

# TOGETHER in the kitchen.

**For Children, Rebonding**, reforging the lost or damaged parent child relationship, is THE key part of divorce recovery. Daily contact, a time your child can count on being with you is critical. One way, perhaps the best way, to get that time is regularly preparing a meal together. According to Dr. Margret Meade and Collin Turnbull noted anthropologists the one thing that signals a person is a functioning part of a tribe or family group, that he BELONGS, is assisting in meal preparation. Being a contributor is the bedrock of belonging...the one thing the children of divorce need most.

**For very young children** a parents secret weapon is...the banana. You mark the banana with a magic marker so the child can slice it, skin on, with a sturdy plastic knife with a serrated edge, or go to the hardware store and purchase a child safe knife, something like "cutnspread". Once the banana slices are peeled they can become a variety of deserts a child can be proud of: add fruit cocktail or yogurt and chocolate chips, or chunky peanut butter with just enough milk to make it juicy, or add a bit of mayonnaise and chopped nuts...be creative. For kids, something as simple as bananas mixed with a teaspoon of any type of jam can be a treat. The point is that even the youngest child can contribute and be kept busy. After cutting bananas comes cheese and then oranges and cucumbers and finally apples and potatoes. A child who can cut and pour can prepare anything. There just isn't a better way to insure your child gets daily parental attention combined with a sense of being a contributor (the foundation of a positive self image).

**For kids age nine and up** your secret weapon is helping them make their own recipe book. Each child gets his own notebook and is allowed to paste in a recipe after he or she has made the dish twice. They are rewarded with cash or a special privilege for each recipe they add...as long as the entire family helps with the dish. (Truly child friendly recipes are not easy to find, even in the age of the internet. Try giving a prize to kids for finding a good recipe either on line or in a magazine. Make looking for easy recipes an evening's entertainment.) Stir fry and rice is a meal almost any child can cook. Simple casseroles are a dependable favorite. Boys who think cooking is not masculine can go to the internet and search for recipes for men etc. Older boys can even learn to cook a special romantic recipe or two, something to make for a prospective sweetheart. Cooking together is a great non threatening date or pre date. By the time a child is fourteen he should have at least twenty recipes in his or her book.

The kitchen is also a great place to get your children involved in their own health. You don't actually have to count every calorie. A few basic lessons are avoid flour, avoid sugar, trim the fat, blot the grease and control your portion size. You might even put up UNWANTED posters of the most dangerous foods in the world...the soft drink, the potato chip, and the donut. Simply avoiding these worst of all foods can make a lifetime of difference in a child's health. There are many great ways to prepare fruits and veggies.

*Preparing meals is a simple way to insure your child gets a little of your time...every day...at a dependable time with the bonus of insuring he or she has a sense of belonging...of being a contributor.*