

CO-PARENTING COUNSELING:

**A FOUR LETTER WORD FOR
INTERCOURSE ENDING IN K.**

TALK

FIRST A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME.

- ✘ Therapist in private practice
- ✘ LPA = Licensed Psychological Associate
- ✘ Practicing since 2001
- ✘ Independent practice since 2005.
- ✘ 10 years experience in Juvenile Corrections
- ✘ 10-15% of my practice is directly involved in custody litigation.

**FIRST A DIGRESSION TO SET
THE SCENE**

SOME DATA POINTS

- ✘ 10% of cases take up 90% of the court's time
- ✘ Custody litigation can continue up to the child's 18th birthday and beyond.
 - + http://chicagoist.com/2011/08/29/lawsuit_alleging_bad_mothering_dism.php
- ✘ Parents may spend \$50,000.00-\$100,00.00
- ✘ Conflict between parents is more harmful to children than divorce.

CO-PARENTING COUNSELING

PURPOSE:

- ✘ Create a functional co-parenting relationship.
- ✘ Shepherd children to functioning independent adulthood.
- ✘ Reduce or eliminate the need for litigation.
- ✘ Improve parents' ability to resolve issues and make decisions.

GET SOMETHING IN WRITING. PLEASE!

Co-parenting may be.....

- ✘ Suggested by a C.I., G.A.L., or Judge.
- ✘ Recommended by C.I., G.A.L., or Judge.
- ✘ Agreed to by the parties.
- ✘ Ordered by the Judge.
 - * Oral
 - * Written

In any case, save everybody a lot of confusion and trouble and get something in writing.

KEEP CO-PARENTING COUNSELING OUT OF COURT.

- ✘ Create a safe zone for parents to work.
- ✘ Limit disclosure to attendance data.
- ✘ Please do not ask for records or testimony from Co-parenting counselor.
- ✘ Will be less effective if parents are ‘performing’ for the court.

IS CO-PARENTING COUNSELING APPROPRIATE?

These issues preclude Co-parenting Counseling.

- ✘ Domestic violence.
- ✘ Active, untreated substance abuse.
- ✘ Safety issues.

WHEN TO START?

The sooner the better.

- ✘ A good divorce is better than a bad marriage.
- ✘ Get the divorce off to a good start.
- ✘ A few sessions now may save a lot of trouble later.
- ✘ Getting parents playing by the same set of rules will save wear and tear on everyone.

CUSTODY VS. CO-PARENTING COUNSELING

- ✘ Custody litigation and Co-parenting counseling may equal cognitive dissonance.
- ✘ Is not mediation or settlement but may challenge parents to examine obstacles to communication and cooperation:
 - + Issues in dispute – win/win vs. win/lose approach
 - + Ideal – resolve issues without going to court.
 - + Counseling may involve exercises in resolving issues.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX...

- ✘ Years of intense litigation create a kind of classical conditioning.
- ✘ Parents act and react in patterned ways to each other.
- ✘ Past incidents color perceptions of present issues.
- ✘ Challenge parents to think in new ways about each other.

OLIVE BRANCH OR CLUB?

- ✘ Emotional reality vs. objective data.
- ✘ Emotions as information not calls to action.
- ✘ Emotions are to be felt and not acted on.

TO BE CONTINUED....

Next month:

- ✘ The curriculum
- ✘ Examples of homework given
- ✘ Accepting the situation as it is. (No matter what you do The Other will never change.)
- ✘ Adapting to The Unchanging Other
- ✘ Rewriting the narrative
- ✘ Applying the rules of shared parenting