

RESOLUTE MEDIATION & ARBITRATION INC.

# PARENTING AFTER DIVORCE

Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course

ADR Academy

121 S. ORANGE AV. #1500, ORLANDO FL 32801 | 407-298-3751

# "PARENTING AFTER DIVORCE"

## *Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course*



## *Course handbook*



## **Welcome Message from Guno Ritfeld, President of RM&A Inc. - ADRAcademy:**

*As divorcing or separating adults, you may be experiencing one of the most stressful and painful times of your life, with many personal changes and adjustments to make. But the breakup of your marriage can be even more stressful and painful for your children. You may stop being husband and wife, but you both will always remain parents of your children.*

*You will celebrate their successes and support them during times of disappointment. If your children will have children, you will be grandparents together. As difficult as it may be, you have to continue to be responsible parents at what may be a very challenging time.*

*The Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course is designed to help you gain a better understanding of what your children are experiencing and to give you the practical tools and guidelines that can help reduce the stress of your breakup on your children. By attending this course, you have taken an important step that we hope will help you assure the emotional and physical well-being of your children.*

*This handbook was prepared to summarize the material presented in the course, so that you can keep it with you and refer to it whenever you wish. I hope the course and this handbook will prove to be beneficial to you and your children.*

*Sincerely,*

*Guno Ritfeld, J.D.*

*RM&A Inc. - ADRA*



## Table of Contents

Welcome Message from Guno Ritfeld, President of RM&A Inc. - ADRAcademy:	3
Introduction	7
A Note to Parents	11
Module 1	13
Legal aspects of deciding child-related issues between parents; Best Interest of the child(ren)	13
Legal aspects of deciding child-related issues between parents	13
Parental Responsibility	13
Parenting Plan	14
Child support	14
More Legal Terms:	15
Typically Contested Issues Requiring Resolution	17
The Words “Best Interest of the Child”	23
Typical Visitation Arrangements for Children of Divorcing Parents	23
The Effects of Parental Conflict on Children	24
Erik Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory of Development	24
Module 2: Emotional aspects of separation and divorce on adults	29
Module 3: Emotional aspects of separation and divorce on children	32
Module 4: Family relationships and family dynamics. Cooperative Parenting	37
Module 5. Financial Responsibilities to a Child or Children	41
Alimony	41
Child Support	41
How is the Process for Child Support Calculations Started?	43
Identifying your financial change and options	45
Acknowledging the court mandated responsibility of the other parent	46
Keeping accurate and up to date records	46
Module 6. Issues regarding spousal or child abuse and neglect	47
Domestic Violence Florida Statutes	49
Florida Abuse Hotline Information	50
Statistics -Violence Has No Place in a Child’s Life	52

What Children Deserve .....	53
Module 7. Skill-Based Relationship Education; Communication and Conflict Resolution .....	54
Relationship Skills .....	54
Communication & Conflict Resolution.....	54
Tips to Manage Anger .....	55
Module 8. Application - How to apply what you have learned.....	58
Step 1: .....	58
Step 2: .....	58
Step 3: .....	58
Step 4: .....	59
Step 5: .....	59
Step 6: .....	60
Step 7: .....	60
Step 8: .....	60
Test .....	62
Community Resources .....	69
References .....	70

## Introduction



Thank you for joining us for the "Parenting After Divorce" - Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course! "Parenting After Divorce" is a four (4) hour course offered by ADRAcademy, a division of Resolute Mediation & Arbitration Inc., a Florida company. The Florida Department of Children and Family Services has approved our course. By completing this course, you will satisfy the parenting course requirement with Florida courts per statute Fla. Stat. § 61.21. You should seek to begin the course as expeditiously as possible. It is required by law to complete this course prior to the entry by the court of a final judgment. To successfully complete this course, you will have to watch it in its entirety and pass the final knowledge check.

***"The components of the parenting course are intended for educational purposes only. The presentation of this material is not intended to constitute mental health therapy, give information on specific mental health disorders nor medications to treat mental health disorders. Participants are encouraged to discuss specific mental health questions with a licensed mental health therapist of their choice."***

***"The legal component of the parenting course provides general Florida family law principles. The presentation of this material is not intended to constitute legal advice. Participants are encouraged to consult with a licensed attorney for answers to specific legal questions."***

### Background information:

A large number of children experience the separation or divorce of their parents each year. Parental conflict related to divorce is a societal concern because children suffer potential short-term and long-term detrimental economic, emotional, and educational effects during this difficult period of family transition. This is particularly true when parents engage in lengthy legal conflict. The purpose of the course is to help parents understand the legal process of divorce, the way their children are impacted by divorce, and learn ways to make positive choices in continuing to parent children after divorce.

### **Why is this course important?**

For parents, divorce or separation may be one of the most stressful and painful times that you will experience in your life and it will require many personal changes. The dissolution of your marriage can be even more traumatic and painful for your children.

