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## PARENTING PLAN TUNE UP

The school year begins, the leaves start to change and the weather turns cooler. For everyone with children, this time of year is more the start of a new year than January 1st. It is also a good time of year to touch base and assess your parenting plan. Is it still working for your children? Have things changed in ways that may require a closer look at the present circumstances?

When parenting plans are drafted, it is during a singular moment in time. Life changes thereafter and a parenting plan must be fluid and flexible to accommodate those changes. Perhaps your children were in grammar school when it was drafted and are now entering high school. Or, one parent has re-partnered and that has created a shift in the dynamics. Whatever the reason, a parenting plan that works and is in the best interests of your children when first crafted may not work well later.

In many families, the parenting plan adjusts and morphs itself to accommodate these changes based on the age of the children, their activities, their needs and desires as well as the circumstances of the parents. Other families may be limping along with an old plan because the parents are not in as cooperative a place to implement the necessary changes.

Many people who have been through custody issues in the court system do not wish to return to that system. For those families, using private mediation to tune up a stale parenting plan makes far better use of time and resources. It is common for parents to need a neutral forum and receive some guidance to restore a balanced parenting plan that works for their children.

So to all of you with children, take a good look at where everyone is presently and make sure that all of the right pieces are in place for best results for them. Here's to another school year!

Parenting plans should evolve as children grow older and develop new interests.

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Revisit your parenting plan on an annual basis to ensure it meets your children's needs and both parent's present circumstances as well.

*Since 1995, William RJP Brown's legal career has focused on domestic relations litigation representing children, parents and parties in all aspects of divorce, custody and parenting access disputes. That background is integrated with the training and work he has performed as a mediator, a Family Special Master at the Regional Family Trial Docket, his extensive experience as a guardian ad litem across the state, and his network of mental health professionals. Attorney Brown received his Parenting Coordination training through the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. For additional information about Parenting Coordination, please feel free to contact us.*

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