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## THE PURPOSE OF THE CLASS

1. To teach parents how to help themselves and the children deal with the ongoing impact of the break-up
2. To give parents communication skills to help them effectively co-parent with one another
3. To help parents understand the mediation process
4. To review important legal terms and rights
5. This class is sponsored by the Santa Barbara County Superior Court and mandated by law (Rule 1507)



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## THE COMMON GROUND

YOU BOTH ARE THE EXPERTS WHERE  
YOUR CHILDREN ARE  
CONCERNED AND YOU BOTH  
LOVE YOUR CHILDREN

THEREFORE:  
**EXPECT SUCCESS!**



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## What is Mediation?

- Mediation is required whenever there is a dispute about child custody or visitation, but can also be voluntary
- Mediation is a process that keeps the power of your and your child's lives in your hands
- Mediation can help you develop a detailed, custom parenting plan, at your own pace without being rushed, that is unique to your family's needs



Family Code §3170

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## California Law Defines Three Purposes of Mediation



Family Code §3161



- To reduce conflict between the parents
- To develop an agreement ensuring the child's close and continuing contact with both parents
- To reach a settlement regarding visitation rights that is in the best interest of the child

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## Who Are Your Mediators?

- Family Court Services mediators have a masters degree (or higher) in a behavioral science such as psychology, social work, marriage and family therapy, or child counseling. Many are licensed therapists, as well
- Mediators have a minimum of two years experience after getting their Master's Degree, knowledge of child development, the court system and community resources  
(Family Code §1815)



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## Mediation in Santa Barbara County is Confidential (FC 3177)

- The details of your case are not discussed outside of Mediation
- The **result** of the session is included on your Mediation Report
- No custody or parenting plan (schedule) recommendations will be made outside of the session to attorneys or judges
- Agreements (Stipulations) are written during mediation for your review and signature. The written agreement is presented to the judge **ONLY** after both parties and any attorneys sign it. Otherwise, it remains confidential
- To ensure confidentiality, only the parties involved in the case may attend the mediation session, unless a judge orders others to participate
- If you bump into your mediator in public s/he will not say hello to you unless you say hello first



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## Confidentiality Exceptions Required in Mediation

- Mediators are required by law to report to the local child protection or law enforcement agency the following:
  - Abuse or neglect of a minor, elder, or dependent adult
  - A person's intent to seriously harm themselves or others
- Mediators may not be able to mediate if there is an open Child Welfare Services (CWS) case involving the children of the mediation case
- Stipulations signed by the Judge and Mediation Reports do get filed in your case, and are available for public review



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## What is a Stipulation?

- A written, legal agreement, prepared in mediation that becomes a Court Order when the Judge signs it
- Details your unique parenting plan and co-parenting guidelines
- Defines your Legal and Physical Custody arrangement
- Enforceable, when necessary
- Violations can result in penalties
- Meant to be a back-up plan when you don't agree on changes to the agreement you have in place
- Meant to change as your child grows and your circumstances change



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## What is Legal Custody?

- Legal custody includes the right to make decisions about the child

- Choosing or changing where the child lives
- Deciding everything about the child's health, education, welfare, childcare, and mental health
- Getting a passport, travelling outside the USA
- Enrollment in religious and extra-curricular activities

- Legal custody is either joint or sole

- Joint Legal Custody = parents make decisions together
- Sole Legal Custody = one parent has the exclusive right to make decisions



(Family Codes §3003 & 3006)

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## What is Physical Custody?

- Physical custody is either joint or sole

- Joint Physical Custody =

- Both parents share significant periods of physical custody that assures frequent and continuing contact with both parents
- Does not necessarily mean an equal time share
- One parent may still be designated as holding the child(ren)'s Primary Residence

- Sole Physical Custody =

- One parent provides the residence and supervision of the child all or most of the time
- The other parent may or may not have court ordered visitation



Family Code §3004 & §3007

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## PARENT ACCESS TO RECORDS

California Family Code §3025:



Notwithstanding any other provision of law, access to records and information pertaining to a minor child, including, but not limited to, medical, dental, and school records, shall not be denied to a parent because that parent is not the child's custodial parent

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## Outcomes of Mediation

- Full Agreement
- Partial Agreement
- Temporary Agreement
- Partial & Temporary Agreement
- Incomplete Mediation
- No Agreement
- No Appearance/No Mediation