This course is important because parents are more likely to consider the best interests of their children if they are provided with information that will help them understand the legal process as well as the emotional and mental stress that divorce or separation has on children.

### **Why are you taking this course?**

It has been found to be beneficial to parents who are separating or divorcing to have available an educational program that will provide general information regarding:

1. Legal aspects of deciding child-related issues between parents such as time-sharing and child support disputes.
2. The emotional experiences and problems of divorcing adults.
3. The emotional concerns and needs of the child(ren) when divorce or separation occurs.
4. Family relationships and family dynamics.
5. Financial responsibilities to a child or children.
6. Issues regarding spousal or child abuse and neglect and available community services and resources.
7. Skill-based relationship education that may be generalized to parenting, workplace, school, neighborhood, and civic relationships.

Parents who are separating or divorcing are more likely to receive maximum benefit from a program if they attend such program at the earliest stages of their dispute, before extensive litigation occurs and adversarial positions are assumed or intensified.

### **Learning Objectives:**

The Florida Department of Children and Family has approved this course to assist and educate parents experiencing divorce, to understand the consequences of divorce on parents and children and the legal ramifications of this process. After completing this course parents will have a greater appreciation of actions that are in the best interest of their children. This course will help you meet the court requirement by using a convenient online format.

This course will help divorcing or separating parents to:

- Better understand legal concepts and aspects influencing child-related issues between parents
- Overcome emotional aspects of separation themselves and help their children as well
- Handle the new family dynamics



- Communicate with the children in a way that reinforces the other parent is still a vital figure in their newly formed family structure as well as to explain to the children in a non-threatening way that what divorce means for everyone involved
- Communicate with each other on issues relating to their children
- Create an efficient parenting plan, maintain it, or proceed to changes when necessary due to changes in circumstances of a parent or children's needs
- Know when there is domestic abuse and what steps to take to keep themselves and their children safe; where to find community assistance and help-line information
- Know parents' financial responsibilities for their minor children

### **Course Outline:**

The course is divided into 8 modules ending with the final knowledge test. Some modules have multiple units and each unit is approximately 15-20 minutes long; most modules will have an end quiz to help you prepare for the final knowledge check. Some modules are interactive and there is additional reading material attached.

Welcome Message and Introduction. - 10min

1. Legal aspects of deciding child-related issues between parents. "Best interest of the child(ren)". - 70 min
2. Emotional aspects of separation and divorce on adults. - 12min
3. Emotional aspects of separation and divorce on children. - 11min
4. Family relationships and family dynamics. - 12min
5. Financial responsibilities to children. - 25 min
6. Issues regarding spousal or child abuse and neglect. - 35 min
7. Skill-based relationship education; communication and conflict resolution. - 35min
8. Reflections and planning - How to apply what you have learned. - 30 min

Quiz ~ 30 min

Total Estimate time: 4.5 hours

Information in this handbook is organized by the above 8 topics and corresponds to what you will hear about while taking the course. We incorporated some additional reading material that you can access while taking the course - the reading material can be downloaded and saved on your computer.

This handbook will help you follow the information discussed throughout the course and refer back to the course material as often as you need to. Each module will have an end quiz specific to that module, to help you prepare for the final knowledge check. Some modules may have multiple units, including some interactive ones, with each unit approximately 15 - 20 minutes long. In order to successfully complete this course you have to watch it in its entirety and pass the final knowledge check. To earn your certificate for this course you have to pass the final

knowledge check with a 70 % score or higher and you have unlimited number of attempts to pass it. If you receive a score less than 70%, you can either refer to the modules' end quiz for clues, or contact the instructors who will review the missed material with you and respond additional questions that you may have. To contact instructors, you just have to post your questions and comments in the course forum or course review section. Instructors will instantly receive an email notification and will get back to you within 24 hours.

We also included an evaluation form so you can give us valuable input on the material presented.

## A Note to Parents

Being a parent has its joys and rewards, but it also requires work and patience and at times can be frustrating. When you separate or divorce from your spouse or partner, you will face new challenges, both as an individual and as a parent. Your children will also be affected by your breakup and will need your understanding and help to adjust to the family changes. Even though your relationship with your spouse or partner is ending, you both still remain parents to your children. For the sake of your children, you have to continue to be responsible parents at what may be a difficult time in your life.

The Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course is offered to help you better understand the effects of your breakup on your children and to give you information and ideas on how you can make this new family situation easier and more livable for yourself and your children. Your children can come through the separation or divorce process and develop into healthy, well-adjusted individuals. You, as parents, have control over this process.

This handbook is a summary of the material covered throughout the course. As you read through it, keep in mind that you, your children, and your situation are unique. Not everything in this course will apply to you, or your situation. You have to choose the information that is useful and appropriate for you, your children and your specific situation.

