

# Factors Affecting Minor & Adult Children's Adjustment to Parental Separation & Divorce

Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT



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# Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. Educate clients about:

- a. The myriad factors that contribute to minor and adult children's adjustment to parental separation and divorce
- b. The findings of over thirty years of worldwide research about children's adjustment to parental separation and divorce
- c. The research findings on child-focused and child-inclusive divorce processes like collaborative divorce and divorce mediation



## Learning Objectives (cont)

Participants will be able to:

1. Educate clients about:

d. What the unmet needs of their children, both minor and adult, could be and assist them to identify and meet the unmet needs of their children, thereby providing parents the opportunity to ensure their children's optimum adjustment to separation and divorce and better outcomes for their restructuring family

2. Describe to clients:

a. The typical reactions by age group of children (minor and adult) of divorce



## Learning Objectives (cont)

Participants will be able to:

2. Describe to clients:

b. The typical signs of stress by age group in children (minor and adult) of divorce

c. Remedy ideas and extensive in print and online resources to use to help parents in ensuring their children's optimum adjustment

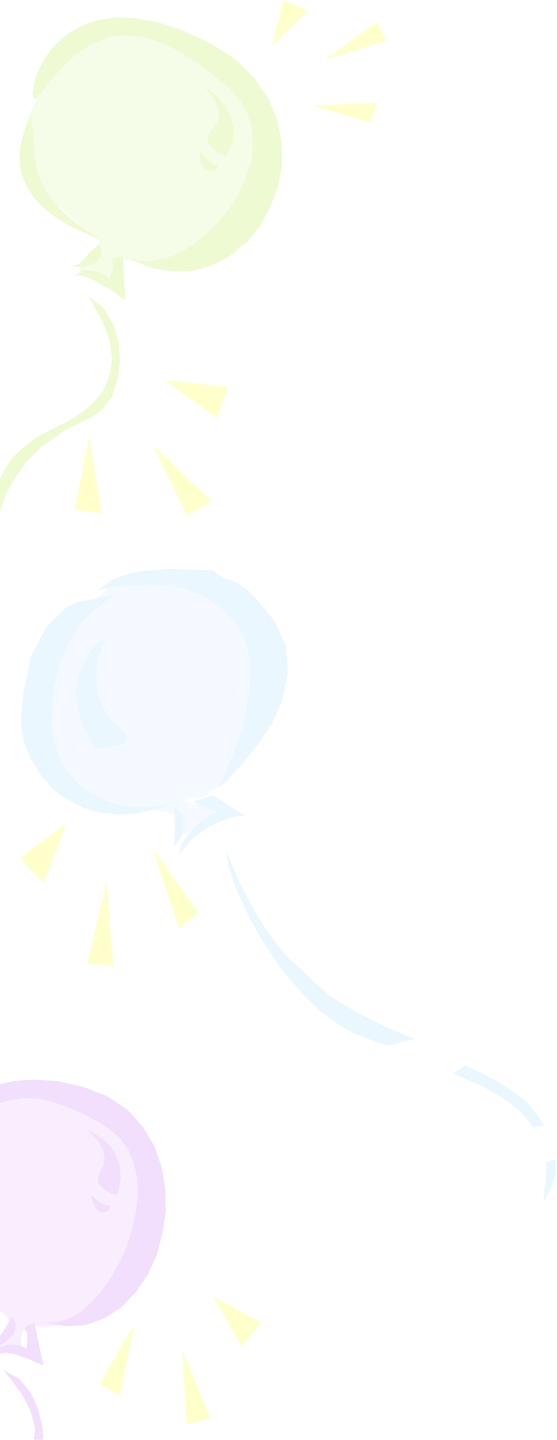
3. Utilize the information and tools taught in this training to facilitate better outcomes for parents and their children with more durable agreements

# My Journey to Collaborative Divorce



A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a streamer and has several small yellow triangular shapes around it, resembling confetti or streamer ends.

## Attendees' goals for this training



# Experiential exercise

Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them leaves an impression.

~ Haim Ginott, American Child Psychologist



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A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a string and has several small yellow triangular shapes radiating from it, resembling party streamers or confetti.

# 3-year-old boy video

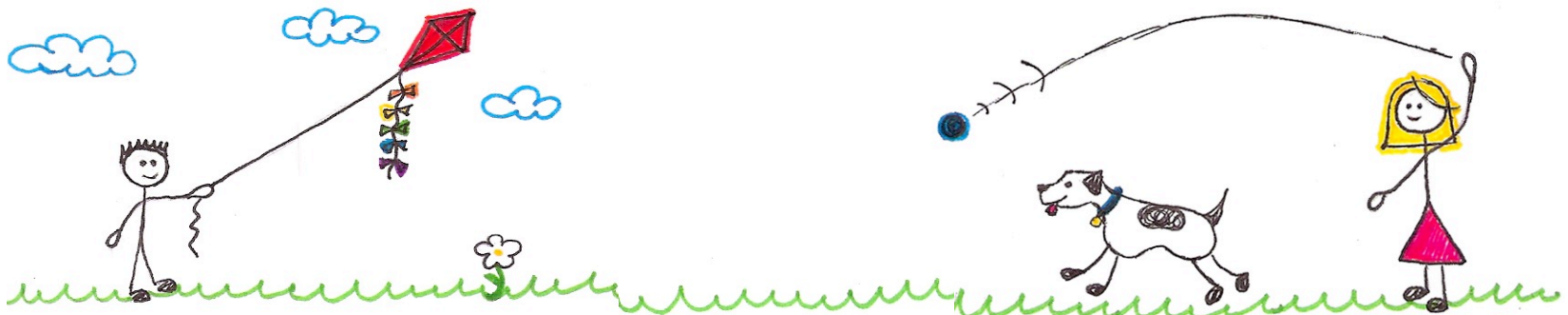
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# Divorce is never a neutral event for children

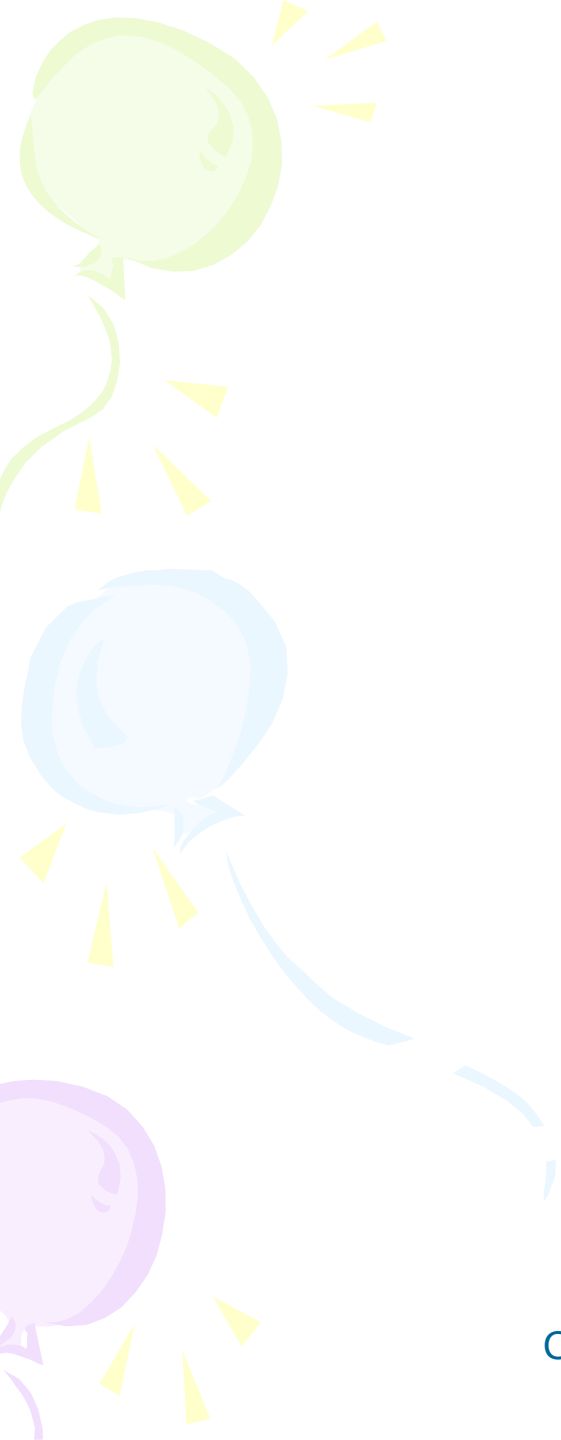
**Shock**  
**Changes**  
**Losses**  
**Grieving**  
**Sadness**  
**Depression**

**Anger**  
**Internalized stress**  
**Loneliness**  
**Uncertainty**  
**Loyalty conflicts**  
**Role reversal**

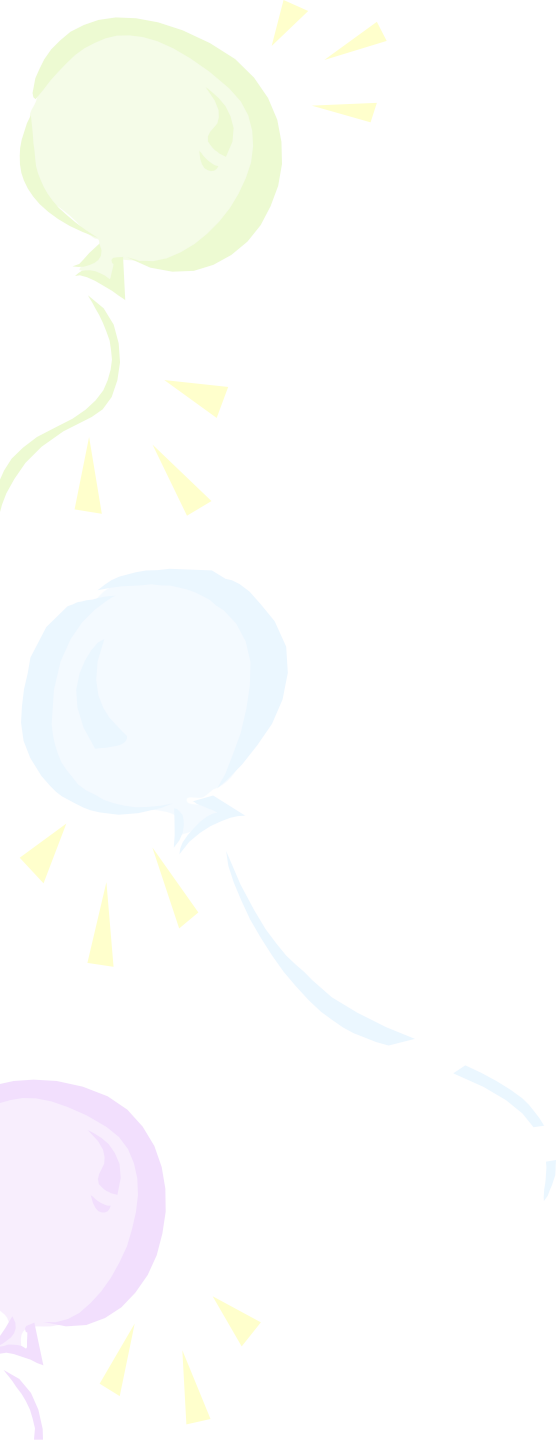
**Guilt**  
**Blame**  
**Insecurity**  
**Fear**  
**Confusion**  
**Anxiety**



# A Storm

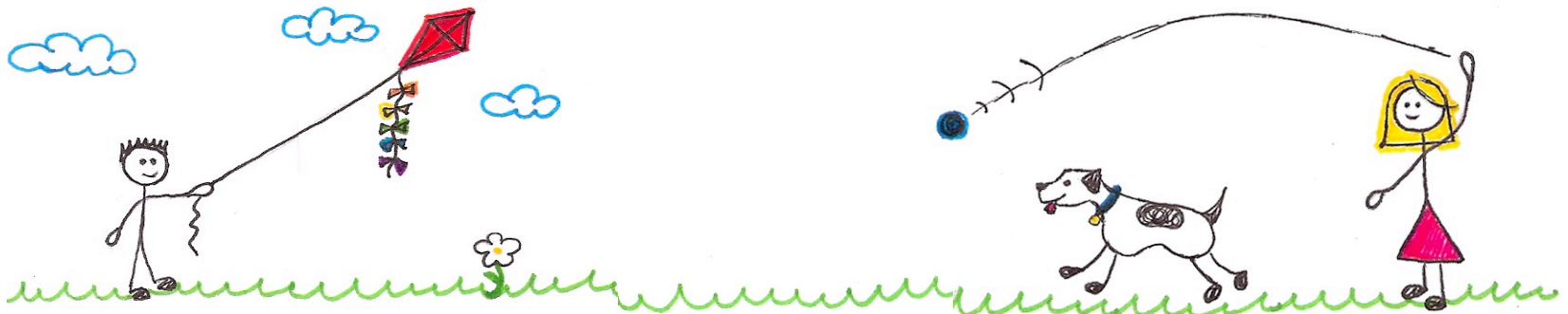


# It's All My Fault



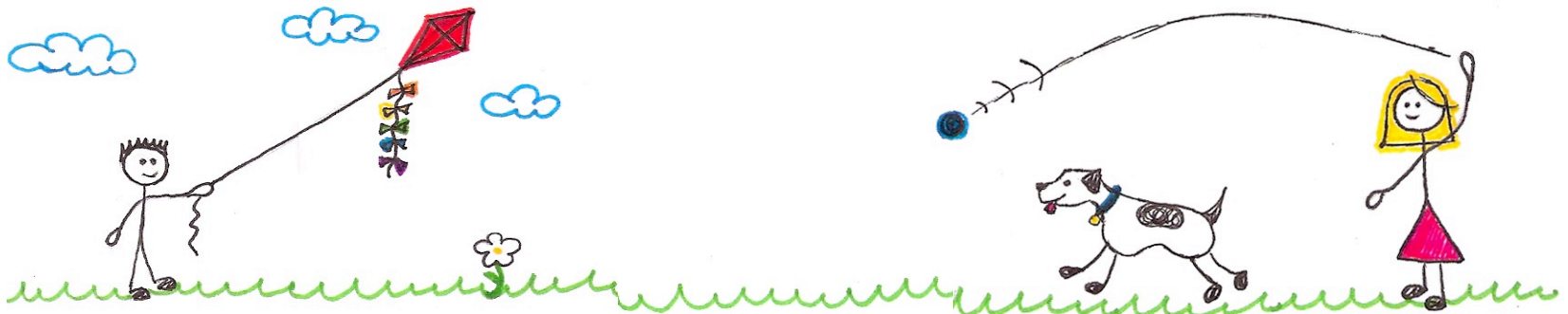
# Divorce is never a neutral event for children

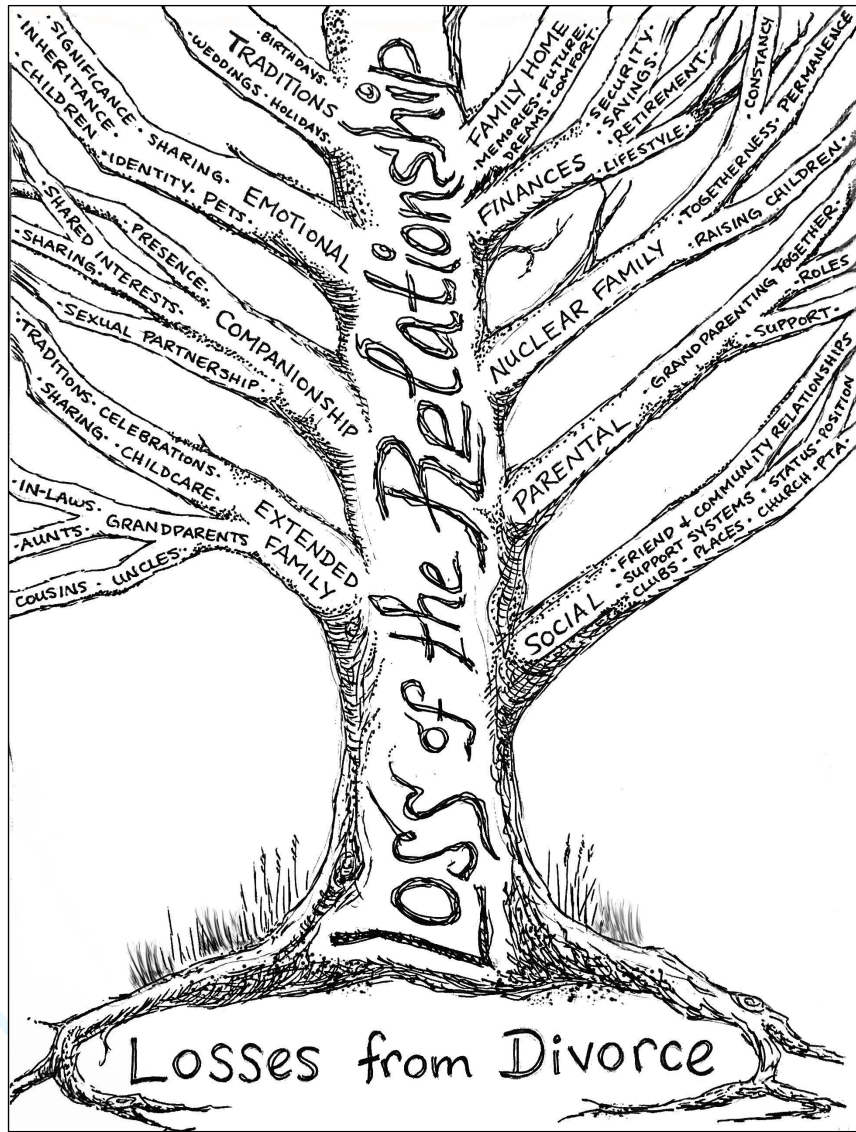
- Many children can deal with their parents' divorce in a reasonably constructive manner due to:
  - Their inherent resiliency
  - Parents' ability to create a healthy coparenting relationship
  - Support of extended family and others in the community



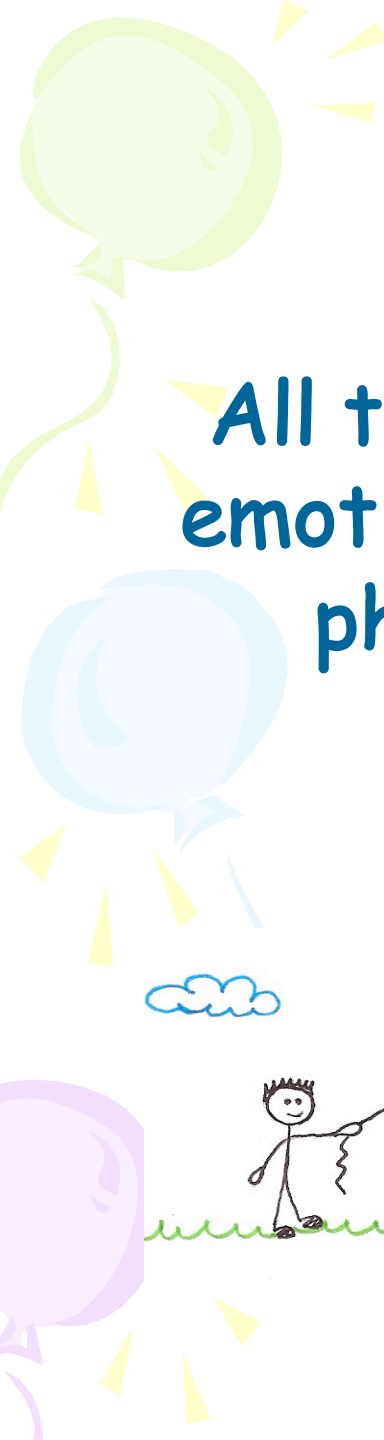
# Divorce is never a neutral event for children

- Children may have difficulty adjusting due to:
  - Reduced parenting time with one or both parents
  - Financial instability
  - Relocation - changing schools and losing friends
  - Inconvenience of traveling between the parent's homes





Losses from Divorce illustration by Anja Hughes from *Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guidebook for Adult Children of Gray Divorce* by Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D. & Bruce R. Fredenburg, LMFT. Reprinted with permission.