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## MEDIATION REPORTS

- Provided at the end of each session to parties, any attorneys, & judge
- Tells the Court:
  - Who attended or did not appear and if mediation was Court Ordered
  - Who has completed the PEACE Class
  - The Outcome of Mediation (FC §3185)
  - Might list undecided issues [FC §3188(2)]
  - Suggestions (in rare cases)



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## Information a Mediator Might Provide for the Court's Consideration:

- Limited information is provided in writing on the Mediation Report for the Judge's consideration in RARE CASES ONLY. If you go to Court, the Court will decide if any of these suggestions are ordered.
- The child speak to the Judge (Family Code Section §3042)
- The parents or children attend classes, counseling, COPE, or other therapeutic services
- The child have an attorney appointed (Family Code §3184)
- The family participate in a Custody Evaluation such as a PCA or a 3011 Evaluation (California Evidence Code 730)
- That a Restraining Order be issued, or indicate that Custody must be determined by the Court because of domestic violence, or other serious concern, like sexual abuse or severe substance abuse (Family Code Section §3044)



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## What if Parents Don't Reach a Full Agreement?

- ❑ If a Court Hearing has already been scheduled for Custody and Visitation, the matter will be referred back to court for the Judicial Officer to make a decision regarding custody and visitation
- ❑ If you do not have an upcoming Court Hearing scheduled for Custody and Visitation, either you or the other parent will need to obtain a Court Hearing date on this matter.



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## Your Children = Your Decision



Studies show that parents who make their own mutual decisions regarding their Parenting Plan are less likely to need future court involvement, are generally happier with the outcome, and are more likely to follow the plan consistently

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## The number one wish Mediators hear from children:

- For their parents to get back together
- OR
- At least for their parents to get along



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## Break-ups: Parents' Experience:



- The end of a relationship is a serious loss, regardless of who started it, both grieve
- You may feel loss of: prior identity, dreams, partner, two-parent household, ideal childhood for the kids, financial freedom, steady family or partner childcare arrangement, stable emotional support, your current social life, and other aspects of being partnered that you may not realize you liked or needed until they're gone
- You may have to divide up your friends, extended family, or change affiliations with groups, teams, etc.
- Friends and family might take sides. Some may fuel the fire of your conflict and you may no longer trust certain people to be loyal to you when around the kids
- The changes can bring feelings of happiness, anxiety, sadness, relief, anger, confusion, worry, and shame

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## How to Respond to Your Child's Questions

- Provide limited, age appropriate information without giving adult details or placing blame
- Tell them it doesn't work for you and the other parent to be together
- Acknowledge the child's feelings; let them feel mad, sad, etc.
- Tell your children they didn't cause the separation and they can't fix it
- Reassure the children you both will love and care for them and you are working on a plan



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## CHILDREN'S FEARS WHEN PARENTS SPLIT



- Where they are going to live and if their basic needs will be met
- Whether they will be able to attend the same school and have the same friends
- If they will have to choose which parent to live with and whether they will be separated from siblings
- If they'll lose contact with extended family members and family traditions
- Wondering whether one or both parents will stop loving or wanting them
- Worrying that their parent will not be okay, or will be lonely while they're gone
- **Believing they are at fault for the split**

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## Risks for Kids:

- Parents are so emotionally empty, they are often not available to support their children nor help them process changes
- Children may become emotional supports for their parents
- One parent leaves the home and disrupts the parent/child bond and the routine the child had with that parent
- Even under the best circumstances, children can feel guilty loving both parents and have problems with loyalty and trust
- Conflict between the parents during and after separation may interfere with the child's healthy development
- Fighting between parents could reinforce children's wish for parents to reconcile
- Children lie - tell parents what they think the parents want to hear, or will help the child to avoid starting a conflict




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## Stages of Grief and Loss Through Separation

The process takes 1-2 years, begins at different times for each family member, and usually follows the stages in the order presented, although that can vary



Stages	For Adults	For Children
<b>Denial</b> <small>Feels like emotional numbness</small>	This can't be happening. She or he will come back and we will work it out. This is the BEST thing I've ever done and I can't wait to enjoy it!	Mom and Dad can't be hurting me and each other. It's only temporary. They will get back together.
<b>Anger</b> <small>Hurt, pain and fear turn into negative thoughts</small>	How could she or he do this to me? I'm the responsible one. He or she is not the person I knew. I still have to put up with you!	How could they do this to me? If they loved me, they would stay together.
<b>Bargaining</b> <small>Trying to make a deal with the other parent or yourself to avoid pain</small>	If we get counseling or I change, then we'll get back together. If I give you all the money, I can take kids away	If I am really good, maybe they will get back together.

