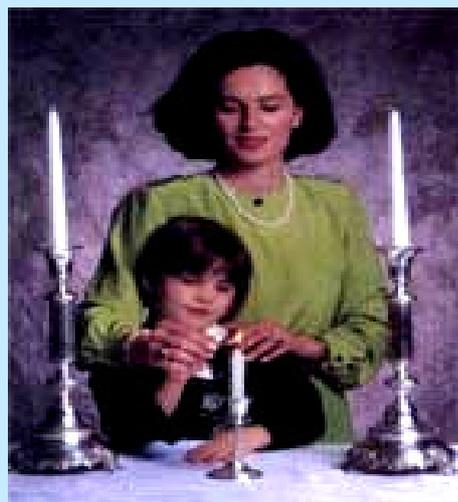


Parenting Plans

Putting your children first



A guide for separating Jewish Parents



Jewish Unity for Multiple Parenting

Especially for Adam, Ben, Danny, Eli, Jonathan and Nicholas who are the names of some of our children for who we have cried and desperately struggled to keep in contact with during times when there have been considerable strains. We will always love you and be here for you. We miss you more than you will ever know.

We know and appreciate that there are many other children facing these dilemmas in our community and throughout society and we hope that this Parenting Plan will ease their suffering and that of their parents.

For those parents and children who experience less acute forms of these difficulties, we hope that this Parenting Plan will assist in helping to deal with the many important and delicate situations that can arise for the family after separation and divorce.

Foreword

office of the **CHIEF RABBI**

Foreword from the Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

I have been aware for a number of years now of the work JUMP (Jewish Unity for Multiple Parenting) has undertaken in assisting Jewish parents cope with the huge difficulties of positively maintaining their ongoing relationships with their children following separation and divorce. As we know, Jewish parents are not immune to these problems and, indeed, may face a number of specific challenges linked to their Jewish values and practices.

I commend JUMP in producing this Jewish Parenting Plans document which, during its development, was circulated widely for input and advice to many Rabbonim and Jewish experts in the fields of childcare, law, and other social community responsibilities.

I know JUMP members believe that by sharing the information included in this document, which is based on their own often painful experiences and efforts to find solutions, that it will assist other Jewish parents avoid some of the pitfalls they had to go through. JUMP's aim is that Jewish parents will take time to consider what is really in the best interests of their children and find a way for their children to be able to spend valuable time with each of them and their extended families and friends.

In addition to Shabbat, Jewish festivals and holy days, it is important for children to be able to experience life cycle events (both their own and those of relatives), and this will be facilitated by exposure to the families and social networks of both parents. It is therefore crucial that both parents are able to spend time with their children and share these experiences and occasions with them and input into their growth and development.

I strongly believe that this document will be of considerable value to Jewish parents and Jewish community experts involved in supporting children experiencing the difficulties of their parents' separation and divorce.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Sacks". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval.

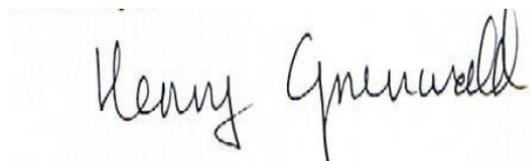
Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

Foreword



Foreword from the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews

On behalf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, I want to congratulate JUMP on this publication. We welcome this attempt to prepare a way of reducing tension and conflict between parents after the breakdown of a marriage. All conflict between parents adversely affects the children of the family who need to be protected from it. This parenting plan will help to achieve that goal.



Mr Henry Grunwald QC

President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews

Introduction

In February 2006 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published their updated Parenting Plans, entitled "Putting your children first – A guide for separating parents"¹ after a lengthy consultation process to which JUMP (Jewish Unity for Multiple Parenting) made a significant contribution.

The impact on children when parents separate and divorce is increasingly being recognised, particularly in our Jewish community which is so fundamentally family-focused. As parents we want to achieve the best for our children, which is not always easy to do when we are at the same time dealing with our own issues following the breakdown of our marriage or relationship.

This Jewish Parenting Guide has been written to provide additional support specifically for Jewish parents in addition to that already provided in the DfES Parenting Plans publication. It is intended to be used jointly with that document. This Guide aims to help you to consider important aspects of Jewish life that will impact on your children as they continue to grow up in a different family environment now that you are no longer together.

The Office of the Chief Rabbi, in its written statement to the Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry on Family Justice: The Family Court in January 2005², included the following important statements, *"The Office of the Chief Rabbi wishes to emphasise the importance of involving both parents in the raising of their children. Children deserve the chance to develop a relationship with both their natural parents."*

Families are the building-block of society, and Jewish law and tradition highlights the centrality of the family to Jewish life. The Jewish tradition highlights the importance of family in the religious domain. The first commandment in the Bible is to have children. The survival of the Jews through thousands of years of dispersion was partly due to the strength of family life. However, the centrality of the nuclear family as an institution has been eroded. The breakdown of the family unit is an unfortunate feature of

¹ http://www.orderprocessor.co.uk/files/273033_NewParentBk.pdf

² <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/FamilyJusticeMemoPart1.pdf> (p12-13)

modern society, and in situations where this occurs, we must do everything possible to protect the interests of the children.

The Chief Rabbi has spoken publicly about the importance of children receiving support and attention from both parents. Children need time with both; and it's their needs that really count.

Each parent has something different to give to their children to contribute to their religious, educational, emotional, social and material needs, and it is important that both parents have the opportunity to give their children time.

The Jewish religion places a high premium on people spending time with their families and communities on specific occasions. These include the Sabbath (Shabbat) and festivals, where a child learns some of the most cherished practices, traditions and customs of the Jewish faith. In Judaism, there are certain commandments incumbent on men and certain incumbent on women, and therefore the child will only have a full Jewish experience, if he / she witnesses both the mother and father practising the commandments.

Jewish tradition highlights the importance of family ties, and only by maintaining contact with both parents, will children be able to sustain relationships with both sets of grandparents and other relatives.

Parenthood is a privilege but also a huge responsibility. Parents have a duty to children, as vulnerable members of society, to protect them and nurture them to adulthood. Hence it is the firm view of the Office of the Chief Rabbi and the Chief Rabbi himself that both parents of the child, have a right to be involved in the child's upbringing (unless proven otherwise) and can make a contribution to their religious, educational, emotional, social and material welfare."

As parents we know all too well the importance of always putting our children first and in considering their needs above our own at times. There is no more important time to do this than when faced with the sad realisation that your family, as it has been until now, will be no more. Every parent will have different views and expectations of how they wish their relationship to continue with their children following the breakdown of their marriage or relationship.

These changes may possibly be influenced by the impact of a new step-family or as a result of a parent sadly dying unexpectedly.

Where no proven safety issues exist, it is in your children's best interest that they continue to have a healthy, loving and extensive relationship with both of you and your extended family, including grandparents and friends.

