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**Tips when considering 50/50 Shared Care**

 **TIP 1: LIVE CLOSE –**Both parents need to live close, the closer the better. Rule of thumb is parents need to live within 20 miles of each other. Generally, in cases involving parents that live more than 20 miles apart there’s usually a primary physical custodial parent because more than 20 miles just becomes too difficult to have the children going between two homes 50 percent of the time.

**TIP 2: PAY –**You need to ensure you are stepping up and sharing the financial responsibility of the children. This means you’re involved in sharing costs of school fees, extra-curricular activities, child support if owed, and genuinely stepping up and helping pay for the children. There’s no question children are expensive and if you’re going to be a 50/50 parent, you need to show that you’re also going to help pay and support them.

**TIP 3: BE INVOLVED –**Meaning you are equally involved with the kids by doing things like pick up and drop off from school, knowing what their extra-curricular activities are and being involved to the extent you can, attending doctor and dentist appointments and all the other nuances and responsibilities that go with parenting. And as mentioned above.

**TIP 5: HAVE SPACE –**Your life needs to be tailored toward the reality of having children half the time and you need to have proper living accommodations for them. This doesn’t mean each child needs a big, luxurious room to themselves, but it does mean you have appropriate space for them and they aren’t sleeping on couches. Of course bunk beds are fine and children can share rooms, but essentially you have a home and space that suits and meets the needs of your children.

**TIP 6: HAVE A PLAN –**Parenting isn’t always predictable and you need to have a plan for how to handle different situations that may arise. If you’re at work, you may get a call from a child at school who needs to be picked up or have a kid who’s sick and needs to stay home. Essentially, of course you can still maintain a job and have children, but you need to have a plan and be the primary person who’s responsible and able to step up and deal with all the realities of being a parent during your allotted parent time.

**TIP 7: BE REALISTIC –**One of the things the court considers is the history of what the parents have been doing. If you’re going to pursue a 50/50 shared care arrangement with your children, make sure it’s something you can actually handle and is realistic based on the life you’ve had and the life you will have going forward. Of course it’s ultimately up to you, but as an example, if you have a career that requires frequent travel and or you’re regularly out of town for extended periods of time, investing the resources into fighting for 50/50 Shared care may be less worthwhile because you just don’t have the lifestyle that supports being physically available for your children 50 percent of the time.

**TIP 8: BE RESPECTFUL –**Like it or not, if you have 50/50 shared care, you’re going to be more involved with your ex-partner. In order to have a successful parenting arrangement, you need to be respectful. Don’t talk negatively to the children about the other parent, always approach your ex with respect and do everything you can to navigate co-parenting in a low-conflict manner.

**TIP 9: REACH AN AGREEMENT –**One of the best things you can do for 50/50 shared care is to work out the shared care arrangements with the other party. It’s a very good sign and gives you the best chance when both parents, can come to an agreement of what co-parenting will look like.

**TIP 10: CHILD’S BEST INTEREST –**Most importantly, 50/50 shared care has to be in the best interest of the children because ultimately this is what the court will be looking at. If you and your ex-parent aren’t in agreement to what shared care should be and your case is brought before a judge then it’s worth noting that the court is a court of what’s fair. The guiding premise of any court or judge evaluating what should happen in your matter, is what is in the children’s best interest.