



# *Bridging Parental Conflict*<sup>®</sup>

## **Parent Resource Guide**

## **Introduction**

Parents experiencing divorce or conflict with the other parent often feel overwhelmed by the emotional toll of the process and confused by the many services available to their families. The following is a compilation of various services and professionals that you may come in contact with as you and co-parent lead your family through this transition.

## **Terms**

### **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)**

An approach to dispute resolution that includes various family services designed to support families through transitions (typically divorce or conflict); with the objective of keeping parents in the decision-making role for their children and their futures. Examples of ADR services: Mediation, Arbitration, Parenting Consultant/Coordinator

### **Child Support**

Child support is court-ordered payments for the financial support and benefit of a child.

### **Closure Therapy**

A counseling process, usually lasting a short time, that is designed to support divorcing parents disengage from the emotional attachment of the marriage, in order to support their ongoing work of co-parenting.

### **Collaborative Law**

A legal process voluntarily entered into in which attorneys and clients agree to avoid adversarial processes, such as court, in order to keep the best interests of the children as the main focus.

### **Co-Parenting**

Cooperative parenting is an approach to raising children by divorced parents that includes the following basic premises: Children have a right to relationships with both parents; Parent conflict is managed and kept between adults only; Parents keep children out of the middle of their conflict; Communication between adults is focused on the children only; and, Parents make compromises and cooperative decisions about raising their children.

## Custody Evaluation

If divorcing parents and never-married parents cannot agree on custody, it is common for them to have a neutral evaluator perform an evaluation of your family. This custody evaluation will provide the Court recommendations regarding what is in the best interest of your child(ren), and ultimately, what the evaluator believes is the most appropriate custody arrangement for your child.

## Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE)

Early neutral evaluation (ENE) is a Minnesota-based, confidential alternative dispute resolution method designed for faster settlement of cases. This process is for divorcing parents and never-married parents who are involved in a court case because they disagree on custody, visitation/access, or parenting plans for their minor children. For more information visit <http://www.mncourts.gov/?page=4015>.

## Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT)

Marriage and Family Therapy is an approach to therapy that works with families as systems of relationships in which one relationship impacts other individuals and relationships in the family, much like the whole mobile move when just one part of it is moved. Marriage and family therapists must be licensed by your State's Board of Marriage and Family Therapy; other licensed mental health professionals in your state may hold a specialty or certification in marriage and family therapy, as well. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT) help families in various transitions, including divorce and conflict.

## Guardian ad Litem

A Guardian ad Litem is an advocate for a child whose welfare is a matter of concern for the court. In legal terms, it means "guardian of the lawsuit." For more information, visit your state's family court's website or other official resources.

## Mediation

Mediation is essentially a negotiation facilitated by a neutral third party. Most states or counties keep a list of trained or certified neutrals who may provide mediation services.

## Parental Leadership™

An approach to co-parenting that recognizes the children's developmental need for their parents to cooperate and compromise on all parenting decisions. To practice Parental Leadership, parents identify what is in the best interest of their children from their perspective; parents then find compromise with the other parent on those best interests; and then they cooperate with the other parent in implementing the compromise. Parental Leadership is particularly important when children are caught in the middle of their parents' conflict because children cannot remove themselves from the conflict or resolve it. Children need their parents to practice Parental Leadership and lead the children out of the middle of the adult problems.

### Parenting Consultant/Coordinator (PC)

A Parenting Consultant or Parenting Coordinator is a professional contracted by parents to make specified decisions for them when they are unable to find compromise. A Parenting Consultant/Coordinator can be granted a wide range of authority that is recognized by the Court if the parents have contractually agreed to that authority.

### Parenting Plan

A strategy and plan created by parents and/or their attorneys and other professional supporters that defines and explains how parenting decisions will be made, which parent will make the decisions and what day/week/month/year. It typically defines and/or actuates “legal” and “physical” custody of the children.

### Resist/Refuse or Reunification Therapy

A process within the profession of Family Therapy by which a parent’s relationships and his/her children are therapeutically reestablished after time away from each other.

### Safe Harbor Agreement

An agreement parents make with their child(ren)’s therapist not to legally release any information a child(ren) may reveal to the therapist in order to use the information against the other parent in a legal proceeding. Some mental health professionals will refuse to work with a child whose parents are in a legal conflict over custody, parenting time, and other matters. A safe harbor keeps the child(ren)’s therapy confidential.

### Supervised/Monitored Parenting and Exchanges

Facilitated service that secures structured visitation and safe exchange services for families.

## **Books**

The following books have been found helpful to many co-parents. This list is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive; it is intended to give co-parents a starting point to learning and discovery of effective written resources. The list is in no particular order.

