

Dear Mom & Dad: I'm Just a Kid, so please...

Post these rules on your refrigerator as a reminder of your commitment to CARE. Ask your child to let you know if you forget one of the rules. Never reprimand your child when he or she gives you this feedback.

1. Do not talk badly about the other parent. (This makes me feel torn apart! It also makes me feel bad about myself!)
2. Do not talk about my other parent's friends or relatives. (Let me care for someone even if you don't.)
3. Do not make me feel bad when I enjoy time with my other parent. (This makes me afraid to tell you things.)
4. Do not block my visits or prevent me from speaking to my other parent on the telephone. (This just makes me very upset.)
5. Do not interrupt my time with my other parent by calling too much or by planning my activities during our time together. (I don't enjoy being caught in the middle of my parents.)
6. Do not argue about the divorce or child support in front of me or on the telephone when I can hear you! (This just turns my stomach inside out! Please leave me out of it. It makes me feel like a possession.)
7. Do not ask me to spy for you when I am at my other parent's home. (This makes me feel disloyal and dishonest.)
8. Do not ask me to keep secrets from my other parent. (Secrets make me feel insecure.)
9. Do not ask me questions about my other parent's life or about our time together. (This makes me uncomfortable. I will let you know if I think it is important.)
10. Do not give me messages to deliver to my other parent or place them in my bag. (I end up feeling anxious about their reaction. Please just call them, leave them a message at work, or put a note in the mail.)
11. Do not blame my other parent for the divorce or for things that go wrong in your life. (I feel terrible when you do. I end up wanting to defend them from your attack. Sometimes it makes me feel sorry for you and that makes me want to protect you. I just want to be a kid, so please . . . stop putting me in the middle!)
12. Do not treat me like an adult. I am just a kid. Don't take my childhood away. (It causes too much stress for me. Please find a friend or therapist to talk with.)
13. Do not ignore my other parent or sit on opposite sides of the room during my school or sports activities. (This makes me very sad and embarrassed. Please act like parents and be friendly, even if it is just for me.)
14. Do not let me take items to my other home only if I carry them back and forth. (It makes me feel like a possession.)
15. Do not use guilt to pressure me to love you more. Do not ask me where I want to live. (I don't want to choose one of my parents over the other parent.)
16. I have two homes, not just one. (It doesn't matter how much time I spend at each home.) I really appreciate it when you let my other parent come into our house every now and then. (Because it is my home too!)
17. Let me love both of you and see each of you as much as possible! Be flexible even when it is not part of our regular schedule. (This tells me I am more important than how much you dislike my other parent.)

Thanks,

Your Loving Child