A decorative background on the left side of the slide features a large green balloon at the top, a light blue balloon in the middle, and a purple balloon at the bottom. Yellow triangular rays emanate from behind the balloons, suggesting a bright sun. The text is centered in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.


**All these factors can affect children's emotional stability, school performance, physical conditions, behavior, and social relationships.**







If you want the children to be ok, help the  
parents to be ok.



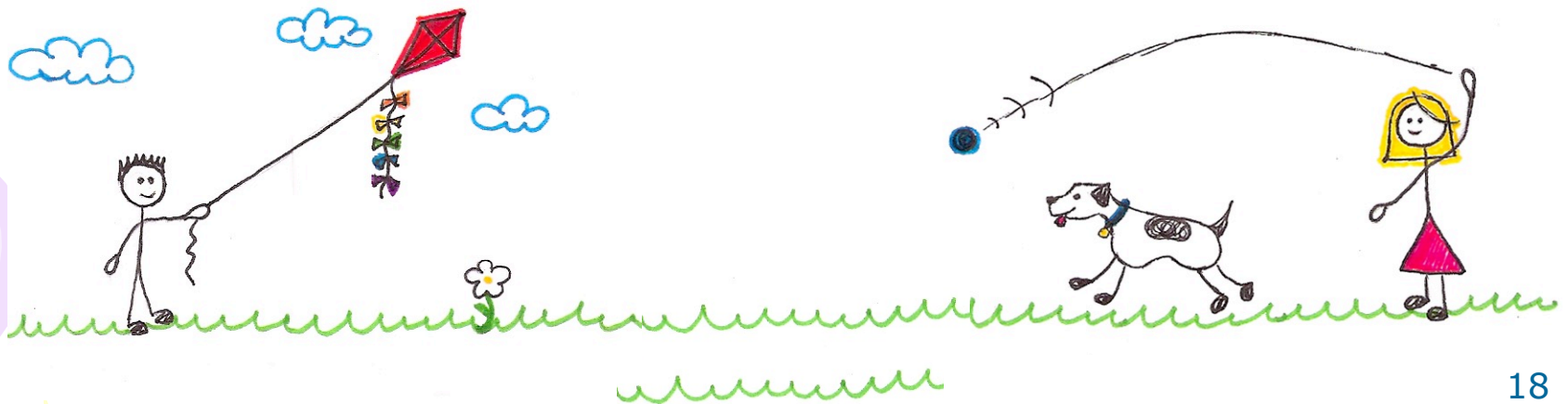
~ Virginia Satir, American therapist and  
developer of family therapy



# Single Most Important Factor that Harms Children of Divorce of All Ages

Continual conflict between their parents, that is, their coparenting relationship -  
**amicable** or **high-conflict**?

Consensual dispute resolution or litigation?



# 6-year-old girl video





# High Conflict Couples

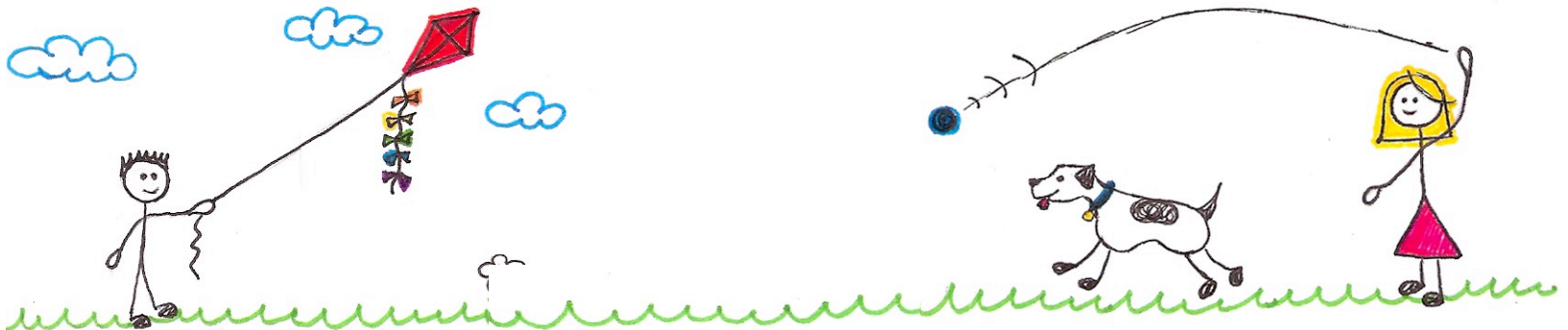
- **Strong Prevalence of Personality Disorders**  
(National Institute of Health studies)
- **21.5% of the U.D. population currently meet the criteria of an Axis II personality disorder\***
- **Personality disorders have a strong overlap and have a higher incidence of substance abuse, depression and other disorders\***

\*Journal of Clinical Psychiatry 7/04, 4/08, 7/08

# Factors Affecting Adjustment at All Ages

Each parent's:

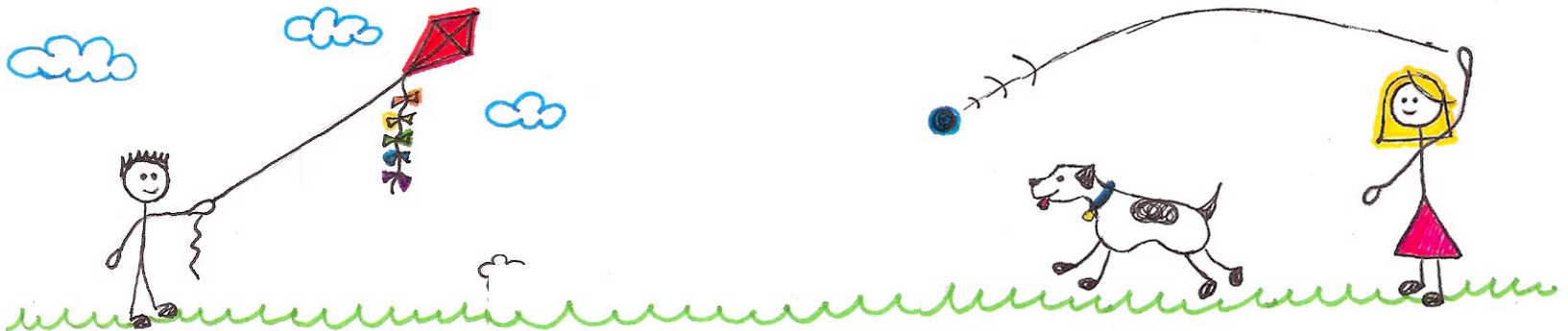
- Personality & temperament
- Age
- Cognitive development
- Emotional development & EQ
- Parenting style



# Factors Affecting Children's Adjustment at All Ages

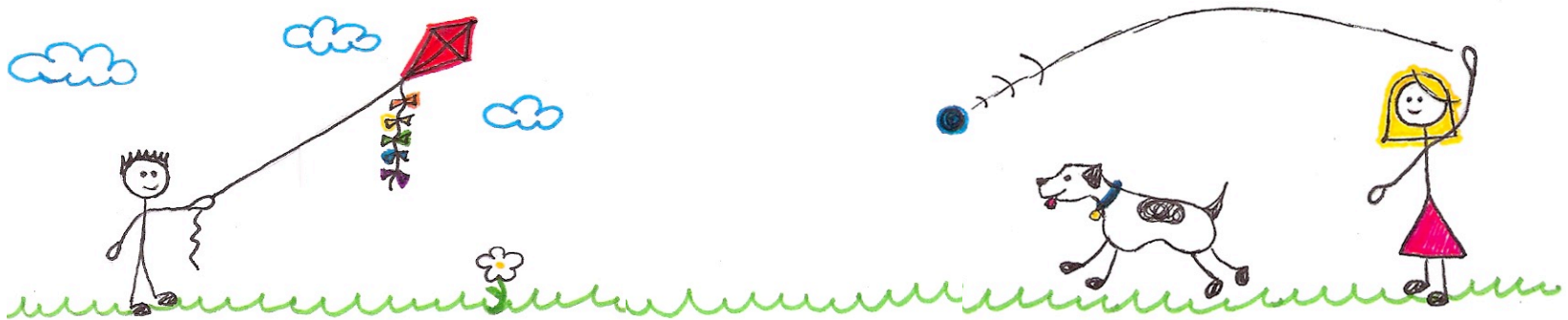
## Child's:

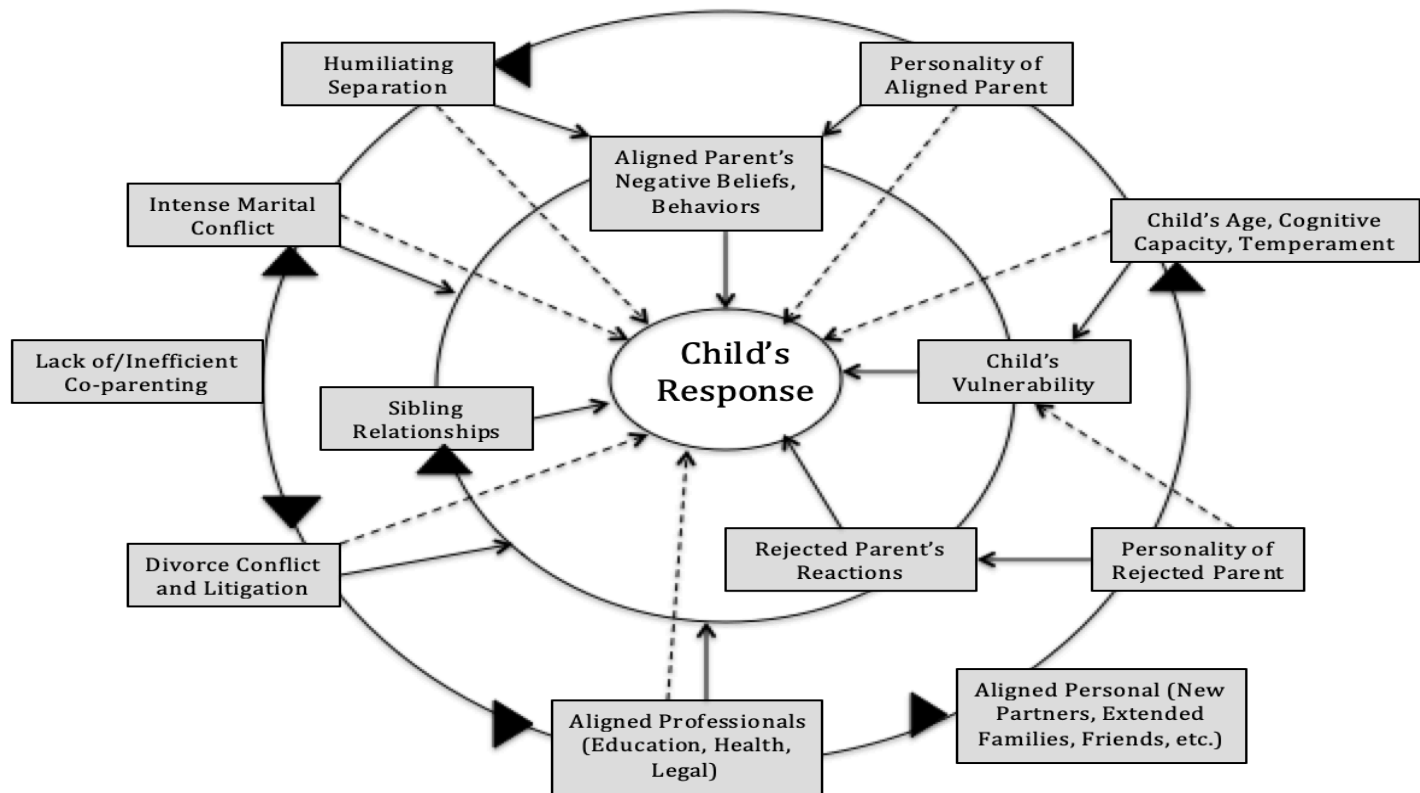
- Personality & temperament
- Age
- Cognitive development
- Emotional development & EQ
- Special needs



# Factors Affecting Children's Adjustment at All Ages

- Other relationships:
  - Marital
  - Siblings
  - Extended family
  - Professional: School, religious, therapist
  - Personal: New partners, community, friends
- Domestic violence: Spousal, child, elder



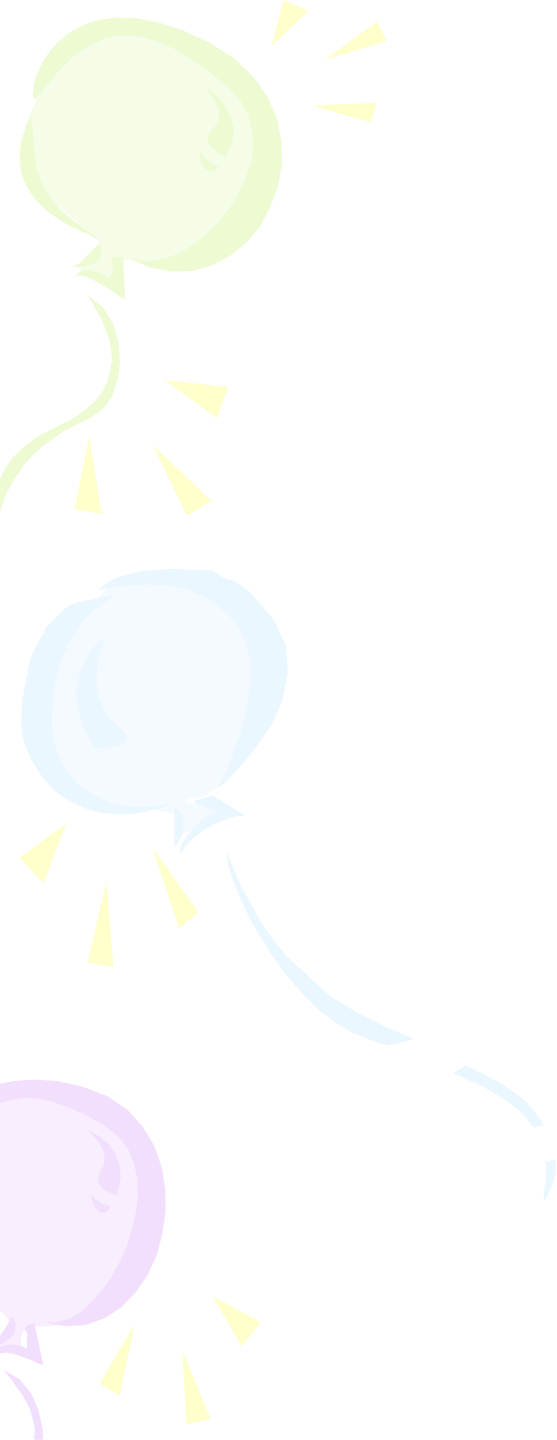


Barbara Fidler, Ph.D., registered clinical developmental psychologist, and Margaret (Peggie) Ward, Ph.D., clinical-forensic psychologist (2017). "Clinical Decision-Making in Parent-Child Contact Problem Cases." in A.M. Judge & R. M. Deutsch (Eds.), *Overcoming Parent-Child Contact Problems: Family Based Interventions for Resistance, Rejection, and Alienation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.) have reformulated the below graphic from Kelly and Johnston (2001) by adding the rectangles containing Lack of/Inefficient Coparenting, and Aligned/Personal (New Partners, Extended Families, Friends, etc.)









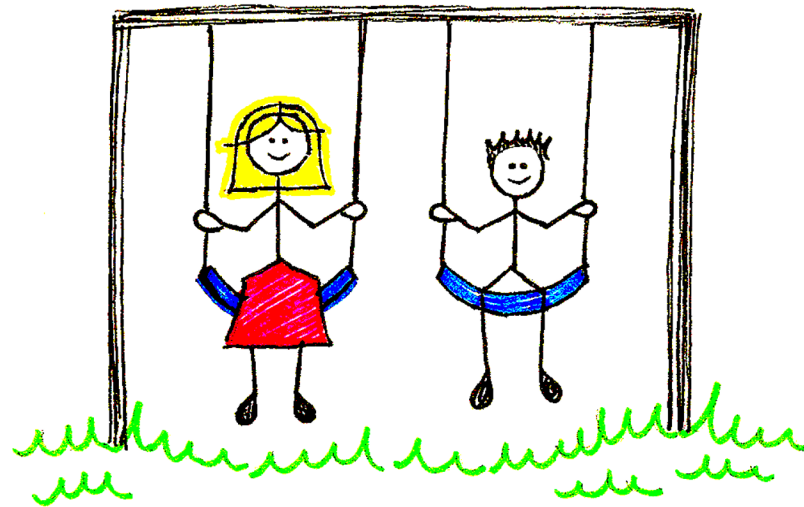
# Parent videos

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a string and has several small yellow triangular shapes radiating from it, resembling confetti or streamers. The balloons are positioned vertically along the left edge of the slide.

# Vignette in breakout rooms



# Questions and Answers



Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT  
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# Factors Affecting Minor and Adult Children's Adjustment to Parental Separation and Divorce

Presented by Carol Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT



Divorce is never a neutral event for children, both minor and adult children. American child psychologist Haim Ginott wrote, "Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them leaves an impression."

It is crucial that legal, financial, and mental health professionals understand the myriad factors affecting children's adjustment to parental separation and divorce, so we can educate parents how to ensure their children's optimum adjustment. Children's drawings, videos, audios, research findings, handouts, and interactive exercises ensure a multi-modal learning experience.

