

CO-PARENTING  
**DIVORCE**  
GUIDE



**Johnson & Smith, LLP**

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# A Peaceful Divorce by Design



Neil James Dan Johnson Martha Smith Chris English

Your divorce settlement is important. And how you get there matters a lot.

## Our Collaborative Divorce service makes a difference

When Dan Johnson began practicing family law in the early 1990s, he knew there had to be a better way to help clients than taking their cases to court. "Divorce litigation cost a lot of money and dragged cases on for months," he recalls. But he soon learned about Collaborative Divorce — an alternative method of dispute resolution outside the adversarial system. Johnson and his partner, Martha Smith are both seasoned collaborative attorneys who are trained to resolve divorce cases using this process. With their Collaborative Divorce service, you can get through your divorce with less stress, expense and conflict.

## A high rate of out-of-court settlement

Today, the law firm of Johnson & Smith has a stellar reputation in Los Angeles County for resolving the vast majority of its cases through collaborative family law. "In Collaborative Divorce, you and your spouse retain your own separate attorneys who will work together with settlement as the only goal," Smith explains. "The best part is: both attorneys sign an agreement stating that they will resign should the process break down and you want to litigate. So everyone is committed to finding a non-adversarial solution."

## Serving you with top-rated legal skills

Johnson and Smith are highly respected by not only clients but also other divorce lawyers and judges. Johnson is a Fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and has an AV

rating in *Martindale-Hubbell*. Smith is a past-president of the California Bar Association, is listed in *Best Lawyers in America*, and has been profiled in *Newsweek* and *The Los Angeles Times*. Both have represented numerous celebrities in their divorces.

## Financial and child-custody expertise

"I also have training in asset valuation," Johnson adds, "which is extremely valuable if your divorce involves significant property issues. And if your case warrants it, we will bring in a financial advisor. Furthermore, Martha has experience as a child advocate, so we cover different aspects of your divorce."

"Come to us for peaceful divorce resolutions," says Smith. "We can help you design a divorce settlement agreement that is best for the future of you and your family."

**Contact us today to book a free initial consultation and start designing your peaceful divorce.**

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For most people, divorce is much more than a major legal process. It's also a challenging time of transition that can negatively impact virtually every area of life: emotional, psychological, domestic, parental, financial, physical health, social, vocational and more.

This special **Co-Parenting Divorce Guide** contains hand-picked articles, book excerpts, advice and more to help you recover from the inevitable stresses and pressures of divorce. And just as importantly, the Guide empowers you to build the satisfying, strong relationship with your children and ex-spouse.



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# The Co-parenting Relationship

**Your marriage may be over, but your relationship with the other parent will continue as long as both you and your children are alive. Healthy co-parenting is a way to carry your children through the crisis of divorce to a safe and happy future.**

By Darlene Weyburne, BCD, CSW, ACSW

Imagine waking up in the middle of the night to the sound of your smoke alarm blaring. Your first instinct would be to run to your children's room, scoop them up, and carry them to safety. You'd probably walk through smoke and fire, or any crisis, risking your own life to save your children. Divorce is a crisis for your children, and they need you to work together with the other parent to help them through it. Your marriage may not have survived the fire, but your relationship with the other parent will continue as long as your children are alive.

Whether you spend one day a month or every day with your children, you and your former partner continue to be co-parents. Co-parenting involves working cooperatively to assist your children in developing into socially and

emotionally healthy adults. It involves communicating with one another concerning the needs of the children. Cooperative co-parenting means considering your children's need to love both parents instead of focusing on your feelings toward your ex-spouse. You do this because you understand that your children's need to see the other parent is more important than your need to punish him or her. Healthy co-parenting is a way to carry your children through the crisis of divorce to safety.

Picture your child on her wedding or graduation day as she looks out at the family and friends who have gathered to witness the event. Will she be focusing on how happy she feels or will she be worrying about whether her parents are going to fight? Throughout the rest of

your life, you and your former partner will be parents and grandparents — and maybe even great-grandparents — together. You can struggle and fight your way through each developmental milestone in your children's lives or you can learn to celebrate them together.

## Developing Respect

Developing mutual respect for each other will help make you effective co-parents. Follow the golden rule of co-parenting: treat the other parent like you want to be treated. This can be difficult if he or she doesn't treat you with respect, but keep in mind that you're doing this for your children's survival and happiness — not for the other parent's benefit. Don't snicker or sneer at something your ex says or something your child relays to you, and don't attempt to convey to your children that you're the better parent. If you're worried that showing mutual respect will confuse your children into thinking that their parents will get back together, avoid talking to your children about your feelings towards your ex: focus instead on his or her positive qualities as a parent.