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## Stages of Grief and Loss Through Separation, cont.



Stages	For Adults	For Children
<b>Depression</b> <small>Once anger wears off, real feelings of sadness emerge</small>	I'm overwhelmed. I can't cope. It's all too much. No one understands.	It's my fault. I hate school. I hate my life. Nothing is okay.
<b>Acceptance</b> <small>Life is different and you no longer try to keep the status quo, but instead embrace the changes</small>	It's over. I need to get on with my life and career and help our kids get their lives back to normal.	Mom and Dad are not getting back together and it's okay.
<b>Growth</b> <small>You try to improve your life, your child's life and your co-parenting relationship</small>	I've moved on. I know myself better. I'm ready for something new and maybe better.	I don't have to pretend anymore. Mom and Dad want me to love both of them.

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## Things to Consider:

- Where are YOU in the grieving process?
- What do you need to do to get to acceptance/growth?
- Where are your kids in the process? What can you do to assist them to get to acceptance and growth?



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## Developmental Stages: Infants, Toddlers & Preschoolers Age 0-5

### ■ Development & Tasks

- Tend to form 1-3 primary bonds
- Learning to trust that needs will be met
- Take initiative, begin to learn impulse control



### ■ Schedule Considerations

- Need a consistent schedule with lots of nurturing, reassurance, and predictability
- Have difficulty tolerating long separations from their primary caregiver(s)
- The schedule should provide more frequent, shorter time periods between each parent



### ■ Signs of Stress

- Excessive crying, eating, clinging, sleep issues
- Developmental delays, regressive behaviors
- Irritability, anxiety, demanding, defiant
- Excessive fears or nightmares, aggression
- Bed wetting, thumb sucking, tantrums



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## Developmental Stages: Elementary School Kids Age 5-10

### ■ Development & Tasks

- Form friendships and nurture primary bonds
- Focus on school and learning
- Develop sense of self, self-care and independence



### ■ Schedule Considerations

- Need a consistent routine of contact with each parent to gain confidence and self-worth
- The schedule should allow them to focus on school and be involved in activities with both parents
- School aged children can tolerate less frequent contact and longer separations from each parent



### ■ Signs of Stress

- Problems with school, peers, learning, or attention
- Extreme loyalty to one parent
- Overly sensitive to parents' pain
- Excessive anger, fear, indignation, or blame
- Emotional withdrawal, sadness, confusion



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## Developmental Stages: Pre-teens Age 10-13

### Development & Tasks

- Become independent from primary bonds, or begin to favor same gendered parent
- Gain sense of control and comfort with peers, may enter own romantic relationship
- Develop morals, internal gauge of correctness



### Schedule Considerations

- Need schedule with flexibility to allow for child to develop peer relationships and outside activities
- Can be apart from primary caregiver for extended periods of time, with access via technology
- Child may have *limited* input into schedule



### Signs of Stress

- Sudden headaches, stomach aches and other symptoms that aren't explained by illness
- School problems, learning problems, peer issues
- Irritability, anxiety, depression, excessive anger
- Drug or alcohol abuse, eating disorder, self-harm



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## Developmental Stages: Teenagers Age 13-18

### Development & Tasks

- Rather than be in conflict with a parent or have parents in conflict over them, teens may try to end relationship with a parent, which hurts everyone
- To mature into healthy adults, teens need a resolved relationship with and to develop a separate identity from their parents



### Schedule Considerations

- Want their plans to be important, too, but also care about spending time with their family and parents
- May prefer to have a "home base"
- Need consistent rules in both homes and good communication between parents



### Signs of Stress

- Breaks rules, acts out at home or school
- Problems with learning, peers, or a parent
- Irritability, anxiety, depression, anger, suicidal
- Drug or alcohol abuse, eating disorder, self-harm



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## Families and Domestic Violence

### What is Domestic Violence?

- Physical abuse (punching, choking, slapping, pushing, breaking objects)
- Sexual Abuse (rape, sexual acts without mutual consent)
- Verbal or emotional abuse (yelling, cursing, blaming, constant insults)
- Stalking, following, spying
- Threats, coercion, and intimidation
- Isolation (prevent leaving, working, making calls, seeing friends/family,)
- Economic abuse (limiting access to funds and accounts, taking money)
- Power and Control over choices