This training examines in depth the myriad factors that contribute to minor and adult children's adjustment to parental separation and divorce and provides information for professionals to share with their clients to help them create the healthiest environment for their children's optimum adjustment. An experienced, pioneering collaborative divorce coach, child specialist, family specialist, mediator, collaborative trainer, and author educates about:

1. The findings of over thirty years of worldwide research about children's adjustment to parental separation and divorce.
2. Research findings about child-focused and child-inclusive divorce processes like collaborative divorce and divorce mediation.
3. The myriad factors that contribute to minor and adult children's adjustment to parental separation and divorce.
4. Typical reactions by age group of children to divorce.
5. Typical signs of stress by age group in children of divorce.
6. Remedy ideas for parents to help their children's optimum adjustment.
7. Extensive resources in print and online to share with parents to use in ensuring their children's optimum adjustment.

## **Learning Objectives:**

Participants will be able to:

1. Educate clients about:
  - a. The myriad factors that contribute to minor and adult children's adjustment to parental separation and divorce.
  - b. The findings of over thirty years of worldwide research about children's adjustment to parental separation and divorce.
  - c. The research findings on child-focused and child-inclusive divorce processes like collaborative divorce and divorce mediation.
  - d. What the unmet needs of their children, both minor and adult, could be and assist them to identify and meet the unmet needs of their children, thereby providing parents the opportunity to ensure their children's optimum adjustment to separation and divorce and better outcomes for their restructuring family.
  
2. Describe to clients:
  - a. The typical reactions by age group of children (minor and adult) of divorce
  - b. The typical signs of stress by age group in children (minor and adult) of divorce
  - c. Remedy ideas and extensive in print and online resources to use to help parents in ensuring their children's optimum adjustment
  
3. Utilize the information and tools taught in this training to facilitate better outcomes for parents and their children with more durable agreements.

### **About Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT**

Dr. Hughes is a California-licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, board certified in clinical hypnosis, author, and family-focused divorce professional, who works with children, adolescents, and adults in her private practice in Laguna Hills, California. She holds her doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology, achieving both summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa honors. She is also a two-time Fulbright Scholar.

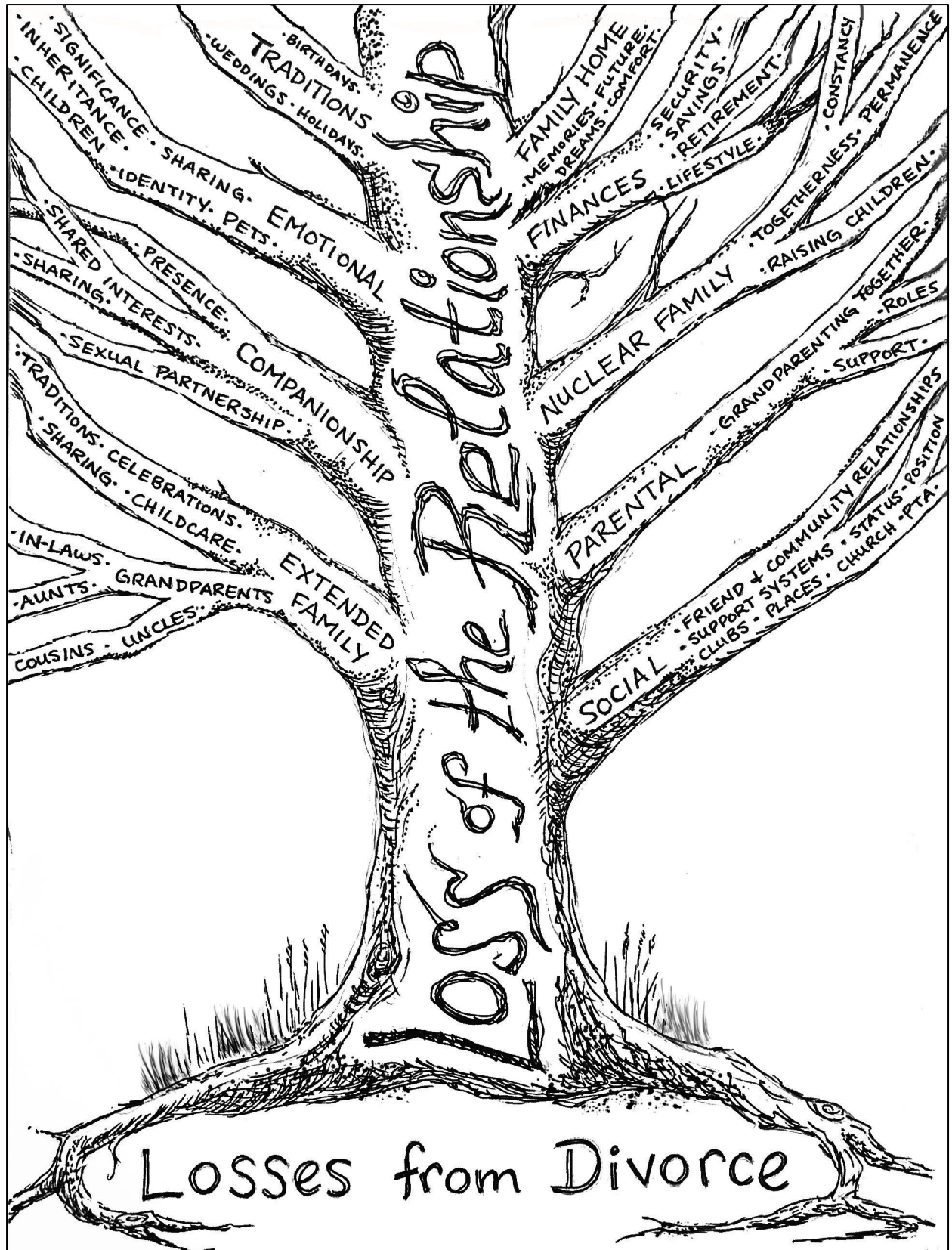


In 2003, Carol was a co-founder of Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County, California, where she has served on its board of directors in many capacities including past President. She has also served on the board of directors of California's statewide organization Collaborative Practice California and various IACP Committees.

In 2011 CP Cal honored Carol with the Eureka Award that recognizes those who have made significant contributions and demonstrated an abiding dedication to establishing and sustaining Collaborative Practice in California.

Carol is a trainer in the collaborative divorce and co-team divorce mediation processes and a frequent presenter at Collaborative Practice California, International Academy of Collaborative Professionals, and Association of Family and Conciliation Courts conferences.

She is the co-author of *Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guide for Adult Children of Gray Divorce*, recently published by Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.



Losses from Divorce illustration by Anja Hughes from *Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guidebook for Adult Children of Gray Divorce* by Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D. & Bruce R. Fredenburg, LMFT. Reprinted with permission.

Crafts

Tulia



Empathy

Thomas



## **TIPS FOR PARENTS ENGAGED IN THE COLLABORATIVE FAMILY LAW PROCESS**

By Gay G. Cox, J.D., and Honey A. Sheff, Ph.D.

An earlier version of this paper under the same title written by Gay G. Cox has been published with permission on the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals' website ([www.collaborativepractice.com](http://www.collaborativepractice.com)), and twelve of the tips were published with permission as a "Memo to Parents in the Collaborative Process," *The Collaborative Review*, Vol. 5, Issue 3 (Fall 2003)

You are to be commended for choosing Collaborative Practice as the means to solve any problems that you and your children's other parent might have because you decided to separate. It is evident that you want the best possible outcome for your children and see this process as a means of achieving it. Based on experience with families who select this method of problem-solving, it is apparent that they tend to have some very important common values. They are parents who desire to:

1. Help their children adjust to the inevitable changes that occur when parents have differences that result in their living apart, and at the same time recognize that their children's needs will vary depending on their developmental levels and differences. (Making Healthy Transitions)
2. Reduce parental conflict and provide the children a conflict-free safe environment, thereby minimizing the emotionally destructive effects high conflict is known to have on children. (Minimizing Conflict)
3. Ensure that the children feel loved by significant adults in their lives, most importantly, by their parents. (Showing Love)
4. Assure the children that it is never a child's fault that the parents are having difficulties, struggling to resolve issues, separating or divorcing. (Avoiding Blame)
5. Encourage a positive and healthy parent-child relationship between the children and their other parent, thereby protecting the children from experiencing torn loyalties. (Fostering Good Relationships)
6. Continue to help the children "feel they are heard," by actively listening to their opinions and preferences, while at the same time not burdening the children with parental decision-making. (Hearing the Voice of the Child)
7. Allow the children to have as normal a life as possible while the matter is being resolved, as well as in the future. (Providing a Safe Environment)
8. Spare the children from being burdened with parental responsibilities and roles during a time when parents realize they are not functioning at their best, and shield them from being put in the middle and serving the role of messenger. (Letting the Children Be Children)
9. Recognize if a child is overly stressed by the changes in his or her life and utilize appropriate resources to help the child cope. (Seeking Professional Help)
10. Preserve financial resources that need to be dedicated to the children's needs, including the future education of the children. (Saving Money)
11. Model healthy communication and problem-solving skills. (Being Positive Role Models)
12. Recognize the need for compromise in their decision making so that meeting their children's needs remains their top priority. (Maintaining Flexibility)
13. Choose from all the options for parenting time and allocation of parental responsibilities those that have the greatest likelihood of the best possible result for the sake of the children, taking into consideration the unique needs of their family. (Achieving the Best Possible Outcome)
14. Understand that development is not a static process and that children's needs change over time, so that decisions and plans must be adjusted accordingly if their children are going to thrive and succeed. (Re-evaluating and Adapting to Change)

## **Children Learn What They Live**

If a child lives with criticism,

He learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,

She learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule,

He learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame,

She learns to be guilt.

If a child lives with tolerance,

He learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement,

She learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise,

He learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness,

She learns justice.

If a child lives with security,

He learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval,

She learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,

He learns to find love in the world.

Compliments of Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT  
Psychotherapist, Collaborative Divorce Coach,  
Family and Child Specialist, and Mediator  
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[drcarolhughes@me.com](mailto:drcarolhughes@me.com)

## A Child Custody View from the Bench

In a case regarding the parents' claims for custody of their children, the presiding family court judge eloquently expressed the court's outlook as to why parents should do all that they can to resolve their issues before asking the court to decide the future of their family. We thank the Honorable Paul W. Garfinkel for his permission to reprint his words for the benefit of all parents, in South Carolina and elsewhere, who may be facing difficult choices as to what is best for their children:

*I want to make a few comments to you about how important it is to your family to resolve this case. . . . I know that as both of you sit here today each of you are convinced of the merit of your own case and the rightness of your own position. However, asking your attorney to convert your convictions and beliefs into evidence that will result in a verdict in your favor is asking for what I believe the most difficult task that a trial attorney can be required to do.*

*A custody case is much different than any accident case or a criminal trial. In those cases, an attorney is only asked to prove what happened at a specific date and place. All of the events have been fixed and are unchanging. A custody case is much different. You are asking your attorneys not to paint a picture in time but to present a movie. The movie must show over a broad range of time how each of you parent. Then I must decide which of you is the better parent.*

*Can you imagine if you had to prove that DaVinci's "Last Supper" was a better painting than Michelangelo's "Creation," and say that you had to prove this to someone who had never seen either painting and you weren't allowed to show the paintings to them? I suppose you could hire the curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art who would come to court and testify about composition, color, depth, character, and proportion. Or I suppose you could bring in some ordinary people to say which one they think is better. Maybe you could take a poll. This is what you are asking your attorneys to do in this case. They have to prove to me who is the better parent, but they have no way of showing me exactly how you parent. They can't take me to the study sessions so I can see what a good tutor Dad is. They can't bring me into your child's bedroom at 5 a.m. to see how Mom comforts the child who is awakened with a fever. I want you and I want your attorneys to bring up those incidents which show you to be caring and loving parents, and I am sure they will try. However, it is more likely that they will be forced to show the other parent at his or her worst. Neither of these efforts will work very well. In trying to prove the positives you will discover that with the passage of time, the inability of witnesses to describe the situation with the same force with which it occurred, just the difficulty of putting into words other peoples' thoughts, feelings and actions, all of these combine to make grey what you felt was vivid or blunt . . . what you thought was poignant. On the other hand, the negatives will seem to make you look like the worst parent that ever lived. Did you ever send one of your children to school without [his or her] lunch? Did you ever forget to give one of your children [his or her] medicine? Did you ever say about your child "I could have strangled her?" We probably have all done those things, and it will be presented as if you are the most neglectful or abusive parent.*

*At the end of the trial any goodwill each of you had for the other, if there is any, will have been totally destroyed.*

*It is both of you who must be parents of these children until either you or they die. Neither I nor any of these lawyers . . . will be there for you for the remainder of this long journey. We could try to do our best to get you pointed in the right direction and maybe even help you along, but it is only in the first few steps. In the end, it is both of you who must raise these children.*

*If your children could reach into their hearts and tell you exactly what they think and feel about what is going on here, if they could get beyond the hurt we know they must feel, we all know what they would say. First they would say, "I wish Mom and Dad were back together." Knowing this will not happen, they would say, "I wish they would just stop fighting." No doubt they love you so much they are probably blaming themselves for your original breakup. It is time you get past the anger and put aside the hurt. You may even have to forgive. The pain that has been caused here arises from the conflict between each of you and has nothing to do with the children.*

*Your children want this conflict to end. You have the chance to leave there today with an agreement that is in the best interest of your children. But it is an agreement that you must reach together. You must be willing to put aside your differences and be willing to accommodate each other's needs. But most importantly you must be ready now to put the needs of your children first.*

*I know that your children want you to settle this case. You can do the right thing and you can start now. Put aside what has happened in the past. This is the judgment day for your children. It's not about you. And think about the additional damage you are going to cause to these children. I can tell you right now it has happened and it happens every time. Put aside your own egos and swallow them. Leave it in this courtroom . . . we've had a lot of egos left in this courtroom. You don't see them but I do because I see parents who are willing to put their children's welfare above their own ego. And they leave it right here and they know and understand what is really best for the children.*

~The Honorable Paul W. Garfinkel

Compliments of Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT  
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## DIVORCE RULES

Dear Mom and Dad, I'm just a kid, so please ...

**1. Do not talk badly about my other parent.**

(This makes me feel torn apart! It also makes me feel bad about myself!)

**2. Do not talk about my other parent's friends or relatives.**

(Let me care for someone, even if you don't.)

**3. Do not talk about the divorce or other grown-up stuff.**

(This makes me feel sick. Please leave me out of it!)

**4. Do not talk about child support.**

(This makes me feel guilty or like I'm a possession instead of your kid.)

**5. Do not make me feel bad when I enjoy time with my other parent.**

(This makes me afraid to tell you things.)

**6. Do not block my visits or prevent me from speaking to my other parent on the phone.**

(This makes me very upset.)

**7. Do not interrupt my time with my other parent by calling too much or by planning my activities during our time together.**

**8. Do not argue in front of me or on the phone when I can hear you!**

(This just turns my stomach inside out.)

**9. Do not ask me to spy for you when I am at my other parent's home.**

(This makes me feel disloyal and dishonest.)

**10. Do not ask me to keep secrets from my other parent.**

(Secrets make me feel anxious.)

**11. Do not ask me questions about my other parent's life or about our time together.**

(This makes me feel uncomfortable. So just let me tell you.)

**12. Do not give me verbal messages to deliver to my other parent.**

(I end up feeling anxious about their reaction. So please just call them, leave them a message at work or send them an email.)

**13. Do not send written messages with me or place them in my bag.**

(This also makes me uncomfortable.)

**14. Do not blame my other parent for the divorce or for things that go wrong in your life.**

(This really feels terrible! I end up wanting to defend them from your attack. Sometimes it makes me feel sorry for you and that makes me want to protect you. I just want to be a kid, so please, please ... stop putting me in the middle!)

**15. Do not treat me like an adult. Please find a friend or a therapist to talk to.**

(It causes way too much stress for me.)

**16. Do not ignore my other parent or sit on opposite sides of the room during my school or sports activities.**

(This makes me very sad and embarrassed. Please act like parents and be friendly, even if it is just for me.)

**17. Do let me take items to my other home as long as I can carry them back and forth.**

(Otherwise it feels like you are treating me as a possession.)

**18. Do not use guilt to pressure me to love you more and do not ask me where I want to live.**

**19. Do realize that I have two homes, not just one. I'd also really appreciate it if your would let my other parent come into our house every now and then, because it's my home, too!**

(It doesn't matter how much time I spend there.)

**20. Do let me love both of you and see each of you as much as possible! Be flexible even when it is not part of our regular schedule.**

THANKS, your loving child, XXXX OOOO

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*Compliments of Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., L.M.F.T.*

[www.Dr.CarolHughes.com](http://www.Dr.CarolHughes.com)

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## **13 Tips for Talking with Your Minor Children about Your Separation and Divorce**

by Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT

[www.DivorcePeacemaking.com](http://www.DivorcePeacemaking.com)

The following tips will help you prepare to talk with your children about your separation and divorce. You care about doing the best you can for your children because you are reading this article. Give yourself permission not to be perfect. No one is. This is a stressful time for all of you. Remember to keep taking slow, deep breaths --- you and your children will get through this difficult time.

1. Agree on a time when you both can be present to talk with your children together. Siblings need the support they can provide each other. Divorce is a major life crisis for all family members. Treat it as such. Ideally, it is best to share the news with your children when they have adequate time to absorb what you will be telling them, for example, when they do not have to go back to school in a day or two after hearing the news.

2. Plan your presentation to your children in advance. Make some notes about what you plan to say and review them to be familiar with what you intend to say. Anticipate what they may say to you. You can have the notes in front of you if you wish and say, "We have made some notes because what we are going to be talking about is very important for all of us, and we don't want to forget anything." Remember that your children will likely be in emotional shock after you tell them your intentions to end your marriage, and they will not be able to absorb everything you say this first time. Be prepared to have the same conversation with them numerous times. Their shock and grieving will interfere with them being able to take in all you are sharing.

3. First, tell your children that you love them very much, that you will always love them and always be their parents. Assure them that they will continue to have both parents' emotional support and love in the newly restructured family.

4. Tell them that the two of you have decided not to be married anymore and live in different homes because you have adult problems between you that you have tried to solve but haven't been able to. Avoid using the word "divorce" because it is laden with negative connotations. Assure your children that this is NOT THEIR FAULT. Children often automatically assume it IS their fault.

5. Avoid saying that you don't love each other anymore. Children then think that their parents could also stop loving them one day, which could unsettle them and the stable foundation of having two loving parents.

6. Avoid blaming each other. Now is the time for the two of you to have a united front with your children. Remember that this news will shatter their view of their family as they have known it. Blaming each other puts them in the middle of your pain and conflict, causes them to experience divided loyalty, feel that they need to choose sides, and feel guilty for loving both of you. Children often report that they hated being put in this position and feeling that each parent attempted to form an alliance with them against the other parent.

