



11 WAYS TO SUPPORT A LONG DISTANCE CONNECTION

Imagine that your child is the only grandchild of your parents, who live far away. You want your child to know and love her grandparents. You want your parents to know and love your child. Distance is a problem.

Supporting a child's connection with a distant ex-spouse or parent to whom you have never been married poses similar problems. By listing what you might do to support a grandchild/grandparent relationship, you can see that setting a parenting time schedule is only one element of maintaining a long-distance relationship.

Most people will naturally do some or all of the following things to support a grandparent/grandchild connection despite geographic distance:

1. Exchange photographs. Keep photographs of the grandparents readily visible around the house. Take photographs of the child and your parents together.
2. Plan family vacations to the grandparents' home. Invite the grandparents to your home. When they're in town, if you see them casually at the store or at a special event that each family is attending separately, greet them and make sure the child greets them.
3. Exchange gifts and cards on holidays, birthdays, special occasions and other times. Help the child pick out or make little gifts. Have the child write thank you notes to your parents for gifts.
4. Remind the child that grandma made this quilt for them or grandma and grandpa gave him this toy truck.
5. Tell the grandparents about special

events in the child's life; invite them to attend or send them copies of the program, the videotape of it, etc. Pass on the grandparents' supportive remarks to the child.

6. Have the child attend special events for the grandparents such as a 50th wedding anniversary or a 70th birthday party.
7. Write, telephone or e-mail regularly about the child. Describe the child. Tell funny stories about him. Share concerns about the child. Summarize information about the grandparents' goings-on for the child. Encourage the child to communicate directly with the grandparents.
8. When the child is old enough, have them visit your parents on their own for a weekend or a week or let your parents take them on a special trip. Arrange time or communication between the child and your parents when the child talks about wanting to visit grandma and grandpa or vice versa.
9. Send the grandparents homework, copies of report cards, copies of newspaper articles, etc.
10. Expect your child to treat your parents respectfully and considerately.
11. Remind your child that her grandparents love them.

Many of these ideas can be adapted to use with a parent who lives far away from your child, and can have a beneficial impact on the child's sense of security and connections with both parents.

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Checklist For The Upcoming Two Months

- 🎯 Send copies/obtain your own copies for end of year report cards.
- 🎯 Finalize/confirm summer daycare, including information on costs when child is absent for vacations. Confirm dates and times for summer holidays.
- 🎯 Confirm dates for summer vacations — discuss itineraries and phone numbers, transportation expenses.
- 🎯 Send copies/obtain your own copies for calendar for children's activities, coach's names, web page, practices and games, transfer equipment — costs.

BOOK REVIEW:

COLD MOUNTAIN

Cold Mountain is not the American masterpiece its paperback cover claims it to be, in this writer's opinion. Yet its story fascinates and informs the reader.

The novel is set in the South in the waning days of the Civil War. Inman was wounded during a grisly battle, and the book begins with him in a military hospital, surviving each long day by reading passages from a book describing his home countryside. Eventually, Inman goes awol from the hospital and begins a long walk back home.

Scenes of Inman's travel alternate with scenes telling the story of Ada, a minister's daughter, accustomed to the soft life of Charleston. Her father dies and Ada is left with nothing. The war has turned her father's bank accounts into worthless pieces of paper. Ada struggles to fend for herself until a wise neighbor pairs her up with Ruby who has taken care of herself from toddlerhood. Inman and Ada had met at a party at Ada's home while her father was alive and before Inman left for battle. They were taken with each other.

The Home Guard and social chaos resulting and the women's daily life. Many soldiers Inman, and the Home Guard's duty is to lo- Yet the overall sentiment is that the South is enemy, killing runaways instead of bringing soldiers and Southern runaways alike strip Few have enough to eat. Many come to re- the battle is being fought – maybe.



from the war affect both Inman's travels are running away from the army, like cate them and force them back to battle. losing. The Home Guard becomes the them in to return to military life. Federal the country folk of food and terrorize them. sent the big plantation owners for whom

One view of the story is that the South is like an individual with much internal conflict over a fight that has lost its meaning. The repeated references to Cold Mountain, the meals the people prepare and eat, and the connections between Inman and Ada, Ada and Ruby, Ruby and her father stand out starkly, compared to the details of the war. These basics – home, food and being with their family – sustain the main characters and are far more important to them than the fight. Only when the war ends, do the characters flourish in their daily lives.

