



Professionals' Introduction to UpToParents.org

August 10, 2020

Because peace for children is success for parents.

Our experience is that the parents who do well in the challenges of separation, divorce, and paternity are overwhelmingly the ones who make a priority of peace for their children. Chance powerfully favors parents who are helped to act on their natural wish to do well for their children—and then enjoy the chance to live in that peace themselves.

Peace will undoubtedly mean different things in different circumstances (such as when domestic abuse requires professional intervention), and all are touched on by this workshop. But as challenging as it can be for hurting parents to defocus from their own hurt and fears, the parents we see helping themselves best—financially, emotionally, and parentally—are the ones who put their children's needs upfront.

It's also well to remember that when parents aren't together (including in divorce and paternity cases), their children:

1. Are the very definition of the parents' future relationship with each other.
2. Are the very reason the quality of that co-parenting relationship matters so much.
3. Are the people whose well-being will prompt most parents to want to do well.
4. Are the helpless and easily overlooked victims of entrenched parent conflict.

So, welcome to UpToParents.org, America's premier—and totally free—online educational tool for parents raising children between two homes. This resource has already assisted over 250,000 parents in building a focus on their children's needs—and then using that focus to define and guide their future interaction.

Our team (including Judge Michael Scopelitis and Dr. Kylea Asher-Smith who appear in short videos in the UpToParents.org workshop) is gratified by the enthusiastic feedback we receive daily from parents. We take seriously the suggestions we receive, and parents' comments reinforce how good parent outcomes come from inviting parents to pause and deeply reflect on their children, their perspectives, and their needs.

Here are samples of [Completed Commitments](#) and [Completed Exercises Responses](#) from the site. And the following are attached here.

- A. Sample professional endorsements.
- B. Sample parent feedback.
- C. Some advantages of UpToParents.org.
- D. Sample referral rule from courts.
- E. Sample referral notice from co-parenting educators.
- F. Collaborative Professionals Use of UpToParents.org (with sample referrals).

A. Sample professional awards and comments

American Bar Association (ABA), “Lawyer as Problem-Solver Award.”

Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC), “Judge Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award.”

Academy of Professional Family Mediators (APFM), “Children’s Champion Award.”

“I fully endorse these Commitments for use with all divorcing parents. Too often, the message to divorcing parents is that they should simply refrain from bad mouthing the other parent. These Commitments communicate that parents have a responsibility to actively support and nurture the child's relationship with the other parent—and they stimulate parents to consider numerous ways to do so for their children. Bravo.” Janet R. Johnson, Ph.D., *In The Name of the Child, Impasses of Divorce, Through the Eyes of Children*.

“A free public tool with enormous promise for minimizing harm to children.” Hon. Brent E. Dickson, Indiana Supreme Court.

“*UpToParents* is the *Google* of online education for separated parents. It’s by far the best, it’s universally available, and it’s free. It sets the focus squarely on children and their needs. It’s truly ingenious and transforming.” Ann M. Schelle, MS, LPC, National Coordinator and Trainer of TransParenting (live co-parenting classes in more than 150 jurisdictions).

“I’ve had a front-row seat to the considerable help provided in divorce and paternity cases to families and courts by *UpToParents*. It’s really an ingenious collection of child-focused exercises that can dispel the myths that mislead parents. And it shows parents how they can win by focusing on their children's needs.” Hon. Michael P. Scopelitis, St. Joseph Superior court, South Bend, Indiana.

“Without question, the single most important thing parents can do to prepare for our divorce adjustment classes is to complete *UpToParents*. We’d never again write or teach a co-parenting class without this parent preparation as a component.” Michael Sheehan, Ph.D. Child advocates in Divorce (CAID).