7. Next, tell them what is going to remain the same. Tell them that you are all still family, that you will always be their parents, and that you will always love them. Tell them you intend to be friendly so that you can both attend their activities and family gatherings and not create tension for them, for other family members, or their friends. Tell them if one of you intends to stay in the family home if you know this. Assure them that they will be remaining in their same schools, same activities, etc., if this is true. If you don't yet know all that will remain the same, it is ok to tell them that. Assure them that you will tell them when you do know more about what will stay the same.

8. Next, tell them what is not going to remain the same. Tell them if you both will be moving into new homes and, at the appropriate time, that they can be involved in seeing the new homes or looking for them with you after you have narrowed your choices down to two options. It's important to be neutral and factual. Resist being a victim or a martyr. It will only make them feel guilty.

9. If they ask you a question you don't know the answer to yet, for example, "Will we stay in this house?" it's ok to tell them you don't know the answer to that question, and when you do, you will tell them.

10. Remember that you are still their parents. It is your job to put their feelings above yours and provide them with the support they need to hear, feel, and understand what you share with them. Acknowledge that you realize the announcement is a shock and that their feelings (anger, sadness, grief, shock, etc.) are ok. Focus on and be empathetic with THEIR feelings. Don't talk about YOUR feelings, e.g., how you haven't been happy for years, how you deserve to be happy, etc. Having just received such painful news, they will be unable to express their happiness for you, and it is unreasonable for you to expect them to do so. Remember, what you are telling them is rocking their familial foundation and rewriting their family history. They are losing their "family nest."

11. Tell them that you still believe in family and that you hope they will too. Tell them that you don't expect them to take care of you emotionally or physically. That is your job, not theirs.

12. Avoid telling them that you stayed together or delayed restructuring your family because of them. This will make them feel guilty for your unhappy marriage. Depending on their ages, they may already be recalling their childhood memories and wondering: "What was real and what wasn't real? Were you really happy on those family vacations?" Divorce destabilizes the family system and inevitably shakes every family member's perception of their past, present, and future.

13. Assure them that this will be a process for all of you to move through, at your own pace and in your own way. Assure them that you will always love them and always be there for them in whatever ways will be most helpful to them. You want them to know that they aren't alone, so they don't become isolated and depressed. Encourage them to speak with a counselor or youth pastor about their feelings. Tell them you intend to speak with a counselor

because you have learned that the end of a marriage is a major life stressor for all family members and is second only to the death of a loved one. Assure them that you will all get through this together.

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# How To Help Your Children During Separation and Divorce

By Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT

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**“If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much.”**

**~Marian Wright Edelman  
Founder, Children's Defense Fund**

Research about the effects of divorce on children indicates that:

- Each year, over 1 million American children experience the divorce of their parents.<sup>1</sup>
- Ongoing parental conflict increases kids' risk of psychological and social problems.<sup>2</sup>
- Improving the relationships between parents and their children helps children cope better in the months and years following the divorce.<sup>3</sup>

Children are the innocent victims of divorce. Divorce ranks second only to the death of a loved one as life's most stressful experiences.<sup>4</sup> Litigation, which by definition is adversarial, can compound that stress exponentially due to the hostility it can engender and the exorbitant costs that parents can incur. “Combat divorce,” a common term for litigation, requires that each parent have the biggest battleship armed with the biggest guns, which take aim at the battleship of the other parent. Let's remember that, no matter what else changes, each of these soon to be “ex-spouses” **forever** remains their child(ren)'s **other parent**. During the process of litigation, that obvious fact can become obscured in the harsh and adversarial language used to characterize the other spouse, thus making it almost impossible for each parent to think of the other parent as their child(ren)'s **other parent** and as a parent who possesses positive qualities.

So where are the children in this process? To continue the “combat divorce” metaphor, they are huddled together in a foxhole wondering what has happened to the family they once knew. As they tenaciously cling to each other in this bunker, they are shaking, fearing whether the next mortar will land in their foxhole or whiz over their heads. Will they lose one or both of their parents permanently? After all, it seems like it has been a short journey from their happy family with Mom and Dad playing with them in the park to the day when Dad or Mom moved out. They never imagined that one of their parents would not be with them in their home. Recently, they have overheard Mom and Dad fighting and talking about having to sell the house where they grew up and where they created so many happy memories. They hear Dad and Mom discussing that they may have to change schools. The thoughts are whirling through their minds: *We will have to make new friends! We won't be able to be on our same soccer team! What if we won't be able to keep our doggie Duke and our kitty Miss Trouble because in our new rented house no pets will be allowed! Mom and Dad are so stressed. We can't bother them with all these questions. We must be very*

*good and very quiet, so they don't have to worry about us too. We need to forget about how we feel and make sure Mom and Dad are ok.*

The children have experienced so much uncertainty and unpredictability recently that on an unconscious level they realize that they cannot predict their future. Nothing seems certain. Life used to seem certain, but not anymore. So much has changed in such a short time, it certainly seems possible to them that they could lose their mom or dad. Who will provide them with certainty, stability, and predictability?

**"A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members."**

**~ Mahatma Gandhi**

When parents are in conflict, their children are in danger. On-going parental strife produces the single most negative impact on children for years into their future. Previously well-adjusted children can become at risk for both psychological and physical symptoms such as anxiety, depression, isolation, sleep disturbance, nausea, headaches, and the inability to focus and concentrate. These symptoms can subsequently cause a delay in children's development. Difficulties in school academically, emotionally and socially can ensue. Adult children of divorce commonly report that they felt as though they lost their childhood during and after their parent's divorce, because the toxicity of the "combat divorce" permeated every aspect of their lives, causing them to struggle with the symptoms described above and necessitating that they "grow up" before they were developmentally ready.

Just as wartime combat is a survival state, so combat divorce is an emotional, and sometimes even physical, survival state for children. Parents often need help in understanding this. They need help preventing their children from becoming the innocent casualties of their divorce. Research tells us that 80% of the issues of divorce are emotion-driven. While parents are in the midst of such emotional upheaval, even the most well-intentioned parents can become overwhelmed and lose sight of what is genuinely in their child(ren)'s best interest. Before, during and after divorce, parents and their children can benefit from the guidance and assistance of peacemaking professionals, who are focused on the well-being of their family now and into the future. Most parents with minor children are going through divorce for the first time. While negotiating this extremely difficult life transition, they have no experience from which to draw.

**Collaborative Divorce and Mediation** are **confidential, no-court divorce** options, which offer parents and children a peaceful, even transformative path for the restructuring of their family. Research shows that mediation can be beneficial for emotional satisfaction, spousal relationships and children's needs.<sup>5</sup> Parents focus not on prevailing but on peacemaking, not on winning but on healing, because real winning means not wanting the other person to lose. **No-court divorce** offers divorcing parents the best possibility that they can share the joys of parenthood. Such sharing is one of the best gifts parents can give their children, because children feel and treasure their parents experiencing this joy. **When divorcing parents learn how to prevent their children from being caught in the crossfire in the middle of a combat zone and put their children in the center of healthy interactions**, their children can remain children. They are unburdened by adult concerns. They don't have to worry about finances, how Mom

and Dad are coping, fear of being loyal to one parent and not the other, being in an alliance with one parent against the other. being afraid to express their feelings for fear of hurting Dad or Mom or of having Mom or Dad be angry with them. When their life as they have known it is crumbling around them, children deserve to experience the benefits of no-court divorce.

Consider these two stories.

The first story: Two divorced parents were called to an emergency scene at a lake to rescue their child who had fallen into a lake. Rather than springing into action and coordinating the child's rescue, they immediately began arguing about whose fault it was that the child had fallen into the lake. The child drowned.

The second story: (For ease of style, I use the generic pronoun "he" and its derivatives.) Two divorcing parents were attending a co-parenting training class. Ten pairs of parents were present in the class. The instructor gave the directions for the first exercise. "Sit down across from your partner and face each other, with your right elbows on the table. Grab your partner's right hand with your own right hand and don't let go. Each parent will get one point every time the back of the other parent's right hand touches the table. The goal for each parent is to get as many points for himself or herself as possible during the exercise. Keep your eyes closed and be completely indifferent to how many points your partner gets. You will have one minute. Ready, set, go!"

For one minute, the pairs struggled as each parent tried by physical strength to force the back of the other's right hand down to the table. With much effort and against the physical opposition of each partner, almost no one got more than a point or two. There was a single exception. Almost immediately, one parent remembered that his goal was to get as many points as he could for himself, and then he became utterly indifferent to how many points his partner got. Instead of pushing on his partner's hand, he pulled it down to the table, gave his surprised partner a quick and easy point, took a quick point for himself, and then gave his partner another point. Without talking to or looking at each other, the two parents, with their elbows on the table, then swung their clasped hands harmoniously back and forth as rapidly as they could, thus collecting a large number of points for each of them.

Upon the conclusion of the exercise, each pair of parents reported to the group how many points each had collected. No one had more than three points, except for the parent pair who had cooperated, each of whom had earned more than twenty points.

Despite the directions to the parents, that used the word "partner" and despite the instructions that they were to be indifferent to how many points their partner collected, virtually all parent participants had assumed that they and the one with whom they were doing the exercise were adversaries. That adversarial assumption dominated their thinking and prevented them from getting as many points as they could have.

(*Beyond Reason: Using Emotions As You Negotiate*, by Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro, gave me the inspiration for this second story.)

A litigation attorney tells me that when potential clients consult with her regarding retaining her for litigation, she educates them about the reasons clients should not consider litigation as an option to settle a dispute. She explains that, if they value the relationship with the persons against whom they are considering bringing the lawsuit, litigation is likely not their best choice.

Do you think your children want you, their parents, to value your relationship with each other, just as they value and love each of you? How will they feel most secure, knowing that their parents are partners or combatants? What will they learn from you if you are engaged in combat divorce? What will they learn from you if you model cooperative problem solving with integrity and mutual respect? Who “wins” when one of your children’s parents “loses?” What is the legacy you want to co-create for them?

**“I was never ruined but twice - once when I lost a lawsuit, once when I won one.”**

~Voltaire

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#### Notes

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- 5 Shaw, L. (2010). “Divorce mediation outcome research: A meta-analysis.” *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 27(4): 447-467.

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### **PRINCIPLES OF COPARENTING**

1. Fully assume all parenting duties including those that were previously done by the other parent when the child is with you.
2. Make all important decisions or changes for the children with the consultation and agreement of the other parent.
3. Communicate directly with the other parent, either in person or in writing about plans or problems, never through the children.
4. Sincerely support a good relationship between the child and the other parent.
5. Speak neutrally or positively about the other parent and insisting friends and family do the same.
6. Listen to the child talk, but never question the child about the other parent.
7. Neither overtly nor subtly encourage the child to complain about the other parent.
8. Share information about the children but also gather information for one's self rather than being dependent on the other parent.
9. Resolve disagreements respectfully, and accept and implement an outcome, which you may not have preferred.
10. Move clothing and toys between two homes with little conflict and cheerfully fix problems that occur when something isn't where it is needed.
11. Pay support and other expenses promptly and pleasantly.
12. Never create a need for the child to hide information or conceal the child's positive feelings about the other parent.
13. View your success as a coparent by how well you can cooperate with the other parent, not by how many hours or days a week you spend with the children.

*(Adapted from Judge Anne Kass, Albuquerque, New Mexico)*

# **How To Talk With Your Adult Children About Your Upcoming Separation or Dissolution of Marriage**

by Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT

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(To avoid the clumsiness of using “child/children,” I have intentionally used “children” throughout this article.)

The following are some tips for you as you prepare to talk with your adult children. You care about doing the best you can for your children because you are reading this article. Allow yourself not to be perfect. No one is. Remember to keep taking slow, deep breaths. You and your children will get through this difficult time.

**1. Schedule a time to speak with your children together and preferably in person.** Siblings need a support system that they can provide each other. When you schedule the time to talk, tell them that you have something important to discuss with them and assure them that no one is sick or dying. If they ask you what you want to talk about, tell them that you prefer to discuss it in person when you are all together. If it isn't possible to speak in person due to residing long distances apart, schedule a time to talk via Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, or another video chat program. Avoid telling them via telephone or email. It is too impersonal. Divorce is a major life crisis for all family members and should be treated as such. Children who were adults when their parents divorced consistently report that the news of their parents' divorce “rocked the very foundation” of their world!

**2. Plan in advance what you will say to your children.** Make some notes about what you plan to say and review them to be familiar with what you intend to say. Anticipate what they may say and ask you. You can have the notes in front of you, if you wish, and say, “We have made some notes because what we are going to be talking about is very important for all of us, and we don't want to forget anything.” Remember that your children will likely be in emotional shock after you tell them your intentions to separate or end your marriage, and they will not be able to absorb everything you say this first time. Be prepared to have the same conversation with them numerous times. Their shock and grieving will interfere with them fully taking in all that you are sharing.

**3. Tell them that the two of you have decided to separate or end your marriage because you have problems between you that you have tried to resolve (If this is true.) and haven't been able to resolve.** Avoid using the word “divorce” because it is laden with negative connotations.

**4. Tell them it is not their fault and there is nothing they can do to prevent it.**

**5. Avoid blaming each other.** Now is the time for the two of you to have a united front with your children. Remember that this news will shatter their view of their family as they have known it. Blaming each other puts them in the middle of your pain and conflict, causes them to experience divided loyalty and feel that they need to choose sides, as well as feel guilt for loving both of you. Children who were adults when their parents divorced report that they hated their parents putting them in this position, and

they felt that each parent was attempting to form an alliance with them against the other parent.

**6. Tell them what is going to remain the same.** Say that you are all still family, you will always be their parents, and you intend to be amicable so you can both attend family gatherings and not create tension for them and their significant others. If they are still in college, tell them how you will be continuing the financial arrangements you have had in place. Tell them if one of you intends to stay in the family home, etc. Assure them that they will continue to have the emotional support of both parents in the newly restructured family.

**7. Tell them what is not going to remain the same.** Say if you will be unable to continue the financial arrangements regarding college. Tell them if you intend to sell the family home. If you have been assisting them in paying off college loans and can't continue doing so, tell them that. Assure them that you will do everything you can to help them financially, as you have in the past, while at the same time acknowledging that there will be some economic impact as the family restructures. It's important to be neutral and factual. Resist being a victim or martyr. It will only make them feel guilty.

**8. Remember that you are still their parents.** It is your job to put their feelings above yours and provide them with the support they need to hear, feel, and understand. Acknowledge that you realize the announcement is a shock, and their feelings of anger, sadness, grief, shock are natural. Focus on and be empathetic with THEIR feelings. Don't talk about your feelings, e.g., how you haven't been happy for years, how you deserve to be happy, etc. Having just received such painful news, they will be unable to express their happiness for you, and it is unreasonable for you to expect them to do so. Remember, the news of your separation or divorce has rocked their familial foundation and rewritten their family history. They have become members of the "lost nest" generation. There will be no "family nest" to return to for the holidays.

**9. Tell them that you still believe in family and hope they will too. It doesn't mean that they will not have a solid and happy relationship.** Tell them you don't expect them to take care of you emotionally or physically, that that is your job, not theirs. Say that you have, or plan to have, your support system separate from them, and you want them to establish a support system for themselves as well. For example, yahoo groups and Facebook have groups for adult children whose parents are divorcing. Also, the book *Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guide for Adult Children of Gray Divorce* will help them realize they are not alone.

**10. Avoid telling them that you stayed together or delayed restructuring your family because of them.** This will make them feel guilty for your unhappy marriage. They will already be recalling their childhood memories and wondering: "What was real and what wasn't real? Were you really happy on those family vacations? Has my whole life been a sham?" Divorce destabilizes the family system and inevitably shakes every family member's perception of their past, present, and future.

**11. Refuse to “bad mouth” the other parent.** Make it clear that you respect their right to have their relationship with each parent. You can support them by making it clear to your adult children, all family members, and family friends that your adult children have every right to refuse to participate in “bashing their other parent” conversations.

**12. Help them decide how to respond to sensitive or intrusive questions.** Tell them that when anyone asks questions or wants to criticize you or their other parent, it’s ok for your adult children to say that they prefer not to discuss it. Or, if others ask your adult children about your divorce, they can thank them for asking, say that it is their parents’ business, and it is not their place to discuss it. Another way to help is to tell your adult children to suggest that others ask their parents directly. If possible, have a conversation with your adult children to help them sort out their limits and what your family’s limits are about sharing private information. Reassure them that they are not obligated to offer any more information than they choose.

**13. Help them understand and create boundaries.** Your children have the right to have their thoughts, feelings, and personal space. This includes their right to have their relationships with each parent. As a parent, you can remind yourself and your adult children that both you and your divorcing spouse will always be their other parent and that their feelings about those relationships are uniquely theirs. Support them in talking with family members and others about the boundary agreements they want going forward. You and your divorcing spouse could help them by sending that message to your siblings and parents and insisting that they avoid pushing or encouraging your adult children to take sides.

**14. Assure them that this will be a process for all of you to move through, at your own pace and in your own way.** Assure them that you will always love them and be there for them in whatever ways will be most helpful to them. You want them to know that they aren’t alone, so they don’t become isolated and depressed.

**15. Encourage them to speak with a counselor about their feelings.** Tell them you have spoken with or intend to speak with a counselor as well, because you have learned that, for all family members, the end of a marriage is a significant life stressor, second only to the death of a loved one. Healing can occur for everyone going through this challenging life transition.

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**Adult Children of Divorce: The Invisible Children**  
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How would it benefit your adult children to speak with a Neutral Child Specialist during your Collaborative Divorce Process? How would it benefit you, their parents?

Research indicates that divorce is life's second highest stressor, second only to the death of a loved one. If this is true, why is it so common for divorcing parents to assume that their adult children are "ok", simply because they are adults? Divorce destabilizes the family system and inevitably shakes every family member's perception of their past, their present and their future.

Experiencing their parents' divorce shatters adult children's view of their family as they have known it. They report that their familial foundation has been rocked and that their family history has been rewritten.

When their parents divorce, adult children experience most of the same feelings as minor children experience, though there is little support for them to deal with these feelings, since they are now adults and expected to be "ok" because they are adults. Adult children of divorcing parents report feeling shock, disorientation, depression, loneliness, anxiety, stress, worry about the well being of their parents, sleep and appetite disturbance, embarrassment, anger at one or both parents, grief, guilt, shame, abandonment and often role-reversal in that they feel that they now need to take charge and become a parent to their parents. They also report feeling invisible, since it seems to them that their own feelings and lives must inevitably become secondary to those of their parents. All of these feelings and experiences can take a devastating toll on adult children of divorcing parents.

Children of divorce, whether adults or minors, are experiencing multiple losses. These losses may include the loss of their parents as a co-parenting unit, the loss of their intact family, the loss of the family home where they grew up, the loss of the security and stability that their parents provided and the loss of their family as a support system, as well as the support system of family, friends and extended family members. Children who were adults when their parents divorced often report that they never felt lonelier in their lives than during the time of their parents' divorce.