Few individuals control a battle over national principles. Nothing in the book suggests any of the characters could have acted to stop the fight from starting. Once started, they were similarly powerless. Some conflicts are different, however. In divorces and many family law matters, the individuals do control the determination of what principles are important enough to pursue and how disagreements about them should be pursued. They have the power to choose a process that honors the importance of the basics to themselves and their children.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Charles Frazier was born in 1950 in Asheville, North Carolina. He holds a PhD from the University of North Carolina. Married to an accounting professor, he has one child and currently lives in North Carolina where he raises horses in addition to his writing. Before writing *Cold Mountain*, he taught early American Literature and traveled throughout South Amer-

ica. The novel *Cold Mountain* was based in part on the life of W. P. Inman, his great-great uncle who, like the main character in the book, deserted from the Confederate army after being wounded and worked his way home to his beloved mountain. He devoted over five years to the writing *Cold Mountain*.

Author's Biography is obtained from www.addison.lib.il.us

FROM THE PUBLISHER:

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BUDGETS



In every divorce, key facts control resolution of the problems the family must address to create two separate households. Among these key facts is the monthly budget for each household.

Ideally, everyone would start with a clean ledger, know their income level, and then create a budget that matches their income level. However, divorce is an interruption to family members who have already made a number of financial commitments. Sometimes future income levels are unknown until the divorce is finally resolved.

Minnesota statutes on child support and maintenance also direct the Court to consider the parties' standard of living during the marriage and the resources of the parties such as investments, retirement savings, and cash accounts. See Minn. Stat. §518.551, Subd. 1(c)(3) and §518.552, Subd. 1 and 2 (c).

As a practical matter, it is often more expensive for the family to maintain two separate households than it was for it to pay the expenses of one. The task facing the parties and/or the Court is balancing what the parties spent during the marriage with the reasonable adjustments necessary, given that the divorce is occurring.

Frequently, that balancing relies in part on projections of post-divorce income and expenses. Neither the Court nor the parties can resolve the problem of going in the red without either (1) increasing total family income or (2) reducing expenses.

For many families, it is helpful to use a five column spreadsheet with (from left to right), the expense item, the amount spent during the marriage, the projected amount for one spouse, the projected amount for the other spouse, and the expenses directly attributable to the children.

This type of spreadsheet allows easy comparison of the parties' relative circumstances in the context of the prior standard of living.

Sometimes it is also helpful to analyze budgets from several different perspectives, to-wit: core expenses, financial commitments, past history, and projected expenses.

Core expenses. In this analysis, a party would identify those expenses that are absolutely essential. For most people, those expenses are housing, basic utilities (e.g., no cable, one phone line), food, medical insurance, prescriptions, and transportation. This identifies a bottom line.

Financial commitments. This perspective starts with those expenses that are defined by financial commitments already made. Typically, these expenses include a mortgage payment, a car payment, cost of medical insurance and other insurances, debt payments. Most of these expenses are created by some type of contract, have consequences if payments are not made, and have an end date. Typically, the amount of the payment is set by the contract and the party has no discretion as to how much is due.

My problem lies in reconciling my gross habits with my net income.

Errol Flynn

Past history. Check registers, credit cards, and habits of using cash provide valuable information on what the family purchased in the past and how much they spent. This analysis will usually take a party beyond the core expenses

and expenses set by contract and give the party some idea of how much of the monthly income was spent on discretionary items – things that are extra for the family — and that often set the standard of living for the family.

Projected expenses. After a family separates into two households, it is very common for levels of expenses to change, for new expenses to be added or for some old expenses to be no longer applicable. A party who has had an opportunity to live separately for a period of time usually has a better idea of their projected future expenses than one who is still living as a family. A party who is living in an obviously temporary situation, such as living with a sibling or renting a room, may also have some difficulty projecting expenses. When there is no idea of a party's ultimate financial obligations, that party may also have some difficulty projecting future expenses, and will need to do some research to generate approximations for a budget.

Each of the above analyses is helpful in parties generating realistic budgets for the future, in a situation where the issue is what is reasonable as opposed to knowing for sure how much money each will have.

DEWALT LAW OFFICE

2412-117th Street, Suite 100
Burnsville, MN 55337

Phone: 952-895-5543

Fax: 952-646-9311
www.dewaltlaw.com

Office Hours:
Monday—Friday
8:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

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Ripples...

the drop of one stone...

a single event transforming the lake...



Each family law matter creates ripples in the lives of the people involved in the case and in our society. This publisher believes that individuals can choose to toss the stone in a way that promotes ripples of cooperation, connection and positive values for the benefit of themselves, and the smaller and greater communities in which they live. "Family Law Ripples" is dedicated to providing practical and legal information to that end.