This Parenting Guide has been written by Jewish parents from a broad range of religious observance who have experienced these difficulties and know from their own experiences that we can best help our children through these difficult times by working co-operatively and considerately together from the outset as decent, caring and loving Jewish parents – for our children's sake.

JUMP Executive

December 2006

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Establishing a New Routine

As adults, you are likely to face many new challenges after separation and divorce as you embark on your individual lives once again. The one thing that will not change is that you will both remain parents to your children. You will also both be equally important to them and need to be as fully involved in their religious and secular lives as possible. It is vital that you help your children come to terms with the significant changes to their immediate family, and ensure they understand that your decision to separate was not of their making. They also need to know that you both will continue to love and care for them and will be there to support them at all times.

Research has shown that children who experience and are exposed to the least conflict when their parents separate, and who continue to have a relationship with both parents and their extended families (including brothers, sisters, grandparents, and friends) seem to do better both socially and educationally.

Routine and continuity for all children, but particularly young children, is important. Clearly, change to their current routine is inevitable. However, if you are able to work together as parents to minimise any difficulties your children will face this will ultimately be in their best interests.

It is important to establish a new routine as quickly as possible whereby your children will spend time with each of you and your extended family and friends. This new routine will develop and evolve over time and will be influenced by the ages and needs of your children and also by your work and home commitments.

Finding a way for you both to work together to establish this new routine for you children is very important even though it may be particularly difficult early on after you have separated. This balance may be difficult to achieve at the beginning as you may not get all the time you want with your children, for example, but do continue to try to find a way of keeping the communication channels open with your ex-partner as this will certainly help your children to adapt to the enormous changes which they too are facing at this time.

The following recently published **top 10 tips**³ have been adapted below to help you think about how you really want to work with your ex-partner in a way that will best help your children through this difficult time.

■ **Top 10 tips**

1. Try to avoid conflict in front of your children at all cost
2. Be supportive of the other parent's role in your child's life
3. Aim to establish a business-like relationship with your ex-partner which is focused on the best interests of your children
4. Never badmouth, judge or criticise your ex-partner in front of your children
5. If your ex-partner badmouths you, do not retaliate or try to set the story straight with your kids
6. Try to resolve feelings and issues about your ex-partner
7. When you have strong feelings about the divorce or your ex-partner try to handle them in a healthy adult way and do not take your frustrations with the other parent out on your children
8. Try to control your anger you may feel
9. Try to adapt your expectations
10. Aim to be flexible and willing to compromise

You may feel having an agreed written overall Parenting Plan defining key issues and parenting time arrangements may work well for you both and it will avoid the worries, pressures and often huge costs of resolving the matter through the courts. Ideally, you will be able to sit down together or with the assistance of a mutually trusted family member, friend, or counsellor to develop a plan. An example of such a plan is shown in Appendix 1.

In addition, examples of new routine shared Parenting Time Plans are shown in Appendix 2, and examples of shared Parenting Time Plans over Jewish festivals are shown in Appendix 3. Routine shared parenting time arrangements have been established successfully by many parents both in the US and UK. These arrangements may work well for some parents but not for others, but at least

³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/01/29/ndivorce29.xml&sSheet=/news/2006/01/29/ixhome>

they provide a starting point to help with your discussions with your ex-partner.

Finally, to assist those people who may support parents in reaching parenting time agreements and who may not be familiar with Jewish festivals and customs and their importance as part of our Jewish life, an explanation of these is provided in Appendix 4. The dates for these Jewish festivals are shown in Appendix 5.

Shabbat

This is an important time each week for you and your children to be able to spend together. Now that you are no longer living as a family in the future you will both be spending Shabbat in a different way with your children. As difficult as this may, this is something you both will need to come to terms with.

Unfortunately differences in levels of religious observance often cause many problems between parents when trying to make arrangements to spend time with your children during Shabbat. This may be because one of you has come from a more religious Jewish background or perhaps one of you may have come from a different faith, for example. However, do remember that you were able to reach a consensus on this whilst you were together. It will be more important than ever to continue to respect and accept each other's Jewish heritage as your children will continue to thrive if both of you are able to be involved in spending time with them on Shabbat.

What appears to work well for a number of Jewish parents is to spend alternate Shabbatot with their children. In this way your children will continue to enjoy all the elements of Shabbat, which may include going to Synagogue with each of you and your extended family and friends.

This is another significant area where you will need to reach agreement with your ex-partner. Your children will want to be able to share time on Shabbat with both of you, but now this will have to happen at different times and in a different way than it did before.

Religious Festivals

We know from our own experiences as children how important it was to spend time with our own families on these special days. Therefore both of you as parents will want to relish spending time with your children as part of your own extended family celebrations.

The challenges for you as separated or divorced parents are that you may no longer be comfortable now enjoying these Jewish holidays together as a family as you once did. However, what is important for your children and you, is that you both, individually, have an opportunity to enjoy festivals with your children and extended family and friends.

Often, when feelings are running high, differences between you about respecting each others' levels of Jewish observance may not be easy to resolve. You managed, however, when you were together to achieve an understanding between you that was comfortable for you both. For your children's sake it is important that now you are no longer together you are able to do the same so that they can continue to experience and learn from their whole family's Jewish heritage which will continue to enrich their lives as they grow up. You may also consider talking to your Rabbi to discuss these difficulties as they would be willing to help and support you.

Another issue which can cause difficulties between you is who should spend certain holidays with the children. Again children should be able to enjoy each festival with each parent and their extended family and you will need to find a way to work co-operatively together to achieve this.

What has worked well for some parents in this situation is that they each spend certain festivals with their children on alternate years; alternatively you may agree each to spend part of a festival together with your children if this is acceptable to both of you.

Barmitzvahs, Batmitzvahs/Bat Chayils, Kabbalat Torah

Your children's Barmitzvah, Batmitzvah/Bat Chayil or Kabbalat Torah (see Appendix 4 "Explanation of Jewish Festivals") will be one of the most important and special events you as parents can share with them. It is also a very special occasion for grandparents and extended family and friends to celebrate with you both and your children.

Now that you are no longer together the challenges of co-operatively supporting your children through this important learning phase, actual experience in Synagogue and following celebrations will be more important than ever.

Your children will want you both to be involved in the learning preparations for these celebrations, including going to Synagogue regularly with them. They will also want you to share in their special day and on such an important day in their life you will need to consider their needs even though tensions between you and your ex-partner may be strained. You may also consider talking to your Rabbi to discuss these difficulties as they would be willing to help and support you.

We all know from other relatives and friends who have arranged their children's Barmitzvah, Batmitzvah/Bat Chayil or Kabbalat Torah how much planning and organisation is needed to get to the big day. If you can work together to plan a family event in a way that you are both comfortable with, it will be fantastic for your children. Do plan well in advance and do not commit yourselves, particularly financially, to anything that will put added strain on your relationship.

