

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIPS

1. PERFECT PALS: The parents are close friends. They cooperate with each other, have good negotiation skills, are good problem-solvers, and share in the child rearing. They are definitely child focused, and they usually have joint custody. They don't fight around the children. The kids are winners.
2. COOPERATIVE COLLEGUES: The parents are not good friends, but they are child focused. They can separate personal issues from child issues. When they need help, they call on a counselor or mediator. They don't fight around the kids. The kids are winners.
3. ANGRY ASSOCIATES: These parents argue and power struggle. There are many custody disputes; they go back to court often about money issues. There are boundary problems, and lots of frustration and hurt. The children feel the discord, and often feel sad and anxious. These parents need to stop arguing and talking negatively about the other spouse in front of the children. If they will separate personal issues from child issues and focus on the children, there is hope.
4. FIREY FOES: These parents are angry all the time. There is lots of fighting around the children with very little calm. The parents are not emotionally divorced, and may hate each other. Extended families get involved, and there are role conflicts. Parents degrade each other in front of the children, and the children feel they need to choose sides. The children feel split; their hearts are torn. They feel frightened, hurt, guilty, and caught in the middle. The child loses; everyone loses.
5. DISSOLVED DUOS: There is no contact with one of the parents, and the other parent has full responsibility in child-rearing. The children feel lost and abandoned. These cut-offs can be disastrous, and the pain may pass on into adulthood.