### What does it do to kids who see, hear, or know of it?



### Out of Control Emotions

- Anxiety and Depression
- Helplessness and Fear
- PTSD reactions, symptoms

### High Risk Behaviors

- Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- Aggressive behavior, Suicidal thoughts
- Have school and health problems
- Might become Perpetrators or Victims of abuse now and/or in adulthood

**If you are hurting or being hurt – THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO GET HELP AND BREAK THE CYCLE**

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## When to Consider Counseling

- It is normal for everyone to have some mild behavioral and emotional problems for a while
- Counseling may help parents or a child under any stressful circumstances. Children can react to parent's stress in addition to their own normal feelings. If the parent is acting out, the child will pick up on that
- Therapy might help families when kids shut down and won't talk to their parents or for strained parent-child bonds
- Counseling is important if you or your child:
  - Experience severe problems (i.e. substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, any type of abuse in the home)
  - Have any of the signs of stress previously listed
  - Are stuck in a stage of grief (i.e. depression, anger)
  - Experience changes in behavior that don't go away nor improve after several months



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## Research Findings

### Children:

- Need to be emotionally and physically safe from parental conflict, information of custody or money disputes, what is said in Court or Mediation, and their parents' stress & emotional reactions
- Having both parents actively and regularly participate in their lives is crucial to a child's healthy development
- Do better when they know when they will be spending time with each parent



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## Mediation Procedures

- The participants are the legal parents, guardians and the mediator **ONLY**
- Each parent presents their proposals after the Mediator introduces ground rules
- Parents negotiate and compromise toward agreement
- The mediator
  - Guides the negotiation with questions or comments
  - Points out dynamics impeding smooth co-parenting
  - Provides education and suggestions to assist parents with their parenting plan negotiation
  - Keeps dialogue balanced and focused on the child
  - Does not allow bullying or other behavior that impedes the process
  - Does not give legal advice, write financial agreements, or take sides



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## What to Consider When Making a Parenting Plan

- Age and emotional stage of development of each child
- Frequency of contact and involvement with both parents *prior* to mediation
- Distance between parents' residences
- Your child's special needs, school events, sports schedules or other extracurricular activities
- Safety concerns
- Level of parental conflict or cooperation



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## How Children Are Involved in Mediation:

- Mediators will use their discretion in deciding if it is necessary to interview your children (**Family Code §3180**)
- Mediators are trained to work sensitively with the children, to be reassuring, and to assess the child's well-being during their chat
- Children are NOT asked to take sides or choose a parent
- Children age 14 and up may choose to speak to the judge, but the judge makes the final decision about talking to kids
- Children of any age never have the *legal* right to decide where to live or when to see a parent



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## What is NOT Discussed in Mediation?

- Child or Spousal Support
- Who Pays Costs of Transportation, Insurance, or the Child's Activities
- Property and Other Monetary Disputes, Who Claims the Children on Taxes
- Negotiating Any Restraining Orders



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## What may be Discussed in Mediation?

- Legal and physical custody
- Regular schedule of when the child(ren) will be with each parent
- School year schedule
- Summer schedule
- Holidays and birthdays
- Vacations, travel, passports
- Transportation and exchanges
- Calls, texts, and other communication guidelines
- Extra-curricular, religious, and other activities
- Guidelines for addressing safety concerns
- Co-parenting strategies and expectations



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## Custody Concerns When There is Domestic Violence

- If the Court has made findings of domestic violence by a parent, the court must determine legal and physical custody of the children, even if parents agree to share it
- Mediation may assist with developing a safe visitation plan which may include monitored contact and third party exchanges



Family Code §3044

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## Special Mediation Rules When There is Domestic Violence

- Restraining Orders are to be followed at all times, Mediators and Family Court Judges cannot override a CRIMINAL Protective Order, nor can Mediators negotiate a Civil Restraining Order
- Mediators can provide referrals for help with your situation
- A separate waiting room is available for each party
- The mediator will meet with the parents separately  
(California Rule of Court 5.225(d)(6))
- A support person may attend with you if you have signed a document stating you request it, but must not participate nor discuss the mediation with anyone  
(Family Code §5393)



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## Safety Considerations & Visits

- Studies show that children **do better** with some contact, even with an abusive or inconsistent parent, so long as it is safe. Otherwise, children can feel abandoned, unloved, worthless, or damaged
- You May Consider (Temporary) Monitored or Supported Visits To Address These Concerns:
  - Alcohol Abuse
  - Child Abuse or Neglect
  - Continued Domestic Violence
  - Homelessness/Housing issues
  - Prolonged Absence(s) of a Parent
  - Drug Abuse
  - Criminal History
  - Child's Medical Issues
  - Long Distance Parenting with Very Young Children



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## Safety Considerations & Visits, Cont.

