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Practical Suggestions in Parenting Disputes for Separated Parents

Advising Small & Family Businesses

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INTRODUCTION

This document provides some general information in relation to your existing and future parenting disputes. This guidance is subject to any advice that your lawyer has given you, any directions from parenting professionals, and any court orders. This document is not “legal advice”; you should speak to your lawyer prior to making any decisions which could significantly affect your matter.

Although you may see the other parent’s negative behaviour reflected in the following examples of improper parenting, that is not the purpose of this document. It is to show that instances of even innocent conduct can be misused or lead to an unnecessary dispute. We strongly recommend that while you read this document, you analyze your own behaviour and memorize these guidelines so that you may properly address future incidents. This document also contains guidance to help you prepare for court in the event that negotiation is unsuccessful or if the conflict escalates.

YOUR CHILDREN

Speaking to Your Children

It is **very important** not to make negative comments about your child’s other parent or discuss any aspect of the parenting and/or financial dispute in front of your children. Doing so may lead the other parent to accuse you of parental alienation (where a child is led to show fear, disrespect, or hostility towards another parent). In extreme circumstances, courts may respond by reducing the time that an alienating parent has with the child or order that their contact with the child be supervised by a third party. In particular:

- **Name calling.** Do not swear or call your former partner, their new partner, their friends, or family members bad names at any time when your child may hear you (eg “deadbeat” or “bitch”).
- **Passing messages.** Do not ask your child to pass along any messages to the other parent. Do not tell your child to address controversial subjects with the other parent. For example, it would be very inappropriate to say “Ask your mother/father why you’re not allowed to have a cellphone”.
- **Legal proceedings.** Do not discuss lawyers or courts with your child. Knowing about interactions with your lawyer or that a court date is looming will only stress your child, and you may be accused of sharing improper information. Also, legal documents should be kept in a secure location that is inaccessible by your child, such as in a locked drawer or at your place of employment.