

Wow, where to start...

For me, I think the biggest challenge early after separation was fear and anxiety of losing touch with my boys when they weren't with me. There is so much uncertainty during that time, and I was often left wondering if I would become irrelevant or be "replaced" by someone or something else. That can happen, but there are ways of preventing it. Changing from being part of their daily life to being (at least perceived) as off/on is very difficult. It took me too long to realize that so much of parenting doesn't require physical presence.

My strategies to deal with this were to be sure that: 1) during my time physically with them, I was there for them as much as I could be, minimizing other distractions or pulls on my time; 2) when not with them, I made sure to be aware of what was going on in their lives (sports, performances, tests at school, etc.) and to call them frequently to discuss those things. I think this lets them know that even when I am not there, I care about them and what is going on in their lives. I am "emotionally" there, connected, concerned, which is really a big part of our role as a supportive parent. It doesn't have to be a lengthy or complicated ordeal - even a five minute conversation about their soccer game or homework assignment or a two-line text is valuable. It also makes it a lot easier to "hit the ground running" the next time I have time with them, rather than starting from scratch with an awkward question like "so, what's being going on the past week?".

I could write forever on this subject (maybe a book when I retire?), but I think this was a big one for me, especially in the uncertain early days.

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