Even if you are not comfortable planning a joint celebration together do remain respectful to your ex-partner. You are both entitled to be in Synagogue with family and friends to share your children's special celebration. Your children will want you both there, so therefore do not put your own interests first in a way that might put your children in a position where they have to choose which one of you they "say" they want to be there with them.

If you decide to hold separate celebrations for your children then again you will have to reach agreement between you on the logistics and timings for such events. Again, your children will want to celebrate their coming of age with both of you and their happiness at such an important moment of their lives should be the priority for you as loving parents.

Religious Education & Attendance at Synagogue

As parents we want our children to understand and experience our historic and diverse Jewish heritage through our family backgrounds and traditional Jewish teachings. An important part of those teachings is that we remain respectful of each other's views and opinions and we continue to behave towards each other in the way that we ourselves wish to be treated. This may be difficult to do when you are both dealing with emotions that are running very high following your family breakdown. Please do remember that what ever you do will have an impact on your children. The breakdown of your marriage is not your children's fault and they will continue always to want and need you both.

When you were together the impact of Judaism on your life is an issue you would have considered and reached agreement on as regards how you were going to bring up your children. You would have ensured that they had the Jewish education that you were both comfortable with. Now that you are no longer together you will need to continue to find a level of agreement and co-operation between you that is in your children's best interests so that they can continue to learn and grow from Jewish experiences from both you and your extended families.

Do be supportive, understanding and respectful of each other's views on religion – from the experiences of parents who have faced this situation before, it is not uncommon for religious differences between parents to become more pronounced after they separate. What is most important is that your children's religious education should continue to be supported and encouraged by both of you as you will both have valuable contributions to make.

You will need to reach agreement between you on what Jewish education your children will receive, whether it is through continued education at school, Hebrew classes or other learning opportunities. It will also be important that you both have the opportunity to go to Synagogue with your children to continue to share this important experience with them.

Children's Birthdays, Family Events & Special Days

Children's Birthdays

As parents, we would always want to be able to spend this special day with our children and similarly our children would like us to be with them to celebrate their birthday. If you feel you are able to share your children's special day together with your ex-partner and extended families that is great.

However, understandably, you may not feel able to do this, and so you need to discuss and agree with your ex-partner how you can both enjoy this special day with your children. There may also be practical reasons, such as the distance needed to travel, that make this difficult to achieve anyway. Perhaps to try and resolve this problem you may decide to take it in turns each year to spend your children's actual birthday together. Another way is that one of you could spend the morning of your child's Birthday with them and the other sees them in the afternoon.

This is something you will need to agree between you so that your children are able to spend time with each of you. It is also important to realise that a birthday is just one day. Whether or not it is your turn to spend your children's actual birthday with them may not be as important as making sure you each have time with them together, on or around their birthday. You both should have an opportunity to be able to make your children feel special as part of their birthday celebrations.

Family Events & Special Days

Both of you will want your children to be able to enjoy special family days with your respective families. Such events may include:

- Grandparents' birthdays
- Cousins' birthdays
- Other family anniversaries or events including:
 - Barmitzvahs, Batmitzvahs/Bat Chayils, Kabbalat Torah
 - Funerals, Evening Prayers or Stone Settings of a grandparent or other family member

To help each other, try to ensure that you keep one another updated about forthcoming events by giving as much notice about them as possible. This will help you both to plan your time with the children and where necessary make arrangements between you to alter the normal routine time to facilitate your children being able to spend these special times with each of your family and friends.

Please remember that this is all about making the best possible arrangements for your children and ensuring they remain happy and fulfilled by being able to enjoy special events with members of both sides of their family.

Schools & Further Education

Choice of schools for your children will be an important decision involving both of you, be it in relation to primary or secondary school education. Reaching agreement on such matters may not be as easy as when you were together because your circumstances may have changed in a number of ways.

However, remember that your children's needs and happiness should always be put first in any decision you make together. It can prove a particularly difficult issue to decide whether your children will attend a Jewish or a secular school and how to plan for their ongoing religious education as part of this decision (see section on "Barmitzvah, Batmitzvah/Bat Chayil, Kabbalat Torah"). Discussion of all the issues in a step-by-step process may help to find a balanced solution.

Your children will already have had to deal with enough change in their lives when you split up. If they have already started school and it is possible for them to remain in an environment that they already know and in which they are comfortable, that is often the best option for them.

If they have not started school or there is a need for them to change school either because you are no longer going to be living in the same area or because it is time for them to move to secondary school, such change may be difficult enough for your children. If you can each minimise any potential disagreements over choices of school you will also help your children enormously to settle into a new learning environment.

Do inform the school of your changed personal circumstances. They will then be able to provide the necessary information and support for your children and for you both, particularly if your children go through a phase where this major change in their life impacts on their school work. You have to work at making this effective and ensure ongoing liaison with the school happens by keeping in regular contact with the school and letting them know what information would be helpful for you both to have, if necessary on an individual basis. From parents who have been in this situation we have learned that schools will provide separate information to parents if they know this is what parents need. However, unless you inform them, schools cannot be expected to know of your changed circumstances.

Also remember you both will both want to be fully involved with your children's academic development as before, so if you are still able to attend parents' events together that will be very helpful for your children. If this is not possible, schools are helpful in arranging separate appointments for parents, if you speak to them about any difficulties you have between you. Just do not expect the school to take sides and favour one parent over the other. It is something that schools will not do and it is certainly not in your children's best interests.

Another significant milestone will be finding a way for you both to help and support your children in their choices for further education if that is the route that is most appropriate for them to follow.

Again if you can both find a way of working together in supporting your children's academic development by sharing information and reaching jointly agreed decisions in relation to schools through to further education that will be most beneficial for your children as they continue to grow up. They will want you both involved whether it be supporting after school activities, attending their sports days, prize givings, special religious events at school, examination successes, including GCSEs and A Levels, all the way through hopefully, until they graduate from University!

Your children are part of you both and they are as entitled to enjoy their successes with each of you, as you are entitled to enjoy their successes with them.

Additional Help for Parents & Children

Parents

■ **Jewish Marriage Council**

This organisation provides marital advice, support, counselling and workshops to all members of the Jewish community

<http://www.jmc-uk.org>

Tel: 020 8203 6311

■ **Singular Challenge**

This group, run by Jewish Care, is for those who have recently separated from their partner

http://www.jewishcare.org/our_services/singular_challenge

Tel: 020 8922 2412

■ **Solo**

This support group, run by the Jewish Marriage Council is for those divorcing or separating

Tel: 020 8203 6311

■ **London Beth Din – United Synagogue**

In its capacity as Court of the Chief Rabbi, the London Beth Din is historically the supreme Halachic Authority for several Commonwealth countries and is responsible for all areas of Jewish Law including Jewish Family Law.