“I can confidently say there is a consensus among our Judiciary, GALs, co-parenting educators and, yes, even members of our local Bar, that if we had it to do over again, we actually would have started our county’s use of *UpToParents* even earlier. For jurisdictions already using live classes, *UpToParents* can exponentially multiply what parents arrive ready to learn and absorb. For jurisdictions without live classes, *UpToParents* may be the only good co-parenting education available to parents—and AT NO COST.” Hon. Gregory A. Horn, Wayne Superior Court, Richmond, Indiana

B. Sample parent feedback

The more people have studied different methods of bringing up children, the more they have come to the conclusion that what good mothers and fathers instinctively feel like doing for their babies is best after all.

—Dr. Benjamin Spock

1. The least judgmental, most child-centered and encouraging set of information I've seen, and I've worked as a pastor, therapist, and educator for many years. Great work!
2. It was wonderful. Very supportive of children without making parents feel scolded. The wording made me feel you with me every step of the way. I have already recommended you to three people, including my divorce lawyer.
3. I didn't realize how my daughter was feeling until seeing this website.
4. It is a fantastic website that I think ALL divorcing parents should visit. It really puts everything into perspective and reminded me who is really important through this process.
5. This was life-changing for me. I am a physician and my marriage of 17 years is ending. I firmly believe this website helped me prevent significant damage to my beautiful children.
6. I loved it. I cried and I laughed through the whole thing. Sometimes in the midst of a painful divorce you forget why you had children and why you were together. It helped me realize that life goes on and how we start our day is how our children are going to start theirs.
7. One word—FANTASTIC. Loved the easy to use and understandable concept of the site. The information and personal touches (i.e., using our son's name). Having the comments and answers from other parents and children. These really made this program hit home. It has started a new way of thinking for me.
8. Loved it—it gave me a whole new perspective on who we should be focusing on.
9. The emphasis always going back to the kids was AWESOME.
10. I love the website. It is very helpful. I'm an attorney, and I'm going to recommend that all of my divorce clients go to the website.
11. It has changed my attitude toward my soon-to-be ex-wife; I had had NO idea the damage I was doing to our son by treating his mom badly.
12. Initially, I thought it was just some silly thing I had to do for my attorney. However, once I got going on it, I realized it wasn't for my attorney at all. It was for me and, more importantly, my children. It really opens your eyes.
13. So easy to use. It should be mandatory for the process. Love the information.
14. I wish my ex-wife and I had done it long ago. I believe everything between us would have gone so, so much better. It helped immensely.
15. WOW! Very well thought out & user friendly. My daughter was born after her mom and I split up. Ellie is now 10 years old, and we have been in dispute for the duration. I wish I had found this sooner.

16. The website is so needed. I started to cry when I read the first commitment with my kids' names in it. Thank you for helping us through these heart-wrenching times. I wish I could have seen this earlier.
17. I loved it—absolutely loved it!! I am so thrilled and proud of my local court that they have required this website. I only wish it would have been here 5 years ago.
18. Very, very insightful, thought-provoking, and useful. Cried my way through much of it, actually. Wish I'd had it earlier. I have really acquired a new orientation on how I want to proceed with my soon to be ex-wife.
19. At first I didn't believe this was necessary but then I started. It was hard for me growing up in a broken family, and I don't want that for my little girl. I wish my parents could have used this website. It might have helped me grow up easier.
20. It is a fantastic website that I think ALL divorcing parents should visit. It really puts everything into perspective and reminded me who is really important through this process.
21. Utterly in awe. I've taken a court-ordered co-parenting class, and the information and focus here has reached a place in me that is hard to explain.
22. A great, wonderful, eye-opening experience. Thank you so much for helping me find myself again and helping me be a better parent to my son. How stupid I feel now to have let this bitterness go this far. Words cannot describe how this website has changed the way I feel about life and myself.
23. ABSOLUTELY A PHENOMENAL TOOL! Children are the only truly defenseless ones in a divorce, and this website is a great tool to help protect them.
24. Great combination of exercises, checklists/commitments, video/audio tracks, and attachments to read and save!
25. This is a thorough website that really helps parents put themselves in their children's shoes. I am a teacher and will recommend this site to my students' parents in these circumstances.
26. Fantastic! When you are in such pain, it is hard to remain focused on the fact that your children should be your primary concern. This website helped me to get my children back into the primary place they should occupy and give my anger a backseat.
27. It made me very aware of MY responsibilities toward our children. Given the interactions between my husband and myself recently, the encouragement that "I will act as an adult no matter how I am treated" was quite empowering.
28. Positively brilliant. Very informative, honest, open, and easy to understand. I can already think clearer about my situation and apply the help for my daughter's sake.
29. Some great points I never considered in the past. I honestly can't think of a single improvement this website needs.
30. It is so well organized and easy to follow. And amazingly impactful, starting with the three sisters. Everything about it made me want to do my very best for our children. This will soften anyone's heart.
31. This is such a great course. I really think it is an amazing program, and all parents who are divorcing should use it.

