A successful co-parenting relationship is as vital to your child’s well-being and health as nutritious food or proper exercise. Research, anecdotal evidence, and plain common sense all point to the fact that children are happier, healthier, and better adjusted when both of their parents play an active role in their lives. Studies also show that the trauma children experience in the wake of a divorce or separation can be lessened when they see their parents getting along. Kids whose parents successfully co-parent feel more secure than those who have limited or no connection to one of their parents post divorce.

Co-parenting 101 is based on the premise that co-parenting is a must, not an option. The involvement of both parents—not just the primary guardian—is the cornerstone of successful co-parenting. This is the first book written by a formerly married couple for whom co-parenting is central to their day to day lives, and it offers a comprehensive, personal, and upfront look at how to effectively raise kids with an ex-spouse.

Authors Deesha Philyaw and Michael D. Thomas share their own experiences raising their children together, as well as provide professional advice from co-parenting experts. Through practical tips combined with expert parental strategies, this book a great resource for divorced parents with children.

For parents, less time stressed out about legal wrangling means more time to be fully present and engaged with the children. By learning to put their animosity aside, parents can focus on putting their kids first.
Deesha Philyaw is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in Essence and Bitch magazines, as well as The Washington Post. Her writing has been anthologized in several collections including Literary Mama: Reading for the Maternally Inclined; When We Were Free to Be: Looking Back at a Children’s Classic and the Difference It Made; and The Cassoulet Saved Our Marriage: True Tales of Food, Family, and How We Learn to Eat. She is the co-founder of CoParenting101.org.

Michael D. Thomas works in the financial services industry and is the co-founder of CoParenting101.org.

In the spring of 2005, we delivered some news to our then-six-year-old daughter Taylor that broke her heart. We told her that we were divorcing because we had grown-up problems we could not fix, even though we’d tried very, very hard. We explained what divorce meant: the two of us would live in separate houses, and she and her eighteen-month-old sister, Peyton, would stay with each of us on different days. We told Taylor all of the ways our lives would change because of the divorce, and we told her all of the things that would remain the same—especially our love for and commitment to her and Peyton. She still had a family, we reassured her.

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Taylor’s reaction was one that is common to many children of divorce. “I made up a word for what I feel,” she told us a few days after our initial conversation. “I’m smad. Sad and mad at the same time.” We knew that we couldn’t take away her hurt entirely, but we made a pact to avoid compounding the pain and upheaval in our children’s lives. Through the sometimes tense legal process and the awkward early days of negotiating the day-to-day details of parenting across two households, we put aside our own wounds and concentrated on the most important task at hand: making sure we acted in our children’s best interest, emotionally and practically.

After our marriage ended, we became the poster children for divorce in our circle of friends and colleagues. We wish we could have been the poster children for successful marriage, but it didn’t work out that way.

Instead, we have managed to establish a congenial co-parenting relationship that allows our children to thrive and that causes those who know us to ask, “How in the world do you do it?” There are simple and not-so-simple answers to that question—answers we have shared with other divorced couples, those contemplating divorce, and adult children of divorce through our blog Co-Parenting 101 and online radio show CoParenting Matters. Inevitably, the response we get is “You should write a book.” So we did.

We are not, however, advocates for divorce. In fact, we tell couples who seek our advice to consider divorce only as their very last option. We won’t debate whether staying together “for the sake of the kids” is best for children. That’s a personal decision each thoughtful couple must make for themselves. But we’ve heard from co-parents who say that using “for the sake of the kids” as the glue to hold their troubled marriage together ultimately didn’t work. This book is a resource for those parenting after divorce or separation, no matter what the reason for the split.

As divorced co-parents, the question we get most often after “How do you do it?” is “If you can get along this well—well enough to collaborate on this book—why couldn’t you make your marriage work?” Our answer: the platonic relationship we’ve cultivated since our divorce is possible only because we’ve removed ourselves from the parasitic resentments that ate away at our marriage, from the daily misery and conflict. In other words, we are able to get along now because we are free to have a relationship that is limited to what we are good at together: parenting. While co-parenting still forces us to bump up against those raw areas that contributed to the demise of our marriage, we deal with them in a different context now: It’s not about us anymore. Our obligations are to our children, and our love for them motivates us to proceed with caution through the rough spots.

We’re not alone in pursuing this particular postdivorce path. Through our blog, we’ve connected with other former couples who tell us that, despite a rocky start, they are doing what at first seemed impossible: striving for civility, compromise, and cooperation. And their children are better off for it.
Co-parenting 101
Deesha Philyaw & Michael D. Thomas

“Co-parenting 101 offers practical advice, information, and tools for parents that can be easily implemented, as well as a tremendous amount of hope. I recommend that parents read this book not only to avoid problems but also as a manual to consult when difficult situations arise.”

-Susan Pease Gadoua, author of Contemplating Divorce and Stronger Day by Day

“As a marital and couples therapist, I have witnessed how contentious divorces affect both the parents and their children. It can be agonizing. I would highly recommend and encourage those folks contemplating divorce to read this book first. It is extremely practical with many vignettes of actual parent struggles, including the authors’ own co-parenting journey. The interview with the authors’ daughter is particularly touching and poignant, a powerful message for all divorced parents.”

-Bari Benjamin, LCSW, BCD, licensed, clinical social worker

“An extraordinary book and required reading for separated and divorced parents, as well as mental health practitioners. [Co-parenting 101] outlines some of the possible pitfalls of the co-parenting process with which clinicians like myself are all too familiar and regularly deal with therapeutically. But now we can refer parents to Co-parenting 101 to help them mindfully approach the co-parenting process and examine the array of options they have in their parenting toolbox.”

-Robert F. Fierstein, PhD, licensed psychologist

“Deesha Philyaw and Michael D. Thomas have done the impossible. This formerly married couple not only co-parent their children without rancor, but in Co-parenting 101, they teach us how to do it, too. What a helpful, detailed, and realistic guide to a widespread but much ignored situation! This book will help readers navigate the tricky and often treacherous waters of co-parenting with a former partner.”

-Ericka Lutz, author of The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Stepparenting

“As a family physician, I care for hundreds of families with parents living separately. The mental and physical health of children is directly impacted by the relationship between their co-parents. I’m recommending this book to every separated family I see. If parents were willing to step up and consider the suggestions made in Co-parenting 101, their kids would be healthier and far more resilient!”

-Deborah Gilboa, MD, of askdoctorg.com

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