<http://www.unitedsynagogue.org.uk/lbd.html>

Tel: 020 8343 6270

■ **Reform Beth Din – Reform Synagogue**

The Reform Beth Din deals with status cases - eg divorce, adoption and conversion. It primarily serves members of Reform Synagogues, but is open to enquiries from others.

Address: Sternberg Centre, 80 East End Road, London, N3 2SY

<http://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/index.php>

Tel: 020 8349 2568

Additional Help for Parents & Children

Parents

■ Liberal Judaism

Liberal Judaism provides information on all aspects of Jewish life including marriage and divorce. The Rabbinic Conference, among their activities, deals with the religious aspects of life cycle events and is also involved in events such as The Jewish Parenting Day.

http://www.liberaljudaism.org/lifeevents_divorce

Address: The Montagu Centre, 21 Maple Street, London, W1T 4BE

Tel: 020 7580 1663

■ Office of the Chief Rabbi

The Chief Rabbinate consists of The Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks and his Cabinet. The Cabinet is a selected group of key Rabbi's and ministers who play a significant role in assisting with the work of the Chief Rabbi.

Members of the Cabinet often hold responsibility for specific portfolios, such as Medical Ethics and Interfaith Relations.

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org>

Tel: 020 8343 6301

■ The Board of Deputies of British Jews

The Board of Deputies spans the complete life of the Jewish Community in Britain - its development, its needs and aspirations and above all, its security.

<http://www.bod.org.uk>

Tel: 020 7543 5400

■ Jewish Unity for Multiple Parenting (JUMP)

Support and lobby group for non-resident Jewish parents who have experienced difficulties with children access issues

<http://www.jump-parenting.co.uk>

Tel: 020 8386 6282

E-mail: jump.parenting@ntlworld.com

Additional Help for Parents & Children

Parents

■ **Getting Your Get**

Information for Jewish men and women in England, Wales and Scotland about divorce according to Jewish law with articles, forms and explanations for lawyers

<http://www.gettingyourget.co.uk>

■ **The Family Mediation Helpline**

This new Government supported service which is staffed by specially trained operators who provides general information on family mediation, advice on whether your case may be suitable for mediation, information about eligibility for public funding, and contact details for mediation services in your local area

www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk

Tel: 0845 6026627

■ **The Family Mediators' Association**

Trained family mediators work with couples to look at their options relating to the children, property and financial matters. See Appendix 6 "Information on Mediation & Collaborative Law for further information.

<http://www.fmassoc.co.uk>

Tel: 0808 200 0033

■ **National Family Mediation**

National Family Mediation (NFM) is a network of over 60 local not-for-profit Family Mediation Services in England and Wales offering help to couples, married or unmarried who are in the process of separation and divorce.

<http://www.nfm.org.uk>

Tel: 01392 271610

■ **London Collaborative Lawyers**

Collaborative family law is a new approach in the UK to negotiating and settling the issues arising from divorce or family separation. London Collaborative Lawyers generate a dignified and co-operative attitude to negotiating in which the commitment of the separating couple and their

Additional Help for Parents & Children

Parents

lawyers is to achieving a settlement which will be as suitable and amicable as possible for the family, particularly the children, without the threat of Court proceedings. See Appendix 6 "Information on Mediation & Collaborative Law" for further information.

<http://www.londoncollaborativelawyers.com>

■ **Divorce Aid**

Divorce Aid is an extensive self-help and support website for families going through separation and divorce. It aims to reduce the conflict and distress associated with the divorce process, thus enabling families to minimise legal costs.

<http://www.divorceaid.co.uk>

■ **Divorce & Children Website**

Christina McGhee, is a divorce professional who has devoted her career to helping children and families find healthy ways to move forward following divorce. She has a Masters degree in Social Work from Tulane University in New Orleans, is a certified family mediator and has extensive training in dealing with high conflict families. She is also the creator and host of this online resource for parents. Christina's work has most recently gained international attention for her participation in the Channel 4 series "How to Divorce without Screwing up Your Kids" broadcasted in the UK during January to February 2006.

<http://www.divorceandchildren.com>

■ **Channel 4 Parenting Website - helping your child cope with your break-up**

Some practical tips for helping you and your children through separation and divorce

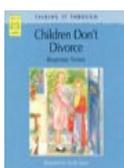
<http://www.channel4.com/health/microsites/F/family/parenting/breakup.html>

Additional Help for Parents & Children

Parents - Reading

■ Jewish Family Life and Customs – A Practical Guide

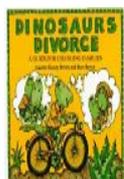
The Board of Deputies of British Jews⁴ Family Law Group, comprising family law solicitors and barristers and other experts in Jewish family law, chaired by Eleanor Platt QC, launched this booklet in June 2006. The booklet is intended as a guide for all members of the legal profession dealing in family law for use when making decisions that may affect the religious practice of clients. Speaking at the launch of the booklet, Sir Mark Potter, President of the Family Division and Chairman of the Family Justice Council, described the booklet as "very useful, short and easy to read" adding that "it will be immensely useful to all judges in making their ruling where their decisions have a huge impact upon the lives of ordinary people."



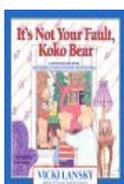
Children Don't Divorce by Rosemary Stones (Happy Cat Books Ltd, 1998)
A sensitively written story in the 'Talking It Through' series, which looks at separation and divorce from a child's viewpoint, allowing children to explore and express their feelings.



Children, Feelings and Divorce: Finding the Best Outcome by Heather Smith (Free Association Books Ltd, 1999)
Why do some children survive the divorce of their parents better than others? How can divorcing parents get it right? This book is a distillation of the author's 25 years experience of working with children whose parents have divorced.



Dinosaurs Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown (Time Warner, 1988)
A read-together storybook for young children whose parents are divorcing.

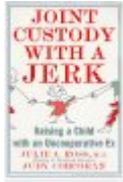


It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear by Vicki Lansky (Book Peddlers, 2003)
A read-together book for parents and young children during divorce.

⁴ <http://www.bod.org.uk/bod/index.jsp?page=extra&address=feedback/enquiries.jsp>

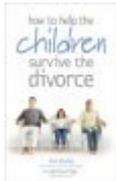
Additional Help for Parents & Children

Parents - Reading



Joint Custody with a Jerk: Raising a Child with an Uncooperative Ex by Julie Ross and Judy Corcoran (Saint Martin's Press, 1996)

Using proven communication techniques, this book offers advice for dealing with common problems of divorced couples who share custody of a child.



How to Help Your Children Survive Your Divorce by Jody Beveridge and Alan Bradley (Foulsham, 2004)

This book draws on the questions children ask and the feelings they hide and explains in clear, simple terms how to anticipate problems, avoid unnecessary harm and what action to take if things have gone wrong.

