R&E S8E11

The Parenting Playbook

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Robertson Easterling Podcast. I'm Craig Robertson. And I'm Matt Easterling. Today's a milestone for us. This is our 100th episode. 100 episodes and more than 28,000 downloads. When we sat down in January of 2020 to record our first show, I don't think either of us had any idea how many lives would be touched by these conversations.

I know I didn't. The first episode was a deeply personal one. We called it The Road Home, and we shared the story of a marriage that went through infidelity, separation, and an eventual reconciliation. And that set the tone for this podcast. We've certainly talked about the law, but this show has never been limited to statutes, court decisions, and legal procedures.

Because family law is ultimately about people. It's about relationships, heartbreak, healing, faith, money, mental health. Addiction, children, and the difficult decisions people make when life doesn't turn [00:01:00] out the way they expected. Over the past 100 episodes, people have trusted us with some remarkable stories.

We've talked to judges, lawyers, therapists, financial professionals, pastors, investigators, parents, former clients, and people who are willing to speak honestly about some of the hardest seasons of their lives. And y'all have listened. Like Craig said, we've had more than 28,000 downloads, but that represents so much more than a number to our team.

Each one represents someone looking for something, whether it was information, perspective, encouragement, hope, or simply some reassurance that they're not alone. We've also learned that honesty resonates. Our most listened-to episode, Unmasking the Narcissist, has been downloaded more than 1,300 times.

Episodes about mental health, narcissism, infidelity, betrayal, addiction, and recovery consistently reach some of our largest audiences. But something caught our attention when we recently looked back at our entire podcast directory. For a family law firm, we've produced relatively [00:02:00] few episodes devoted specifically to custody and parenting.

And parenting has certainly been part of many of our recent conversations in and around the office, particularly in light of Mississippi's new custody law. Our recent episode about that landmark change in the law had one of the fastest starts of any show we've released. That tells us parents are looking for clear, practical information about what the new statute means and how they should respond to it.

But understanding the law is only part of the challenge. While a judge can establish a custody arrangement, divide parenting time, and even decision-making authority, raising a healthy child in separate homes is up to the parents. That's why we created The Parenting Playbook: Your Game Plan for Raising Healthy Children Through Divorce.

Every quarterback receives a playbook before the season begins. He studies it before the stadium lights come on because once the game starts, it's too late to learn the fundamentals. Parenting through divorce is not much different. Emotions are high. Conversations can quickly become arguments. [00:03:00] Small disagreements turn into major conflicts, and parents can begin making decisions out of fear, hurt, or frustration instead of purpose.

The Parenting Playbook is designed to help parents slow down- Understand the rules, and make more intentional decisions. It explains Mississippi's custody law, the new joint custody presumption, the Albright factors, parenting plans, co-parenting, modification, and the practical choices that shape a child's daily life.

But the playbook is not necessarily about, quote, winning a custody case. It's about parenting. Its central message is the same one we want to emphasize throughout today's show. The goal isn't just to win a custody case. The goal is to raise children who know they are deeply loved by both parents. One of the things we included in this book is what we call the R plus E Children's Bill of Rights.

It's adapted from a book by Robert Emery called The Truth About Children in Divorce. It's a simple reminder [00:04:00] that even in the middle of separation or divorce, children have needs, protections, and rights that every parent should keep at the center of every decision. To help us work through the playbook, we're bringing in three members of the Roberts and Easterling legal team.

Mandolin Blanton will join us to discuss the first three chapters: the mission, know the rules, and the new game. Then Jared Culpepper will help us explore the next three chapters: the playbook, calling the plays, and avoid the penalties.

And finally, Sarah Didlake will close our discussion and the book with team first, halftime adjustments, and playing the long game.

We're grateful to every listener, sponsor, guest, client, friend, and member of our team who helped us reach one hundred episodes. Thank you for trusting us with your stories, for sharing the show, and allowing us to be part of some extraordinarily important conversations. The Parenting Playbook is available as a free download at robertson.ms.

We hope you'll download it, work through it, and share it with a parent who may need it. Because while the legal process eventually ends- [00:05:00] Parenthood never does After the break, Mandolin Blanton will join us to begin working through the parenting playbook

There's an old question people ask when something feels impossible: How do you eat an elephant? The answer is simple. One bite at a time. Divorce often feels like an elephant dropped into your life overnight. Even if you saw it coming, the weight can feel overwhelming. Questions pile up, fear follows close behind.

Your body feels it, your mind races, and well-meaning advice often makes things louder instead of clearer. The First 30 Days was created to help you take the first bite calmly, intentionally, and without panic. This free e-book is not about solving everything at once. It breaks the early stage of divorce into manageable, human-sized steps.[00:06:00]

Each day focuses on one small action designed to reduce chaos and increase clarity. Some days are practical, some are reflective. All are meant to help you stay steady while you find your footing. Written by the Mississippi Family Law Attorneys of Robertson and Easterling, this guide blends legal insight with emotional awareness and real-world practicality.

It does not push you toward divorce or assume reconciliation is impossible. It helps you slow down enough to see what is actually happening. You do not need to eat the whole elephant today. You only need to take the next bite. Download The First 30 Days free at robertson.ms.

Ethan Kelly here with Providence Capital Management, where our goal is to help you provide for your future. A key part of that is insurance planning. There are several different kinds of [00:07:00] insurance policies, but each one is very important for you and your family. Life insurance helps replace your income, pay off debts, and keep your family in their home if you're no longer here.

Long-term care coverage helps pay for help at home, assisted living, or nursing care, so your loved ones don't have to choose between your care and your savings. And disability insurance protects your most important asset, your ability to earn an income, by replacing a portion of your paycheck if illness or injury keeps you from working.

If you need a simple, coordinated plan using life, long-term care, and disability insurance that fits your budget and goals, we will coordinate with the necessary professionals to make that happen. Send me an email at ethan@providencecm.com today. That's ethan@providencecm.com. Let's work together on providing for your and your family's future.[00:08:00]

Everyone, my name is Reagan DiGiallarmo, and I'm currently a law clerk here at Robertson and Easterling, and this is the R&E Children's Bill of Rights. Every child whose parents are living through separation or divorce has: one, the right to love and be loved by both of their parents without feeling guilt, pressure, or divided loyalty.

Two, the right to be protected from their parents' conflict, anger, and adult problems. Three, the right to stay out of the middle of their parents' disagreements, including the right not to carry messages, keep secrets, or choose sides. Four, the right to have a meaningful relationship with both parents whenever it is safe and healthy to do so.

Five, the right to know that the divorce is not their fault and that it's not their job to fix their family. Six, the right to have their thoughts, feelings, fears, and questions heard with patience, respect, and love. [00:09:00] Seven, the right to stability, consistency, and the security of knowing what tomorrow looks like, even when their family is changing.