Often divorcing parents inappropriately discuss with their adult children what led to their divorce and may blame each other to their adult children. Sometimes one or both parents see themselves as victims or martyrs and share that view with their adult children, causing their adult children to feel guilty or angry with their parents, thus damaging the parent-child relationship. When parents put their adult children in the middle of their pain and conflict, their adult children can feel divided loyalty and pressure to "choose sides". They may feel guilty for loving both parents and for spending time with both parents. Children who were adults when their parents divorced report that they hated being put in this position and feeling that each parent was attempting to form an alliance with them against the other parent.

Adult children of divorcing parents may feel responsible for their parents' unhappy marriage if their parents tell them that they were unhappily married for years and that they stayed together because they wanted to provide a stable home environment for their children. This can also cause them to reconsider their childhood memories and to doubt their reality. They may wonder what was real and what wasn't real. Was my childhood and adolescence a façade?

Depending on where your adult children are in the developmental stages of adulthood, your adult children may be experiencing the following:

**Post high school, college age children** are especially vulnerable in that they are transitioning from adolescence into young adulthood. Divorce precipitates an uncoupling process for parents that is usually so tumultuous and painful that it impairs parents' ability to be at their best and to continue providing the customary emotional support system for their young adult children. The impact of their parents' emotional turmoil can create difficulty in focusing on their studies, their jobs and their own friend and romantic relationships. They may begin to doubt their own ability to maintain relationships and to question commitment and family. They may become isolated and have

difficulty making decisions. College age adult children who are attending college are typically still financially dependent on their parents. During divorce finances may become strained and the parents may not be able to continue to pay as they have previously paid for their adult children's college expenses. This creates tremendous stress for college age adult children, who do not yet have the means to contribute to their college expenses. College age adult children may avoid spending time with their parents during their college vacations, in an effort to avoid dealing with their uncomfortable feelings and because of their conflicted feelings of loyalty to both parents, as well as the many feelings described above.

Adult children **who are graduating from college or who have recently graduated from college** when their parents divorce, may experience difficulty moving out into the world toward their career and even marriage, when their familial foundations have lost their stability. They may begin to doubt their own ability to maintain relationships and to question commitment and family. They may become isolated and have difficulty making decisions. Adult children in this developmental stage of adulthood often report that they feel destabilized because it seems that, just as they are coming to terms with the reality of growing up and moving away from their family and into the world, the reality they knew growing up no longer exists. Many feel conflicted that perhaps they should delay their "launch" and move close to one or both parents to assist them during the stressful time of their divorce process.

**Adult children who are established in adult life**, married or single with their own career, home and perhaps with children of their own, may experience that their current life, which has roots in their familial past, may no longer feel so firmly rooted. The responsibilities of their own nuclear families, coupled with the additional responsibilities they may feel for the well-being of their now divorcing parents, can cause them additional stress. Complicated by their parents' divorce, such accumulating pressures can become overwhelming for the adult child in this stage of life. Because these adult children are in such a "mature" stage of adulthood, their world typically does not offer support to them regarding their parents' divorce. The underlying message from our culture is to deny their distress and pain regarding their parents' divorce.

When adult children have the opportunity to speak with a Neutral Child Specialist, they are able to discuss the above issues in a safe, neutral environment with a professional who has the training and expertise not only to answer their questions and provide them with information about the new life situations they are experiencing, but also to assist them plan how best to navigate their changing lives.

The benefit to you as their parents is that the Neutral Child Specialist sensitizes you, your adult children's co-parents, to the needs of your adult children in the context of your divorce and gives you useful information about the restructuring your family is experiencing, so you can be the best co-parents possible for your adult children. Your spousal relationship is ending, but your co-parenting relationship lasts forever, no matter how old your children are. You will always be your children's **other parent**. The Neutral Child Specialist can assist you to create the legacy you want for your adult children: a peaceful, restructured family with amicable, cooperative and respectful co-parents who understand the needs of their adult children.

Original material © 2014 Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT

Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT, holds her doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology, and her master's degree in Counseling Psychology, achieving both summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa honors. She is also a two-time Fulbright Scholar. In private practice in Laguna Hills, CA, since 1983, Dr. Hughes is a respected expert and sought-after speaker on the effects of divorce on children. She is a board-certified clinical hypnotherapist, an EMDR therapist and a former professor of Human Services at Saddleback College. In 2003 she became one of the founding members of Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County and is also a co-founder of and trainer for the Collaborative Divorce Education Institute in Orange County, CA, a non-profit organization, whose mission is to educate the public about peaceful options for divorce, as well as to provide quality training for collaborative divorce professionals. She frequently trains and mentors collaborative practitioners and has appeared on the Time Warner Public television series "How to Get a Divorce". Carol is a frequent presenter at conferences of the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals, the Association of Family Conciliation Courts, and California's annual statewide

conferences for collaborative professionals. In 2011 Carol was honored with the Eureka Award, which recognizes those who have made significant contributions and demonstrated an abiding dedication to establishing and sustaining Collaborative Practice in California.

She is the co-author of the book *Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guide for Adult Children of Gray Divorce*. For a complete listing of her collaborative practice training and teaching workshops please visit [www.CollaborativePractice.com](http://www.CollaborativePractice.com), the website of the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals, and click on the “Locate a Collaborative Professional near you” link. In addition, please visit her website at [www.DivorcePeacemaking.com](http://www.DivorcePeacemaking.com).



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Carol Hughes, PhD

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR PARENTS DIVORCE

### And You're Already a Grown-Up

**H**eading home for the holidays is a treasured tradition in many families. But what do these families do if their aging parents divorce?

The divorce rate among couples age 50 and up more than doubled between 1990 and 2010, according to a study by researchers at Bowling Green State University, and it shows no signs of falling. It isn't just the older divorced parents who endure the emotional consequences of these splits. The dissolution of their marriages can take a toll on their adult children, too—at any time of year.

Here is what the adult children of divorced or divorcing parents need to know...

#### YOU MIGHT FEEL ABANDONED

It might not come as a surprise that the divorce of one's parents can be traumatic. What is surprising is that this trauma can be deeper and longer-lasting than living through a natural disaster.

**Reason:** People tend to get over shared traumas faster than private ones. In the wake of a shared trauma, they feel understood and supported...and they see other people coping with the same trauma and getting on with their lives. But in a private trauma, they feel alone, lost and abandoned in their pain.

This can be the case for adults whose parents divorce. Intellectually they know that other adults' parents have divorced, but the topic and its emotional consequences are discussed so rarely that they feel they are experiencing this alone. And when these adult children mention how much they are hurting, they often do not receive much sympathy. Other people don't understand how adults who most likely have been living on their own for years can be so traumatized.

In fact, these feelings of abandonment and pain are perfectly normal. Your parents' marriage forms part of the foundation of who you are. If that marriage ends, it can feel as if your foundation has crumbled, leaving you unsupported.

**What to do:** Find people who have endured the same trauma. Speaking with them can transform the private trauma into a shared one, likely speeding the recovery process. Start with your siblings—they are enduring your parents' divorce, too. Complex family dynamics and differing emotional responses to divorce mean that this won't be the answer for everyone, however. Other possibilities include friends whose parents have divorced...therapists or clergy members...and support groups for people experiencing grief.

#### IT CAN HURT YOUR MARRIAGE

People learn how to be husbands and wives in part by watching their parents during childhood. If those parents later split, it is only natural to ask yourself, *Did I really learn how to sustain a marriage? Am I good marriage material?*

Meanwhile, one or both of the divorcing parents might lean heavily on an adult child for financial or emotional support. This new demand for the adult child's time, money and/or emotional resources means that he/she has fewer resources to devote to his spouse, kids and career, opening the door to difficulties in these areas.

**What to do:** If you begin to question your own marriage, consider that this might be a stage in your grieving process, not a sign that you truly are headed for divorce. Speak with a therapist trained in the treatment of grief if these concerns persist.

If one (or both) of your parents leans heavily on you emotionally during or after the divorce, help that parent find a broader and more appropriate support system. Ask the parent's friends and church leaders whether they can assist...and/or help the parent find a local support group for divorced people.

If a parent leans on you heavily for financial assistance, pay a certified financial planner to determine how much support you can provide without jeopardizing your other fi-

*Bottom Line Personal* interviewed Carol Hughes, PhD, a psychotherapist and divorce coach based in Laguna Hills, California. She has more than 30 years of experience working with divorcing couples and their children and is one of the founding members of Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County. [DivorcePeaceMaking.com](http://DivorcePeaceMaking.com)

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nancial responsibilities. Invite the parent to a meeting with this adviser.

#### CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

Divorcing parents sometimes battle each other through their adult children. They discuss their former partners' flaws and failings with their adult children either out of spite or despair or in hopes of convincing the children that the divorce was the other parent's fault.

And sometimes children of divorcing parents argue with each other (or with other family members)—because they blame different parents for the split...or because a sibling cuts off contact with the parent who seems to be at fault while another sibling does not.

**What to do:** If your parents' divorce causes you to fight with your siblings, say, "Our parents are splitting up, but that doesn't mean we have to. In fact, it's more important than ever that we stick together." Say words to this effect each time anger arises between you. If you simply cannot discuss this topic calmly, agree not to discuss it any more than is absolutely necessary.

If your parents try to fight battles through you, explain that you have no interest in listening to bad things about either of them. Do not be surprised if you have to repeat this boundaries discussion many times.

#### THE HOLIDAYS ARE HARD

The holidays can be the time of year when the parents' divorce truly hits home for adult children if gathering together had been a tradition.

**What to do:** Create an entirely new holiday tradition. Take your immediate family somewhere fun and interesting for the holidays. Or invite members of your extended family—including your parents—

More from Carole Hughes, PhD

## Four Ways Divorcing Parents Can Limit the Fallout for Their Adult Children

Parents' behavior during and after their divorce can significantly affect how much their adult children suffer. Parents should...

- **Break the news together**, in person and without blame or anger, if possible. Say something along the lines of, "We've decided we're not going to stay married. It's no one's fault." When pressed for reasons, simply say, "We have problems that we haven't been able to solve." This will be especially difficult if you feel that your spouse is at fault, but expressing blame and anger will only make the divorce more difficult for your adult children.

If the children already know (or are likely to find out) that one parent has clearly wronged the other, the "wronged" parent could admit that the situation is not quite as clear-cut as it seems. *Example:* "You already know that your mother had an affair, but you should know that we had been growing apart for years. Neither of us was the best spouse we could have been." This gives the children permission to continue having a positive relationship with the parent who seems primarily to blame. Even if you are very angry at your soon-to-be-ex-spouse, your kids still have a right to

have a relationship with both of their parents.

If the divorce follows from one parent coming out as gay, it's best to say this. It might be a difficult conversation, but it gives your children an understanding of who their parents truly are and why the divorce is happening.

- **Emphasize what won't be changing.** *Example:* "We both still love you kids, and we always will," and "We'll remain friends/friendly/amicable with each other." (Choose the most positive word you feel you can here.)

- **Seek emotional support from people other than your children.** Your kids deserve to live their own lives, not suffer through your problems.

- **Role-model effective problem solving.** When you are tempted to lament your situation or act petty toward your ex in front of your adult child, consider what lesson you wish to teach in this moment. Children learn from their parents' example even during adulthood. This is an opportunity to teach a lesson about handling difficult times with grace and maturity. That lesson could be part of the legacy you leave behind after you are gone.

over to your house. If your parents can't treat each other civilly or if it's painful for one of your parents to see the other, you could invite them on different days during the holiday season.

#### YOU MAY FEEL RELIEVED

When parents have been fighting for years, their adult children sometimes feel glad when they hear that

their parents are divorcing. They might then feel guilty about this initial reaction.

**What to do:** If you think the divorce is warranted, let your parents know this. They probably will be relieved that you are not angry with them. Your positive reaction could help other family members admit their relief, too. **BLP**

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Carol Hughes, PhD ■ Collaborative Divorce Solutions

## YIKES! MOM OR DAD IS DATING AGAIN

### How to Avoid a Family Rift

**D**ivorced or widowed parents might feel excitement or hope when they return to the dating world after decades away. But their adult children might feel anxiety about the parent's safety and financial security (and their own inheritance)...renewed grief over the loss of the family unit...or discomfort at seeing the parent behave in a non-parental way.

Here's what parent and child should do—and not do—to protect their relationship during these emotionally difficult times...

#### WHY GROWN KIDS AREN'T HAPPY WHEN MOM OR DAD DATES

Parents often cannot understand why their adult children have a negative emotional response to the news that they are dating or in a new relationship. In fact, the adult children might not completely understand their own reactions.

The parent's return to the dating world forces a role reversal. Traditionally, it is parents who are asked to be happy for their children's happiness and parents who watch and worry while their children endure the ups and downs of meeting new partners and taking chances on new romances. When a parent dates, these roles are flipped, forcing unfamiliar and difficult-to-navigate dynamics for all.

If the parent settles into a new long-term relationship, that might force the adult child to finally con-

front the difficult fact that the family unit of his/her youth is gone forever. Intellectually, this adult child, of course, understands that the family unit ended when the parent was widowed or divorced—but some adult children manage to avoid psychologically confronting this fact until the parent starts seeing someone new. (This is especially likely if the parent is divorced, not widowed. The adult child might have been telling himself that his parents would get back together eventually.)

In these cases, the adult child is looking backward and grieving the loss of the old relationship just as the parent is looking forward in excitement to a new one. That difference in perspective virtually ensures that they will struggle to see eye to eye.

#### WHAT PARENTS SHOULD DO

To reduce the odds that a new romantic relationship will damage your parent/child relationship...

**Share the news that you are dating again—or that you are in a relationship—in a calm, private moment.** Present this news in a straightforward manner, such as, "I wanted you to know that I'm dating again." Or "I wanted you to know that I'm seeing someone." And then let the adult child process what you've said and ask questions. Do not phrase this in a way that demands happi-

ness from the adult child, such as, "Isn't it wonderful—I'm dating!"

**Do not find fault with your adult child's reaction to your return to dating or a new relationship even if that reaction is negative.** There is nothing immature or even unusual about an adult child's less-than-positive response to this news. This is an emotionally challenging situation, so be ready to take any reaction in stride. Telling your adult child to "grow up" or asking, "Don't you want me to be happy?" only increases the odds that the parent-child relationship will suffer.

**If you find someone who you think could become a long-term partner, ask your kids if they want to meet this person rather than trying to force a first meeting.** Offer the option of waiting to see whether the relationship lasts a while longer before agreeing to meet. Parents often have unrealistic expectations that their new partners will instantly become part of a happy family unit. That almost certainly will take time (if it happens at all).

**Also:** Dissuade your new partner from pushing too hard to form close bonds with your adult children when they do meet. Your partner should be pleasant and polite but should let your adult children take the lead in these relationships.

**Continue to find as much time as possible for your adult children and your grandchildren—ideally *without* a date by your side.** When parents of adult children start spending time

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dating, they often spend less time with their children and grandchildren. This gives the adult children an additional reason to find fault with the parent's return to romantic life.

**Reassure your adult children that your money is safe.** Your initial reaction to their financial worries might be, "My money is my business"... "My new partner loves me, not my money"...or "It's selfish of you to put your inheritance ahead of my happiness." But it is perfectly reasonable for your kids to be concerned. Relatively savvy people sometimes do fall victim to dating scams, and when they do, their entire families can pay the price. So rather than dismiss your kids' money concerns, you could reassure them that you are not splurging on extravagant gifts for this new partner...and that if you do someday remarry, you will get a prenup. Or you could agree to work with an estate planner (or some other trusted financial adviser) to make sure that your money remains in your family.

**Reminisce with your adult children about the old days when your original family was intact.** This subtly reinforces the sense that your search for a new relationship does not invalidate the family unit of their youth.

**Do not discuss your sex life with your adult kids.** It is surprisingly common for parents to share details about their revitalized sex lives with their adult children when they return to the dating scene. Doing this only makes a difficult situation even less comfortable for the adult children.

**Do not denigrate your ex-spouse.** Detailing everything that was wrong with your ex will not help your adult children understand why

you need someone new. It will only make them angry that they are being pushed to see their other parent in a negative light.

**If you are divorced, do not ask your kids not to tell your ex that you're dating.** That would put your kids in an uncomfortable position and make it harder for them to see your new partner in a positive light. One option is to contact your ex with the news around the same time you tell your kids, assuming that your lines of communication with your ex remain open.

#### **WHAT ADULT CHILDREN SHOULD DO**

To remain on good terms with your parent—and help protect your parent if necessary...

**Stifle any negative initial reaction you may have.** This negative reaction likely is rooted in your deep-seated emotions surrounding your childhood family unit, not in your true opinion of your parent's decision to date or of the new partner. If you can't say anything positive, say something noncommittal such as, "Thanks for letting me know. That's big news."

**Raise any concerns you may have about your parent's finances in a way that does not imply that a new partner is a gold digger or scammer.** Suggesting that a new partner might be after your parent's money will only make your parent rush to his defense. Instead, note that starting a romantic relationship can have financial consequences, and recommend that the parent meet with a financial adviser or estate planner.

If after getting to know a new partner, you still harbor fears that this person might be after your parent's money, discuss these concerns with one of your parent's trusted peers who has met the new partner.

A trusted peer is more likely than an adult child to be able to successfully discuss this difficult topic with the parent. Alternatively, you could discuss your concerns with an attorney who specializes in elder abuse. (You can find one through the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys at [NAELA.org](http://NAELA.org).)

**Don't be surprised if your parent's rekindled romantic life makes you experience doubts about your own marriage—and don't overreact to these doubts.** It is not uncommon for adult children to leave their spouses when their parents start dating again. Our parents are our relationship role models—whether we like it or not. When we see a parent searching for (or finding) someone new, we might feel an itch to do the same even if our relationship previously was sound. Meet with a counselor, and talk through your feelings about your parent's return to dating and your feelings about your own marriage before taking any big relationship steps.

**Reassure yourself that your feelings about your parent's new relationship are completely unrelated to your feelings for your other parent.** Some adult children express negative feelings about a parent's new relationship because at some level they fear that accepting this relationship would be disloyal to their other parent (or to the memory of the other parent, if deceased). Such feelings are normal, but they are not accurate and are not helpful to anyone.

If you cannot shake negative feelings about your parent's new relationship, discuss these feelings with a therapist or clergy member. BLP

## FIELD NOTES

# Never Too Old to Hurt From Parents' Divorce

By Jane Gordon Julien

April 21, 2016

In the room that would be the scene of Lisa George's divorce in 2012, Ms. George, now 59, was seated on the same side of the table as her about-to-be-ex-husband. Each of their divorce lawyers slid into seats across from them.

Between the lawyers sat Carol Hughes, a divorce coach in Orange County, Calif. Dr. Hughes placed two collages on small easels on the table. One was pasted with photos and words from the couple's daughter, 25 at the time. The second was of their son, who was 28.