Children

■ **Norwood – Children & Families First**

Norwood is the safety net of the community, tackling issues which hit at the very heart of Anglo-Jewry and threaten its future: abuse, addiction, family breakdown, financial hardship, special education and special needs

<http://www.norwood.org.uk>

Tel: 020 8954 4555

■ **It's Not Your Fault**

Practical information for children, young people and parents going through a family break-up

<http://www.itsnotyourfault.org>

Publications

■ **Department for Education & Skills (DfES) Parenting Plans – Putting your children first: A guide for separating parents**

To be read in conjunction with this Parenting Plan guide for Jewish parents

http://www.orderprocessor.co.uk/files/273033_NewParentBk.pdf

Additional Help for Parents & Children

Publications

- Other DfES Publications of interest available to order via:

http://www.orderprocessor.co.uk/catalog_category.aspx?cat_id=7

Me and My Family helps children aged 5-8 years to understand what is happening during the separation or divorce of their parents and to think about the kind of changes that are taking place. It is designed for children to complete with some help and explanation from an adult.

My family's changing is a booklet for children and young people aged 8-13 years whose parents are separated or divorced. It provides general information and advice, explores areas and issues to think about, gives ideas on how to cope with what is happening, and contact details of organisations that can offer help and advice.

My family's splitting up is a guide for young people whose parents are separated or divorced. It provides basic information on separation and divorce, aids to help explore feelings and thoughts, examples of young people's experiences, contact details of organisations that offer help and advice, and details of website and reading resources.

Children - Reading



The Suitcase Kid by Jacqueline Wilson (Corgi, 1993)

Jacqueline Wilson doesn't offer instant solutions to children of divorcing parents but chronicles a young girl's journey to the beginning of equilibrium in her new life. Things will never be the way they were, but they'll get better over time.

Recommended for ages 9-13.

Acknowledgements

As part of the extensive consultation process key Jewish and non-Jewish organisations and expert individuals involved with family and parenting issues were requested to review this document. We are indebted to the following people and organisations that have provided invaluable guidance and comments to help with the development of this Parenting Plans guide for Jewish parents.

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- Representative members and professional/rabbinical staff of the West London Synagogue

Appendix 1

Template for a Parenting Plan

Parenting Plan For

(insert names of children)

Agreed by:

(insert names of parents)

Signed: _____

Date of Agreed: _____ **Proposed Review Date:** _____
Parenting Plan

Introduction

This Parenting Plan template aims to provide you with a formal way of documenting agreements that you have reached between you which will help both you and your children now that you are no longer together.

The Plan has been designed by parents who some time ago were in the situation you are now facing and feel that it would have been helpful for them if such a document had been available.

The following sections focus on some specific areas of your children's lives which, as parents, you will need to consider. You are at liberty to complete sections that you feel are relevant to both of you and that you are able to reach agreement on. Please also feel free to amend this Plan or adapt it to best suit your own needs.

Always remember that you are making plans for your children and that it is their welfare and happiness which is at stake.

JUMP Executive

December 2006

1. Time Arrangements

Routine Parenting Time

Add here times and days that your children will routinely be spending with each of you that you have both agreed.

Family Events and Special Days

Add here any forthcoming family events and special days that your children will be spending with each of you that you have both agreed.

Religious Festivals

Add here any religious festivals that your children will be spending with each of you that you have both agreed.

School Holidays

Add here any school holidays that the children will be spending with each of you that you have both agreed.

Public/Bank Holidays

Add here any public/bank holidays that your children will be spending with each of you that you have both agreed.

Your Children’s Birthdays

Add here any plans and arrangements for your children’s birthdays that you have both agreed.

2. Contact Details for Identified Carers for the Children

Add here important contact details for relatives, friends and carers for the children that may help look after them when with either of you.

Mother's Carers

Name	Address	Phone Number

Father's Carers

Name	Address	Phone Number

3. Staying in Touch

Add here agreed arrangements you have reached between you for how and when the children can contact each of you either by phone or e-mail when they are not staying with you.

4. Schools & Further Education Contact Details

Add here key contact information that may be helpful for you both in maintaining contact with schools or colleges your children are attending.

Child's Name: _____

Name	Position	Address	Phone Number	E-Mail

4. Schools & Further Education Contact Details (Continued)

Child's Name: _____

Name	Position	Address	Phone Number	E-Mail

After School Activities

Add here details of after school activities your children will be involved in that will assist you both in making arrangements to collect them on the days that they are with each of you.

Child's Name: _____

Out of School Activity	Day/Date	Address, if not at School	Contact Phone Number	Activity Start Time	Activity End Time

4. Schools & Further Education Contact Details (Continued)

Child's Name: _____

Out of School Activity	Day/Date	Address, if not at School	Contact Phone Number	Activity Start Time	Activity End Time

5. Synagogue & Religious Education Contacts

Add here details of the synagogue you each attend with your children and the religious education contacts eg; for Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah/Bat Chayil lessons.

Mother's Synagogue

Name	Address

Father's Synagogue

Name	Address

Contacts for Religious Education

Name	Address	Phone Number	E-Mail

6. Other Key Contact Information

Add here other key contact information and document information relating to your children which will be helpful to you both.

Medical Contacts

Child's Name	Role	Name	Address	Phone Number	E-Mail
	GP				
	Dentist				
	Optician				
	Specialist				

Other Key Document Information

Child's Name: _____

Document	Key Information (if applicable)	Who will primarily look after this document
Birth Certificate		
Passport	Number: _____ Emergency contact names: _____ _____ Expiry date: _____	_____
NHS Number Certificate	Number: _____	_____
National Insurance Card	Number: _____	_____

6. Other Key Contact Information (Continued)

Other Key Document Information (Continued)

Child's Name: _____

Document	Key Information (if applicable)	Who will primarily look after this document
Birth Certificate		
Passport	Number: _____ Emergency contact names: _____ _____ Expiry date: _____	_____
NHS Number Certificate	Number: _____	_____
National Insurance Number Card	Number: _____	_____

7. Child Support and Other Expenses

Add here agreements you have made between you to meet such expenses as routine child support costs, school fees, school lunches, school uniform, after school activities, religious education costs and any other expenses you may consider appropriate to include.

Cost/Expense	Amount	Who Will Meet Cost/Expense	Comment

7. Child Support and Other Expenses (Continued)

Cost/Expense	Amount	Who Will Meet Cost/Expense	Comment

8. Plans for Reaching Agreement on Difficult Issues Impacting on Your Children

There may be times when it will be difficult to reach agreement on issues. It may therefore be helpful to add details below of the agreements you have reached between you in how you will aim to work together to resolve such difficult situations. You may consider asking a mutually trusted relative or friend to work with you both to help make such decisions. Alternatively you may feel it would be helpful to approach a trained mediator to assist.

9. Revisions to Parenting Plan

There may be times when your circumstances change or as your children grow up and their support needs differ that you may wish to make changes to this Parenting Plan. For example this Plan may need to change when your children move from primary to secondary school or from secondary school to college or university.