Eight, the right to grow up surrounded by encouragement, not criticism; hope, not fear; and peace, not conflict. Nine, the right to know that both of their parents will always be their parents, no matter what changes in the family. And ten, the right to be a kid, to laugh, learn, play, dream, make mistakes, and enjoy their childhood without carrying the weight of adult burdens.

Hey everybody, welcome back to the show. Matt 100 episodes. I know. I ca-can't believe it. I wasn't sure that we would make it past the first 10. Thankfully your parents listened, and I think Rachel and the girls might've listened. But over time, a, a handful of people have listened to what we had to say, and I think today's show is super important, and I'm thrilled that Mandolin Blanton,

one of our associate attorneys, is joining us to [00:10:00] talk about the first three chapters of the book.

So Mandolin, welcome back to the show. Thank y'all for having me. I'm glad to be here. So let's just dive straight in to just, in the opening chapters of this resource that we've made for parents, we start by just talking big picture. Everybody has a rhythm with regard to how they manage their life, and a breakup, Matt, shakes that up.

Absolutely. Usually they've been living under, some type of status quo. Now, it may not be a happy one which is part of the reason that they may be, starting down this path, but it's at least familiar. And when that, when those changes start to take place, there's a feeling of unruliness or like there are there's no set place for them to go.

Yeah, I call it the storm before the calm because everybody has a rhythm to the way they manage parenting, they manage their life. And then when something shakes that up, oftentimes it, it's like a storm. There, there's chaos. And Mandolin, when people first [00:11:00] come into our office- what's your perspective on, where they are, where their mindset is when it comes to their kids?

A lot of times when people first come to see us, our job is to help them find the right perspective on the scenario that they're dealing with. So this first chapter talks a lot about seeing the end game and not necessarily what's happening in their home right this second, because like you said, it's the storm before the calm.

It won't be like that forever. So when it comes to custody, I often see parents whose initial reaction is to jump into a parent-focused perspective. And that sort of distracts them from the big picture of how do I navigate this divorce that results in having well-adjusted children who end up growing up to be well-adjusted adults.

Yeah, I know that it can be very difficult to be mindful of, the long-term direction of things when you're just trying to literally plug holes in the boat- ... there at the very beginning. And while each is [00:12:00] very important, we have to get those, those holes plugged.

We at least wanna make sure we're , generally going in the right direction. Yeah, because par- let's face it, parenting is a lifetime assignment. Sure. And it's

not just when your child is in elementary school or when your child is in middle school or high school or college. It's forever.

In fact, how common is it for a mom or a dad to be sitting with their adult child in our office when the wheels fall off of their relationship? And, like it or not, some of these decisions that are made at the very beginning and then through of a divorce or any type of circumstance when a family is breaking into two homes like it or not, at the beginning or whether it's through the entire case, some of those decisions and how those interactions go will affect the relationship that you're gonna have with the partner you're going separate ways and how you guys parent going forward.

And while your child may not, like that you're getting a divorce, you would like for them when they're adults, you wanna think about how are they gonna reflect on the divorce that happened when they were children. And you hope that [00:13:00] they have, good things to say how, about how you handled it.

Maybe not necessarily that it happened, but how you decided to handle it as a parent. Exactly, because they're gonna remember it. Mandolin, we talked about this before we got on the microphone today about the adverse childhood experience little test that's available, and if you can hear our voice, you can download that from online.

But obviously or maybe not obviously to some folks, a, a divorce is an adverse childhood experience for a child, full stop. It's just going to be. They're always going to remember the trauma associated with mom and dad not living together. And while you may not be able to control that divorce is going to happen, it needs to happen, it's the best thing for your family, you would like for it to minimize the impact of the divorce, the negative impact of it on your children.

Absolutely, which by now I've been fortunate enough to been doing this long enough that there are cases from early in my career where we're talking about little kids are now adults. And from what I've heard and from what I've read in [00:14:00] different literature, the best way to raise a Have a healthy, adjusted child through divorce is to create a sense of stability and so the child knows that they can love both parents and that they're gonna have a relationship with both parents, and while they may not be living in the same home anymore, th- they're still, co-parents together and that, the, the child doesn't have to pick between the two of them.

I think that's something that our listeners should really stop and think about because a court proceeding, while certainly mom's and dad's rights are at issue,

most judges don't care that much about what mom thinks or what dad thinks. Their goal is to pro- promote what we call a child's best interest, and you will s- read that throughout this book.

You'll see that in all the content that we've put out with regard to navigating child custody circumstances after a breakup. My entire career I've been saying that the only truly [00:15:00] innocent person in one of these custody cases is the ch- is the child, and that's who the court is truly gonna be looking out for.

I think that parents really need to think about working that empathy muscle. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, and they've got to do that for their kids through the divorce because their kids are not gonna know exactly what happened, and they probably shouldn't know every, event that happened throughout the divorce, but they're gonna remember how they felt.

And, you want that to have a good impression on them in that way of how they're feeling. They're gonna remember how their parents treated them through it, not exactly what happened. Manuela, I totally agree with that. It's ... People often don't remember, just as you said, the, the detailed facts of the circumstances, but they absolutely remember how they felt in that moment.

We don't remember everything from our childhood, but you can remember how you felt in different stages, and the divorce is going to be a stage that leaves a lasting impact. It's a very [00:16:00] popular book, The Body Keeps Score. And, th- those feelings, they get they stay in the body and they they influence this child's life- forever.

And so Mand let's switch gears just a little bit. Let's get into the, to the, the definitions and defining the playing field. So can you help our listeners understand a little bit about some of the key definitions with regard to custody? Yes. So there's two different types of custody.

There's legal custody and the best way that I would describe legal custody is to think about it in terms of all the mental parts of parenting. So where your child is gonna go to the doctor, where they're gonna go to school, what extracurricular activities they're gonna participate in. Everything that's sort of hands-off that you do for your child because they're a child, that's what legal custody is, and you can share that with your ex-spouse or you can have it yourself.

But most parents end up sharing that. So it's decision-making. Yeah, it's all [00:17:00] decision-making. It's all mental. And the the example that I like to

give is my daughter Emma was a big-time volleyball player, and unfortunately she tore her ACL. And when she did, after she got her MRI, we had a consultation with a surgeon who was an awesome guy with an awesome facility, and he recommended a treatment plan.

And just out of an abundance of caution, we had a second opinion, and different doctor, different clinic, same approach to the surgery. And the decision that Rachel and I had to make with regard to which surgeon was going to do the operation was legal custody. That is a legal custody decision. It's what, where's your child gonna go to church?

What school are they gonna attend? If they have special needs what's the treatment protocol gonna be? Just Madeline said, it is the thinking side of custody. It is the hands-off side of custody. When you're sharing legal custody, it requires you to discuss everything, all the mental parts of parenting with the other parent.