In the middle of the negotiations, "even in the heat of disagreement, there was an immediate realization that our kids were part of this," Ms. George said. "It was the best possible reminder to stay grounded."

The divorce rate among couples 50 and older has soared. The number of individuals who are adults when their parents divorce is climbing with it. Yet the vast majority of recent research, and subsequent counseling, for divorcing couples is focused on young children.

But for adult children of divorce, specific therapy or even divorce coaches like Dr. Hughes are difficult to find.

When Krista Mischo's parents divorced after 45 years of marriage, she sought comfort from others in her situation. "I went to a divorce care group, but it was a meeting for adults going through divorces," said Mrs. Mischo, who lives in Wisconsin and was 43 at the time. "The only group for children of divorce I could find was for young children."

In 2012, she decided to create a group of her own, and began writing a blog, Time for Serenity ([acodtimeforserenity.blogspot.com](http://acodtimeforserenity.blogspot.com)).

In a short time, she said, the blog had attracted more than 20,000 readers around the world. Mrs. Mischo, who stopped writing the blog after two years, said, "I think I really exhausted every possible topic I could think of, and therapeutically I have worked through almost every aspect of this, and I don't want this to define me."

Her need to connect resonated with others in the same situation.

"Readers used the word 'devastated,'" she said. "The wind is knocked out of you."

The effect on adult children is undocumented, said Susan L. Brown, a sociology professor at Bowling Green State University, whose 2012 study with I-Fen Lin, "The Gray Divorce Revolution," established that the divorce rate among people 50 and older had doubled in the previous 20 years.

"I don't know how it will play out," Dr. Brown said of her findings. "For most people getting a gray divorce, the children are adult age." But, she said, research "actually applies to a past generation. Where is the research that will help this generation?"

Jenny Kutner, 24, of Manhattan, a senior staff writer for the online news site mic.com, is still negotiating her way through her parents' 2013 divorce. Soon after it was final, Ms. Kutner's father told her and her college-age sister that they needed to call him every day. For about a month, they did.

"My father told me I wasn't sad enough about it," Ms. Kutner said. "He would say, 'I just got divorced.' And I would say to him: 'My parents just got divorced. I don't know what to tell you.'"

Then her mother wanted to share details of her dates. Ms. Kutner had had enough.

"I have said so many times over the past year that I felt as though I had two 50-something-year-old children," Ms. Kutner said. "And I have totally resented it."

Both parents want the children to understand their pain and confusion. That's not O.K., therapists say. Parent up, they say.

"In our work, we're seeing the trauma to adult children whose parents are going through divorce," Dr. Hughes said. "The parents say, 'The children are adults now, they'll be fine,' but they aren't fine. Often, the children can be pulled into the divorce process."

Adult children are already trying to figure out the logistics of their parents' divorce: where to spend holidays and birthdays, if they need to visit more often to support the more emotionally struggling parent. Getting dragged into teary midnight phone calls or contentious conversations about whose fault the divorce was makes a difficult situation unbearable.

Worse, many adult children begin to question whether they want children of their own, or if they have the ability to maintain a healthy relationship.

"I really have no interest in the idea of getting married," Ms. Kutner said. "If my parents could end up not staying together, to me it really indicates that we live too long, and I have found a lot of peace in that. Some people really do outgrow each other, and the relationship is as long as it is and that might not be a lifetime."

Most therapists treat adult children of divorce the way they treat those who are grieving from any other loss, or who are depressed or anxious. Without a wealth of recent research on gray divorce and its impact, gathering information is left to the therapists.

Dr. Hughes has created her own questionnaires for her clients, "generic questions I have developed from knowing the developmental stages the adult children are in," she said.

Dr. Hughes recommends certain behavioral modifications for divorcing parents. She knows, for example, that many of them break the news by telephone.

That is what happened to Ms. George when her parents divorced when she was 36. As Dr. Hughes coached Ms. George through her own divorce, she told her that children of any age want to hear the news in person, and with their siblings.

"She told us neither parent should deliver the entire message, and that they need to hear that this isn't the result of anything they had or hadn't done," Ms. George said. "At any age, they need to hear that."

So Ms. George and her husband waited until the whole family was together at Thanksgiving and until others were out of the room. Then they spoke to their children. Afterward, both children contacted Dr. Hughes for further conversations about the divorce.

Such help wasn't available nine years ago, when Mrs. Mischo's parents divorced.

Her mother was 66 at the time, her father 71. "My parents' divorce definitely affected my own marriage," Mrs. Mischo said. "You live, eat, breathe and sleep with what's going on. Their marriage had always seemed intact and very committed. I had to rethink everything."

Those thoughts include adult children's questioning of their own perceptions. "Adult children begin to question the reality of their own lives growing up," Dr. Hughes said. "Some parents will say, 'I wanted to divorce your mom or dad when you were little, but we had you kids.' The adult child asks, 'Was it all a facade?'"

Dr. Hughes is part of a small but growing field of therapists working with lawyers to encourage divorcing parents to consider the needs of adult children. Her practice, part of Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County, "is very active on this topic," she said. "I think we're in denial as a nation as to how adult children are affected by divorce."

As sad as she is about her divorce, Ms. George said she had no regrets about the process. She first heard of divorce coaching when she stopped at a tag sale in her Newport Beach, Calif., neighborhood and, chronically teary-eyed from the difficulties of the divorce, came away with a business card for a divorce coach. Eventually, she met Dr. Hughes.

"I wanted for my kids to have a better sense of this process for themselves as young adults as they are making their own coupling decisions, and a place where they could feel safe with someone to talk to," Ms. George said. "I didn't have anyone to talk to regarding my parents' divorce. I wanted someone there for them, and that was Carol."

# **I emptied the family house after my parents' divorce and this is what I learned**

By Ruben Regalado, [www.eldiario.es](http://www.eldiario.es) - February 16, 2020 - translated by Patricia Garavoglia

There will no longer be a “tomorrow as in my parents’ house” nor a “let’s go to the grandparents’ house.” With each object, a dilemma: Donate? Give away? Keep? Throw out?

My parents have divorced, so the family home is no longer the family home. It has become a financial asset, and, as such, it has been sold. I have had to empty it of the things accumulated over the years; mine and theirs. Suddenly, I am facing a whole lifetime and the memories of a project, the family, that is broken.

Emptying a home is like watching an Almodóvar movie. It is a mixture of drama, memories and comedy, depending on the closet you open. From the poems written to your first girlfriend, to that photograph in Ibiza, to the four of us, when divorce was what happened to everybody else. From the piece of hashish you did not finish, to the photograph with that friend who crashed a car. From the class notes to the cassette tapes.

When we moved to the house there were no mobile phones. Felipe González governed and Javier Sardà was a renowned radio journalist. It was 1994, and I was eleven-years-old with an attic to fill with toys, junk, and books. Fifteen years later, at Christmas time, my mother telephoned me: “We have sold the house, when can you come to help me empty it?” I think I am not exaggerating if I say that in that house nothing has ever been thrown out. In hindsight, we might even have an undiagnosed case of Diogenes syndrome.

## **A “millennial museum”**

My bedroom was kept as an ode to the millennial adolescence. There remained the cassette tapes of radio recordings, the CDs, the first mp3, the collection of cigarette cartons, of beer bottles, the little box with hashish in the sock drawer... Posters of Laudrup, of Ché, of the Beatles, and the flag of the Second Republic. The Mercadona stub from the first Viña Rock festival. The sheet metal planters from which we drank Calimocho<sup>(1)</sup>, the employee card from that summer job at the Pryca.<sup>(2)</sup>

Useless junk, yes, but also memories. And facing each object, a small dilemma: Donate? Give away? Keep? Throw out? Almost everything went to the trash, and in some way, each new bag full of junk was like killing that future which will never be. There will no longer be a “tomorrow as in my parents’ house,” nor, a “let’s go to grandparents’ house.” At the same time, each toy, each book put into a bag, was like throwing a little piece of me in the trash. As if a little bit of my childhood were dying.

Is it normal to feel like this? The psychologist Carol Hughes, a specialist in divorces with adult children and author of several studies on the subject, believes it is normal. She addresses it with her clients with an exercise: “I ask that you imagine that you find a box in a closet in the family



home. The box contains an object which represents a special moment in your family life. An object that makes you happy and one you can take, touch... and, then the object dissolves into dust.“ In that moment Dr. Hughes asks her clients what they feel, and the answer is always the same: “They feel a loss, as if a family member had died and they feel overwhelmed by the sadness. Everyone asks me if that’s normal. Yes, it is normal, they are grieving a profoundly significant loss in their life.”

### **Something akin to death**

With that idea of the parallelism between death of the family project and the real death of a family member, I turn to Paco Roca, author of *La Casa*, who was elected best national comics artist in 2015. In it, Paco tells how he had tackled emptying the family home when his father died. “There is something similar in both cases in the sense that you confront yourself with the things that you had left open over the course of your life. Memories, that gift from your ex-girlfriend that you never threw away...”

Somehow, I think, it is like seeing your life pass before your eyes. The objects transport you to the past. The pre-school notebooks took me to pre-Olympic Barcelona, to Güell Park, to the 500 pesetas my father gave me when my brother was born. With the class notes I saw myself as a “botellón”<sup>(3)</sup> at Parque del Oeste or waiting for the first bus to take me home, already daylight. The Knights of the Zodiac series took me to my cousin’s house, to Pressing Catch (WWE television program) Sunday mornings. I found the membership cards for sparks club and Kids Bank Club. The Ninja Turtle fanny-pack turned up full of marbles. My childhood’s memories are not the memories of a courtyard of Seville<sup>(4)</sup> but they have a point.

### **It is over**

But the journey is not only personal, “it is like taking a journey through family history over the years,” Paco recalls. And it is here where things get complicated. Who gets what? The community property, photos, books, paintings. Things that for me symbolize the happy years but for my parents have become reminders of pain and a possible motive for conflict. I have WhatsApp full of photos with questions: “Was this yours? “My mother/father says that as far as she/he is concerned we can get rid of it, do you want it?” And so, bag by bag, we went emptying the house, until one Wednesday evening there was nothing left.

The empty house seemed something else. It was no longer a place where I had been happy. It was a wasteland. I turned on the hall light and walked over to the living room. I heard the echo of my footsteps and I started to cry. I sat on the floor. When I stopped, I felt a bit stupid, but above all surprised, I did not expect it. Nevertheless, it is normal, “you were not crying over the house, the books, the toys, but for all the memories and the family union. You were crying for the broken history,” Hughes tells me.

They are difficult moments, says Paco Roca, that, despite all, took some positive things from the process: “It is difficult to empty a whole house...those are things that are not valuable and that

end up in the trash but, at the same time, you realize how your parents have loved you, from all the things of yours they kept fondly through the years. I have a four-year-old girl and a seven-year-old boy, and I am saving all their drawings and school work.”

And what have I learned from all this? Of me, that I have not betrayed myself and that I am more or less where I thought I would be. Of the uselessness of keeping things, like Paco, nothing. I have the house full of my daughter’s drawings and a shelf full of work she has been bringing from preschool and her three years of school. Of how to organize life with divorced grandparents and a young daughter, it is better if we talk another day.

(1) A wine and coke cocktail

(2) A supermarket chain

(3) Group drinking in public

(4) Machado, Antonio, In “Retrato” Machado writes “Mi infancia son recuerdos de un patio de Sevilla”.

<https://poemsintranslation.blogspot.com/2010/02/antonio-machado-self-portrait-from.html>

## Our Language Matters

### Litigation/adversarial language

### Collaborative/cooperative language

you.....	I
my children/ my house.....	our children/our house
tell .....	ask/request
You are entitled to .....	What are your hopes, concerns, interests and values?
divorce petition .....	transition document
child support/Disso Master.....	What it takes to pay for our children's expenses / needs and abilities
spousal support .....	reallocation of family resources
child custody/visitation.....	parenting time/co-parenting plan/time with the children / ime w/Mom/time w/Dad
discovery/subpoenas .....	voluntary transparency, information gathering
exhibits/evidence .....	information
opposing counsel .....	collaborative counterpart
fair.....	What I can live with.
never/always.....	sometimes/often
I will not.....	My request is....
proposal .....	option
win/lose.....	mutually acceptable
negative past .....	positive future
recommendations .....	information/education
make settlement proposals .....	brainstorm options

I recommend that you ..... One option to consider might be...

My legal advice is ..... Let me give you some legal information.

I'll see you in court ..... Clients brainstorm and craft agreements

I insist on/that..... You can bring up your concern at the team meeting.

The law says .....The law is one option to consider, and the law limits you from assessing other options that may be far better suited to you achieving success as you have defined it for yourself and for your family.

I know that under the law ..... The law is uncertain, and what a judge will do is difficult to predict as legal professionals can and do differ.

parties/clients ..... person's name/the person I am working with

opposing party ..... the person's name

expert ..... someone with expertise/experience

therapist/counselor ..... divorce coach/communication facilitator

child therapist/custody evaluator .... child specialist/voice of the children

session ..... meeting

custody evaluator's written report ... Child specialist orally shares information with parents and coaches to assist them craft their co-parenting plan.

opposing counsel/other side ..... collaborative co-counsel/collaborative colleague

financial planner/ CPA/financial ..... neutral financial professional  
expert

I represent (client's name) ..... I am (client's name) collaborative lawyer/divorce coach

I will protect you ..... I will make sure that you have all of the information necessary to enable you to make good choices for your family

As your attorney I will ..... You have a team of collaborative professionals to support you.

I am a divorce lawyer ..... I am a peacemaker.

I will provide you with solutions .... We will brainstorm together as a team.

I can get you ..... You are supported in this process by your Divorce Coach, Neutral Financial and me so that your emotional, financial and legal needs will be met.

I know what you want or need ..... Let's make an assessment of what will position you for success.

I am in charge of ..... We work as a team of Collaborative Professionals.

You will end up with ..... I will position you to achieve success as you have defined it for yourself and for your family.

You should .....What would it look like if...

ground rules ..... foundations for success

professionals speak for the clients.... clients speak for themselves

clients talk to the professionals ..... clients talk to each other

adversarial body language ..... collaborative/cooperative body language

temporary support/child support..... income & expense sharing

**Why do we use collaborative / cooperative language instead of litigation / adversarial language?**

(Adapted by Carol R. Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT, and Brian D. Levy, J.D., with permission from Collaborative Divorce Team Trainings ©2009 and International Academy of Collaborative Professionals Training 2013 by Vicki Carpel Miller, LMFT, and Ellie Izzo, Ph.D., LPC)

## **United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, Nov. 29, 1989**

In 1989, world leaders made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – an international agreement on childhood.

It's become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives around the world.

196 countries have ratified the treaty.

But still not every child gets to enjoy a full childhood. Still, too many childhoods are cut short.

It is up to our generation to demand that leaders from government, business and communities fulfil their commitments and take action for child rights now, once and for all. They must commit to making sure *every child, has every right*.

### **What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?**

In 1989 something incredible happened. Against the backdrop of a changing world order world leaders came together and made a historic commitment to the world's children. They made a promise to every child to protect and fulfil their rights, by adopting an international legal framework – the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Contained in this treaty is a profound idea: that children are not just objects who belong to their parents and for whom decisions are made, or adults in training. Rather, they are human beings and individuals with their own rights. The Convention says childhood is separate from adulthood, and lasts until 18; it is a special, protected time, in which children must be allowed to grow, learn, play, develop and flourish with dignity. The Convention went on to become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives.

### **What has the Convention achieved?**

The Convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. It has inspired governments to change laws and policies and make investments so that more children finally get the health care and nutrition they need to survive and develop, and there are stronger safeguards in place to protect children from violence and exploitation. It has also enabled more children to have their voices heard and participate in their societies.

### **Article 12**

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

COLLABORATIVE  
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COLLABORATIVE  
PRACTICE

Resolving Disputes Respectfully

## Factors Affecting Minor and Adult Children's Adjustment to Parental Separation and Divorce

### CONTACT INFORMATION OF PRESENTER

Carol Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT

*Creating more peace in the world one person, one couple, one family at a time.*

Psychotherapist • Child Specialist • Coparenting Specialist • Family Specialist • Divorce Coach • Mediator •  
Trainer

949.855.2740 \* [www.drcarolhughes.com](http://www.drcarolhughes.com) \* [www.divorce\\_peacemaking.com](http://www.divorce_peacemaking.com)



These professionals also conduct Collaborative divorce cases online through virtual video conferencing and document sharing platforms.

### OTHER COLLABORATIVE RESOURCES

#### International Organization

IACP – International Academy of Collaborative Professionals

[www.collaborativepractice.com](http://www.collaborativepractice.com)

#### State Organizations

CP Cal – Collaborative Practice California

[www.cpcal.com](http://www.cpcal.com)

CD Cal – Collaborative Divorce California

[www.collaborativedivorcecalifornia.com](http://www.collaborativedivorcecalifornia.com)



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**CURRICULUM VITAE**

**EDUCATION AND AWARDS**

Patrick Healy Award, Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County

Eureka Award, Collaborative Practice of California

California Coast University, Santa Ana, Ph.D., With Highest Honors, Psychology

California State University, Fullerton, School Psychology Program

California State University, Fullerton, M.S., With Highest Honors, Counseling Psychology

University of California, Irvine, Interdisciplinary Studies,

Goethe Institute, Germany, Fulbright Scholar

Goethe Institute, Germany, Fulbright Scholar

University of Colorado, B.A., Classical and Germanic Languages, *summa cum laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa*

**CERTIFICATIONS**

Mediation - Center for Understanding in Conflict, Gary Friedman, J.D.

EMDR Level 1 and Level 2 - EMDR Institute

Clinical Hypnosis - California State Board of Behavioral Sciences

**SPECIALIZED TRAINING**

One Race, One Blood: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Glenn Crawford, CDFA, 8/22

Trauma and Divorce, Rebecca Fischer, J.D., and Ronda Fuchs, Ph.D., 4/22

Examining Race and Culture in Collaborative Practice, Center for Understanding in Conflict, 3 - 4 /22

Handling the Very Challenging Collaborative Case: A Seminar Workshop: Pauline Tessler, J.D., and Nancy Ross, LCSW, 3/22

Insight Mediation Ongoing Training Group, Jacinta Gallant, J.D., 9/21 to present

Interviewing and Assessing Children in Family Law Matters: Using the Literature. Margaret Lee, Ph.D., 2/25

The Intersection of Family Law and Child Protective Services: Understanding and Supporting Families When Child Safety is At Play, Dene Carroll, LCSW, Jamie Ott, LCSW, Kathleen Smith, J.D., 2/22

Before Too Much Damage Is Done: Creative Approaches to Early Intervention, Lyn Greenberg, Ph.D., ABPP, Leslie Drozd, Ph.D., Jorge Akagi, LCSW, Comm. Nikki Clark, 2/22

Coparenting Therapy, Jenna Flowers, Psy.D., LMFT, 2/22

Insight Mediation Training, Jacinta Gallant, J.D., 11/21 to present

Mosten Mediation Ongoing Case Consultation Group, Forest Mosten, J.D., 10/21 to present

Therapeutic Separations: When Parties Aren't Certain about Separation, Steven Sulmeyer, Ph.D., J.D., 10/21

Testifying as a Mental Health Professionals, AFCC-CA, 12/21

Trauma Informed Care and Community Solutions, AFCC-CA, 11/21

COVID Conundrums and Legal Custody Solutions, AFCC-CA, 8/21

Roll with It: Recognizing and Responding to Resistance, Deborah Gilman, Ph.D., 4/21

Whose Problem Is It? Understanding and Addressing Issues of Client Chemical Dependency Utilizing a Team System's Approach, Nancy Ross, LCSW, Sharon Clark, Ph.D., and Bryan Nguyen, LMFT, 4/21

Pivoting, Practicing, and Profiting: Critical PPP for 2021 and Beyond, Susan Guthrie, J.D., Debra Dupree, Psy.D., and Gabrielle Hartley, J.D.

