

## Jessica Woodruff

**From:** O'Neil Attorneys [jessica@oneilattorneys.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2011 3:00 PM  
**To:** Jessica Woodruff  
**Subject:** O'Neil Attorneys Newsletter

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## News From the Firm....

March 10, 2011

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## From Our Blog...

### CoParenting is Tough But Worth It

Posted on January 31, 2011 by [Michelle O'Neil](#)

In the [divorces in Dallas Texas](#) and surrounding areas, I see a lot of parents that struggle with co-parenting. It is almost cliché to say that a divorce means the end of the husband/wife relationship, but not the co-parenting one. Still, many people allow their anger/distrust/dislike of each other interfere with their [shared parenting responsibilities](#) with the child's other parent. Yes, I said "responsibilities" -- you two chose to have a child together, so you have an obligation to your child to work through whatever the difficulties are to parent the child together. Virtually never will a parent have zero access to a child unless his/her rights are completely severed by a court at law. So, get used to dealing with him/her.

[Lee Block](#) wrote a good article about this on The Huffington Post Blog:

[Co-Parenting: The Toughest Job in The World](#)

The divorce is done and things are going along nicely for a while, and then it happens. Your ex doesn't tell you that when the kids were with him or her they got sick. Not just a little sick, but sick enough that when it is your visitation, you have to take them to the doctor. And, then it happens again. It is their visitation and they show up hours late for pick up, and your plans to meet your friend for dinner had to be canceled. Or, they bring the kids home hours late, and won't answer their cell phone to tell you what is going on.

And, yet again. They stop answering emails and suddenly don't answer the phone when they have the kids so you can speak to them during their visitation. Communication breakdown in post divorce is common and

become critical. It is critical that both parents have access to the children no matter who is in possession of them. That is why most decrees state that phone calls can be made and must be answered. It is critical that the parent who does not have the kids knows when the children are sick, and when they call to see how they are doing, that the phone is answered.

It is critical for the children to know that they have access to each parent, no matter whose house they are staying at. But, emotions get in the way. He made you angry because he has a new girlfriend. She made you angry because she didn't tell you about a parent/teacher conference. The list goes on and on. Despite the long list of complaints you have about your ex-spouse, you must co-parent and communicate. You are divorced on paper, but the truth is, you are never divorced from your spouse if you have children. You spend the rest of your life seeing and communicating with that spouse.

When co-parenting breaks down and one ex refuses to communicate, it is imperative that you put your foot down right away. Do not accept less than what is your right, for your sake and for the sake of your kids. Sometimes that involves going to see an attorney to find out your rights. And, if you are lucky, then one single letter will shape up the situation. If you are not, it could mean several trips back to the courthouse.

But, no matter what it means, co-parenting is essential in the post divorce process. You have to raise your children together. Even though you might consider yourself a single parent, your children do have another parent. And, if that other parent wants to be involved, then you must communicate with them. Put the anger and bitterness aside and communicate.

One tip that has always helped me is to keep it on a business level, rather than a personal level. You are now in the "business" of raising these children with a person that no longer resides in your home. It can be tricky. Do you discipline the same way? Do you have the same values? Do you put the same emphasis on what is important?

It can help if you write down what you need and want regarding how the kids deal with homework, which friends you like and don't like, how you like them disciplined and if there are any issues, such as they are punished or grounded and things they are not allowed to do.

When it comes to children, they need and respond to continuity. So, it is important that both houses provide that continuity. For instance, Little Sophie didn't do her homework, clean her room and talked back to Mom. Mom grounded Little Sophie and took the television away for the week. But, Little Sophie is going to Dad's house on Thursday night. Make sure that Dad knows that Little Sophie is not allowed to watch TV and the reason why. Tell Dad when he picks Little Sophie up, so she knows that he knows, and can't manipulate Dad. Dad should then not only respect that Little Sophie was grounded, but he should talk to Little Sophie about her actions.

Just because you are now living in two separate houses does not mean you can't work together to raise your children. Is it harder? Absolutely. But, if you were still in the same house and Little Sophie had broken those rules, she would be grounded with no television and it wouldn't be an issue. This is important to remember. How would it be IF you lived together?

If you and your ex can co-parent in separate homes the same as when you were parenting in one home, then communication will remain open and there should not be any kind of breakdowns. Also, never forget, it's for the kids that you are doing this. Not each other.