Yeah, and it doesn't mean you have to agree. Smart people disagree all the time. Matt- ... you're a smart guy. We don't always [00:18:00] agree. No, we don't. ... Most of the time we do. Oh, u- usually. But, But not always ... but it's also important for anybody who's listening to know the vast majority of parents share joint legal custody.

And they should- They should ... because parents should share decision-making with regard to the kids because let's face it, their mom and dad have different life experiences and can add different perspective to whatever the issue is. Even when you're married, people disagree over certain decisions for their children, and so it's important that this legal custody really helps keep both parents informed about what's going on in their child's life, which I think they have a right to do that, of course. And i- as long as You're keeping your child as the focus of these decisions that need to be made, as opposed to getting entrenched in what I want versus what the other side wants. I feel like most people usually are able to come to, agreements on things. Now, in the event that you have joint legal custody and you can't agree about some type of really important decision, [00:19:00] the court can always weigh in on that later.

And in some instances judges go ahead and award one parent or the other sort of the tie-breaking vote. And it doesn't have to be a global tie-breaking vote. Sure. They, the- a court can even deci- divide that into medical decisions or educational decisions or religious decisions. And again it depends on, I like to say custody cases are like snowflakes.

They're all different. Just like parents are all different, just like kids are all different. Mandolin, talk a little bit about physical custody, because that's really where the rubber hits the road with regard to parenting time and what people generally think of as child custody. So physical custody is when people just say who has custody of the children, they're usually talking about physical custody.

So it's just where your child lives at most of the time, and it's going to-- you're gonna have some kind of parenting time schedule. And it can look however you want it, if you agree. But courts have different preferences on what that looks like. But it's just where the child spends most [00:20:00] of the time.

Okay. So you can have joint physical custody, or you can have sole physical cus- custody, right? Okay. Now, I know there's a pretty common misnomer that, that people might, share physical custody with, the majority, one person being the primary physical custodian.

There's actually no such thing as that Greg? Yeah. The there's not, and that's some old language. But generally you've got legal custody, physical custody, and any combination of that can be shared by parents. And the time sharing arrangement is what we typically call the parenting plan, and that is, that's the schedule.

And again, everything is seen through the lens of what is in a child's best interest. You- if you've heard it once on this podcast, you've heard it a dozen times that the pole star consideration for any custody determination is the best interest of a child. Matt, though, that's gotten shaken up lately by our Mississippi [00:21:00] legislature and in July 1st of 2026, there were some serious changes to the law, and we've done an entire show on that, that I recommend our listeners go back.

Matt and Sarah sat down with retired Judge Ed Patton, and they did a whole episode where we talked about this new law, but we can't have a show on parenting without talking about that because it's changing everything. I had a meeting just today with a, a woman who is the mother of two children, and a year ago, under no circumstances would I have h- would I have advised her that I think that hers would be a joint legal and physical custody arrangement with equal parenting time.

But I couldn't say that today because quite frankly, we don't know what's gonna happen with the interpretation of this law. Just for the benefit of people listening who maybe haven't listened to that episode before, but Manly, can you tell us a little bit about about [00:22:00] this new law and how it may change things?

So like Craig said, July 1st of this year the new custody law is now there's a presumption in favor of parents sharing joint custody. So meaning there's a predetermined best interest of children, that joint custody is what's going to work better. But that presumption is rebuttable. But now we're starting from a position of joint custody where before July 1st of this year, it was a blank slate.

There was no presumption in favor of mom's or dad's sole custody or joint custody. It was just they were-- the, the judge was going to determine it based off of what you presented, and now we have a presumption of joint. So the legislature has now told chancellors across Mississippi that it is in children's best interest for their parents to have joint custody and for them to spend equal time with both parents.

It also made [00:23:00] some shakeups to child support, and we won't get into all those details today, but that, that's another, and a lot of academics believe might be the biggest change in the, in our custody child support jurisprudence is with regard to the child support. And it's a... Again, we won't get into that today.

We all attend the CLE that the Continuing Legal Education seminar that Professor Debbie Bell from Ole Miss presents in north Mississippi, central Mississippi, and south Mississippi. And I was fortunate enough to be on a panel of lawyers who were discussing in a room full of about a hundred family law practitioners this new law.

And what I found is there are very different opinions. Some are of the mindset like Judge Patton was, that it's just one more factor that chancellors are gonna have to decide whether or not the the joint custody presumption is rebutted before they get into the Albright factors and then make their decision.

But I heard one [00:24:00] practitioner who was a, a fellow panel member say that she believes that now there is a presumption, like you said earlier, Matt, in Mississippi, that we start with joint custody, and it is a public policy in Mississippi that parents should have joint custody, joint legal and physical custody, and equal parenting time.

It, to, to me, it really seem, it, it seems to come down to How easily is that best interest or joint custody presumption going to be rebutted? Only time's gonna be able to tell. I think it's something ... There's certainly enough subjectivity in the way the language of the statute that each chancellor's gonna be able to interpret that somewhat on their own.

And as we sit here today, we're probably, what would you say two years before we'll have any law- anything come in from the court of appeals. Oh, sure. Because we gotta ... There, there gonna have to be a trial on the law. And then they would have to be appealed, and then we'll have decision from the court.

So th- the, the law is going to be [00:25:00] shaped in the next five years with regard to how this is gonna actually work in practice. I think that practitioners will start to be able to, tell over time maybe if how hard it is for each chancellor to find that presumption rebutted. And but even that is gonna take, some period of time.

Manlin, before we get to our first commercial break what are your thoughts? You've been counseling people in the weeks before the law was passed and and since. What, what kind of feedback are you getting from parents and how do you see this playing out? I'm getting mixed feedback.

I think that parents are either happy that it's going to take away some discourse or fighting, as far as custody goes. If there's a presumption that joint custody is best, some parents are saying, "Okay, then let's try it. That ultimately would be best for my child to spend equal time with both parents."

And then on the other side of the coin, you have parents that are, upset about it, and they're upset about it [00:26:00] because, I think our feedback is a little ... we're trying to interpret the statute, and it's difficult to interpret, and I can see where that would be frustrating, especially if your spouse has not had a status quo of being a joint custodian.

So it's been mixed and, it's difficult. But I think that over time, like Matt said, in the next few years we're gonna have some, some decisions that come from the appellate court that should help us to, interpret it a little bit better. Manlin, before we before we end this segment, any final thoughts from you on the first three chapters of the book?

Your, your takeaway and what you think a parent should be focused on in, in the early stages of the process that they're gonna walk through. I think a key takeaway is not focusing so much on who's going to win the custody fight, quote-unquote. I think that it's more important to think about what does a court value out of a parent?