- Monitored Visits/Supervised Exchanges:
  - Supervised visits are best in cases where the child has been abused by the visiting parent, or may be in danger in the visiting parent's care
  - Come to mediation with names of 1-3 willing supervisors and their days and times of availability
  - Can be any neutral person you mutually agree is suitable
  - A professional will usually charge both parents for services
  - Might be a therapist if the parent/child relationship needs repair
  - Supervised exchanges may help prevent additional domestic violence
  - Meant to end once the parents have built trust, cause(s) of concern have been addressed
- Supportive Visits:
  - Supportive visits are best when the parent and child don't know one another well
  - Supervisor should be a neutral person the child feels comfortable with and trusts, who's presence is reassuring
  - Last only until the parent/child bond is (re)established



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## What Happens After Mediation?

- Once mediation is finished, the mediator's role is complete
- If your parenting plan needs adjustment you must make another appointment
- FCS cannot help with execution of your agreement, only law enforcement and judges can make a parent comply
- Speaking with one parent only isn't allowed



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## Children Love Both Their Parents Equally

It isn't their job to choose  
It is your job to decide



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## You Stop Being Partners but...

- You continue as parents
- Parents cannot be replaced
- Your child should naturally feel connected with both parents. Do what you can to preserve their parent/child bonds
- Involvement by both parents in a child's life and activities is positive and desirable.



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## What is Cooperative Co-parenting?

- \* Parents work together in raising their child in two homes and treat the other parent professionally, as business partners involved in an important job
- \* There is more consistency between homes
- \* There's more flexibility for kids and parents
- \* Major decisions are made together
- \* Transitions are usually smoother
- \* Parents are able to be involved in their child's life and are kept better informed
- \* Children enjoy having both parents at their events without tension or conflicts
- \* Parents are BFF's\* because communication is:
  - Brief (parents keep it short)
  - Friendly (parents keep it nice, professional)
  - Focused (Chats are about the children and current concerns, *only*)



\* Excerpted from Bill Eddy's work

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## Successful Co-parenting Communication:

- Promptly share information and details regarding the child's activities and events
- Communicate with specifics and in writing, only, if needed
- Give the other parent the benefit of the doubt; ask questions about concerning situations or information



- Listen without interruption
- Only talk about the children
- Imagine you are being taped and the kids will see it later

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## Things Parents Can Do to Help the Child Adjust to the Loss When Parents Separate:



- Working out a parenting plan quickly
- Staying involved in your child's life, at the same level as before the separation, when possible
- Keeping adult issues (money, court disputes, negative emotions, parental conflict, etc.) away from the children
- Having consistent routines at both homes as much as possible
  - Bedtime, Nutrition, Hygiene, Homework, TV & Computer time, Discipline, Behavioral Expectations, Chores, etc.
- Treating the other parent the way *you* want to be treated



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## How to Support Your Children

- Promote the child having time with their other parent, even if the other parent isn't perfect or the child is anxious. **Always encourage them to go!**
- Give your child permission to love the other parent and all their other family and friends (even if there is a new significant other!) without concern that they'll hurt your feelings or get in trouble
- Remind your children both parents will always love them and take care of them
- Include all children equally and treat them similarly, especially in blended families



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## Co-Parenting Mistakes to Avoid

- Negatively comparing the child to the other parent
- Criticizing the other parent or their loved ones to the child or to other people in your child's life
- Using your child to deliver messages to or spy on the other parent
- Pumping the child for information about the other parent
- Arguing in front of your child
- Punishing your child for wanting to spend time with or live with their other parent



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## Co-Parenting Mistakes to Avoid

- Using your child to negotiate schedule changes with the other parent
- Making the child choose which parent to see
- Withholding visits to punish a parent
- Excluding the children from their family members, including half- and step-siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts, and grandparents
- Telling the children your adult feelings or problems and/or sharing details about the parents' relationship, break-up, or disputes
- Coming in and out of your child's life and forcing them to re-adjust



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## EXCHANGES BETWEEN PARENTS

- Exchanges are often difficult for kids and some stress is expected
- There is both happiness and sadness for the children every time
- A child may resist leaving or resist returning to each parent
- Since children hate to end projects before completion, such as Lego building or video games, have the child involved in a quiet activity and make sure the activity is ended prior to pick up and the child is ready for the exchange early
- Have exchanges at natural transition times
- Don't cling to the child, make goodbyes brief
- Help your child transfer their belongings and then be welcomed by their other parent
- Remember the children will take their cues from you, so be encouraging and positive!