It may be helpful to add below key time points that you may wish to meet to discuss and agree changes to this Parenting Plan

Appendix 2

Examples of Routine Shared Parenting Time Plans

Routine Parenting Time Arrangements

Scheme 1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Parent 1 - Week 1 & 2														
Parent 2 - Week 1 & 2														

Scheme 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Parent 1 - Week 1 & 2														
Parent 2 - Week 1 & 2														

Scheme 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Parent 1 - Week 1 & 2														
Parent 2 - Week 1 & 2														

Scheme 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Parent 1 - Week 1 & 2														
Parent 2 - Week 1 & 2														

In addition the aim will be share all School holidays equally and ensure each parent is able to spend at least a continuous two week period with their children over the Summer School holiday

Appendix 3

Examples of Shared Parenting Time Plans over Jewish Festivals

Year	Purim	Pesach	Shavuot	Rosh Hashanah	Yom Kippur	Succot	Shemini Atzeret/ Simchat Torah
1	Parent 1	Parent 2	Parent 2	Parent 1	Parent 2	Parent 1	Parent 1
2	Parent 2	Parent 1	Parent 1	Parent 2	Parent 1	Parent 2	Parent 2
3	Parent 1	Parent 2	Parent 2	Parent 1	Parent 2	Parent 1	Parent 1
4	Parent 2	Parent 1	Parent 1	Parent 2	Parent 1	Parent 2	Parent 2

- If the children are with one parent and need to be returned to the other parent for the festival, arrangements should be made to return the children in a reasonable time (e.g. at least 2 hours) before the commencement of the festival. Reasonable time should also be agreed for children to share post festival activities and rituals with the parent they have spent the festival with
- If one parent misses their usual **weekend** or **midweek** parenting time as a result of the other parent having the children over a Jewish festival:
 - The following **weekend** parenting time arrangements will be reversed in favour of the parent who missed their weekend contact
 - Additional parenting time equivalent in length to the time missed will be arranged with the parent who missed their usual **midweek** contact at the next available School holiday
- **Tu B'Shvat, Lag B'Omer & Tisha B'Av** contact will occur according to agreed parenting time arrangements unless otherwise agreed by the parents
- **Chanukah** contact will occur according to agreed parenting time arrangements as it is likely that each parent will have time with the children over this eight day holiday

Appendix 4

Explanation of Jewish Festivals

The following information is intended to assist those not so familiar with Jewish festivals and customs, particularly when assisting with reaching agreements between parents to share these very special occasions with their children. On Shabbat which occurs each week and also on the majority of Jewish festivals Jews are not permitted to work or undertake any labour (which extends to operating electrical devices including a television, a computer and light switches), carry or travel either by car or public transport, apart from walking. They will instead visit Synagogue to celebrate these events with their children and family. Often part of the festival includes the preparations before and afterwards which are also important for children to be able to experience with both parents and extended families.

These rules are, however, complex and are observed by individual Jewish people to different levels.

■ **Shabbat**

The seventh day of the week is Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath, which stretches from sunset on Friday until one hour after sunset on Saturday. Shabbat is a day on which Jews mirror G-d's own rest after creating the world. It is a very important time for the family each week to spend time with each other and share the many activities associated with Shabbat.

■ **Barmitzvahs, Batmitzvahs/Bat Chayils**

The Barmitzvah and Batmitzvah/Bat Chayil are a "rite of passage," a crossover from childhood to adulthood; a milestone in a Jewish life. Orthodox Judaism deems a boy a "Barmitzvah" when he turns 13 and a girl becomes "Batmitzvah/Bat Chayil" when she turns 12. Reform and Liberal Judaism celebrate both boys' and girls' coming of age on their 13th birthday. At that point the child, who is no longer a child in the eyes of Jewish law, becomes responsible for his own deeds, spiritually, ethically, and morally. This coming of age is usually celebrated with family and friends in Synagogue with the child's involvement in the service, with boys in Orthodox congregations, reading a learned portion of the Torah (five books of Moses known as the Jewish written law and comprising the first five books of the Old Testament)

they have learnt. In Liberal and Reform congregations girls also read from the Torah. It is usual for family celebrations to follow afterwards.

■ **Kabbalat Torah**

Kabbalat Torah is a firmly established religious observance in Liberal Judaism. The ceremony of Kabbalat Torah at age 15 allows girls and boys to affirm their commitment to Judaism as a consequence of a personal decision and runs from Bar and Batmitzvah, culminating in the ceremony created jointly by the students and the Rabbis.

In the following paragraphs, explanations of Jewish festivals are given in the order in which they occur during the secular calendar, starting in January.

■ **Tu B'Shvat**

This festival occurs around January or February each year. It is known as the "New Year for Trees" and involves planting trees and celebrating their importance. On Tu B'Shvat Jews often eat fruits associated with the Holy Land, especially the ones mentioned in the Torah.

■ **Purim**

This festival occurs around February or March each year. Purim commemorates the time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extermination by the courage of a young Jewish woman called Esther. It is customary to hold carnival-like celebrations on Purim, to perform plays and parodies. The main commandment related to Purim is to hear the reading of the Book of Esther in Synagogue. The Book of Esther is known as the Megillah, which means scroll. Children in particular enjoy dressing up as the characters found in the Book of Esther, including King Achashverosh, Vashti, Queen Esther, Mordecai and Haman.

■ **Pesach (Passover)**

This festival occurs around March or April each year. Passover is one of the most important religious festivals in the Jewish calendar. Jews celebrate the Feast of Passover to commemorate the liberation of the Children of Israel who were led out of Egypt by Moses. The festival lasts eight days for Orthodox Jews outside Israel with the first two and last two days being days on which services are held at the synagogue. Reform and Liberal Jews celebrate Pesach for seven days. As for Shabbat, Jews are expected to rest. On the evening before the first two days, a special service called a Seder ('Order') takes place

over a meal around a table in a home. Traditionally at the beginning of the Seder the youngest child present asks four important questions about why Jews eat matzah (unleavened bread) during this festival and bitter herbs as part of the Seder.

■ **Lag B'Omer**

This festival occurs around May each year. Thirty three days following the first day of Passover, Jews celebrate Lag B'Omer. It is celebrated to commemorate the day a plague ended during which thousands of students of Rabbi Akiba, a Talmudic scholar, died during the Counting of the Omer. The period of counting is traditionally observed as a period of mourning. The mourning, however, is set aside on Lag B'Omer, making it day of special joy and festivity. Families often go on picnics and outings and also enjoy bonfires to celebrate this festival.

■ **Shavuot (Feast of Weeks)**

This festival occurs around June each year and takes place fifty days after the first day of Passover. Orthodox Jews observe Shavuot for two days. Reform and Liberal Jews observe Shavuot for one day. Shavuot marks the time that the Jews received the Torah on Mount Sinai. It is considered a highly important historical and religious event. Prayers are said on Shavuot to thank G-d for the Torah and for His Law. Some people also spend the first night of Shavuot studying the Torah. Dairy products such as cheesecake are also eaten during Shavuot.