If you have to go into a courtroom, how can I show up as the best version [00:27:00] of myself for my child? And I think that courts like to see healthy relationships with the other parent, which might be, completely opposite of the

way that you feel about them as your spouse, but you need to feel that way about them as the parent of your child if it's safe to do so.

So I think that they value parents who put their child's needs above their own. And it's not n- something to necessarily win. It's not a game. It's a it's you trying to do the best for your child so that they turn out to be well-adjusted adults.

Welcome to Your Wellness Reset with Kelly Englemann. Let's dive into important interplays between two major hormones, insulin and cortisol, and how they impact the balance of our sex hormones, like estrogen and testosterone. Insulin is primary known for regulating blood sugar levels, while cortisol, our stress hormone, plays a vital role in how our body responds to stress.

When insulin and [00:28:00] cortisol levels are constantly high or dysregulated, often due to poor diet, chronic stress, or lack of sleep, they can disrupt our delicate balance with our sex hormones. This imbalance can lead to a range of issues, including low libido, irregular menstrual cycles, and even mood swings and weight gain.

This also causes general inflammation. This can impact both men and women. So how do we control these major hormones to promote balance in our sex hormones? First, prioritize a well-rounded diet. Focus on whole, unprocessed foods that stabilize blood sugar levels, such as non-starchy vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats.

Incorporate more fiber into your meals. This will help slow down the absorption of sugar, keeping insulin levels in check. Next, let's manage that stress effectively. In this modern world, we can't eliminate stress, but we can incorporate relaxation techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, and yoga into our daily routines.

[00:29:00] These practices can significantly lower cortisol levels, allowing other hormones to find their balance. Lastly, prioritize quality sleep. Aim for seven to nine hours each night, because sleep plays a crucial role in hormone regulation, and insufficient rest can lead to elevated cortisol levels and increased insulin resistance.

By consciously controlling insulin and cortisol, we can create a harmonious environment for our sex hormones to thrive. Embrace these strategies to support your hormonal health and enhance your overall well-being. Remember, balance

is the key. For more information, visit us online at enhancewellness.com or give us a call, 601-364-1132.

Joining us for the second part of today's episode is Jared Culpepper. And Jared is an associate attorney at Robertson and Easterling. He's been with us what, a year and a half now, Jared, is that right? Two years in September. Okay. Time flies. [00:30:00] It does fly. Jared is a proud husband and- Two years, really, already?

Wow ... a proud husband and father of two small children, and we appreciate you coming to help us Get through the middle of the playbook Thank you for having me. I'm excited to join and contribute however I can. First, man as a dad, a relatively new dad, your kids are young y- how has that changed your approach to family law?

I know it, for me, was super eye-opening, as the stages of my kids' life, and they're, they're in college now. But how about you, man? How's that influenced your, the way that you counsel our clients? Yeah, I have a four-year-old and an 18-month-old, and so it really helps me understand what some of our clients who have children of those ages, what they're going through.

And I think, too, it helps me resonate with clients when they're going through some of these particular hardships, issues, struggles, not only with divorce or custody issues, but they're trying to navigate that with some [00:31:00] things that their kids are struggling with too. Oh man, absolutely. I, gosh, I can hardly remember when my kids were the age of yours.

Th- they change so fast from season to season. Let Jared, one, one of the things in chapter four is the very familiar Albright factors. So he- help our listeners understand what those are, how a court uses it, and how relevant it is now that we have, we're in this age of this joint custody presumption in Mississippi.

Yes, the Albright factors come from a, a case, Albright v. Albright, and they're a list of factors that help the court really step back and look at a child's situation, a child's life, and each parent's involvement, lifestyle, and circumstances to get a whole picture on, this, what, what's going on in this child's life and what is the best custodial situation for this child going forward.

And it's not a, a scorecard. It's [00:32:00] not we're not trying to get points against the other parent. It's not, oh, Dad got seven Albright factors, Mom got five, Dad wins custody. It's we're looking at these circumstances in the child's

life. We're looking at how they apply and how we can really come up with the best situation given input in, in all these different areas of a child's life.

Yeah, Matt, it's not a scoreboard. They are a list of factors that a court uses to guide their analysis. Our, the Court of Appeals basically let practitioners know this is a general framework of the the questions, the subjects that need to be covered and that a chancellor needs to address in order to make a comprehensive best interest analysis.

And so these factors, you can Google them. They're all over our website. They're in the parenting playbook. And there's-- I wanna talk specifically about continuity of [00:33:00] care. Matt, we had this discussion in light of the new joint custody statute, and there were some comments by a local chancellor that you found really interesting.

There, for a long time, there has been a, I guess a prevailing sentiment that parents should continue to try to do things After they've divorced, they're doing the same way as they had before. An example would be if you've got one parent who's a stay-at-home parent and they're doing most of the work inside of the household, and they're maybe doing transportation, running kids to and from school.

And say the second parent is the breadwinner who's going out and earning the financial resources that, pays for the family. To expect that, oh there should just be a blanket, parent A, the one who's been working inside of the home, they're the ones that should have custody it doesn't make a lot of sense because the try-trying to apply a status quo to a circumstance that by definition is no longer [00:34:00] gonna be the status quo is ill-advised.

And like you said earlier today in your office the status quo wasn't working. Exactly. That's why there's a breakup. That's why there's a lawsuit. That's why there's a disagreement. Not only is it not going to be able to apply because you're not in the same house, it wasn't working. Something about it wasn't working.

And there's also the idea, Jared, what do you think about this, about, that dad who's working 50 hours a week and maybe wasn't responsible for taking the child, the transportation to school or to doctors or planning birthday parties, but they're capable of doing those things if they make a commitment to change their lifestyle.

And by definition, a breakup creates the raw material for that to happen, right? You can look at these Albright factors like potential opportunities. A lot of people will get frustrated because parent A, or in, in your example, the dad wasn't really involved during the marriage. Now there's this breakup, this split, separate households, and all of a sudden he's taken on an extra load, and some people might call him super dad.

And- The [00:35:00] super dad syndrome- Yes ... I wrote about it 15 years ago. And the funny thing about the super dad syndrome, had that person acted that way before the breakup, the wife or partner would've been thrilled with his, energy and involvement with the kids. And most of the time. Of course.

But sometimes, too if you really do care about your children and you want to set them up to have as good of a future as they wanna be, then that requires some personal sacrifice, too. So that 50-hour, 60-hour working parent, they might have to cut back and work 40 hours or find a more flexible employment situation so they can step into a different role and take kids to the doctor or do school pickups, things like that.

And Jared, that reminds of a case that you and I are working together where we represent a dad who was working a job that made him unavailable for significant periods of time, and things at home were broken And so that dad has to make a choice to, is he going to be a v- is he gonna [00:36:00] change his vocational schedule to be more present for his kids when thing, when the wheels had fallen off at the house?