In particular, if you have been or continue to be either physically or mentally abused by your former spouse or partner, some of the ideas or concepts are not appropriate for you and should not be tried. For example, the use of anger management techniques will not stop abuse and may even be unsafe and make things more difficult. Also, "cooperative parenting" is not appropriate when there is domestic violence. "Parallel parenting" is the more appropriate way for parents when there is domestic violence.

What do we mean by domestic violence or abuse? Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of behavior in which one family member exerts power and control over the other(s). This behavior can include one or all of the following forms of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and economic. The first priority of parent education, as it should be for you, is your safety and that of your children.

You should also keep in mind that you cannot control how your children's other parent behaves or reacts. Remember that it is still helpful to your children even if only one parent tries to follow the ideas and suggestions covered in this course. In other words, it is better to have one parent following the guidelines and suggestions covered in the parenting course, than to have neither parent using healthy parenting practices.

The Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course is offered to help you become more aware of the aspects of the divorce or separation process that are most harmful to your children and to give you tools on how to better handle this new family situation — both for your sake and your children's. Please refer to this course often for support and guidance,

especially when faced with challenges. Remember that while divorce or separation can be a painful experience, both for adults and children, there are options for the improvement of your well-being and that of your children.

## Module 1

### Legal aspects of deciding child-related issues between parents; Best Interest of the child(ren)

#### Legal aspects of deciding child-related issues between parents Parental Responsibility

*The parents share parental responsibility for a minor child unless the courts order that the parental responsibility would be detrimental to the child.*



*Time Sharing* is not the same as parental responsibility. Time-sharing is the physical time parents get to spend with the child. Parental responsibility is the legal obligation of care for the child.

A parent can have sole parental responsibility and still have split time-sharing.

Circumstances that could prevent equal parental responsibility include being convicted of a misdemeanor of the first degree or higher involving domestic violence in accordance with [Florida statute 741.28](#), which includes domestic violence. Domestic violence is defined as assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offences resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by a family or household member.

The courts can appoint sole parental responsibility with time-sharing to the other parent if that is what is determined to be in the best interest of the child.

The courts can consider expressed desires of the parents and may grant one parent ultimate responsibility over certain aspects of the child's welfare. The courts can also divide these responsibilities between the parents based on the best interest of the child. These areas can include but are not limited to education; health care, religious affiliation or other unique needs specific to the family.



It is important to note that if one or both parents are in the military and they are activated, deployed or temporarily assigned to a military service and the parent cannot comply with the current time-sharing agreement, the court may not issue an order or amendment to the agreement. The court can enter a *temporary order* to modify or amend the time-sharing if there is clear evidence the amendment is in the best interest of the child. If this situation could apply to you, it is in your best interest to discuss this situation proactively with your lawyer or the court to learn about the

appropriate process and how to proceed if this should occur. *(For additional information on specific issues related to military families dealing with divorce read "A Handbook for Military Families" - see reading material in Module 1 of this course).*

## Parenting Plan



When minor children are involved in dissolution of marriage the courts will require the parents to include a parenting plan. This document will be either agreed upon by both parties, arrived via mediation or appointed by the courts if an agreement cannot be made.

In some cases, a child psychologist, appointed by the courts in good faith, can recommend a parenting plan.

The parenting plan establishes when the child spends time with each parent. It will include a residential schedule, holiday schedule and a summer break schedule.

The Florida Courts highly recommend that the parents work together to agree upon a schedule that works for both parents and it is in the best interest of the child. There is no set or standard schedule, so the plan can be flexible and worked to consider things like: child's age, school or daycare drop off and pick times, as well as special activities.

Additional information, such as schedule examples and guidelines can be found on [Florida Courts website](#).

## Child support

Child support can be awarded to either parent and is enforced through the legal system. Child support is the monetary payment from one parent to the other based on parenting responsibility, shared-times, and / or fundamental obligations to support his or her minor or legal dependent.

The determination for child support payment and amounts are based on the parents combined net income that would have been allocated to the child(ren) as if the parents and children were living in an intact household. The guidelines encourage fair and efficient settlement of support issues between parents and minimizing the need for litigation.

You can locate a Florida Child Support Calculator by visiting the Florida Courts - [Family Law Forms webpage](#).

Child support is a legal obligation; therefore, child support can be enforced through garnishment of wages if the party responsible for paying fails to do so.

Child support typically terminates on the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday unless the Beverage Law applies to the child ([Statute 743](#)).



In the child support orders, a provision for health insurance will be included for the minor child, when health insurance is presumed to be reasonable in cost if the incremental cost of adding health insurance for the child or children does not exceed 5% of the gross income of the parent responsible for providing health insurance.

**Considerations:** Some of the parenting responsibilities or shared responsibilities to consider as you begin to work with the other parent include, but are not limited to: medical decisions, insurance, preventative care, vision care, dental care, immunizations, illness with one parent, splitting medical bills, education decisions, school choice, distance to school / bus / drop-off/pick-up, religious belief decisions. This doesn't include the financial ramifications, but does mean choosing doctors and schools.