C. Some advantages of UpToParents.org

1. **An open-platform availability with no cost to parents or courts.** Two powerful advantages follow from this free availability of these sites. First, parents have unlimited, around-the-clock, and permanent access to the extensive content on *UpToParents*. They can view— at any time and as often as they like—their own work as well as videos and articles. Additionally, parents can, and often do, invite their co-parents, the children’s grandparents, and other close friends and families to view these materials to elicit their support for better family functioning.

Second, this free resource avoids the imposition of a number of financial costs and other burdens on families and courts themselves. Fees for other programs can be as high as \$30-60 per parent (or \$60-120 per family). Not only are courts burdened with consideration of waiver petitions, but family and court resources become less available for other useful programming such as parallel live classes and mediation.

2. **Availability in both English and Spanish, with instantaneous translation between the two.**
3. **Separate curricula for parents in three distinct circumstances: divorce cases, paternity cases, and cases where spouses are open to possible reconciliation.** All three curricula are available in both English and Spanish, with instant translation between languages.
4. **Unequalled engagement of parents through such strategies as (a) personalized use of children’s names and circumstances, (b) 15 instances of feedback specifically tailored to each parent’s actual responses, and (c) unequalled video, audio, and interactive content.** The narrow curricula in other programs are far surpassed here by an inspiring look at (i) one’s own children’s losses and the dangers to them from parent conflict and (ii) how responding to those children’s needs can be parents’ best way of serving their own interests as well.
5. **A process of self-education and personal restoration.** This relationship- and skills-based curriculum shines a bright light on matters that most parents care deeply about but can overlook in the painful processes of separation and divorce. These include children’s huge losses, pain, and risk factors from parent conflict as well as specific ways that parents can immediately respond appropriately for the sake of children and parents alike. The content is both informational and affective, giving parents’ complementary guidance to peace-making.

6. **Powerful written exercises specific to the children and family involved.**
 - A. Exercise A to describe each child's circumstances, losses, reactions to parent conflict, and needs.
 - B. Exercise B to list 10 compliments and good memories to share with the children about their other parent.
 - C. Exercise C to describe suggested improvements in parent interaction around the children.
 - D. Exercise D to create at least a skeletal parenting plan.
7. **Accommodation of different learning styles, levels of language skills, and family circumstances.** *UpToParents* is the only online resource offering a "layering" curriculum that allows parents to learn according to their particular learning styles, whether that be by written pages, videos, interactive articles, or journaling.
8. **Voices of actual children and parents in professionally produced videos.**
9. **A singularly complete curriculum with over twice the subject matter of other programs, all made possible by the personalized and interactive presentation that holds parents' interest.**
10. **Almost two decades of testing and improvement with over 250,000 parents in educative and mediation settings.**
11. **A merging function that blends parents' work into a set of "Agreed Commitments," a clarifying picture of co-parents' common interests and goals.**
12. **Complete freedom from the commercial links in other programs that can create both distraction and parent resistance.**
13. **Superior testing, upkeep, and improvement.**
14. **Unparalleled support for courts, other professionals, and parents.**

E. Sample referral rule from courts

In order that parents in marital dissolution (divorce) and paternity cases have the best opportunity to protect themselves and their children, the court orders as follows.