Or is he gonna continue to do the same thing? And so this is a very real circumstance. And the, but the bottom line, Matt, you said it best, is by definition it wasn't working anyway. And I think it's important that we mention we're not saying cavalierly that a, a person who is has a demanding work schedule, that they have to choose, that choosing to continue to provide for your family in the way that you have traditionally done it, it means that you don't love your kids.

Or by changing, having to go from a 60-hour workweek to a 40-hour workweek, that, y- you don't love your kids unless you do that. That is not what that means. Again, the thrust of this entire book is doing having the goal of raising healthy children And, part of that is the way that they are provided [00:37:00] for.

And sometimes you need to be able to recognize that each parent probably brings a different skill set to the table. But if you're not going to be in the same

house anymore, it's important that you each cultivate at least part of those skill sets that you don't have. Yeah, and if you can hear my voice, being a single parent is hard.

Full stop. It's just difficult. Jared, I know there's times when you've been left with those two babies for, overnight or on a weekend, and it's a full-time hands-on job when it's just you. Oh yeah. And your son is all over the place. He's a ball of energy.

I love him, of course. He's so much fun, but he's tough to wrangle. And then the 18-month-old our little girl, she's walking too, and she's curious, and she learns, and so she's recently learned how to go upstairs. That's a new problem. And, I'm not playing one-on-one defense anymore. I'm playing zone, and that's tough sometimes.

That's well said, bro. I wanna talk a little bit a lot of attention is given to the preference of a child, and I think this is [00:38:00] a little outdated, but there was a time probably early in my career, and I'm doing this a long time now, that when a child made a preference pretty much a chancellor would follow that child's preference.

And we're talking about a 12-year-old. Once a child is 12, they have the opportunity to say what they would prefer their custody arrangement to be. That doesn't mean they get to determine it, but they get to voice an opinion. What's been your experience with that, Matt? My experience is that although the, the threshold is 12 years old, I felt that there was an increasing amount of weight that got added to it by chancellors the older that a child got.

I agree with that for sure. So a 12-year-old, the same weight might not be put on their feelings about it as, a 17-year-old. I do agree that it's important. I think honestly, the m- most important part of it is for the parents to hear it And try to understand why their child might feel that way.

And instead [00:39:00] of convincing them why they're wrong, either figure out how to, do your part better that might make them wanna spend a little bit more time, at your house. And also it may help you avoid some sort of costly and painful litigation because at the end of the day, it's hard to make teenagers do anything they don't wanna do.

Exactly. I like to say that a, a 16-year-old is like an 800-pound gorilla, and an 800-pound gorilla does exactly what an 800-pound gorilla wants to do. And the o- like you said, Matt, the older a child gets, the more difficult it is to demand

anything, especially a parenting plan that they had absolutely nothing to do with creating.

And they're more interested in being with their friends and being involved in their activities than they are, what mom and dad's custody schedule says. Jared, what do you think? I've had limited e- experience with this, but one, one instance comes [00:40:00] to mind. We had a, a 14, 15-year-old and a move, a potential move for a parent was on the table, and our judge simply asked i- in conference, "What does the kid wanna do?

Okay, that's what I'm gonna do." "So go figure it out. I don't wanna see y'all in the courtroom." Exactly. And that's, and the whole, the bottom line is judges use chainsaws, whereas lawyers have the opportunity to use scalpels, and parents have even more opportunity to make custom decisions for their family.

Because let's face it, we're s- we're strangers. We don't live in their house. We don't walk in their shoes daily. And and but although we've got a lot of contact with our clients, a judge has very limited contact, even in the biggest cases that we do. And it's much easier for me to say this, I understand, than it is for, people to apply it in practice.

But if your sole focus is the best interest of your child and trying to raise them into, [00:41:00] healthy adults, if both sides commit to that focus, usually it's gonna work out, the best way that it can. Because if you're focusing on that child, you're not focusing on that's not fair to me, or I didn't get this, or I didn't...

g- there's a lot about parenting that's not fair. Lots. And I get to live under the same roof with my wife and my child, but there are, things that, you know, about being a parent that's a, it's a job you sign up for. You know there's gonna be a lot of sacrifices, and it's obviously very rewarding and fulfilling.

I wouldn't change anything about it, but, focusing on the fairness of it to, to yourself is not the best way to look at it. No, it's a exercise in self-sacrifice. It's not fair when you're in the same house, and it's not gonna be fair after it, great question. Jared, let's switch gears just a little bit.

Let's, we're talking about the lens through which a, a custody case is evaluated by a judge through the Albright factors and now the joint custody presumption in Mississippi. Let- let's talk about the parenting plan itself, the s- the schedule. [00:42:00] What ... and I know Tennessee was a little different than Mississippi, but what makes a great parenting plan?

One it really serves as a guide, a roadmap, an outline, and it's not necessarily strict rules to a game. And so it needs structure, but it also needs flexibility. You gotta have room to move. Life changes. The, the thing about family law, divorce, custody cases that's different than r- really most probably Any other type of law is RFACs are continually developing because RFACs are based on real life.

We can't predict the future, but we can try to set something up to meet future needs. And so a good plan and really a good parenting style is to try to be as proactive as possible. We don't know exactly what the future holds, but y- you know your kids, you know your life circumstances, so how can we set things up to either mitigate potential problems or minimize potential [00:43:00] problems?

I know our listeners can't see us right now, but if you looked around this table between myself, Craig, and Jared we run the spectrum of an 18, 18-month-old to an eight-year-old to what? A 20-year-old? 20-year-old and 22-year-old. And the, the idea that one set of papers would work for all three circumstances is just a little foolish when you think about it.

Yeah, and I'll tell you, and I tell this to a lot of people, the best parenting plan is one that goes in a drawer and that nobody has to look at anymore because everybody's getting along and cooperating and- ... like you said, putting the child first. When the decisions that I make are through the lens of what is in the best interest of my child.

Can Dad have this extra day? Look at that through the lens of- ... is this in the best interest of the child? Should she attend the wedding with her mom? Look at it through the lens of is that in the best interest of your child? I call it the rule book. And as in like the, a rule book for a board game.

It- you only look at it when there's [00:44:00] a disagreement. A disagreement about how we're gonna do how we're gonna, play this part, or what we're gonna, and again, if you're focusing on the child, that's usually going to work itself out. It's supposed to be your time, but there's a trip that she wants to go on that, that's gonna benefit your child to be able to go and have that experience, put he or she first and let them go.

Yeah. It's not all about you, bro. It's just not. I understand. And, there's gonna be a lot of, taking a backseat, especially as the kids get older and they wanna do less and less things with either parent. Yeah, Jared, when I was a, a young

lawyer, even younger than you, the the, the guy that I was working for said that custody arrangements, parenting plans are like a sword and a shield.

