



The proper way of asking to change the Visitation Schedule

With the holidays just around the corner divorced parents are often faced with scheduling challenges such as managing the school break, attending office parties and friends getting together.

The following are tips to consider when approaching your former partner to discuss the need to change the visitation schedule.

Tip #1

Discuss the date change with your former spouse **BEFORE** you discuss this with your children. There is a common saying "I got it straight from the horse's mouth" which is the absolute best way for your ex spouse to hear about the need to change the children's schedule. If you tell the children first and they tell their other parent then that will most likely leave them steaming and perhaps not very cooperative.

Tip #2

Discuss the need to revise the schedule **PRIVATELY** with your former partner and not in front of the children. You need to negotiate this fairly and if he/she is forced to make a decision in front of the children then you basically have their back against a wall and that simply is not fair.

Tip #3

Give your ex time to make a decisions. You have had time to think about the request – they need time to consider this request.

Tip #4

Your former partner may provide other options to your proposed change. Allow yourself to consider these options since their opinions and needs are just as important as yours.

Tip #5

Don't force the children to make a decision of choosing one parent or one event over the other. This can be extremely hurtful and damaging to them. If the children are of adolescent age then allow them to voice their thoughts/opinions/concerns and take what they say seriously. Then take what they have to say into consideration as you and your former spouse make the decision.

Tip #6

It is advisable to sit down together and work out an 18 month scheduling plan. It not only provides certainty for both adults, it creates certainty and consistency for the children. This way when a scheduling conflict does occur, you can sit down and visually see how to adjust it to meet everyone's needs.

Tip#7

Family traditions are important for children. If you are trying to take them on a vacation during a time when family traditions are generally practiced this may be extremely difficult for the children to deal with. It is important to look at the timing of your vacation and try your best to balance away time with the children's enjoyment of long held traditional celebrations.

Tip#8

Recognize that as your children come into adolescence they become more egocentric and their friends and their needs seem to be more important to them than spending time with family. Parents need to come together and revisit their parenting agreement to see how their children's needs have changed and how to balance spending time with each parent while giving your children autonomy.

Tip#9

A term that is used in drafting a parenting plan is "Right of First Refusal". This means that if it is your time to spend with the children and you have an event/function that conflicts with your time you can do one of two things;

1. Contact your ex spouse and see if she/he can take the children
2. If they have made plans then it is your responsibility to either make arrangements with a responsible and reliable sitter or you don't go to the event - Even if their plan was to sit alone with a roaring fire and good book they have the right to say "No".

In part – the point to this wording is that your ex should not have to make changes to their schedule or be made to feel guilty if you have a scheduling conflict.