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## Important Reminders



- The other person's motive for being involved as a parent doesn't matter; involvement is GOOD
- Your behavior will impact your child's ability to experience healthy future relationships. Studies show exposure to conflict is the MOST harmful act for a child's well-being in the present, as well as, far into the future. Shield your children from all parental conflict
- Reassure your children every day that they are NOT responsible for the break-up and that they are LOVED

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## Frequently Asked Questions

How much is it?	There is NO cost for mediation.
When are appointments?	Monday-Friday, between the hours of 8:15 am and 1:30 pm. Plan to be at your appointment for <b>at least TWO hours</b> .
What if someone does not attend mediation?	<b>BOTH parents must attend in order to proceed.</b> A Mediation Report of "failure to appear" is sent to the Judge. A monetary sanction of \$100 or more may be given. Your court hearing may be rescheduled and your orders delayed. You may have to wait at least 90 days for another appointment.
What if someone is late?	Mediation cannot start until <b>BOTH</b> parties arrive. <b>Arriving more than 20 minutes late can result in the appointment being cancelled.</b> A Mediation Report of "failure to appear" is sent to the Judge.
What if I'm/my kids are sick or contagious?	If you or the children are seriously ill or may be contagious: <b>CALL THE MEDIATION OFFICE PRIOR</b> to entering the office.

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## Frequently Asked Questions, cont.

Can I reschedule?	You must reschedule at least 7 days in advance. <b>Both parties must be in agreement to the appointment date and time in order to re-schedule.</b> Failure to do so will result in a Late Cancellation notice to the Court. You may be fined and a new mediation appointment may not be available for 90 days.
Who should attend?	<b>Both</b> parents must attend and participate in mediation. Children 6-18 also participate, separately, unless their presence is waived in advance by the mediator. A responsible, <b>NEUTRAL</b> adult to watch 6-13 year olds. <b>Mediation may be canceled if children under 6 or no childcare person is present.</b> <b>*We do not provide childcare*</b>
Where is mediation held?	Santa Maria (805) 614-6429 312 E Cook Street, Clerk's Building E, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Santa Barbara (805) 882-4667 1100 Anacapa Street, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor, between Dpt 5&6

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## How to Set A Voluntary Appointment

- Attend the PEACE or Online PEACE class first
- Talk to the other party to figure out the best times and days
- You or Your Attorney Call the Mediation (Family Court Services) office:
  - Santa Maria (805) 614-6429 312 E Cook Street, Clerk's Building E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor
  - Santa Barbara (805) 882-4667 1100 Anacapa Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, between Dpt 5&6
- File and Send the other party a Notice of Mediation form ([SC-4018](#))
- Be sure to Attend your Appointment – late cancellations or no-shows can result in consequences ([SC-4017](#))
- Please bring someone to watch children ages 6-13, any needed interpreters, children of the case ages 6-18, but **no-one** else to your appointment
- **Children may be able to leave after they have been interviewed, while you and the other parent continue your mediation**



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## Things to Consider:

- The better you get along with your co-parenting partner, the happier your life and your kids' lives will be, now and well into the future
- When you think about special moments in your child's life (their graduation, the birth of their first child, etc.) how do you want your child to feel? Should they worry about mom and dad fighting, or should they be surrounded by both parents' love and support?
- When your child goes through difficult or important times (peer issues, their first romantic relationship, an illness or accident), will you and your co-parenting partner increase their anxiety and fears, or soothe them cooperatively?
- Imagine your child telling you about their childhood. Imagine how good you will feel when your child tells you they appreciate all the support they felt from you to love and spend time with both parents. Think how happy you will be to know that you and your co-parenting partner could work together to provide a happy, satisfying childhood for your children
- **Have you done everything you can to be flexible, cooperative, and communicate with the other parent for your child's sake?**



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