You can use them when things go bad to enforce your rights and you can also, use it for boundaries and, what I will do, what I won't do, what I will accept, what I won't accept. And what are your thoughts on that? I think it's really important, a- and I talk to a lot of our clients about this too, [00:45:00] give the other person some grace when they need it because there's gonna be a time where you need it too.

Y- your car tire blows out, your meeting runs long, you're sick, you gotta go help your parent do something and, you gotta change the schedule a little bit. There are times where they wanna, "Hey, my meeting ended early. Can I pick them up from school a little early?" I- is it hurting you or are you being spiteful?

Yeah, the golden rule goes a long way in life and certainly in parenting. I mean you, y- using the sword and shield analogy, most swords are double-edged. Indeed. And so how you choose to use it, you can expect it's going to be used that way against you. If you start using it as a weapon, it's gonna be weaponized against you.

Yeah. No, no question and that's a perfect segue into this next chapter and the next segment that I wanna talk to Jared about and that, that is the stupid things that parents do. And they are aplenty and, I mean- it could go from sending text messages or sharing information adult [00:46:00] information with kids or parentifying your kids.

A good rule of thumb with regard to a written communication in a family dispute is if you wouldn't be comfortable standing in front of a judge and reading your own words in front of, in a courtroom, then don't send it. If you have if you cannot help but sending some snarky communication to your ex-partner, then by all means run it through AI and say, "Make this nicer, please."

Do something because you just don't want a lot of venom out there to the other parent if you're gonna find yourself in a courtroom setting. Absolutely. You really don't want a lot of venom out there, period. Sure. Of course. If you're in some, type of heated exchange like that I mean, the best thing I'd, I know to do is to maybe write it, set it aside, don't send it.

You need to l- you need to wait until your own temperature has, has calmed down. I know that I do that with correspondents all the time, where I've get ready to fire something off and realize, you know what? Maybe I need to, take

a, a breath and I'll come back and be like, "Oh, [00:47:00] okay, this was a little harsh," or I wasn't really getting across the point that I needed to because I was upset.

If any lawyer is listening to this, probably the first 15 years of my career I'm fire, aim, ready. And, a- and it's a, a blessing and a curse. But as I've, matured I... There is that between stimulus and response, there is a little space where that pause is, and sometimes you just gotta sleep on it and reread it before you hit send.

You're u- if you think about what you're trying to accomplish, almost never in those circumstances are you gonna send some message, whether it's email, text, and the other side read it and go, "What? You know what? Craig's right. I think that, ... I think I'm just gonna change everything that, you know...

You're right, I'm wrong." That isn't what happened. That's just somebody taking that message and putting it over here on the pile to use against you later or to cancel out something else that they've already done. Jared, I know for a fact that y- you work vocationally in the stupid things that people do.

What are [00:48:00] your ideas on this subject? Matt beat me to the punch there with, if you are fired up and you wanna send something, j- just don't. Sometimes I tell people to maybe even journal it, throw it away. Physically write it down and just throw it away. Sometimes put it in a note where you're not accidentally sending something, and you can reflect on it.

But I think, too one thing is practicing patience. I know it's easier said on this side of the things than someone going through custody litigation or a divorce where their world is falling apart. But really having awareness that, okay, I'm about to put this thing out there, whether it's a text message, email, social media, that is never gonna be deleted.

I can take down the post. Someone's already screenshotted it. Oh, man. It's out there. You said it with social media. Gosh. Y- I don't know how social media has ever assist... By posting something on social media, it's never helped anybody in the history of the world in a custody case. It just hasn't.

Now, the things that people post can be great evidence in a [00:49:00] custody case, but I have never in my life seen, been able to successfully use something that my client posted to help promote whatever it is we were trying to accomplish. Especially if it was negative about the other side. Yeah. Taking a shot at your child's- Other parent on a completely public forum is inappropriate.

It doesn't matter what they did. And it's not fair to your child. And I can assure you if those words don't matter to you, they should. It will matter to the judge. But getting back to your question, things, tips to prevent this, to correct this kind of behavior, get off social media while you're going through something like this.

You don't have to delete your account, but delete it from your phone, log out on your computer, deactivate it, shut it down. I- I'm sorry, you're gonna have to go on a hiatus for a little bit because odds are you're gonna post something dumb. A lot of people in these situations feel like they have to [00:50:00] defend themselves with every accusation hurled by their significant other or their ex, whoever that person that they're in litigation with.

They think that they have to respond, defend every claim, whether it's text message or social media. And like both of you have said, that's just our bread and butter really. A lot of cases are built on bad text messages and bad social media posts. And that's the quickest way for a judge to not think very highly of you maybe before you even open your mouth is through that stuff.

Yeah, we have to be a little careful about what, you can't destroy evidence so you have to be careful and certainly talk to your attorney before you go deleting posts or deleting deleting accounts. But- An- another big one that's, I don't know, has had a it's reared its head more in, in the last year or two are people pulling out their phones and they're recording the other one while they're having a conversation.

Oh. Yes. And I can assure you, I understand why people do it, but no attorney or judge has ever looked [00:51:00] at it and thought anything po- nobody's ever looked at it and thought, "Oh, wow Dad really has it under control and Mom's a nightmare here," or whatever. It makes you both look bad. It is horrible to do in front of your children, and there is nothing that's gonna make a judge shake their head more than being played that crap in court and then you hear a child talk in the background.

It is an awful thing to do. It is a bad idea. Don't do it. That's great advice, bro. Jared, we're gonna, we're gonna wrap this segment, but any, any final thoughts on your section of the book that we're discussing today that you'd like our listeners to hear? Yes, I think one important thing if you're about to go through this process, if you're going through this process, is changing your perspective.

Or even if you have a, a custody order and you're actively working through one co-parenting with your ex- ex-spouse and the other parent of your children,

changing your perspective, meaning changing the, the lens that you view [00:52:00] communications and information from that other person.

You don't have to view everything in a negative light, because a lot of times it's probably not coming in a negative light. It's easy to infer negative tone through written communication. It's obviously easy to pick that up over spoken communication. But don't automatically assume things are coming with negative intent, harmful intent, because oftentimes it's not.

And when you make that assumption, that's when you throw gas on the fire and a problem comes out of nowhere. Yeah, a little bit of grace goes a long way. Exactly.

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Okay, guys, we're back. And for this final segment of the show, we're with Sarah Dedlake. Hey, Sarah. Hey, Craig. So we've been talking off microphone a little bit about the, the, the new custody amendment is really the biggest thing that's happened in family law, [00:54:00] probably in my career. And, it's hard to get on a podcast and say as a lawyer and an expert in this field and to say, we don't really know what's gonna happen with this new law," but Sarah, we just really kinda don't, do we?