Our Family in Two Homes Ongoing Training Group, Jacinta Gallant, J.D., 2/21 to present

New Skills for Parents (In and Out of Mediation), Bill Eddy, J.D., LCSW, 2/21

Birdnesting: A Child-Centered Solution to Co-Parenting During Separation and Divorce, Ann Buscho, Ph.D., 1/21

Shared Parenting Research 2020. Marsha Kline Pruett, Ph.D., M.S.L., ABPP, 12/20

California Law and Ethics, Heidi Dalzell, Psy.D., 11/20

Oh! The Pos-abilities: What Collaborative Professionals Should Know When Families Require Extraordinary Consideration, Rebecca Fischer, J.D., Edward Sachs, CPA, Jerome Poliacoff, Ph.D., Carolyn Mazza, J.D., Thabatta Mizrahi, M.A. Ed, Jordan Niefeld, CPA, 10/20

Just Roll with It: Recognizing and Responding to Resistance, Deborah Gilman, Ph.D., 10/20

Collaborative Future: New Faces and New Approaches, Dominique Panko, 10/20

What to Estate Lawyers Really Want and How Can We Respond? Zinta Harris, J.D., Alan Nobler, J.D., and Nancy Ross, LCSW, 10/20

Preparing the Client for Collaboration: Bringing Our Family in Two Homes to Your Practice, Jacinta Gallant, J.D., 10/20

Voice of the Child: An International Perspective, Rachel Birnbaum, Ph.D. 10/20

The Child Specialist Leading Families through Liminality, Deborah Gilman, Ph.D., 8/20

Multidisciplinary Programs for Prevention and Responding to Contact Failure: Education, Early Identification and Timely, Effective Judicial Intervention, Judge Phillip Marcus, 5/20

Dynamics, Not Diagnoses: Assessment and Responding to the Best Interests of the Polarized Child, Benjamin D. Garber, Ph.D., 5/20

Concepts, Controversies, and Conundrums of Parent-Child Contact Problems, Barbara Jo Fidler, Ph.D., and Nicholas Bala, J.D., LLM, 5/20

Building Interdisciplinary Team – a Blueprint for Success, Forrest “Woody” Mosten, J.D., 2/20

What Does the Neutral Financial Specialist Do? Mark C. Hill, CFP, CDFA, 2/20

Parenting Apart, Christina McGhee, MSW, 2/20

New Ways for Families for Mental Health Professionals, Bill Eddy, J.D., LCSW, 1/20

Nightmare Case, Dream Team: When Mental Illness Is a Question, Jennifer Bradley, J.D., Adele D'Ari, Ed.D., Lynn Fletcher, J.D., and Lisa Herrick, Ph.D., 10/19

The Separation Dialogue: An Intervention for a Smoother Divorce, Rene de Hass, Annelies Verhoeft, J. Mark Weiss, J.D., 10/19

Mediation Skills for Collaborative Practice, Woody Mosten, J.D., 9/19

Not Just Alienation: Resistance, Rejection, Reintegration, and Realities of Troubled Parent-Child Relationships, Marsha Pruett, Ph.D., and Leslie Drozd, Ph.D., 5/19

Set Another Place at the Grown-up's Table: Child Participation in Family Dispute Resolution, Stacey Platt, J.D., 4/19

Enrolling Folks into Collaborative Practice: Mark Hill, CFP, CDFA, Carol Hughes, Ph.D., and George Richardson, JD, CFLS, 4/19

Beyond Pitfalls in Commonly Accepted Best ADR Communication Practices, Sharon Ellison, MA, 4/19

Exploring & Expanding Emotional Intelligence: Enriching Clients and Professionals Along the Divorce Path Through the SentBeat Experience, Elli Izzo, Ed.D., and Vicki Carpel Miller, LMFT, 4/19

Agreement Readiness: How Full Interdisciplinary Teams Bring Clients to Agreement Readiness, Bart Carey, JD, Cathleen Collinsworth, CDFA, MAFF, and Carol Hughes, Ph.D., 4/19

Therapeutic Apologies in the Context of Strained Parent-Child Relationships, Michael Saini, Ph.D., Robin Deutsch, Ph.D., and Leslie Drozd, Ph.D.: 2/19

When Children Are Seen but Not Heard; Need for Recognition of Children's Voices in Custody Determinations, Penny Clemmons, Ph.D., J.D., CFLS, 2/19

The Opioid Crisis, Substance Abuse, and Treatment Alternatives: Alix Nassirri, DO, Michael Kretzmer, JD, CFLS, and Fallyn Cox, Psy.D.: 2/19

Using Family Therapy Techniques to Move from Hostility to Civility: Redirecting Emotions, Empathic Confronting, and Radical Reframing, Angus Strachan, Ph.D. and Stan Katz, Ph.D., 2/19

The Evolution of Family Law and Parenting Evaluations: Science, Unintended Consequences & Reconsidering Delivery of Services, Robert Kaufman, Ph.D., Steven Friedlander, Ph.D., Hon Marjorie Stabach, and Lorie Nachlis, J.D., CFLS, 2/19

When Civility Breaks Down in Politics and Relationships: Designing Interest-Based Approaches to Chronic Conflicts, Kenneth Cloke, J.D., LLM, Ph.D., 2/19

Understanding the Big Challenges of “Blended Family” Relationships: What Works and What Doesn’t, Patricia Papernow, Ed.D., 2/19

What Is Real? Identifying and Intervening with an Encapsulated Delusion, Robin Deutsch, Ph.D., ABPP, Leslie Drozd, Ph.D., Hon. Harvey Silberman, 2/19

Highlights of 2018 Family Court Research: *Family Court Review* and More, Robert Emery, Ph.D., 1/19  
California Law and Ethics, Heidi Dalzell, Psy.D., 12/18

Beyond Desensitization...Widening Children’s Tolerance Through Current Trigger Work, Debra Wesselman, LIMHP, Cathy Schweitzer, LMHP, and Stefanie Armstrong, LIMHP, 5/18

Gray Divorce: What Will the Children Say? Linda Nastari, LCSW, Sally Cooperrider, J.D., Pam Flournoy, CDFA, and David Weinberg, J.D., 4/18

Using Internal Family Systems to Manage Conflict in the Collaborative Process, Barton Ruben, Ph.D., 4/18

The Unique Skill Set of the Child Specialist as a Family Focused Facilitator in Collaborative Divorce and Mediation Meetings, Cathleen Collinsworth, CDFA, Carol Hughes, LMFT, Bruce Fredenburg, LMFT, and Bart Carey, J.D., 4/18

Enrolling the Client and Spouse into Collaborative Practice, George Richardson, J.D., Mark Hill, CDFA, and Carol Hughes, Ph.D., LMFT, 4/18

Relational Identity Theory – Part 1, created by Daniel Shapiro, Ph.D. of the Harvard Law School Program on Negotiation: Ed Palotta, Ph.D., 7/17

Relational Identity Theory – Part 2, created by Daniel Shapiro, Ph.D. of the Harvard Law School Program on Negotiation: Ed Palotta, Ph.D., 9/17

Powerful Non-Defensive Communication – Summer Deepening, Sharon Ellison, 6/17

Healing the Wounds of Attachment & Rebuilding Self, An Advanced EMDR Therapy Clinical Course: Deany Lalot, LICSW, 4/17

Special Needs Children in Divorce, Linda L. Dugan, J.D., 4/17

Grand Rounds for Collaborative Professionals, Cathleen Collinsworth, CDFA, Carol Hughes, LMFT, & Bart Carey, J.D., 4/17

Bill Eddy’s New Ways for Families, Shawn Skillin, J.D., 4/17

The Art of the Question, Chip Rose, J.D., 3/17

Peacemaking Skills for Home and Office: How to Truly Listen, Retired Judge Fernando Firmat, 2/17

Three-Day Collaborative Divorce Interdisciplinary Team Training, Collaborative Divorce Education Institute: 1/17

California Law and Ethics, Heidi Dalzell, Psy.D., 11/16

Miscommunication Across Cultures and Genders, Nina Meierding, J.D., 10/16

Designing and Delivery Engaging and Impactful Workshops and Trainings, Brian Gailbraith, LLM, & Sue Cook, MEd, 10/16

Wanting “Yes” and Getting “No,” Fred Luskin, Ph.D., 10/16

Marketing the Synergy of Collaborative Teams, Joryn Jenkins, J.D., Anu Osborne, LLM, and Vanita Bellen, MHSc, 10/16

Giving Voice to Collaboration: Training the Power of Your Most Overlooked Tool, Barbara McAfee, 10/16

How Interdisciplinary Collaborative Divorce Teams Bring Clients to Agreement Readiness, Cathleen Collinworth, CDFA, Bruce Fredenburg, LMFT, Carol Hughes, LMFT, and Brian Levy, J.D., 10/16

Meeting with Clients to Choose Their Process: An 8-Step Approach, Brian Gailbraith, J.D., 10/16

A Voice Not a Choice: Skills and Tools for Incorporating the Child’s Perspective into Collaborative Practice, Kathleen Zumpano, LMFT, 5/16

Addiction and Competency Concerns for Professionals and Clients, James Heiting, J.D., Greg Dorst, J.D., and Mike Razo, Esq., 5/16

Bringing Your Best Self to the Collaborative Practice, Frederic Luskin, Ph.D., 5/16

Advocating in Collaborative Practice, David Fink, J.D., Emily Weaver, LMFT, and Arlene Konstant, J.D., 4/16

Ethics in Collaborative Team Practice, David Weinberg, J.D., 4/16

Lie Detection and Mindfulness for Wise and Durable Agreements, Clark Freshman, J.D., 4/16

Prenuptial Agreements in Collaborative Practice, Bart Carey, Esq., and Leslee Newman, Esq., 4/16

It’s All About the Frame: A Deeper Look at Conflict, Victoria Smith, J.D., and Sherri Goren Slovin, J.D., 10/15

Feedback Skills for More Satisfying and Effective Teamwork, Jacinta Gallant, J.D., and Mark Weiss, J.D., 10/15

The Secrets of Unconscious Communication: Managing the Most Challenging Clients, Deborah Thevenin, Ph.D., 10/15

The Power Paradox, Dacher Keltner, Ph.D., Director, University of California, Berkeley, Greater Good Science Center, 10/15

Authentic Presence and the Art of Seeing, Shasha Porter, LICSW, and Adrianna (Summers) Galimberti-Rennie, AFBPsS, 10/15

Practical Applications in a Collaborative Process, Bruce Fredenburg, LMFT, 8/15

Understanding Impasse, Catherine Conner, J.D. and Randy Cheek, LMFT, 4/15

Creating a Legacy for our Children, A Parenting Guide for Divorce and Separating Parents When Anger or Domestic Violence is an Issue, Alyce LaViolette, LMFT, 4/15

Communication, Spirituality, and the Brain, Mark Waldman, 3/15

Understanding and Being Aware of Our Biases, Fred Glassman, J.D., and James Walton, Ph.D., 2/15

- Managing Liability and Ethical Issues for Confidential Family Mediation in California, 1/15
- Law and Ethics, California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, 12/14
- California Law and Ethics, Heidi Dalzell, Psy.D., 12/14
- What We Learned at the 2014 International Academy of Collaborative Professionals Educational Forum,  
Diana Martinez, J.D., and Sara Milburn, J.D. 11/14
- The Challenges of Expectations, Trust, and Fairness in the Collaborative Process  
Sherry Goren Slovin, J.D., 10/14
- New Directions for Trainers of Collaborative Professionals, Anne Purcell, Ph.D., M.Ed., BEd ST Hons,  
Dip T, AACM, 10/14
- The Use of Motivational Interviewing, John Jochem, Psy.D., 10/14
- Scaffolding Complex Collaborative Divorce Cases, Tools for Tackling Tough Issues, Justin Sedell, J.D.,  
and Karen Bonnell, MS, 10/14
- The Inevitability of Conflict and the Power of Circle Process to Forge Change, Former Judge and Chief  
Justice Barry Stuart, 10/14
- Circles and Practice Group Conflict and Intimacy, Nancy Cameron, QC, 10/14
- Ethics Café, George Richardson, J.D., et al, 10/14
- Collaborative Divorce or Cooperative Divorce, Jennifer Webb, J.D., Brian Levy, J.D.,  
Leslee Newman, J.D., 10/14
- When A Child Rejects A Parent – Exploring Rejection, Resolution, and Reunification, Los Angeles County  
Bar Association, 9/14
- Divorce Recovery, John Fry, Ph.D., 9/14
- Dealing with High Conflict Clients, Bart Carey, J.D., and Yaffa Balsam, LMFT, 8/14
- Enrolling the Client and Spouse, Diana Martinez, J.D., 7/14
- Mediation in a Time of Change, Community Service Programs, 3/14
- Difficult Clients and Power Imbalances: Anthony Aloia, Ph. D., 4/13
- Creating an Understanding of Clients' Motivations, Values, Principles, and Needs, Randy Cheek, LMFT,  
Ann Buscho, Ph.D., Emily Weaver, LMFT, 4/13
- Streamlined Protocols Training, Collaborative Divorce Institute, 1/13
- Bringing Interests Down to Earth, Gary Friedman, J. D., and Catherine Conner, J. D., 10/12
- Behavioral Basis for Optimal Team Functioning, Rick Foster, M.A. and Greg Hicks, 10/12
- Collaborative Divorce Interdisciplinary Team Protocol Training, Collaborative Divorce Team Trainings,  
6/12
- Training the Trainers Shadow Trainer, Collaborative Divorce Team Trainings, 6/12

Advanced Self Reflection in Action for Conflict Professionals: Gary Friedman, J. D. and Norman Fisher,  
4/12 – 12/12

Trainers' Roundtable, Nancy Cameron, Q.C., L.L.B., 10/11

The Inevitability of Conflict: Advanced Skills for Managing Client and Team Problems, Rita Pollak, J.D.,  
Cathy Heenan, Ed.D., and Susan Miller, MA, CPA, CFP, CDFA, 10/11

Transformative Processes: From Indigenous Knowledge Through Narrative Mediation to Neuroscience,  
Richard Jaffee Cohen, J.D., 10/11

Child Specialist Training: A Scientifically Informed Collaborative Model, Daniel Pickar, Ph.D., A.B.P.P.,  
10/11

How We Fight – John Gottman's Lessons for Collaborative Professionals, Joseph Shaub, J.D., 10/11

Self-Reflection for Conflict Professionals Intensive V, Gary Friedman, J.D. and Norman Fisher, 5/11

Coaching Tools for Collaborative Team, Fundamentals of Coaching Others for Peak Performance,  
Maria Nemeth, Ph.D., 4/11

Why Collaborative Practice Is Good Karma Divorce, Judge Michele Lowrance, 4/11

Getting to the Emotional Truth of the Case, Stephen Sulmeyer, J.D., Ph.D., 4/11

The Biology of Loss: Understanding the Neuropsychological Impact of Impaired Parent/Child Attachment,  
Gabor Mate, M.D., 4/11

Beyond Dispute Resolution: Using Peacemaking to Build a Successful Collaborative Practice,  
Woody Mosten, J.D., 4/11

When the Body Says "No": Stress-Disease Connection, Gabor Mate, M.D., 4/11

Working with Difficult Clients, David Wienberg, J.D., Natalie Leininger, CFP, Barbara Seifer, LMFT, 4/11

Self-Reflection for Conflict Professionals Intensive IV, Gary Friedman, J.D. and Norman Fisher, 4/11

Practical Techniques for Diagnosing Resistance and Moving Beyond Obstacles to Settlement,  
Nina Meierding, J.D., 2/11

Training the Trainers, International Academy of Collaborative Professionals, 2/11

Self-Reflection for Conflict Professionals Intensive III, Gary Friedman, J.D. and Norman Fisher, 1/11

Mediation Skills and Strategies in Collaborative and Unbundled Practices: Woody Mosten, J.D., 12/10

Self-Reflection for Conflict Professionals Intensive II, Gary Friedman, J.D. and Norman Fisher, 12/10

Law and Ethics, Continuing Psychology Education, 12/10

Self-Reflection for Conflict Professionals Intensive I, Gary Friedman, J.D. and Norman Fisher, 10/10

Advanced Interdisciplinary Team Training, Los Angeles Collaborative Family Law Association, 10/10

From Grievance to Agreement: Adding Forgiveness Practices to Our Collaborative Toolbox,  
Ann Busho, Ph.D., 10/10

The Art and Science of Resilience: Facilitating the Prepared Mind of the Collaborative Client, Vicki Carpel, LMFT, and Elli Rizzo, Ed.D., 10/10

Difficult Conversations, Gary Friedman, J.D., and Catherine Conner, J.D., 7/10

Neuroscience and Collaboration, Pauline Tessler, J.D. and Thomas Lewis, M.D., 4/10

Using the Full Team Model to Meet Emotional and Financial Needs of Families. Collaborative Divorce Team Trainings, 4/10

Positive Solutions for Team Dysfunction, Catherine Conner, J.D., and Randy Cheek, LMFT, 4/10

Training the Trainers, Collaborative Divorce Team Trainings, 3/10

Collaborative Divorce Interdisciplinary Team Protocol, Collaborative Divorce Team Trainings, 3/10

Advanced Conflict Resolutions Strategies, Forrest Mosten, J.D., 1/10

Highest Potential Collaborative Family Law Practice, Pauline Tessler, J.D., 10/09

Helping High Conflict Parents Resolve Disputes, Joan Kelly, Ph. D., 9/09

Creative Solutions for Divorcing Families, Gary Neuman, MS, LMHC, 4/09

Full Team Protocols for Collaborative Divorce Practice, Collaborative Divorce Team Trainings, 3/09