It is in your best interest to co-create and agree upon a parenting plan with your child's other parent. If the courts determine aspects of the parenting plan, they will do so in the best interest of the child. They will consider factors presented, and, at times, they rely on outside parties to give the courts assistance.

### **More Legal Terms:**

#### **Dissolution of Marriage - Divorce**

In Florida, divorce is called "dissolution of marriage", so the terms "divorce" and "dissolution of marriage" can be used interchangeably. The Divorce / Dissolution of Marriage authority, processes and procedures are found in [Florida Rules of Civil Procedure](#), [Florida Rules of Family Law](#), [Florida Rules of Judicial Administration](#) and [Florida Statutes and Laws](#). These rules prescribe specific processes, requirements and obligations of the divorcing couples, parents, attorneys, mediators and the courts.

Dissolutions of Marriage are filed in the Circuit Court having jurisdiction in the respective county. A Circuit Court may have jurisdiction over more than one county. The filing party should make sure that the filing occurs in the proper court. **[RULE 1.060](#) gives the court the authority to transfer the filing to the proper County Court called "proper venue."**

#### **"Complaint" or "Petition" for Dissolution of Marriage**

**One of the first forms to complete when filing for divorce is the "Complaint" or "Petition" for Dissolution of Marriage.** Forms pertaining to Dissolution of Marriage are available through the Florida Supreme Court website - a link to Florida Supreme Court website is made available to you in the divorce resources section of this course. Forms include: the petition for dissolution of marriage, parenting/visitation plan, child support calculation, and division of marital assets.

The petition lists all issues the court should consider, such as: division of assets and debts, child custody, child support and alimony.

Florida is a "no fault" divorce state. The spouse seeking a divorce simply needs to state that the marriage is "irretrievably broken." This rule relieves the court of the complicated duty of deciding who is at fault, and the parties to the marriage are spared of having to talk about painful personal issues in court.

### **Complaint Filing Options**

Since the 1970s, most states have permitted no-fault divorces, which may be either contested or uncontested.

**Uncontested issues** - Are all issues on which the parties are able to agree and which are part of a marital settlement agreement.

**Contested issues** - Are any or all issues upon which the parties are unable to agree and which the judge at a hearing or trial must resolve. Contested divorce issues may include: division of the marital property, alimony, child custody and child support.

The filing party must also state a legal reason for divorce called "*grounds*." A reason stated in many cases is that the marriage is "*irretrievably broken*."

**Residency requirement** - There is also a residency requirement. In order to file for Dissolution of Marriage in Florida, residency requirements must be met for the court to accept the case. If the court discovers it does not have jurisdictional rights to hear the case, the filing may not be accepted or it will eventually be dismissed or transferred. To obtain Dissolution of Marriage, one of the parties to the marriage must reside at least 6 months in the state before the filing of the petition. The Dissolution of Marriage can be filed in the county in which either or both spouses reside. (Florida Statutes - Chapters: 61.021)

### **Related Family Law Key Terms**

*Pro Se* is a legal term for Self Representing Parties. Pro Se parties can obtain various forms the local court or download them from the Florida Supreme Court Website.

*Petitioner* - The Petitioner is the spouse who initiates the filing procedure with the family or domestic relations court.

*Respondent* - The Respondent is the spouse who does not file the initial dissolution of marriage papers, but rather receives them by service.

*Parenting Plan* - A document created to govern the relationship between the parents relating to the decisions that must be made regarding the minor child(ren).



*Parenting Plan Recommendation* - A nonbinding recommendation concerning one or more elements of a Parenting Plan made by a court-appointee pursuant to either [section 61.20](#) or [61.401](#), Florida Statutes, or [Florida Family Law Rule of Procedure 12.363](#).

*Shared Parental Responsibility* - an arrangement under which both parents have full parental rights and responsibilities for their child(ren), with both parents making major decisions affecting the welfare of the child(ren) jointly.

*Supervised Time-Sharing* - a parenting arrangement under which time-sharing between a parent and his or her child(ren) is supervised by either a friend, family member, or a supervised visitation center.

*Supportive Relationship* - a relationship, defined in [section 61.14\(1\)\(b\)1](#), Florida Statutes, existing between a spouse who receives alimony and a person with whom that spouse resides.

*Time-Sharing Schedule* - a timetable included in the Parenting Plan that specifies the time, including overnights and holidays, which a minor child or children will spend with each parent.

There is a list of specific documents that must be produced in almost every divorce case.