You're right. And it doesn't mean that I haven't heard attorneys and non-attorneys alike very confidently say what is and is not going to happen because of this law. But the truth is, we don't know all of the effects of this law. What

we do know is that there is a presumption of joint custody with equal parenting time being in the best interest of the child.

And anybody at this moment who tells you that they know exactly how courts in general or specific courts are going to, treat this amendment is probably just lying to you. I agree with that because I ... Look, a judge, and I say, I will say this publicly now, I've said it publicly many times, my perspective has been a [00:55:00] chancellor who goes through the proper steps of analysis can, oftentimes use their life experience and their judgment to create, whatever outcome they think is best.

And so I believe an appellate court would be hard-pressed if a judge w- through the proper analysis and found that the joint custody equal parenting presumption should be rebutted. I don't know what appellate scrutiny as long as the judge went through the proper analysis. I just can't imagine that's going to be attacked.

H- here's what I can say. Successfully anyway. What I feel like I can say for sure This is not an automatic application of joint custody. There is subject- subjectivity in it where a judge can find that this presumption is being rebutted. So it does not automatically mean that there will be joint custody.

How each judge deals with rebutting that remains to be seen. TBD. But and [00:56:00] while I know that is a very uncomfortable place to be in, and uncomfortable talking about the thing that is probably most important to, a listener's, a listener at home, what- the most important thing to their life.

But the truth is there's never any certainty in these custody cases before this amendment or after. Things happen in courtrooms. Anybody who tells you that they know exactly what's going to happen when they go in there either doesn't know what they're talking about or they're lying to you. Yeah, Sarah, the-- I- I've been thinking about this, the idea, the standard is a preponderance of the eve- evidence, which is...

I- I've been thinking of it as 50% plus a feather. Is that accurate? It is. It's 50% plus one. It's just lean. You just, I heard at least one lawyer make this statement in front of a room full of other lawyers that Mississippi, it's now our public policy. And I don't know if I totally agree with that statement.

I-- 50% plus a feather means I'm leaning that way a little bit, but it doesn't necessarily mean I'm gonna land there every time. And I can [00:57:00] understand on paper, yes, it is Mississippi's public policy of the joint custody and equal parenting time presumption. Yes, that is what the statute says, but it is

still a rebuttable presumption, and it's rebuttable not by clear and convincing evidence, which is a much higher criminal standard, but a preponderance of the evidence, which is, like you said, 50% plus a feather.

Yeah. And up until recently, I've basically looked at that as meaning if the judge is convinced as if they had to vote yes or no, whether it is in that child's best interest to, for it to be joint custody, that's really all it comes down to. And if they were convinced no, then they would move on to, applying we're assuming the Albright factors at that point in time.

It may not ultimately be as cut and dry as I Originally anticipated that it would be depending on how each, chancellor, I guess views their how much license they have when it comes to that presumption. Yeah. And the same CLE I was talking about that Professor Debbie Bell [00:58:00] conducts every year, and she's gonna be a guest on the podcast later this season, and she does an ethics portion of her presentation.

And in this, this particular year, she had two parents explaining their life and their life circumstances, and, they were very different. There were things about mom that one could easily argue that she should have primary custody, and there were things about dad that one could argue.

And what was interesting, most interesting about this to me is Debbie polled the audience and said, "How many of you think that the the presumption had been rebutted in this particular case?" And almost unanimously, everybody said no. And, this was a, a room full of 100 divorce lawyers, and they were, somewhat polarizing facts.

And most people in that room under that fact scenario thought that the presumption would not be rebutted. Yeah. In any custody case, there are gonna [00:59:00] be, pros to each side's case and cons to each, party's case. And I don't think that the presumption being rebutted is going to come from, oh you had a strike against you over here, so now it's been rebutted.

It ... Make no mistake, there's gonna be strikes against both parents. Nobody's perfect. Nobody's gonna have done everything perfectly, and I know as a parent there are things I wish that I had done differently. That's right. But deciding whether those strikes rise to, some type of level where it will not be in this child's best interest to be with both sides it's just only time's gonna tell.

Yeah. And I we had a, a judge on our podcast a few episodes ago, and I asked him, I said, "What was, what were the hardest decisions to make?" And he said,

"Custody decisions between two good parents." And I do believe, I believe, Craig Robertson believes that in that scenario, if both parents want joint custody with equal parenting time and they're willing to make the sacrifices necessary to [01:00:00] make that happen I think that we will have more joint custody decisions when you've got two good parents.

I agree with that. I think that there will be a little bit ... I anticipate there will be more of a shift towards this is how I will be able to make this work Versus look at the scoreboard of what happened prior to the divorce. Yeah, this is my plan for making joint custody with equal parenting time work.

I realized that my work schedule As it was set up prior to my wife and I divorcing was not conducive to having a child with me the majority of the time or half of the time. But this is how I, this is how I can make that work. I can rearrange my hours where the, my off week I've, w- the week that the child's not with me my work will be more loaded into that week, and I can create more flexibility in the weeks where a child might be [01:01:00] with me.

Create sh- being able to paint a picture for the court as to how it can work, to me seems to be the, would be the best way to keep that presumption intact, if that's what your goal was. Yeah, Sarah, the so t- talk a little bit about ... Now, this the new statute, we all know, applies to new temporary arrangements and new final arrangements.

It does not apply to people who are currently living under final judgments, right? Correct. So modifications for existing judgments will still be under, the old law. So if you're trying to modify a custody, if you're trying to modify a visitation plan or a parenting plan versus a custody order that is already existing, whether temporary or final, the joint custody presumption will not apply.

Let's talk a little bit about that. So we've been focusing our energy a lot today on, on new original custody decisions and parenting plans. But what about the parents that are [01:02:00] living under a schedule now? Can you tell our listeners a little bit about how you change a, a, a court document when circumstances change or as time goes forward and kids' needs change and parents' schedules?

What, h- how does that work? First it depends. If you're just trying to change a schedule or if you're just, if you're trying to change the custody arrangement. If it's the schedule, the mo- the standard is that the schedule's just not working. If you're trying to change a custody arrangement, you have to show a material

change in circumstances which has an adverse impact on the child, and then you go back and look at the Albright factors.

It's in the ... You have to show it's in the best interest to modify custody. And Matt the, I am of the opinion that life creates material changes in circumstances, and the adverse impact part of that modification standard is thankfully the more difficult part of it because kids are resilient.

There is also a, a, a slim line of cases that says that custody can be modified even in an [01:03:00] instance where there has not been an adverse impact if it is imminent that one will take place Yeah, they're living in adverse circumstances, although- ... somehow they've remained unscathed so far.

If you find out that, your child, there's a meth lab where your child lives, you don't have to wait for it to blow up for them to be adversely impacted. We can make the assumption that adverse impact is imminent, and the court can step in, before a child is injured. Sarah what are some things when we are crafting these parenting plans that we should keep in mind w- with regard to y- some- sometimes we're crafting a, ultimately what- what's a contract for the life circumstances of someone in that present moment.