- (1) Whenever parents in a dissolution of marriage case (divorce) or paternity case have one or more children under age 18, they must complete the work on UpToParents.org and file with the court their Certificate of Completion. Certificates of Completion must be filed:
 - a. In dissolution (divorce cases) within 21 days of the filing of a petition for dissolution;
 - b. In paternity cases within 21 days of the court's finding of paternity.
- (2) The "Certificate of Completion" must be attached as an exhibit to a pleading entitled, "Certificate of Completion of [parent's name] from UpToParents.org" and reading in substance, "Attached is a copy of the Certificate of Completion showing that on [date] [name of parent] completed the Commitments work on UpToParents.org." Blank forms of this pleading are available in [identify office].

[An alternative where parents are sent to a class and completion of the website work is confirmed there]:

- (1) Whenever parents in a dissolution of marriage case (divorce) or paternity case have one or more children under the age of 18, they must attend the "Parents as Partners" class. The deadline for that attendance is:
 - a. In a dissolution of marriage case (divorce) within 30 days of the filing of a petition for dissolution of marriage, and
 - b. In a paternity case, within 30 days of the finding of paternity.

Parents must call the office of the "Parents as Partners" class at 202-555-8181 sufficiently in advance to arrange to attend the class.

- (2) As preparation for that class, parents must complete the work on UpToParents.org and take to the class copies of their Commitments, Exercise Responses, and Certificate of Conclusion available from links on the Conclusion page that will appear when the website is complete. Parents must bring these copied materials to their class to receive confirmation of attendance and credit for completion of the class requirement.

F. Sample referral notice from co-parenting educators

***Special Notice to Parents Referred to a
“Parenting as Partners” Class in Morguson County***

Here’s an important *head start* for your upcoming “Parenting as Partners” class.

Do the work on www.UpToParents.org. You may choose either the English or Spanish version from the drop-down box on the homepage. Once you finish, print out your completed work (including the Commitments you chose and your Exercise responses) from the Conclusion Page and take it to your class.

This website work is required by the Court, *and* it will help you understand some of what will be discussed at your class.

The website also has interesting videos and interactive articles that can help you.

If you don’t have Internet access, you can use any public library branch or the computer of a friend or family member. Get started soon on the website work, as it can take between 1-3 hours to complete.

Remember to take your finished website work (Commitments and Exercise Responses) to your class.

Thank you.

Howard Grossman, Ph.D.

G. Collaborative Professionals' Use of UpToParents.org

Collaborative family attorneys, divorce coaches, and child specialists may all find powerful assistance in their clients' use of UpToParents.org.

We're inclined to hope and believe Collaborative Professionals are more likely than others to embrace both that children's wellbeing ultimately depends on parents and also that most parents are fully capable of staying connected with (or reconnecting with) their natural wish to do well for their children. We certainly believe that everything said in this introductory article is worth Collaborative Professionals' consideration.

The myriad ways a couple operating within a Collaborative Agreement could benefit from using UpToParents.org certainly include these.

1. Each parent's completion of the workshop—*and* periodic review of their chosen Commitments and Exercise Responses.
2. The parents' option to use the "Merge function" on the Conclusion Page to combine their chosen Commitments into a set of Agreed Commitments (the ones both parents chose), something that can both underscore the commonality of the parents' best interests and suggest success strategies to discuss.
3. Parents' opportunity to meet directly to talk about their work on and reflections from UpToParents.org.
4. Parents having their Collaborative Professionals see and comment on their Commitments and Exercise Responses.
5. Using the almost inevitable similarity in sentiments in their UpToParents work to remain strongly committed to the Collaborative undertaking, including the pledge to be mindful of their children's best interests starting with mindful collaboration.

Here are samples of [Completed Commitments](#) and [Completed Exercises Responses](#) from the site.