### **Typically Contested Issues Requiring Resolution**

#### **Issues typically contested by divorcing couples requiring resolution:**

Typically, the following **six issues** are the major issues that must be resolved during a divorce case in Florida:

#### ***I. The grounds for divorce/ dissolution of marriage***

**Grounds** are the legal reasons for requesting a divorce. When one spouse initiates a divorce by filing a complaint or petition, he or she must state the reason for the divorce. That reason may be that the marriage is irretrievably broken, or that the two spouses now have irreconcilable differences, but there has to be a reason. The reasons, or reasons, are the grounds for which to request a divorce. No one can legally end a marriage just by walking away. A marriage can only be legally terminated by the court with jurisdiction.

Florida State Statutes, CIVIL PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE Section 61.052(1), Florida Statutes, requires, with limited exception, that the court find that the marriage is irretrievably broken before it can grant a party's request for a divorce.

#### 61.052 Dissolution of Marriage.

(1) No judgment of Dissolution of Marriage shall be granted unless one of the following facts appears, which shall be pleaded generally:

(a) The marriage is irretrievably broken.

(b) Mental incapacity of one of the parties. However, no dissolution shall be allowed unless the party alleged to be incapacitated shall have been judged to be incapacitated according to the provisions of s. [744.331](#) for a preceding period of at least 3 years. Notice of the proceeding for dissolution shall be served upon one of the nearest blood relatives or guardian of the incapacitated person, and the relative or guardian shall be entitled to appear and to be heard upon the issues. If the incapacitated party has a general guardian other than the party bringing the proceeding, the petition and summons shall be served upon the incapacitated party and the guardian; and the guardian shall defend and protect the interests of the incapacitated party. If the incapacitated party has no guardian other than the party bringing the proceeding, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem to defend and protect the interests of the incapacitated party. However, in all Dissolutions of Marriage granted on the basis of incapacity, the court may require the petitioner to pay alimony pursuant to the provisions of s. [61.08](#).

(2) Based on the evidence at the hearing, which evidence need not be corroborated except to establish that the residence requirements of s. [61.021](#) are met which may be corroborated by a valid Florida driver license, a Florida voter's registration card, a valid Florida identification card issued under s. [322.051](#), or the testimony or affidavit of a third party, the court shall dispose of the petition for Dissolution of Marriage when the petition is based on the allegation that the marriage is irretrievably broken as follows:

(a) If there is no minor child of the marriage and if the responding party does not, by answer to the petition for dissolution, deny that the marriage is irretrievably broken, the court shall enter a judgment of Dissolution of Marriage if the court finds that the marriage is irretrievably broken.

(b) When there is a minor child of the marriage, or when the responding party denies by answer to the petition for dissolution that the marriage is irretrievably broken, the court may:

1. Order either or both parties to consult with a marriage counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist, minister, priest, rabbi, or any other person deemed qualified by the court and acceptable to the party or parties ordered to seek consultation; or

2. Continue the proceedings for a reasonable length of time not to exceed 3 months, to enable the parties themselves to affect a reconciliation; or

3. Take such other action as may be in the best interest of the parties and the minor child of the marriage.

If, at any time, the court finds that the marriage is irretrievably broken, the court shall enter a judgment of Dissolution of Marriage. If the court finds that the marriage is not irretrievably broken, it shall deny the petition for dissolution of marriage.

Some people confuse "grounds" with "fault." Under no-fault, spouses have grounds for divorce when they agree that they can no longer make their marriage work, yet neither spouse is at fault for this breakdown. Grounds for a divorce only refers to the reason for the divorce; fault refers to the fact that someone -- either spouse -- did something wrong. When spouses say they can no longer make their marriage work, it may mean that they can no longer get along, or that one or both of them no longer wants to be married. In no-fault actions, in most jurisdictions, the court does not dwell on the "why" of the marital breakdown.

## *II. Parenting plan issues*

**Dependent Child(ren)** - child(ren) who depend on their parent(s) for support either because they are under the age of 18, have a mental or physical disability that prevents them from supporting themselves, or are in high school, between the ages of 18 and 19, and performing in good faith with a reasonable expectation of graduation before the age of 19.

### **"Best interest of the child"**

The best interest of the child is a standard used in family law to make decisions impacting a child in matters of adoption, child custody, guardianship, and visitation, among other issues. It is a subjective, discretionary test, in which all circumstances affecting the child are taken into account.

### **What Factors Determine the Child's Best Interests?**

Although the best interests standard can be hard to define in some situations, some factors are common in this analysis in most custody situations:

- Wishes of the child (if old enough to capably express a reasonable preference);
- Mental and physical health of the parents;
- If a child has special needs, how does each parent take care of those needs;
- Religion and/or cultural considerations;
- Need for continuation of stable home environment;
- Other children whose custody is relevant to this child's custody arrangement;
- Support and opportunity for interaction with members of extended family of either parent such as grandparents;
- Interaction and interrelationship with other members of household;
- Adjustment to school and community;

- Age and sex of child;
- Is there a pattern of domestic violence in the home;
- Parental use of excessive discipline or emotional abuse; and
- Evidence of parental drug, alcohol or child/sex abuse.

