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DEBORAH N. DEWALT NEWSLETTER

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So many of us are trying to simplify our lives and get back to basics. If you are one of many, there are some books on how to make simplicity a family project:

- LIVING SIMPLY WITH CHILDREN, by Mari Sherlock (Three Rivers Press, \$12.95)
- INTENTIONAL FAMILY, by William J. Doherty (Morrow, William & Co., \$12.95)
- CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE: PARENTING TO INSPIRE VALUES, by Dorothy Law Nolte (Workman Publishing Company, Inc., \$8.95).

In her book, Sherlock writes, "Simplicity by its very definition involves doing away with the unsatisfying excess in our lives and concentrating on what is really meaningful to us. ... Simplicity and childhood are natural counterparts. Left to their own devices, children lead down-to-earth, uncomplicated, genuine, lives."

The modern challenge is to give them that despite a culture that pushes exactly the opposite value.

PLAN SUMMER SCHEDULE NOW

With these days of alternating warm late winter days with frigid ones, it is hard to convince yourself summer is just around the corner. But those of you who have children know that the brochures and flyers for summer daycare and camps have already started arriving. If you are trying to share a child's summer with another household, the time to start planning is NOW.

Children's summers are best designed around their interests. Each parent in a separated family can inquire generally about what a child would like to do and then check into some possibilities. Unless you have the final say, it is best not to make promises to children about what they will be doing until you and the other parent are on the same page.



Language such as “Here are some choices – your mom/dad and I will be talking and when we make a final decision, we will let you know” can make the difference between a “promise” and the child correctly understanding that there is an idea being discussed.

Most parents also have some ideas about when they would like to vacation or when that 50th wedding anniversary combined with a family reunion is coming up. Use clear language in discussing these plans with your children until the schedule is firmed up with the other side.

The keys to a smooth summer are:

- Planning ahead;
- Communicating with the other family;
- Working out a plan with something in it for each household;
- Confirming the plans in writing to make sure everyone has the same understanding; and
- **PUTTING YOURSELF IN YOUR CHILD’S SHOES** – leave time for your child to wind down, rest up, get organized, and do something (or nothing) on the spur of the moment.

If you cannot reach an agreement on your own, do not ignore the loose ends until the day before you want to leave on vacation. Try another means of communication. Set a deadline. Use a mediator. Have your attorney try a letter or telephone call. Decide to be satisfied with the summer schedule in your Decree or Order. Call the guardian ad litem or visitation expediter. **LEAVE SOME TIME FOR SOMEONE TO TRY TO HELP YOU.**

What if you do not get the time you wanted? Be honest with your child. It is not the end of the world – you can see each other another time and find something fun to do together.

Missing baseball this summer, a vacation to the Black Hill, and yes, even that 50th wedding anniversary is not as important to your child as their knowing that you are happy to see them anytime. That simple message lasts a child’s lifetime.



Have a friend asking questions about divorce? Good general introductions to Minnesota dissolutions are at www.divorcechoice.com, www.mnbar.org/divorce.htm, and www.extension.umn.edu/parentsforever/ There are also answers to frequently asked questions at my website www.dewaltlaw.com.

Please feel free to let us know if you want to be added to our mailing list at: (952)-895-5543.

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