Tags: [Children and Parenting](#), [coparenting relationship](#), [parenting time Texas](#), [shared parenting dallas texas](#)

## Meditate away your stress

**The practice of meditation offers peace, serenity, and calm -- a welcome respite from the turbulent emotions of divorce.**

By Diana Shepherd

How do you beat divorce-related-stress? Many people try "treat" behaviors: smoking, drinking, taking drugs (prescription or "recreational"), eating a carton of chocolate ice-cream -- whatever gives them feelings of pleasure and well-being. Unfortunately, all of these are band-aid solutions: they temporarily ameliorate some of the symptoms without addressing the root of the

### Attorney Spotlight



Things you didn't know about attorney [Michelle](#)

problem.

Here's a better solution: consider practicing meditation on a regular basis (daily is best). Anyone can practice meditation; you don't have to be on a path to spiritual enlightenment or have any religious beliefs. "Thinking you're unable to meditate is a little like thinking you are unable to breathe, or to concentrate or relax," notes scientist, writer, and meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D. in *Everywhere You Go, There You Are*. "Pretty much everybody can breathe easily. And under the right circumstances, pretty much anybody can concentrate, anybody can relax."

There are as many types of meditation as there are colors in a rainbow. You can meditate while seated, standing, lying down, dancing, singing, eyes open or shut, listening to music, brushing your teeth, eating -- the list goes on.

#### **Mindfulness Meditation**

"Mindfulness provides a simple but powerful route for getting ourselves unstuck, back in touch with our own wisdom and vitality," claims Kabat-Zinn. "The key to this path...is an appreciation for the present moment." Too often, we ignore our present: immersing ourselves in regrets about the past or fears about the future. This is never more true than while going through a life-changing experience such as divorce. So now more than ever, you need to learn to bring yourself back into the present, to quiet and unclutter your mind.

The following meditation can help you to maintain your balance, offering a calm clarity even in very stressful situations. At first, you'll need a quiet space free from distraction to practice mindfulness meditation. Eventually, as you build these mental muscles, you'll be able to bring yourself back into the present moment and quiet your mind anywhere, anytime.

Sit comfortably, your spine reasonably straight but not ramrod stiff, and close your eyes.

#### **Focus your attention on your breathing.**

From time to time, you'll become aware of emotions, thoughts, sounds, smells, or physical sensations that break your concentration. Acknowledge they are there, then let them drift past like a cloud -- without passing judgment or getting emotionally or mentally involved with them. Bring your attention back to your breathing and continue the meditation.

#### May O'Neil:

When Michelle is not in the court room, researching cases or running her office, she likes to spend her free time gardening, cooking, reading and playing with her Yorkie puppies. She is also very interested in holistic nutrition.

#### **Testimonials**

"During the most painful and frightening period of my life, Michelle's calm strength, confidence, and expert legal knowledge were a source of comfort, hope and assurance. Michelle or her capable assistant Christina were available and helpful anytime I called with a concern or question. They work quickly with knowledge and respect of the legal system, and really care about their clients. With Sincere Thanks."  
~D.C.

"Michelle is a lethal combination of sweet-and-salty. When the situation calls for it, she is genuinely warm and kind, the epitome of the Southern Belle. But when her hackles are up, there is no stopping her! She cannot be out-gunned, out-briefed, or out-lawyered. I have never seen Michelle - all 5 foot 1 of her - be intimidated by anyone, whether they're 30 years her senior, a more prominent lawyer, or, even, sitting in the judge's seat. In short, Michelle is a top-notch litigator - definitely someone I would want on my side if I needed a family lawyer."  
~M.M.

If you're struggling with intrusive thoughts, try counting your breaths. Think: "One inhale, one exhale. Two inhale, two exhale," and so on up to 10 or 20. Then start again at one.

Here's another exercise that can help you beat stress. Dirgha Pranayama is called the "three-part breath" because you're actively breathing into three parts of your abdomen. The first position is the lower belly (between the pubic bone and the belly button), the second is the upper belly (between the belly button and the bottom of the ribcage), and the third is the chest (the ribcage). Here's how to do it:

- Sit with a straight back, consciously relax your body, and let go of thoughts and worries by focussing on your breathing.
- Breathe slowly and steadily, in and out through the nose and into the belly.
- Inhale slowly into the first position, then into the second, then into the third; then exhale in reverse: third, second, first positions. Rest your hands on the first two positions to feel your belly rising and falling.

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## About Our Law Firm

At the Texas family law firm of [O'Neil Attorneys](#), we have one purpose in mind: providing men and women with compassionate and relentless advocacy from beginning to end in all [practice areas](#) of family law litigation and family law appeals in Texas courts. Whether defeating opponents in the courtroom or creating new law at the appellate level, we are committed to providing superior results to all of our clients.

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