**Parenting Plan** – a document created to govern the relationship between the parents relating to the decisions that must be made regarding the minor child(ren). The Parenting Plan must contain a time-sharing schedule for the parents and child(ren) and shall address the issues concerning the minor child(ren). The issues concerning the minor child(ren) may include, but are not limited to, the child(ren)'s education, health care, and physical, social, and emotional well-being.

In creating the Plan, all circumstances between the parents, including their historic relationship, domestic violence, and other factors must be taken into consideration. The Parenting Plan must be developed and agreed to by the parents and approved by the court. If the parents cannot agree to a Parenting Plan, or if the parents agreed to a plan that is not approved by the court, a Parenting Plan will be established by the court with or without the use of **parenting plan recommendations**.

**Parenting Plan Recommendation** – A nonbinding recommendation concerning one or more elements of a Parenting Plan made by a court-appointed mental health practitioner or other professional designated pursuant to either section [61.20](#) or [61.401](#), Florida Statutes, or Florida Family Law Rule of Procedure [12.363](#).

Parenting Plan issues include, among other things, parental responsibility and timesharing, which were previously called "child custody" and "visitation."

[Section 61.13\(2\)\(c\)\(1\)](#) , Florida Statutes, reads "It is the public policy of this state that each minor child has frequent and continuing contact with both parents after the parents separate or the marriage of the parties is dissolved and to encourage sharing of the rights, responsibilities, and joys of childrearing. There is no presumption for or against the father or mother of the child or for or against any specific time-sharing schedule when creating or modifying the parenting plan of the child."

Parenting Plan is not conditioned upon the payment of support by either parent. This means that a parent has a right to time with his/her child(ren) even if he/she is not presently financially supporting the child(ren).

A designation of who will be responsible for any and all forms of healthcare, school-related matters including the address to be used for school-boundary determination and registration, and other activities; and the methods and technologies that the parents will use to communicate with the child.

As each family is unique, each final Parenting Plan, whether drafted by the parties' agreement, or the court, will be unique.

*Shared Parental Responsibility* - an arrangement under which both parents have full parental rights and responsibilities for their child(ren), and the parents make major decisions affecting the welfare of the child(ren) jointly. Shared Parental Responsibility is presumptive in Florida.

*Sole Parental Responsibility* - a parenting arrangement under which the responsibility for the minor child(ren) is given to one parent by the court, with or without rights of time-sharing to the other parent.

*Supervised Time-Sharing* - a parenting arrangement under which time-sharing between a parent and his or her child(ren) is supervised by either a friend, family member, or a supervised visitation center.

*Supportive Relationship* - a relationship, defined in section 61.14(1)(b)1, Florida Statutes, existing between a spouse who receives alimony and a person with whom that spouse resides.

*Time-Sharing Schedule* – a timetable that must be included in the Parenting Plan that specifies the time, including overnights and holidays, that a minor child or children will spend with each parent. The time-sharing schedule shall either be developed and agreed to by the parents of a minor child or children and is approved by the court, or established by the court if the parents cannot agree, or if their agreed-upon schedule is not approved by the court.

### ***III. Equitable distribution of assets and liabilities.***

One of the many requirements for Dissolution of Marriage to be finalized is the filing of various forms and mandatory disclosures. This includes adherence to **Mandatory Disclosure Rule 12.285**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure, requires each party in a **Dissolution of Marriage** to exchange certain information and documents, and file a **Family Law Financial Affidavit**, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure Form 12.902(b) or (c). Failure to make this required disclosure within the time required by the Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure may allow the court dismiss the case or to refuse to consider the pleadings of the party failing to comply.

***Equitable distribution*** - is the division of assets and liabilities by the parties. Florida law requires that, except in certain circumstances, non-marital property be set aside to the party to whom it belongs and the marital property be equitably divided between the parties starting with a presumption of an equal split (50% to each).

***Marital Property - Marital Assets*** - generally, anything that you and/or your spouse acquired or received (by gift or purchase) during the marriage. For example, something you owned before your marriage may be non-marital asset. An asset may only be determined to be marital by agreement of the parties or determination of the judge. In most cases that includes:

1. Money that each spouse has which either spouse has earned during the marriage.

2. Anything either spouse purchased with money earned during the marriage.

In Florida, the courts have the power to equitably divide marital property at the time a marriage is dissolved. This means the division of marital property is made without regard for whose name is on the title.

**Non-Marital Property** - Under Florida law, non-marital property is:

1. Anything a spouse owned before the marriage.
2. Anything a spouse earned or received after the parties' separation or after a petition for dissolution of marriage is filed.
3. Anything that a spouse received at any time as an individual gift or by inheritance.

