

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for April 20, 2020
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about some tips for co-parenting during the current stay at home orders and beyond.

One parenting situation that is near and dear to my heart is co-parenting. This means that each divorced parent shares time and responsibility in raising their children. As a co-parent myself, I fully recognize there are many rewarding and challenging aspects of this role. And our current stay at home situations can add another layer of complication to what many times can already be complicated scenarios.

Recently leaders of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) and Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) published some advice for co-parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are a few highlights:

Be Healthy: Comply with all CDC and local and state guidelines and model good behavior for your children with intensive hand washing, wiping down surfaces and other objects that are frequently touched, and maintaining social distancing.

Be Mindful: Be honest about the seriousness of the pandemic but maintain a calm attitude. Avoid making careless comments in front of the children and exposing them to endless media coverage intended for adults. Don't leave the news on 24/7, for instance. But, at the same time, encourage your children to ask questions and express their concerns and answer them truthfully at a level that is age appropriate.

Be understanding: There is no doubt that the pandemic will pose an economic hardship and lead to lost earnings for many, many parents, both those who are paying child support and those who are receiving child support. The parent who is paying should try to provide something, even if it can't be the full amount. The parent who is receiving payments should try to be accommodating under these challenging and temporary circumstances.

Dr. Maggie Kerr, State Specialist with UW-Madison, Division of Extension also offers some tips for co-parents.

Communicate: Talk with your co-parent and children about the expectations you have for your households about social distancing. Stating your expectations clearly is likely to reduce future conflict. If the children will go between households, each co-parent needs to know who the children will be in contact with at the other house, including other family members and children. Together, you can decide what works best to keep your families as safe as possible.

Remember the basics: This is a stressful time and the uncertainty and changes may cause more frustration than usual. Do your best not to argue in front of the child or to speak negatively about the child's other parent. Keep communication open but limited to relevant information, such as custody arrangements, childcare, schoolwork, and exposure risks.

Be kind to yourself: This is a tough situation. Do not strive to be a perfect parent. Set realistic goals for your family. Trust that you are doing your best to parent your child through a difficult time. Remember to take care of yourself by talking walks and connecting with your family and friends.

This is great advice from some trusted experts. Remember to check out our website coshocton.osu.edu or "OSU Extension Coshocton County" on Facebook for more resources about healthy living and healthy finances as well as agriculture, gardening and youth development information.

I encourage you to call friends and family, especially those who are older, to check-in on how they are doing. Send a letter or card to someone you haven't talked to in a while. Keep cooking. Keep cleaning. Keep learning. Keep living.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!