

## Mediation with Un-Married Domestic Relations Parties

### Some Open-Ended Questions

1. Tell me about your relationship:
  - A. What's the current state of the relationship?
  - B. How often do you interact? (How are those interactions?)
  - C. How well do you know the other's party's family?
  - D. How well does the other party know your family?
  - E. What do you perceive are the other party's values regarding parenting?
  - F. What are your most important parenting values?
  - G. What is the degree of trust?
  - H. What's the current state of the relationship?
  - I. How does each party feel about that relationship?
  
2. Tell me about your relationships with the child:
  - A. How do you individually parent?
  - B. What do you perceive are the other party's values regarding parenting?
  - C. What are your most important parenting values?
  - D. What is the current parenting time arrangement?
  - E. How does perceive the other parent individually parents? (If there are negatives, what specific change would you be willing to request?)
  - F. How have you jointly parented?
  - G. How would you like to jointly parent?
  - H. What do you perceive as the compatibility of your parenting styles?
  - I. What is the commitment level to joint parenting?
  - J. What is the importance to you for your child to have both parents involved in his/her life?
  - J. What education have they had regarding joint parenting?
  
3. Tell me about your child:
  - A. How is the child doing in school or in development?
  - B. What's the greatest accomplishment for your child?
  - C. Who is your child's favorite friend, person, or teacher?
  - D. What relationships do your child have with paternal and maternal siblings?
  - E. What's your child's greatest fear?
  - F. What's makes your child happy?
  - G. What's the most recent memory your child has of the two of you as parents?
  - H. What type of memories would you like your child to have of the two of you as parents?
  
4. Mediator's Internal Questions:
  - A. Does the relationship between the parties present a challenge to mediation?
  - B. What has been the joint parenting relationship?
  - C. What agreements have the implicitly or explicitly made about their relationship and their parenting relationships?
  - D. What is the level of commitment to individual parenting?
  - E. What is the level of commitment to joint parenting?
  - F. Is this case appropriate for mediation?

## The Unmarried Parents & Mediation

	Single	Casual Dating	Steady Dating	Committed
<b>Relationship's Communication History</b>	Non-Existent to barely existent. Parties haven't had any ongoing contact.	Some contact. Know some things about each other.	Have a fairly good knowledge of each other and have regularly communicated. Communications have expanded to include the other party's family.	May resemble that of married couples where there has been daily, ongoing communications. Communications with the other party's family and friends have been free flowing and regular as well. Parents may cohabitate.
<b>Joint Parenting History</b>	Father was not present at birth. Possible denial of paternity. Genetic Testing. Father may not be regularly participating in the child's life physically and/or financially	Father was present but may not have acknowledged paternity immediately. Mother is primary caregiver and as decided what parenting time father will have.	The child has a relationship with maternal and paternal relatives. Child may interact with father and paternal relatives on holidays or at specified times. Both parents have had input upon schedule.	Co-parenting and the child has a regular and consistent relationship with maternal and paternal relatives, not just limited to holidays and specified time.
<b>Trust &amp; Commitment History</b>	Little or no basis for trust. They know very little about one another. Commitment factor will not be based upon what they know about each other or the history of their relationship but what they are willing to do for the child as parents.	May or may not exist. The casualness and the degree to which each party agreed to and accepted that casualness may affect the T&C.	Fair amount of trust and commitment.	Long-term existence and/or very strong presence of trust and commitment.
<b>Some dominant negative emotions displayed during mediation.</b>	Mother; fear and regret. Father; fear, regret and un-empowered.	Mother and Father; anger and ambivalence.	Mother and Father; hurt and disappointment.	Mother and Father; hurt and disappointment.
<b>Mediation approach</b>	Building trust and commitment. Helping parties to identify and articulate emotions. Balancing power; maternal dominance in determining parenting time.	Building trust and commitment.	Helping parties to articulate hurt or disappointment (venting) to identify, restore, and possibly expand trust and commitment.	Helping parties to articulate hurt or disappointment (venting) to identify and restore trust and commitment.

Trust means do **"I believe that you will make good decisions involving parenting."**

Commitment means **"Am I willing to allow you to have an active parenting role and take steps to facilitate that."**