A party claiming an asset or liability is non-marital has the burden to prove that it is non-marital

**Liabilities** - everything owed by you or your spouse, including mortgages, credit cards, or car loans. A liability may be marital or nonmarital, but that distinction is for the court to determine if you and your spouse do not agree.

**Marital Liability** - generally, any debt that you and/or your spouse incurred during the marriage. A debt may only be determined to be nonmarital by agreement of the parties or determination of the judge.

#### ***IV. Alimony***

Alimony (aka spousal support or maintenance) may be awarded based on the requesting party's need and the other party's ability to pay. Alimony, if awarded, can be paid in a variety of methods and for varying lengths of time depending on the facts and circumstances of the case.

#### ***V. Child support***

The court may order either or both parents to pay an amount necessary for the support, maintenance, and education of the minor child(ren) born to or adopted by the parents. Florida has a set of child support guidelines that must be utilized in calculating the amount of child support. With limited exceptions, child support terminates when a child reaches the age of eighteen years old. Child support in Florida does not include a college education. The parties can agree to provide for their child(ren)'s college education if they so choose but it cannot be court-ordered over a party's objection.

***VI. Other requests*** These can include items such as restoration of a party's name and/or payment of or contribution towards attorney's fees and costs. The court may restore a former name of a spouse in the Final Judgment. This relief cannot be granted unless a spouse specifically requests it, which is usually done within the original petition or a counter-petition

filed with the Court. The name to which the requesting spouse is to be restored must be the name he/she had prior to the marriage.

### **The Words “Best Interest of the Child”**

The words “best interests of the child” have no one, single meaning, and the laws in most states define “best interests” by listing a number of factors for the court to consider. Common factors in many states include the following: the capacity of the parents to understand and meet the needs of the child; religion and/or cultural considerations; the child’s wishes; the need for continuation of a stable home environment; the relationship between the child and parents, siblings, and others important in his or her life; the child’s adjustment to school and community; the age and sex of the child; and parental use of excessive discipline or emotional abuse.

Because all children are unique and respond differently to divorce, lawyers should become familiar with the characteristics of all children in the family—including any child with a disability—such as the children’s age, emotional maturity, resiliency to change, and ability to cope with changes in family structure during and after the finalization of the divorce. Divorcing parents need to recognize more than just their legal responsibility and be willing to adjust the environment to make it ideal for the child to grow and mature.

### **Typical Visitation Arrangements for Children of Divorcing Parents**

(Whether the children have a disability or not)

1. Alternating weekends and/or midweek visits, as well as extended school holiday and summer visits. Children with a disability - it is sometimes better to minimize frequent adjustments to a new environment, especially during the school year, and focus on structuring longer visits with each parent for more concentrated time. For many children with disabilities, especially children diagnosed with autism, a disruption to their daily routine can affect behavior and school performance and result in unnecessary stress for both the children and parents. Parents should communicate to minimize disruptions or changes in routines. This will ensure that the routines in each household complement each other and serve to avoid any negative impact on the child.
2. Divorcing parents should take a similarly thoughtful approach to childcare arrangements. The parent with whom the child lives may need to seek out temporary respite care to give that parent a break; finding a trusted babysitter or child care facility that is able to respond to the unique needs of a child with a disability is often challenging. With respect to these arrangements, divorcing parents should strive to minimize last-minute changes. Even slight alterations, such as those associated with a different pickup location, a different pickup time, or a new babysitter, may result in unnecessary disruption to routines and create anxiety for the child involved. Even as the child grows into adulthood, this may continue to be an issue. Children with disabilities often need supervised care even as they get older. For example, a child with developmental disabilities who cannot function without supervision will need assistance in most aspects of daily living activities such as bathing, dressing, feeding, and/or social interactions with others.

3. Divorcing parents should collaborate in selecting appropriate educational programs and making decisions, taking into consideration the time needed to research the appropriateness of the program, the supports that the school is suggesting, and other supports outside of the school day, such as tutoring or structured remediation that will support learning.
4. As children mature, parents should work together to explore options for post-secondary education and training, employment, independent living, and other goals for the future. Planning for the future will require an organized approach to locating community supports, completing applications, developing interviewing skills, and practicing self-advocacy skills.

### **The Effects of Parental Conflict on Children**

1. Domestic Violence is defined as a pattern of coercive behavior used by one partner to control and / or dominate the other.
2. A child's capacity to adjust to his or her parents' divorce will be seriously compromised when the child is exposed to ongoing parental conflict.
3. In fact, the two most damaging factors impacting children of divorce are ongoing parental conflict and destabilized parent-child relationships.

### **Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development**

In Erikson's theory, one conflict emerges at each developmental stage and becomes the most significant one to resolve. Consequently, the relationship that exists between parent and child will be crucial in determining how each conflict is overcome. While reparations can be made at later times to heal what was not attained, whatever vulnerabilities persist can affect a youngster's self-perception, self-esteem, and relationships with others.