■ **Tisha B'Av (9th day of Av)**

This fast day occurs around July or August each year. It is a solemn occasion because it commemorates a series of tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people over the years, many of which have coincidentally happened on this day including the destruction of the Temples. Tisha B'Av is observed with prayers and fasting.

■ **Rosh Hashanah (New Year)**

This festival occurs around September each year. Rosh Hashanah (literally 'Head of the Year') is observed by Orthodox Jews for two days whereas it is observed by most Reform and Liberal Jews for one day. A great deal of time is spent in Synagogue during Rosh Hashanah. People will reflect on their actions over the past year and ask for forgiveness for their sins. The central feature of the Rosh Hashanah services is the blowing of the shofar, a ram's

horn. The sound was heard on many important occasions in Biblical times. The sound of the shofar starts a ten-day period known as Yamin Noraim (literally 'Days of Awe'), which ends with the solemn fast day of Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah is not only celebrated in the synagogue, but at home too. A special meal is served, with the emphasis on sweetness. Apples are dipped in honey, as a symbol of the sweet New Year that each Jew hopes lies ahead.

■ **Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)**

This Holy day occurs in September or October each year. Yom Kippur is the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar. It means 'Day of Atonement' and is a day on which Jewish people reflect on the past year and ask for G-d's forgiveness for any sins. They fast for 25 hours taking neither food nor water from sunset to one hour after sunset on the following evening. Everyone who is fasting eats a meal before the fast begins. Boys under thirteen and girls under twelve do not have to fast. The day is spent in continuous prayer in Synagogue and the single sound of the shofar marks the end of the holy day.

■ **Succot (Festival of Tabernacles or Booths)**

This festival occurs around October each year and comes five days after Yom Kippur. Succot is also known as the 'Feast of Tabernacles'. Succot commemorates the years that the Jews spent in the desert on their way to the Promised Land, and celebrates the way in which G-d protected them under difficult desert conditions. The word Succot means huts and a Jewish family will build an open air temporary structure or Sukkah with a roof of branches and leaves in which to live during this holiday. In the UK because of our climate the tradition is that meals are usually eaten in the Sukkah. A palm branch and some leaves of myrtle and willow (Lulav) and a citron fruit (Etrog) are symbolically part of the festival as a reminder of G-d blessing our survival during the coming dark days of winter. This festival is a happy holiday which children particularly enjoy and help to build the Sukkah.

■ **Shemini Atzeret/ Simchat Torah (Rejoicing of the Law)**

These festivals occur around October each year. Shemini Atzeret can be translated as "the assembly of the eighth (day)." This holiday is celebrated on the eighth day of Succot in the UK. The major custom is the reading of the special prayer for rain.

The holiday of Simchat Torah celebrates both the completion and beginning of the reading of the Torah. Simcha means rejoicing and thus Jews rejoice the

ending and beginning of the Torah. In Synagogue once the Ark is opened and all the Torah scrolls have been taken out, everybody in the synagogue is given an opportunity to dance with them. There are two traditions associated with the festival. One is the distribution of sweets and apples to the children who follow the scrolls with flags. Orthodox Jews observe these festivals on consecutive days whereas Liberal Jews observe both festivals together on the last day of Succot.

■ **Chanukah (Festival of Lights)**

This festival occurs in December each year. Chanukah is the Jewish Festival of Lights and is celebrated for eight days. The festival marks the phenomenal victory of a group of Jews called the Maccabees over the Syrian Greeks, the most powerful army of the ancient world. At the end of the three-year war, the Maccabees recaptured Jerusalem and rededicated the Temple. When the Maccabees rededicated the Temple, they discovered a single vessel of oil with the seal of the High Priest still intact. This lasted for eight days in the Temple rather than the anticipated one day. This became known as the miracle of the oil. Jews light the Chanukiah (an eight branched candlestick which has a ninth branch for the "Servant" (Shammash or lighting candle) on each of the eight evenings of this festival, an additional candle being lit each night until all candles burn together on the eighth night. Chanukah is a special time for children. Gifts and Chanukah money are exchanged. Some families give a small present on each of the eight nights of Chanukah. Children and adults play with a spinning top called a dreidel. Some foods have a special significance, such as latkes (a kind of potato fritter), pancakes and doughnuts. This is because they are fried in oil and so Jewish people remember the miracle of the oil lasting eight days in the Temple.

■ **Funerals, Evening Prayers and Stone Settings**

A funeral, sometimes referred to as Levoya, is a ceremony held at the burial ground. Children may attend but it is up to their parents to decide if it is best for them to do so. Because Jewish custom is to bury the deceased person quickly, funerals may occur with virtually no notice and therefore separated parents should permit "lapses" in parenting plans to occur on such solemn occasions.

Evening prayers, sometimes referred to as a Shiva, are prayers held for up to a week during the first week after the funeral, where people pay their respect to family members or close family friends. School age children may attend.

Stone settings, or grave stone consecrations, are usually held about one year after the funeral. These are also important family events where respect is paid to a family member or close family friend who has passed away.

Appendix 5

Jewish Festivals Dates 2006 – 2011

FESTIVAL	2006/2007 5767*	2007/2008 5768*	2008/2009 5769*	2009/2010 5770*	2010/2011 5771*
Rosh Hashanah (1 st & 2 nd Day) 1 Tishri ⁺	Saturday 23 September Sunday 24 September	Thursday 13 September Friday 14 September	Tuesday 30 September Wednesday 1 October	Saturday 19 September Sunday 20 September	Thursday 9 September Friday 10 September
Yom Kippur 10 Tishri ⁺	Monday 2 October	Saturday 22 September	Thursday 9 October	Monday 28 September	Saturday 18 September
Succot (1 st & 2 nd Day) 15 Tishri ⁺	Saturday 7 October Sunday 8 October	Thursday 27 September Friday 28 September	Tuesday 14 October Wednesday 15 October	Saturday 3 October Friday 4 October	Thursday 23 September Friday 24 September
Shemini Atzeret/ Simchat Torah~ 22 Tishri ⁺	Saturday 14 October	Thursday 4 October	Tuesday 21 October	Saturday 10 October	Thursday 30 September
Chanukah (1 st Day) 25 Kislev ⁺	Saturday 16 December	Wednesday 5 December	Monday 22 December	Saturday 23 December	Thursday 2 December
Tu B'Shvat 15 Shevat ⁺	Saturday 3 February	Tuesday 22 January	Monday 9 February	Saturday 30 January	Thursday 20 January
Purim 14 Adar ⁺	Sunday 4 March	Friday 21 March	Tuesday 10 March	Sunday 28 February	Sunday 20 March
Pesach (1 st & 2 nd Day) 15 Nisan ⁺	Tuesday 3 April Wednesday 4 April	Sunday 20 April Monday 21 April	Thursday 9 April Friday 10 April	Tuesday 30 March Wednesday 31 March	Tuesday 19 April Wednesday 20 April
Pesach (7 th & 8 th Day) 2 Tevet ⁺	Monday 9 April Tuesday 10 April	Saturday 26 April Sunday 27 April	Wednesday 15 April Thursday 16 April	Monday 5 April Tuesday 6 April	Monday 25 April Tuesday 26 April
Lag B'Omer 18 Iyar ⁺	Sunday 6 May	Friday 23 May	Tuesday 12 May	Sunday 2 May	Sunday 22 May
Shavuot (1 st & 2 nd Day) 6 Sivan ⁺	Wednesday 23 May Thursday 24 May	Monday 9 June Tuesday 10 June	Friday 29 May Saturday 30 May	Wednesday 19 May Thursday 20 May	Wednesday 8 June Thursday 9 June
Tisha B'AV 15 Av ⁺	Tuesday 24 July	Sunday 10 August	Wednesday 5 August	Tuesday 20 July	Wednesday 5 August