And the following sample letters are ones Collaborative Professionals can adapt in correspondence to their clients in separation, divorce, and paternity cases.

#1 Sample Collaborative letter: From one attorney to the client

Dear Jonah:

Thank you for our recent meetings and your commitment to proceed in the letter and spirit of this Collaborative Process. As I've said, I think it will serve your best interests well.

I'm writing here about one strategy that can help in any case with children.

It's been a privilege hearing about Stacy and Jake. They sound like wonderful kids. I want to let you know about a free online co-parenting workshop you may find helpful: UpToParents.org. It's a terrific way parents can both reflect on the specifics of their children's special needs in challenging times like these and also use that focus as a useful light forward.

When you're finished with this work, you're welcome to send copies of it to me and let me know then if you think there are things from that workshop you'd like to speak about.

As always, please feel free to let me know if there's something you believe I can help with.

Cordially,

Elizabeth Hamilton
Jonas, Wilkins, Hamilton, and Jennings

Sample Collaborative letter #2: From both attorneys to both parent-clients

Dear Elizabeth and John:

Thank you for our recent meetings and your mutual commitment to proceed in the letter and spirit of this Collaborative Process.

We wanted to send you a joint letter about a free online co-parenting workshop you may find helpful: UpToParents.org. It's a terrific way parents can both reflect on the specifics of their children's special needs in challenging times like these and also use that focus as one of their useful lights forward.

The workshop is made for parents to do separately. When you're both finished, you'll see a link on the Conclusion Page where you can merge the Commitments you both chose into a set of Agreed Commitments. (Your

You're obviously free to use any of the ideas on this website as you think best. We would both be happy to hear your reactions and to see your finished work if you wish to share it.

Cordially,

Elizabeth Hamilton
Jonas, Wilkins, Hamilton, and Jennings

Gerald O'Reilly
O'Reilly and Associates

Sample Collaborative letter #3: From divorce coach

Dear Patty:

Thank you for our recent meetings and your commitment to proceed in the letter and spirit of this Collaborative Process. As I've said, I think it will serve your best interests well.

It's been a privilege hearing about Stacy and Jake. They sound like wonderful kids. I want to let you know about a free online co-parenting workshop you may find helpful: UpToParents.org. It's a terrific way parents can both reflect on the specifics of their children's special needs in challenging times like these and also use that focus as a useful light forward.

If you wish to use it, you'll see a link on the Conclusion Page that allows you to merge your chosen Commitments into a set of Agreed Commitments (the ones both parents choose).

I'd be pleased to see your work once you're finished. You can either copy and mail your chosen Commitments and Exercise Responses to me—or just give me your username and password from UpToParents.org so that I can log in and see your work.

As always, please feel free to let me know if there's something you believe I can help with.

Cordially,

Arnold Parsons, Ph.D.

Sample Collaborative letter #4: From child specialist

Dear Mindy and Michael:

Thank you for our recent meetings and your mutual commitment to proceed in the letter and spirit of this Collaborative Process.

As part of my child specialist work on behalf of you, Riley, and Jessica, I want to let you know about a free online co-parenting workshop you may find helpful: UpToParents.org. It's a terrific way parents can both reflect on the specifics of their children's special needs in challenging times like these and also use that focus as one of their useful lights forward.

The workshop is made for parents to do separately. When you're both finished, you'll see a link on the Conclusion Page where (if you wish) you can merge the Commitments you both chose into a set of Agreed Commitments.

Your Exercise Responses are confidential unless you choose to share them with each other.

I'd like to see your work once you're finished. You can either copy and mail your chosen Commitments and Exercise Responses to me—or just give me your username and password from UpToParents.org so that I can log in and see your work. I will keep your work confidential unless and until you say you wish me to share it with each of you and the rest of the Collaborative Team.

As always, be in touch with any concerns you have.

Cordially,

Patricia Madden, LCSW, LMFT