The Impact of Divorce on Children, Ericksonian Foundation, 12/08

Teleheath: Ethics, Legal and Clinical Issues, Ofer Zur, Ph.D., 11/08

Maximizing Family Law Cases Through Informed Consent, Woody Mosten, J. D., 9/08

In-Patient Treatment Approaches for Patients with Co-Occurring Disorders, Cottonwood de Tucson, 9/08

Beyond the Basics-Building on Our Core Strengths, Collaborative Practice California, 4/08

Appreciative Inquiry, Peggy Thompson, Ph.D., 4/08

His Brain, Her Brain, Donna Israel, Ph.D., 4/08

Neutral Coach Collaborative Divorce Skills - Advanced Training, Linda Solomon, LMFT 3/08

Neutral Coach Collaborative Divorce Skills, Linda Solomon, LMFT, 2/08

Communication Challenges for Client-Centered Collaboration: Dealing with the Tensions, Gary Friedman, J.D., and Catherine Conner, J.D., 4/07

Advanced EMDR with Children & Adolescents, Greg Smith, LCSW, 9/07

EMDR and Peak Performance, Greg Smith, LCSW, 9/07

Psychotherapy with Children, Richard Leslie, J.D., 12/06

Confidentiality and the Law, Richard Leslie, J.D., 12/06

The Psychology of Aging Well, Ofer Zur, Ph.D., 12/06



Collaborative Family Law Interdisciplinary Training-Going Deeper-Beyond the Paradigm Shift,  
Los Angeles Collaborative Family Law Association, 4/06

Collaborative Law in Family Law, Francisco Fermat, J.D., 2/06

Mediation Training, Adryenn Cantor, J.D., 2/06

Partner Violence, Ofer Zur, Ph.D., 11/04

Ethics and the Law, Ofer Zur, Ph.D., 10/04

Dual Relationships, Ofer Zur, Ph.D., 9/04

Mentor Personal Coaching Training, Mentor Coaching, 4/04

Collaborative Divorce Training, Collaborative Divorce Associates, 2/04

Executive Coaching Training, College of Executive Coaching, 11/03

Collaborative Divorce Training, Ronald Supancic, J. D., 7/03

Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Training, EAGALA, 3/03

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Training, Pegasus/EAP/CTHA, 1/03

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Training, Pegasus/EAP/CTHA, 8/02

Advanced EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing) Training, EMDRIA, 6/02

Animal Assisted Psychotherapy, The Delta Society, 3/02

Chemical Dependency Treatment, Homestead University, 11/00

HIV/AIDS Treatment, Homestead University, 11/00

Advanced EMDR Training, EMDRIA, 6/99

Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing (EMDR) Level II Training, Francine Shapiro, Ph. D., 3/99

The Long-term Effects of Divorce on Children, UCLA Child Development Center,  
Judith Wallerstein, Ph. D., 2/99

Psychoneuroimmunology, National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine. 3/97

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Francine Shapiro, Ph. D., 10/95

Codependency Treatment, John Bradshaw, 11/91

Custody Evaluations & Mediation, Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, 5/89

Shame and the Adult Children of Alcoholics, Claudia Black, Ph.D., 1/89

Treatment of Adult Children of Alcoholics, Claudia Black, Ph. D., 2/88

State of California Workers Compensation Cases: Therapeutic Treatment, 10/86

Child Abuse Reporting and Therapeutic Treatment, State of California, 10/86

Advanced Hypnosis Techniques, T. X. Barber, Ph.D., 1/86

Advanced Hypnosis Techniques in Family Therapy, Milton H. Erickson Foundation, 11/84

Advanced Clinical Hypnosis Training, Milton C. Lucius, Ph.D., 3/81 – 12/83

The Psychologist and the Law, Orange County Psychological Association, 11/83

Domestic Violence, California Youth Authority & Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 9/83

Gestalt Techniques in Family Therapy, Orange County Counseling and Training Center, 6/83

Paradoxical Techniques in Therapy, Orange County Counseling and Training Center, 6/83

Conjoint Family Therapy, Virginia Satir, Ph.D., 1/83

Group Therapy for Adolescents, California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, 1/83

Group Therapy Techniques, California State University, Fullerton, Gerald Corey, Ph.D., 11/82

Stress Reduction Treatment, South Coast Community Hospital, 11/81

Rational Emotive Therapy, University of California, Irvine: Albert Ellis, Ph.D., 10/81

Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting, State of California: 10/81

Conjoint Therapy, Orange County Mental Health Department, Lynn Segal, LCSW, 8/81

Paradoxical Techniques in Individual and Family Therapy, Paul Watzlawick, Ph.D., 2/80

Assertion Training, Behavior Modification, Educational Psychology, Interdisciplinary Studies,  
University of California, Irvine: 1974-1978

## **EXPERIENCE**

2022	Presenter Collaborative Practice California statewide conference Factors Affecting Children's Adjustment to Separation and Divorce
2022	Co-Presenter South Palm Beach Florida Choose Collaborative Practice Group: Home Will Never Be the Same Again for Adult Children of Gray Divorce
2021	Coach for Guthrie-Mosten Academy 40-hour Mediation Training attendees
2021	Co-Presenter International Academy of Collaborative Professionals' Educational Forum: The Overlooked Value of the Child Specialist as a Family-Facilitator in Collaborative Divorce and Mediation Meetings
2021	Co-Presenter International Academy of Collaborative Professionals' Educational Forum: Home Will Never Be the Same Again for Adult Children of Gray Divorce
2021	Presenter Nova Southeastern University Master's Degree Program in Marriage and Family Therapy:

Factors that Contribute to Children's Adjustment During and After Parental Separation and Divorce

- 2021 Presenter  
Maryland Collaborative Practice Group:  
Home Will Never Be the Same Again for Adult Children of Gray Divorce
- 2021 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California State Conference:  
The Overlooked Value of the Child Specialist as a Family-Facilitator in Collaborative Divorce and Mediation Meetings
- 2021 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California State Conference:  
Home Will Never Be the Same Again for Adult Children of Gray Divorce
- 2021 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice Washington State Conference:  
The Overlooked Value of the Child Specialist as a Family-Facilitator in Collaborative Divorce and Mediation Meetings
- 2021 Co-Presenter  
International Academy of Collaborative Professionals Webinar:  
Home Will Never Be the Same Again for Adult Children of Gray Divorce
- 2020 Co-Presenter  
International Academy of Collaborative Professionals' Educational Forum:  
The Overlooked Value of the Child Specialist as a Family-Facilitator in Collaborative Divorce and Mediation Meetings
- 2020 Coach for Woody Mosten 40-hour Mediation Training attendees
- 2020 Presenter  
Nova Southeastern University Master's Degree Program in Marriage and Family Therapy:  
Children's Adjustment to Divorce
- 2020 Co-presenter  
Collaborative Family Law Professionals of South Florida: Home Will Never Be the Same Again: How Gray Divorce Affects Adult Children
- 2020 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County: Home Will Never Be the Same Again: Adult Children of Gray Divorce
- 2020 Co-presenter  
Attorney-Therapist Networking Breakfast: Home Will Never Be the Same Again: Adult Children of Gray Divorce
- 2020 Co-Presenter  
Orange County Divorce Alliance: Adult Children are Stakeholders in their Parents' Divorce
- 2019 Co-Presenter  
International Academy of Collaborative Professionals' Educational Forum:  
Enrolling Folks into Collaborative Practice
- 2019 Co-Presenter

- Collaborative Practice California State Conference: Enrolling Folks into Collaborative Practice
- 2019 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California State Conference: Agreement Readiness: How Full Interdisciplinary Teams Bring Clients to Agreement Readiness
- 2018 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California State Conference: The Unique Skill Set of the Child Specialist as a Family Focused Facilitator in Collaborative Divorce and Mediation Meetings
- 2018 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California State Conference: Enrolling the Client and Spouse into Collaborative Practice
- 2017 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California State Conference: Grand Rounds for Collaborative Professionals
- 2017 Co-Trainer  
Collaborative Divorce Education Institute: Three-Day Collaborative Divorce Interdisciplinary Team Training
- 2017 Co-Presenter  
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts-California: Collaborative Divorce and Divorce Co-Mediation – A New Paradigm for Resolving Disputes Respectfully Without Litigation
- 2016 Co-Trainer  
Continuing Education for the California Bar: Collaborative Divorce: A New Paradigm for Resolving Disputes Respectfully Without Litigation
- 2016 Co-Trainer  
International Academy of Collaborative Professionals' Educational Forum: How Interdisciplinary Collaborative Divorce Teams Bring Clients to Agreement Readiness
- 2016 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Divorce Education Institute: Bringing Clients to Agreement Readiness
- 2016 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California State Conference: How Interdisciplinary Teams Bring Clients to Agreement Readiness
- 2015 Co-Presenter  
International Academy of Collaborative Professionals' Educational Forum: The Neutral Child Specialist's Value Added to Collaborative Divorce Teams
- 2015 Co-Presenter  
International Academy of Collaborative Professionals' Educational Forum: The Financial Neutral's Role in Bringing Clients to Agreement Readiness
- 2015 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County: The Financial Neutral's Role in Bringing Clients to Agreement Readiness

- 2015 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California State Conference: The Neutral Child Specialist's Value Added to Collaborative Divorce Teams
- 2015 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California State Conference: The Financial Neutral's Role in Bringing Clients to Agreement Readiness
- 2015 Co-Presenter  
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts-California Conference: Collaborative Divorce: A New Paradigm for Resolving Disputes Respectfully Without Litigation
- 2015 Presenter  
Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County: The Power of Peacemaking Circles; The Challenges of Expectations, Trust and Fairness in the Collaborative Process; and, Advanced Skills for Collaborative Practitioners
- 2014 Co-Presenter  
Southern California Mediation Association: Collaborating with Other Interdisciplinary Professionals for Mediation Success
- 2014 Guest Speaker – Lisa Zonder's KVTA radio show, "Divorce Lisa Zonder Style" – Children and Divorce
- 2014 Guest Speaker – ESPN LA radio show "The Experience with Fern Cusack" - Collaborative Divorce
- 2013 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice California: Positioning from Within the Professional Team
- 2013 Co-Presenter  
Alternatives, A Collaborative Divorce Group: Building an Integrated Team and How to Have Difficult Conversations
- 2012 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Divorce Professionals of Pasadena: Full Team Interdisciplinary Collaborative Divorce Practice - An Overview: Basic Understanding of Protocols, Roles of Professionals and Ethical Concerns
- 2012 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice of California State Conference: Working as an Integrated Team Toward Agreement Readiness
- 2010 to present Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Divorce Education Institute: Second Saturday and Divorce Options programs at professional offices and community colleges
- 2011 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Professionals of the Inland Empire: How to Have Difficult Conversations
- 2011 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County: Breaking Impasse with the Magic of Brainstorming
- 2010 Shadow Trainer, Woody Mosten, J.D. and Collaborative Divorce Education Institute

- 2010 Shadow Trainer, Collaborative Divorce Team Trainings
- 2010 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice of California State Conference: Breaking Impasse with the Magic of Brainstorming
- 2009 Co-founder and Trainer  
Collaborative Divorce Education Institute
- 2009 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Practice of California State Conference: Her Brain, His Brain – A Practical Approach to Emotional Issues in Collaborative Practice: Nurture (Psychosocial) and Nature (Neurophysiological)
- 2008 Co-Presenter  
Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County: Her Brain, His Brain – A Practical Approach to Emotional Issues in Collaborative Practice: Nurture (Psychosocial) and Nature (Neurophysiological)
- 2003 – present Collaborative Divorce Coach, Child Specialist and Mediator for Collaborative and Mediated Divorce
- 1997 Instructor  
University of California, San Diego, Department Psychiatry, Addiction Technology Transfer Center: “The Missing Link: Chemical Dependency And Nutrition.”
- 1983 – Present Private Practitioner  
Individual, Marriage, Family and Child Psychotherapist: Specializing in treatment of addictions, eating disorders, sexual abuse, adult children of dysfunctional families issues, child and adolescent issues, child custody and co-parenting
- 1987 – 1998 Associate Professor  
Saddleback College, Department of Human Services: Design and instruct classes on adult children of alcoholics and other dysfunctional families, domestic violence, eating disorders, sexual abuse, and crisis intervention and referral techniques  
  
Saddleback College, Department of Community Education: Design and instruct workshops on alcoholic and other dysfunctional families, parenting skills, relationship skills, eating disorders, and self-hypnosis
- 1995 – 1998 Lead Instructor and Director  
Saddleback College, Department of Human Services: Design, organize and staff the two week long Annual Summer Eating Disorders Institute; instruct modules in the Institute
- 1987 – 1994 College Professor  
University of Phoenix: Design and instruct continuing education classes for educators on eating disorders and addictive behaviors
- 1987 – present Family Therapist: appointed by the California Superior Court, County of Orange
- 1984-1998 Trainer and Educator  
Laguna Beach Community Clinic Crisis Hotline, The South Orange Court Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline, Community Services Programs, Parents United, and Weyerhaeuser Hines Nursery Employee Assistance Program

1984-1987	Consultant United States Marine Corps Joint Drug and Alcohol Counseling Center, El Toro, CA
1970-1988	Educator and Counselor Educator, counselor, athletics coach, resource team member in public schools: Wyoming and California
1981-1983	Intern in Marriage, Family and Child Therapy Irvine Counseling Center, Irvine, CA
1981-1982	Private Practice Psychotherapist Trainee Tustin Associates for Human Development: Co-therapist for recovering alcoholics group and for eating disorders group
1981	Intern in Marriage, Family and Child Therapy Orange County Adult Outpatient Services, Laguna Beach, CA

### **LICENSES and CREDENTIALS**

Marriage, Family and Child Therapist (LMFT 18377), State of California

Certification of Clinical Hypnosis, State of California

Licensed New Ways for Families® provider

Pupil Personnel Services Credential, State of California

Standard Secondary and Community College Life Teaching Credentials, State of California

### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

Phi Beta Kappa

Fulbright Association

California Association of Marriage and Family Therapist

American Psychology Association

California Psychological Association

Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County (Founding Member)

Collaborative Divorce Education Institute (Co-Founder)

Collaborative Practice of California

International Academy of Collaborative Professionals

## PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS

"The Highest Divorce Rate in History: Gray Divorce: Causes, Consequences, and Tips for Professionals Serving this Population," in "Just Resolutions" American Bar Association publication, 3/22

"Home Will Never Be the Same Again: Guidance for the Families of Gray Divorce," *Psychology Today* Guest blog column, 6/21 to present

*Home Will Never Be the Same: A Guide for Adult Children of the Gray Divorce Revolution*, published by Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, May 2020

*Children in the Center: Healthy Co-parenting After Divorce*, a book in progress

*Abby Dearest: A Therapy Dog Speaks to Parents About Children and Divorce*, a book in progress

"I Emptied the Family Home After My Parents' Divorce and This Is What I Learned," El Diario interview - 2/16/20

"Yikes! Mom or Dad Is Dating Again: How to Avoid a Family Rift". *BottomLine Personal*, 10/20/17

"The Child Specialist", a chapter in *The Divorce Puzzle: Connecting the Pieces Collaboratively*, Joryn Jenkins, Editor, 7/13/17

"What to Do When Your Parents Divorce and You're Already a Grown-up", *BottomLine Personal*, 11/15/16

"Never Too Old to Hurt from Parents' Divorce," *New York Times* interview, 4/24/16

"Where Are the Child Specialists on Our Collaborative Divorce Teams? The Case for Value Added," an article for collaborative professionals; co-authored with Bruce Fredenburg, LMFT, 2011

"How to Talk with your Adult Children About Your Impending Divorce," an article for divorcing parents of adult children, 2011

"Adult Children of Divorce: The Invisible Children," an article for divorcing parents of adult children, 2011

"How to Talk with your Minor Children About Your Impending Divorce," an article for divorcing parents of adult children, 2010

"How No Court Divorce Benefits Children," an article for parents and professionals, 2009

"Eating Disorders: Progression and Recovery," [www.anonymousone.com](http://www.anonymousone.com), October 2000

"Metaphoric Meanings of Disordered Eating," [www.anonymousone.com](http://www.anonymousone.com), September 2000

"Katie's Story," [www.anonymousone.com](http://www.anonymousone.com), August 2000

"Eating Disorders, A Unique Perspective on the Internal and External World," [www.anonymousone.com](http://www.anonymousone.com), July 2000

"The Power of 'I' Messages," *Bridges, a Guide for Singles*, 1998

"What is Healthy Self Esteem?" *Bridges, a Guide for Singles*, 1997

"If I Am So Wonderful, Why Am I Still Single?" *Bridges, a Guide for Singles*, 1996



"Why Preteens Are at Risk for Drugs," *The Network of Hope*, 1996

"Adult Children as Drug and Alcohol Counselors: The Pitfalls," *The Southern California Recovery Guide*, 1992

"Emotional Incest," *The Southern California Recovery Guide*, 1992

"Adult Children in the Workplace," *The Southern California Recovery Guide*, 1992

# Sachs Multimedia Service Sheet

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Denver, CO 80220  
(305) 975-1676



## WEBSITE SERVICE

SERVICE	COST	DELIVERY TIME	DESCRIPTION
Full New Website Design	Starting at \$4,000	4-8 weeks	Fully customizable website built from scratch, no templates used, mobile friendly
Homepage Redesign	\$1,500-\$2,000	2-4 weeks	Upgrade your current site to give it a fresh and modern theme
Landing Page Design	\$1,000-\$1,500	1-3 weeks	Create a single page to get a consistent and clear message for consumers
Website Management	\$300+ monthly	Ongoing	Make sure website stays up to date with all necessary plug-in updates, blog posts, picture and info updates, etc.
Search Engine Optimization	\$295-\$950 monthly	Ongoing	Request additional breakdown

## DIGITAL MARKETING SERVICES

SERVICE	COST (MONTHLY)	DELIVERY TIME	DESCRIPTION
Social Media Management	\$200 first platform, \$75 each additional	3 posts per week	Post, share, like, comment, manage messages and comments
Email Marketing	\$200	1-2 emails per week	Manage email campaigns; update contact lists
Email Contact List Growth	\$100 per 1,000 contacts	2-3 weeks	Search directories to gather targeted emails to expand contact list
Pay Per Click Advertising	\$200 + budget	Ongoing	Google AdWords, Facebook Ads, LinkedIn Ads

## CONTENT CREATION SERVICES

SERVICE	COST	DELIVERY TIME	DESCRIPTION
Blog Writing	\$0.11 per word	1-2 weeks	Ghost write blogs for your website, newsletter, social media, and more.
Video Content	Priced Per Project	N/A	Film and produce promotional videos for your personal business or professional organization
Audio Content/Podcasting	\$50 per hour	1 week	Help produce, edit and distribute audio content

## CONSULTING SERVICES

SERVICE	COST	DELIVERY TIME	DESCRIPTION
Consulting Services	\$40 per hour	N/A	Reduced pricing for prepackaged consulting services.