

What is Co-Parent Communications Counseling?

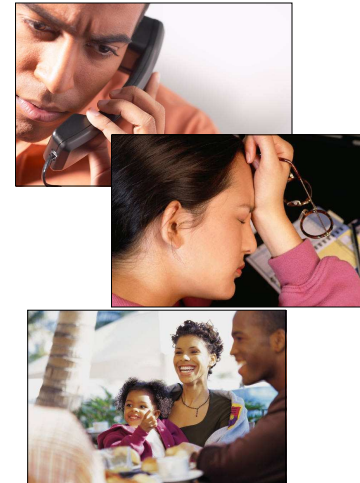
Co-Parent Communications Counseling is not therapy or coaching. It is a short-term intervention designed to help parents who are divorced, or in the process of divorcing, communicate in the most effective way possible given their level of conflict and individual conflict styles. The goals are:

- To move focus from parental needs to children's needs.
- Minimize children's exposure to conflict in executing the legal parenting plan arrangements.
- Create methods of communication between parents appropriate to their level of conflict.
- Find ways to insure that both parents maintain ongoing relationships with the children.
- Agree on specific methods of future conflict resolution that reflect the above goals.

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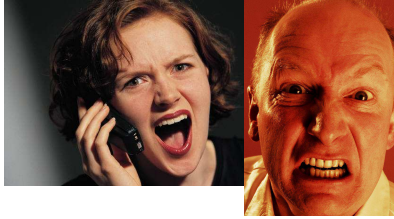
Co-Parent Communications Counseling

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- **Assessing Conflict**
- **Developing a
Communications Plan**
- **Teaching Divorced
Parents a New Way
of Relating**





It Doesn't Have to Be Ugly...



Divorce is one of the most humiliating and isolating events a family can endure. Placing blame is often high on the priority list and fear-based anger is fueled by the process of litigation and both sides drawing their lines in the sand.

Most of the time, the poor communication patterns between parents that may have led to the break-up of the marriage, intensify after the divorce, creating an extremely unhealthy environment for both the parents and the children.

Parents must either change their patterns drastically or agree to disagree in a way that is civil, manageable, and tolerable. This is where co-parent communications counseling can make a positive difference...

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Who Benefits?

Ultimately, children of divorce benefit when they do not have to remain in the midst of their parents' conflicts. Research shows over and over again that conflict is a major determining factor in how kids fare after divorce. Parents who work to minimize conflict create a healthy environment for their children, as well as reduce stress and health problems in themselves. Co-parents who learn to move from blame-placing to problem-solving are able to get the much-needed emotional divorce that frees the family to move on in a healthy way.

When Is It Appropriate?

This particular intervention is appropriate for co-parents who are assessed with mild to moderate conflict levels, but is not recommended for parents with domestic violence issues or severe conflict. **This intervention may satisfy the requirements of a court order for additional co-parenting education. Check with the judge in your case.** If an agreement cannot be reached on a productive communications plan, a recommendation will be given to move to the next logical step, such as employing a custody evaluator or a professional parent coordinator. As a matter of efficiency and effectiveness, **it is important that both parents attend their respective county's four-hour basic seminar for divorcing parents before beginning the counseling sessions described here.**

What is Involved?

Typically, in four to six one-hour sessions, co-parents will be assessed to determine their current level of conflict and will receive help in developing a communications strategy that can become part of the divorce's parenting plan. The first four sessions consist of two individual meetings with each parent and the last one or two sessions are conducted jointly. **Cost is \$100 per session** (additional costs may apply if a written report is requested at the end of the six sessions).

About the Counselor

Diane Shearer is a Certified Family Life Educator and a registered domestic mediator, with a masters degree in family sociology. She is a family therapist in Snellville, Georgia, and directs the non-profit, **Center for Navigating Family Change**, which conducts the court-ordered divorcing parents seminars in Gwinnett and DeKalb counties. Diane also publishes the quarterly newsletter, *The Peaceful Co-Parent*, and authors the self-syndicated monthly column, *Successful Single Parenting*, that appears in numerous regional parenting magazines around the country. She is author of the book, *Solo Parenting: Raising Strong & Happy Families* (Fairview Press, 1997), and is a member of the training team for the **Collaborative Law Institute of Georgia**.