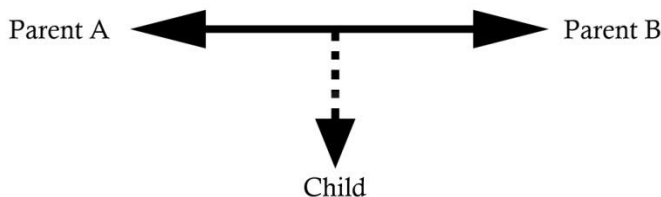


Triangulation

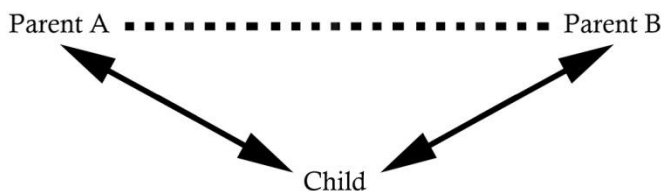
Triangulation occurs when parents involve their child in parental decision-making or negotiations rather than maintaining communication between the adults. For example, suppose your child refuses to have time with his or her other parent, talk to the other parent on the phone, or bad-mouths the other parent. When you say, “I can’t make my child go to his other home if he doesn’t want to go,” or “It’s between them,” or if you leave it up to the child to return the other parent’s calls, your behavior puts the child in the position of being able to make adult decisions.

In other words, instead of the adults making the decisions in a straight line between each other and then informing their child of the decision, or seeking input from the child only after both parents agree, the child is allowed to make direct decisions with one parent about the child’s relationship with the other parent. In such a situation, a child may try to play a parent against the one that he or she is upset with.

The following is an example of healthy coparenting. Decisions are made between the parents, and the child is involved only with the agreement of both parents.



The following is an example of triangulation. Decisions are made between the parents and child, with little or no communication between the parents.



The following is an example of extreme triangulation (parental alienation, which is discussed later in this chapter). One parent is cut out of communications completely, and may have no access to the child.