Jewish festivals always commence immediately before dusk prior to the first day of the festival and terminate at nightfall the following day – a 25 hour period. If there are two consecutive Holy Days, as indicated on the calendar, the laws relating to the festival continue over both days, terminating at nightfall on the second day.

Orthodox Jews celebrate all days of each festival whereas Liberal and Reform Jews usually celebrate the first day of each festival.

*Jewish Calendar Year *Jewish Calendar Date of Festival

~Most Non-Orthodox Jews observe the eighth day of Succot as Simchat Torah some, however, may follow the Orthodox practice.

Further information on Jewish festivals for subsequent years can be obtained from <http://www.unitedsynagogue.org.uk> and <http://www.bod.org.uk/bod/index.jsp?page=extra&address=calender/jewishyear.jsp>.

Appendix 6

Information on Mediation & Collaborative Law

Mediation and Collaborative Law are the two main alternative dispute resolution processes available to deal with relationship breakdown and issues concerning children. Mediation has been established for many years. Collaborative Family Law is a newer process gradually establishing itself as a major alternative to the litigious court process.

Mediation

Mediation is a process whereby a mediator or mediators act as a facilitator to enable divorcing or separating couples to try to reach agreement themselves. The mediation process enables the parties to resolve for themselves all of the issues arising from the breakdown of the relationship. Mediators work with the couple with the aim of achieving an outcome acceptable to both parties. Normally this is in direct discussion guided by the mediator. Each individual is encouraged by the mediator to take their own legal advice as the need arises, as the mediator is not able to give individual advice on issues of law.

The mediation process is particularly good at helping parents to focus on their children's needs and to work with parenting plans. It puts couples in control of their own decision making.

It is particularly suitable for couples who feel able to discuss matters with each other and for those willing to allow the mediator to keep discussions on a civilised and dignified basis. It is not suitable when there are substantial power imbalances between the parties or where domestic violence has been a significant factor within the relationship.

The mediation process tends to work through direct meetings of approximately 1½ hours each. Whilst there is no such thing as an average marriage breakdown, experience shows that most mediations will take between four and six meetings. Full disclosure of financial information is dealt with within the mediation using the same forms as are used in the other processes, including the court process.

Further detail on mediation is available at <http://www.thefma.co.uk>.

Collaborative Law

Collaborative Family Law is a new approach to negotiating and settling the issues arising from divorce or family separation. The commitment of the separating couple and their lawyers is to achieving a settlement which will be as suitable as possible for the family, particularly the children, without the threat of court proceedings. Both clients and the specially trained collaborative lawyers commit themselves to making every possible effort to achieving a settlement. Negotiations take place in what are called four way meetings.

The specialist family lawyers who are specifically trained in this area are able to both advise their clients individually as well as helping them to focus objectively on the wider issues. This enables the couple to look not only at their own interests, but also at the interests of their children and the extent to which their interests and the interests of their spouse or partner conflict, and may then be resolved. The whole focus is turned from one of taking positions and posturing into an emphasis on trying to achieve the best that is possible in the circumstances for the parties and most particularly, for any children.

Collaborative Family Law is ideal for clients who both want the support of their own solicitors and who want to reach a "fair" result, even though the word fair is entirely subjective and may mean different things to each party.

A significant element of the collaborative law agreement is that if agreement cannot be reached between the parties then the collaborative lawyers must withdraw and the clients will need to instruct new lawyers to embark on the process of litigation. This has an important impact in preventing posturing from either of the clients or the lawyers and truly emphasises the wish to reach agreement.

Further information about collaborative law can be found on the website www.londoncollaborativelawyers.com or at the website of Resolution www.collabfamilylaw.org.uk.

Costs

There is a different structure for each of the above processes. The actual cost of mediation can be considerably lower than the costs of the adversarial process. The total cost involved, however, may not be dissimilar to the costs of negotiating

settlement on a fairly easy basis through solicitors. This will depend on the extent to which the individuals use their own solicitors throughout the process.

The cost of using the collaborative family law process will again depend upon the number of meetings required between solicitors and all parties. Experience is beginning to show that using the collaborative family law process is cheaper than litigating and using mediation is slightly cheaper than collaborative law. The costs of implementation of any agreement are the same whichever process you use.

Cost is, however, not merely financial. Compared to the costs in selling a home, or even going on two or three family holidays, the legal costs fall into perspective. The true cost of litigation is, however, to the continuing relationship of the couple as parents and with their relationship to their children.

Both processes encourage a co-operative approach to dealing with matters concerning children in which the children's interests are put first. The parents are also enabled to look more objectively at what is really in the children's interest. Communication skills learnt through the mediation or collaborative family law processes can also benefit the couple throughout their continued relationship as parents.

Imagine the beneficial effect on the future of society if children were to discover that it is possible to have a break-up of a relationship that is civilised, dignified, and in which parents are able to put their children first.

Peter Martin

Accredited Family Law Specialist (Resolution)

Collaborative Family Lawyer

Accredited Mediator (FMA & Resolution)

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Tel: 020 8349 0321
Specialist Family & Collaborative Lawyers

- Gloria Proops, Co-Founder Agunot Campaign

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- Anita Taylor, in memory of her grandson, Jonathon Dacosta

- Sue Levy, in memory of her parents Nat & Sheila Fersht

- Daniella Shannon, in memory of her late father, Solly Elishahoff

- JUMP Members



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**Resolution Accredited Specialists in Family Law
Collaborative Family Lawyers
Mediation**

I am really pleased to have assisted in the production of this invaluable Parenting Plan.

I hope separating parents will use it and adopt attitudes that will enable both parents to be fully involved with their children, which will inevitably be in the children's best interests.

Peter Martin – Head of the Family Department