



Co-Parenting Counseling & Parenting Plans

Michael L. Crane, MA, 6th YR, LPC

Donna Cahill, BA, Certified Mediator

www.broadviewcounseling.com

What is Co-Parenting Counseling?

Co-parent counseling has two primary goals:

A) To help restructure the parents' communication so they can learn to more effectively and safely approach each other.

B) To address outstanding issues involving their children that can range from behavioral problems, education, medical decisions, scheduling difficulties, etc.

Co-parenting should be 'cordial and businesslike'

Co-Parenting Counseling is not:

- Therapy
- Billable through insurance
- Easy, Clean, and Fun
- Effective with only one parent invested
- The right choice for families struggling with significant domestic violence or protective orders
- Likely to succeed when conflict is intractable and persistent
- A waste of resources including time and money

Why Co-Parenting Counseling?

Negative impacts of a high-conflict divorce on children include:

- *Delayed adjustment and attachment
- *Strained parent-child relationships
- *Depression
- *Anxiety
- *Negative coping strategies such as substance abuse.
- *Executive dysfunction

The negative effects of a high-conflict divorce can last for years after the parents separate.

When parents have a more collaborative relationship outcomes are more positive. Simply, the children are better off.

When to consider Co-Parenting Counseling

- I. Mild to Moderate levels of conflict
- II. High level conflict over one primary issue with a history of communicating
- III. When both parents can buy into the concept of ***working together for the best interest of the child***
- IV. When issues with the child/children require skills that individual parents do not currently employ
- V. When issues arise over trust, safety, communication, denigration
- VI. Early in the conflict and as-needed after a relationship with a co-parenting counselor is established

Common Themes in Co-Parenting Counseling

- Fear and mistrust
- Mental health issues (anxiety, depression, ADHD, etc
- Communication
- Consistency across settings
- Emotional regulation and child behavioral disturbance
- New relationships
- Education and medical decision
- Child-Parent relationship building

Co-Parenting and Children's Wellbeing

- “The security of the parent about being a parent will eventually become the child’s feeling of security about himself.” – Dr. Bruno Bettelheim
- Children benefit from an effective parental partnership immensely:
- The child has the chance to absorb and internalize mother/father interactions, actively identify with each and, at the same time, as a parental duo.
-
- The child learns to integrate disparate and contradictor elements in his/her developing self as parents do in their relationship.
-
- Both parents being actively involved results in higher levels of emotional and cognitive development, less likely to be violent or be hurt, less likely to be violent, and improved academic achievement.

How Co-Parenting can help

- -Change the paradigm from 'marriage' to 'partnership'
- -Psychoeducation regarding benefits of collaboration vs. risks of high conflict
- -Help identify barriers to communication, trust, etc
- -help parents each identify their strengths and weaknesses and how to complement each other
- -Coaching on communication skills, problem solving, emotional regulation, prioritization
- -Allowing parents to feel and share vulnerabilities in a safe environment
- -Formulate a parenting plan with mutual buy-in
- **-Reduce litigation when parents can't afford to pay attorneys anyway!**