But how do you anticipate these life changes when it's, when it comes down just to the words on these pages? You certainly can't anticipate everything, and it's important to keep in mind that life does not c- exist around a parenting plan. So life changes, [01:04:00] children grow up, they have new extracurricular activities, new interests.

One parent may move or have a, a job change. So you certainly can't anticipate all of those types of things, so being flexible and willing to adapt I think is important. Oh, yeah, willing to adapt. I completely agree with that. Matt, what do you think? I think that treating a parenting plan as, as just the gospel that you cannot deviate from is a mistake.

It sets the wrong tone and the wrong energy for everything, going forward. I know that people, sometimes they just don't want to make an accommodation, and they try to, use the parenting plan as their I wouldn't mind if they spent more time, but, this says that I get, I have every Wednesday night."

I think that's a mistake. I think that parents should try their best to work all things out without ever having to look at the parenting plan. I think it's [01:05:00] important that in parenting plans that they're written isn't in plain

English so that it's easy for people to interpret. 'Cause sometimes there could be confusion over, "I thought this was my Christmas."

"No, it's my Christmas." And people that aren't necessarily at each other's throats, there's just been a genuine misunderstanding, and if you write it in a really confusing manner, they may not be able to understand it. You need people to be able to interpret this on the fly. And, again, emphasizing that With everything in the parenting plan it's always in the event the parties cannot otherwise agree.

That is it's a part that I think most clients, moms, dads, that they overlook. It just seems like throw-in language at the beginning, but it's some of the most important language. The whole point is it comes first. You should be trying to agree. Oh, it says we exchange here. Let's be practical.

Let's try to figure, is there a place that makes more sense? I moved. I now [01:06:00] live, 15 miles from where it said before. What, what's gonna make the most sense? Ignoring that part of the paragraph is just going to cause you further heartache. Yeah, thankfully, I've never had to live under one of these, under one of these schedules.

Obviously, people who are really close to me have, and, it's just miserable to have to cross-check every move that you make with, you know, some set of papers that might have been written five, six, seven years ago. And i- it's just, the, the golden rule goes a long way, and just the, just common courtesy and kindness and grace goes a long way in these types of circumstances.

I agree. And, n- not only is that going to help the relationship with your co-parent, which I know that sounds odd. Most people, especially if you're just starting to walk through this process, you're probably not necessarily thinking I'm not worried about them. I'm not worried about them being my friend."

They are your child's parent, and you're gonna be involved with [01:07:00] them whether you're divorced or not For likely the rest of your life. Even after they're grown and this, this parenting plan is a com- you know, moot point, you're gonna have graduations, you're gonna have weddings, you're gonna have grandchildren, you're gonna have events that you guys are gonna be involved in together.

And if you can't coexist in being in the same room, it- it's gonna make it hard not only for you, but it's gonna make it really hard for your kids and those grandchildren and all those other people. And it's hard to think about that at, at,

at this point, but it's definitely true. Also, the way that you use that parenting plan your child's gonna notice it.

If it can happen, there should be an attitude towards that things can change, that we can pivot. The important thing is that you're happy and that you're safe and, "Oh, hey, this ball game come up, came up that Dad wants to take me to. Can I..." That child should feel secure to ask that and know [01:08:00] that, Mom just wants me to be happy.

She's gonna be okay with me going to the ball game, even though that's technically her night. And the more you behave that way, you're gonna receive some reciprocity on it, and that creates the healthiest environment for your child to grow up. Yeah, that's a great word, Matt. Sarah, in these last moments, any, any, any final thoughts on this last little bit of literature that we're putting together for our clients and for just the general public?

Just to piggyback off of what Matt was talking about, kids are incredibly perceptive. And one thing to think about, you don't have to like the other parent. Just, and I know co-parenting is a big buzzword right now. It doesn't, I like to think it doesn't exist just by virtue of having the same child.

It's requires actual intention, communication cooperation with each other. Yeah, just in- intent- be intentional about it. Give and take. Yeah, that's true. 'Cause you can't just be a co... You're not just automatically a co-parent. A co-parent requires effort. Requires sacrifice, requires compromise.

Choosing [01:09:00] day to put your children's interests before yours, even if you are just, cannot stand the other parent. We were talking earlier in the office. One, ironically, one of the best co-parenting examples I can think of comes from one of the most hotly litigated cases we have had recently, and one of the children had a medical emergency.

Dad was traveling out of state with the child. Mom was back here in Mississippi, but was helping coordinate medical care across state lines. When the two of them absolutely hated each other, they were able to put that in a box and care for their children. Yeah, ab- absolutely. I mean- If you can hear our voices, you can co-parent, but you're, you just have to make the choice to.

Now, and again, that doesn't mean be boundary-less. That doesn't mean be a doormat. That doesn't mean that you that you don't stand up for, what you believe is in your child's best interest. But in a lot of [01:10:00] circumstances,

it's just basic common sense and courtesy. The nature of your relationship with your, with the co-parent is obviously changing.

You're, you've broken up, you're getting divorced, and the definitions or the labels attached to that individual are going to change some. But don't devalue or demote that person in the presence or in the eyes of your child. Saying that's just your mom," or, "That's just your dad."

There's Just your mom, just your da- that's, that should be one of the two most important people in that child's life. Yep. And so just treating or talking about them with a different status other than that to your child is a mistake, and it's gonna hurt them. Yeah, and I am of the opinion that the more people who love and support my children, the better.

And I think that's true for the people who might be walking through this circumstance where, the law intersects with their parenting [01:11:00] role. And your partner, your ex-partner your ex-spouse, they love your child. They might not love him or her like you do, a- and their family loves your child.

And again, when it's safe to do so, it's always great just to give the other side just the benefit of the doubt. So wow, Matt, episode 100, we did it. Absolutely. Guys I just ... Sarah, thanks to you for being on the show again, and to Madeline and Jared and to Reagan just for all the work that you guys do, and for Stephanie and Mack and Amanda and everybody who makes up our little work family.

We're just so grateful. And to our clients and to our listeners and to all of our sponsors. Matt, we just couldn't have done it without the support of everybody. No it's truly been a team effort, and I hope that, it's helped somebody along the way in the first 100 episodes.

And however many episodes are to come in the future, I hope that we'll continue to help people. [01:12:00] Yeah, guys check out this new resource at robertson.ms and thanks again for tuning in to our show. And again, guys you know, parenting is a lifetime, it's a lifetime assignment. And, wrong, or indifferent you've got a partner in that assignment.

And the more kindness and generosity and compromise when it's safe to do so, the better. So from all of us at the Robertson and Easterling Podcast, thanks for tuning in, and we'll see you next time.

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