

The Yogi's Guide to Getting Divorced

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Elena Brower

In their new book, *Better Apart*, yoga teacher Elena Brower and attorney Gabrielle Hartley share their tips on how to emerge from divorce stronger and more resilient than before. Here, they share their thoughts on co-parenting with patience, respect, clarity, peace, and forgiveness after you separate.

[Elena Brower](#)

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If you hit relationship problems, it can be hard to co-parent with the same level of consciousness you bring to your yogic practices. But there is a way to do it. Here's how.

For most humans, separation or divorce stirs up a steady stream of doubts, fears, insufficiencies, and rage. Days, months, and even years of unspoken worries and concerns begin surfacing, and the turmoil can seem insurmountable at first.

With regard to your parenting plan, it's important to design an arrangement that prioritizes the physical and emotional needs of your children. When possible, always put them first. Here's how to think about creating a co-parenting plan through the lenses of patience, respect, clarity, peace, and forgiveness.

How to co-parent with patience

In an ideal world, you and your ex will try to maintain continuity and consistency of rules and expectations between your homes, but over time, your two households will likely become more different than alike. Particularly after your children have had a chunk of time at your ex's home, they may behave in new and unexpected ways.

Remember, your kids are managing divergent expectations in each house, and it's your task to practice patience with them as they navigate two homes. It's also your task to be patient with your ex, with your ex's significant other, and especially with yourself when potentially chaotic situations arise.

Patience affords you the pause in which to consider all angles. Patience also grants you the presence to respond only after you have calmed down. And when you disagree with the other parent's style or decisions, please speak about it during a time when you're not heated, and definitely not in front of the kids. Practice being patient enough to note what needs to be addressed later, in a quiet, calm space, when you both have a chance to decompress and settle. Patience is like a muscle you're developing, and practice makes perfect.



Support your children through the transition period by giving them time to process the divorce

How to co-parent with respect

Your children's sense of who they are depends almost entirely on how you and your co-parent respect each other. Please be mindful of what you say about their other parent, because children and teens integrate what they hear into who they are. Negative words and actions directed to or about their other parent are destructive to children.

Model respect by demonstrating it to your ex and any extended family members who enter into your children's world. Even when you are not feeling full of respect for them, you can be respectful of the situation and of their role as your child's parent. Stay calm and collected in the face of challenging interactions.

Ask for—don't demand—accommodations in your parenting plan when these are necessary. If you are respectful of others, you're more likely to be treated the same way in return.

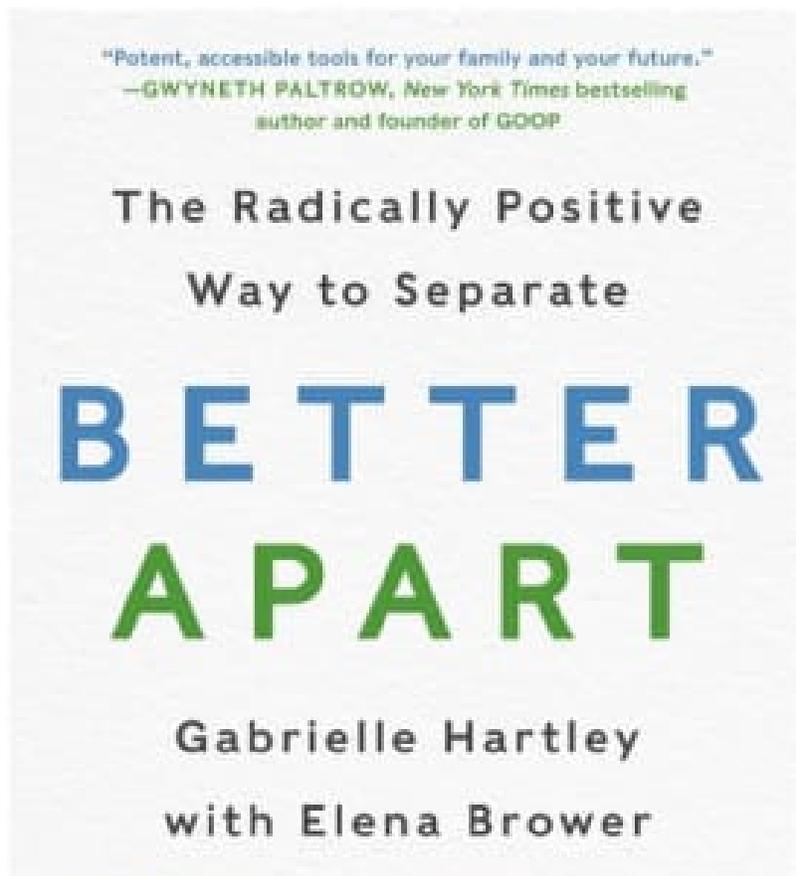
Respect also means not saying what you might be thinking in front of the kids—for example, saying your child's stepmother is limited, unattractive, and/or boring. If there are any real concerns over other members of a blended family—a stepsister appears to have a bad influence on your daughter, for example—take it up with your ex gracefully, not in the presence of your children. If you can't resolve a serious problem to your mutual satisfaction, then it may be time to engage a parenting coordinator, your lawyer, or a mediator to begin to move forward. If necessary, revisit your lawyer and appear before a judge about changing your parenting plan.

How to co-parent with clarity

Your clearheaded assessment of your family's needs is essential in creating a parenting plan. Once you've created a well-structured flow for the children, you can begin to be flexible with each other and with your kids.

Most children will have feelings and thoughts about and reactions to the custody arrangement. Support your kids through this transition by validating their feelings and giving them ample space to process. Consider taking them to a therapist who specializes in working with children whose family is in transition. Create clarity with regard to the parenting plan by sharing the details of the schedule with your kids. Take the time to listen to what your children need and pay attention to what your ex says they need.

Always keep space open for your ex and your children to say more, by asking in the moment if there is more to say, more to discuss. By listening to them in an attentive, caring way, you're creating a template for them to do the same for you.



BETTER APART by Gabrielle Hartley and Elena Brower.

How to co-parent with peace

Fashion a parenting plan that prioritizes peace, one that minimizes the potential for conflict in the future. Focus on your child's best interests instead of your own needs and desires. As you'll see in a few years, when you meet the needs of your kids, they'll grow up well-adjusted and secure, which will help your family overall.

Prioritize peace in your negotiations by verbally marking when you and your ex agree: "I've just noticed we're in agreement on that!" Your calm, peaceful resonance will open the door to kindness throughout the process. By maintaining this priority in your mind and heart,

even when matters are less than peaceful, you'll make things easier.

How to co-parent with forgiveness

Forgive yourself for having a hard time. Forgive yourself for not wanting to share your children. Forgive yourself for not giving your children the nuclear family you had imagined.

Forgive yourself for having to go to work and put your kids in child care. Forgive your ex as he/she struggles with time management. Forgive your ex's mother, who has a temper that you're now seeing in your child. Forgive your own mother (or anyone else) when she can't stop lamenting your failure. And if you're thinking now about your own family's version of these examples, be sure to revisit your parenting plan to minimize conflict and facilitate forgiveness going forward. When you forgive, you open your heart to true, abiding compassion.