- *BIFF™ for CoParent Communication*, by Bill Eddy
- *Honey, I Wrecked the Kids: When Yelling, Screaming, Threats, Bribes, Time outs, Sticker Charts and Removing Privileges All Don't Work*, by Alyson Schafer
- *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*, by Adele Farber, and Elaine Mazlish
- *Keeping Kids out of the Middle*, by Benjamin Garber
- *Positive Discipline*, by Jane Nelsen, Ed.D.
- *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child* by John Gottman
- *What in the World Do You Do When Your Parents Divorce?: A Survival Guide for Kids* by Kent Winchester, JD, and Roberta Beyer, JD, provides some practical, straightforward information for parents and their children.
- *Why Do They Act That Way?: A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen*, by David Walsh, Ph.D.
- *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts* by Robert Bolton
- *Parenting with Love & Logic*, by Foster Cline and Jim Fay (Authors)
- *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Min* by Daniel Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson

## Other Resources

### Websites

Dr. Lisa Herrick: (<http://lisaherrick.com>), provides some informative articles for divorcing parents. Also, link to her "What I'm thinking" page. Dr. Herrick is a clinical psychologist in Virginia/Washington DC area.

Dr. David Walsh's website is <http://drdavewalsh.com>, provides many resources and insights into parenting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, including valuable ideas for managing children's technology use.

Bill Eddy's High Conflict Institute ([www.highconflictinstitute.com](http://www.highconflictinstitute.com)) offers help to anyone who finds themselves involved in a difficult relationship -- whether at work or at home. The High Conflict Institute's coaching, consulting, books, DVDs, audio recordings, seminars and other training events provide an opportunity for anyone who needs guidance managing relationships with high conflict people.

### Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Alcoholism and other drug dependencies are a significant social problem that causes severe effects on families and children. Here are three well known treatment facilities:

Hazelden: <http://www.hazelden.org>;

New Beginnings: <https://www.nbminnesota.com>;

Minnesota Teen Challenge: <http://www.mntc.org>

Please visit their websites for contact information.

### Domestic Abuse and Violence

The law defines domestic abuse as one of the following acts committed by a family or household member against another family or household member: infliction of physical harm, bodily injury, or assault; infliction of *fear* of imminent physical harm; terroristic threats; acts of criminal sexual conduct; interference with an emergency call. If you suspect you are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence, contact an advocacy program, a therapist, or a lawyer for help.

For more information visit the following websites:

The Domestic Violence Crisis Line is (866) 223-1111.

Other domestic violence resources include:

[www.mncourts.gov/selfhelp/?page=1881](http://www.mncourts.gov/selfhelp/?page=1881), this webpage has a lot of good resources for anyone experiencing domestic violence

<http://www.domesticabuseproject.com>, the Domestic Abuse Project has a variety of programs for families experience domestic violence

## VALIDATION—A POWERFUL PARENTAL LEADERSHIP™ TOOL

Parents are...	YOU be mindful of...	Consider the other parent by...
<b>Present</b> with their children	Giving your children your complete attention.	Listening to, but not siding with, your child when he/she returns from other parent's home.
<b>Accepting</b> of children's interests and statements as true for them	Your parenting responsibilities. Accepting your child's interests as true for him/her is not the same as agreeing. As the parent, you can still say no!	Understanding that additional information may be needed to make a decision. This is NOT inconsistent with accepting another person's statement as true for them.
<b>Empathetic</b>	Denying, dismissing, or denigrating your child's comments. You can still expect respect; this will teach your children listen to and respectfully disagree with others.	Limiting or precluding your influence on your child's relationship with the other parent.
<b>Curious</b>	Asking clarifying questions: Are you saying...? What makes you want to...? Don't presume you understand everything your child is communicating.	NOT asking presumptuous or investigative questions, such as: "I know s/he is unreliable, but did s/he <i>really</i> leave you alone?" Or, "Did you feel that way when the girl/boyfriend slept over?"
<b>Encouraging and affirming</b> of their children's spirit to make decisions for their own lives...even if the outcome is not what was desired	Do not shame them! The most common shaming questions is: "What's wrong with you?"	Do NOT say: "You're just like your mother/father!" Or make any negative comparisons to the other parent.
<b>Patient</b> because they know that children do the best they can in this world...they too will grow up one day.	Body language communicates more than your words. Eye rolling, sighs, folded-arms, and physically turning away from your child all communicate impatience, and may also communicate contempt for their behavior.	Speaking and behaving supportively toward the other parent. Eye rolling, sighs, folded-arms, and other negative body language communicate <i>contempt</i> , not patience, for the other parent. Your children will feel it.