

Resources to Assist Family Mediation Involving Parents, Grandparents, and Other Family

From the creators of
UpToParents.org and ProudToParent.org

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Note: Most of these materials were created for cases involving issues between separated, never-married, or divorced parents. However, many of the same considerations apply to parent-grandparent cases. Consider these materials carefully, and then use your good judgment to see what fits for you and your family's circumstances.

Here are some video links to watch:

1. [3 Girls' Invisible Pain](#) (8:09)
2. [A Daughter Speaks about Survival](#) (3:16)
3. [9 Myths that Fool Even Smart Parents](#) (6:16)
4. [The Safety Zone that Protects Children](#) (6:02)
5. [8 Hidden Keys No One Has Told You About](#) (6:13)

After watching these videos and looking over the pages that follow, please answer the questions on the last page of this document.

We congratulate you on focusing on children's needs—and on using that focus to build a better future.

The 9 Myths that Fool Even Smart Parents and Grandparents

Myth	Truth
#1: “We have a competition.”	Almost always, parents and grandparents either win together or lose together. They all do best as a team.
#2: “We have legal problems.”	In most family cases, very few issues are legal ones. And usually the real issue for parents and grandparents is how to build good win-win cooperation for everyone’s sake.
#3: “We have a custody dispute.”	Almost no families have an actual custody dispute; instead, they have the chance to help the children and themselves by working together.
#4: “The judge will solve the problem.”	Judges’ decisions don’t solve a family’s problems; in fact, resorting to court almost always leaves parents, grandparents, children, and families more fractured.
#5: “This is complicated.”	The emotional challenges are great, but the answer is often a simple focus on children’s needs. Building peace for kids is usually everyone’s best light out of hurt.
#6: To protect the children, I must fight.	The fight can’t protect children because the fight is precisely what’s hurting the children. Success, therefore, isn’t winning a fight; it’s ending a fight.
#7: “Focusing on the children will hurt me.”	Far from hurting parents or grandparents, focusing on the children’s need for family cooperation helps everyone.
#8: “I’m not sad, just mad.”	Surprisingly often, parents and grandparents can find themselves in conflict due to the very losses that are hurting the children. Hurt should not be translated into a battle.
#9: “We’ll have no relationship.”	The children need parents and grandparents to have good relationships with each other. Restoring those good relationships will help the children, parents, and grandparents.

Note: This Child Safety Zone Pledge was conceived with separated parents in mind. But the ideas apply equally to cases involving parents and grandparents.

Child Safety Zone Pledge for Our Children

***Children have no defense
against their parents' anger.
--Dr. Ross Campbell***

The Philosophy of a Child Safety Zone:

There are about 10,000 minutes in a week, and on average most children of divorce see their parents together for about 4 of those minutes. This leaves the parents about 9,996 minutes when they can talk about any topic, no matter how difficult or emotional. Is it really selfish for the children to ask that the 4 minutes when they see their parents together be consistently peaceful?

Because these times together are so brief, all parents can give their children the gift of decent interaction during these times.

Our Pledge to Our Children:

We now agree that all times when our children see us together or hear us speaking ***belong to our children***. They make up their ***Child Safety Zone*** and are entirely for meeting their needs, including especially their need to see us act as responsible adults in a partnership for them. They are not for conflict or dealing with any difficult issues.

Other children receive this gift from their parents, and our children are no less deserving.

From today forward, we each give our children the gift of this ***Child Safety Zone***. Regardless of what my co-parent does or how I think I've been treated, I will always speak and act as a courteous and responsible adult during:

- All pick-ups and drop-offs.
- All other times our children see us together.
- All telephone conversations when our children know we're speaking.









With this agreement each of us will have the benefit of knowing that our children will be safer and happier—and that we can approach all family encounters confident of a civil time.

Signature and date

Signature and date

The 8 Hidden Keys No One Has Told You About

Here are 8 things (or as we call them 8 Hidden Keys) virtually all parents and grandparents can do to protect children and build a better future. And best of all, (1) they're free, (2) they can be done immediately, and (3) they can be done regardless of what anyone else is doing.

-  1. Observing the Child Safety Zone
-  2. Keeping children out of adult roles
-  3. Sharing 10 good things about the other people in their lives
-  4. Celebrating what they get to do with these other people
-  5. Cheerfully encouraging calls to these other people
-  6. Promptly sharing child-related information
-  7. Staying out of unnecessary legal combat
-  8. Enjoying and admiring the children

10 Earmarks of Successful Parent-Grandparent Cooperation

1. Parents' and grandparents' focus is always the kids and the future. They notice the children's deep losses and make every effort not to add to them.
2. Parents and grandparents recognize that their conflict is a source of deep pain and serious danger for children—and thus that their new peaceful and courteous relationship is essential.
3. Parents and grandparents sincerely support the children's contact and good relationships with each other. They are friends to each other's relationships with the children.
4. Parents and grandparents discard competition and embrace cooperation. They realize they have one scorecard, the fragile children's well-being, and they score well by reducing conflict and building cooperation.
5. Parents and grandparents constantly observe the *8 Hidden Keys*, things they can do immediately, for free, and regardless of what anyone else is doing.
 - Living by the Child Safety Zone.
 - Keeping the children out of adult roles.
 - Sharing with them 10 good things about the other important people in their lives.
 - Celebrating what the children get to do with those other people.
 - Cheerfully encouraging their calls to those other people.
 - Promptly sharing child-related information.
 - Staying out of unnecessary legal combat.
 - Enjoying and admiring the children.
6. Parents and grandparents practice forgiveness.
7. Parents and grandparents honestly and courageously address and then put away whatever issues brought conflict into the family.
8. The new relationship between parents and grandparents is characterized by transparent, trust-building interaction.
9. Everything passes through this test: will this statement, action, or position help the children? Will it help minimize their already enormous losses? Will it reduce their hurt today and increase their chances of broad success tomorrow?
10. Parents and grandparents teach their "tribes" (close family and friends, new partners, etc.) this new way of relating.

Questions for Grandparents and Parents in Mediation

If you mediator or counselor requests, please write out your most thoughtful responses to the following questions and send them to your mediator or counselor. Be thorough, constructive, and creative as you begin constructing a new day.

1. Please list the major losses in the lives of the children involved here. These should include both losses related to the family's circumstances (for example, the unavailability of a parent, conflict in the family, etc.) and other losses (the death of a relative or pet, any handicaps, etc.).
2. Many lucky children have families that work well together, and the child/children involved in you case are going to be in competition with those lucky children. How concerned are you to make sure your child/children are not at a disadvantage because of family conflict?
3. Family members do not necessarily need to be friends with each other, but they should be friends to each other's relationships with the children in the family. In other words, children are usually best off if the adults support the children's good relationships with and good opinions of all the important adults in their lives. Do you feel that the other adult or adults in this matter are friends to your relationship with the child/children involved?
4. Would the other adult or adults in this matter say that you are a friend to their relationship with the child/children involved?
5. What are you willing to do to be a better friend to that relationship?
6. What other changes would you like to see to help the family work better and to help any children who are involved?
7. Is there anything else you wish you mediator or counselor to know?
8. Are there any parts of your answers that you wish to be kept confidential (that is, not shared with the other persons involved in this mediation)?