#### ***The Infant: Birth to One Year***

- *Erikson's Psychosocial Development: Trust vs. Mistrust* — Although an infant is too young to comprehend the parents' separation and divorce, an infant will be affected by changes and disruptions in their environment. Psychological concerns at this stage center on the infant's capacity to form secure attachment to both parents in the context of co-parenting arrangements.

Parents must try to balance their ability to provide emotional continuity (i.e., voice tone, gestures, handling) with a stable environment in order to promote feelings of attachment, security, and trust.

- *Psychological Input Regarding Visitation* — Each parent needs to provide as much consistency as possible in his or her parenting, so the infant can form a global impression that the world is a safe and secure place. If the infant experiences an excessive amount of unpredictable, inconsistent, or untrustworthy care giving, the infant is more likely to become a fearful, anxious, and frightened baby and experience the world as if it is an untrustworthy place.

While it would stand to reason that infants would benefit from primarily being in one location, the reality is that infants whose parents are separated and/or divorced will be forced to experience changes in their daily routine. These changes are unavoidable as some parents may



be forced to return to work or school and cannot remain home with their infant. Regardless, if parents are able to the best of their ability to maintain a schedule that provides regularity, attention, and affection, this can help minimize feelings of mistrust. However, if ongoing disruptions exist in one or both environments, it is likely to affect an infant's daily schedule including eating, sleeping, and social patterns.

### ***The Toddler: One to Two Years***

- *Erikson's Psychosocial Stage: Autonomy vs. Shame or Doubt* — Developmentally, this is a phase centered on learning to assert one's will, knowing the toddler is still very dependent upon parental figures. Toddlers explore their environment by being active and learning to engage in activities such as self-feeding, dressing, and having control over bodily functioning. Parents may not realize this, but toilet training is an important bodily achievement since it involves teaching their youngster to conform to societal expectations. As a toddler succeeds in this area, a sense of self-confidence and self-control is achieved. On the other hand, if a toddler has great difficulty in mastering the developmental tasks of this stage, a heightened sensitivity to being shamed can result.
- *Psychological Input Regarding Visitation Schedule* — Just like infants, toddlers also need a visitation schedule that is predictable and reliable. Separated and divorced parents are strongly encouraged to share all aspects of their child's daily and evening functioning, including their feeding schedules, bedtime rituals, ways of soothing their toddler when ill, etc. Toddlers are too young to understand the visitation process, but they are sensitive and likely to show some distress during the times of exchange. What parents can do to ease their discomfort during these transitions is to act and speak in a calm and soothing manner. Furthermore, parents should bring with them a comforting, familiar, or soft object such as a teddy bear, blanket, or doll to help ease their toddler's distress. Over time, these inanimate objects become associated with providing emotional security and comfort.

### ***Preschoolers: Three to Five Years***

- *Erikson's Psychosocial Stage: Initiative vs. Guilt* — According to Erikson, this is the age when children's intellectual curiosity grows by leaps and bounds. Preschoolers are able to learn about the world from real as well as imaginary figures. And, when their interests, explorations, and activities foster positive feelings, a sense of initiative is developed. On the other hand, if youngsters are chastised and made to feel inadequate for their ideas and efforts, then feelings of guilt will likely emerge.

Young children have difficulty understanding the idea of divorce, so it is very important for parents to let their children know they could not be responsible for the parental dissolution. Otherwise, children may secretly blame themselves and feel guilty, thinking they are unworthy of receiving love and attention from either parent.

Additionally, young children are concrete thinkers, meaning they will engage in either/or thinking, which results in seeing their parents and others in dichotomous, or all-or-nothing terms. Thus, three to five-year olds cannot understand that parents can be happy and sad,

loving and angry, or kind and punishing. Therefore, when a parent who usually is on time arrives late to pick up his or her preschooler, this parent can be regarded as “bad” whereas the parent who comes on time is considered “good.” It is this kind of thinking that leads children to distort reality and say things that can exacerbate problems. At this age, a child’s lie is not equivalent to an adult’s lie since fantasy and reality exist side by side and the boundaries between the two can co-exist. And, when children are faced with unpleasant situations, sometimes they will escape into a fantasy world in order to distance themselves from their painful reality. Consequently, sometimes children may not exactly tell the “truth,” yet, there are many reasons for their so-called “lie.” More often than not, their inability to remember is preferable to heightening conflicts between their parents. Therefore, parents would be better off if they could try and react less to their child’s words, and instead try to understand the feelings and intent behind them.

- *Psychological Input Regarding Visitation Scheduling* — Preschoolers also need a visitation schedule that is predictable and reliable, as going to and from each household can still produce feelings of separation anxiety, emotional distress, and insecurity. When unexpected changes occur in a parent’s routine, they must be clearly explained. Even phone calls should occur as routinely and consistently as possible. These exchanges can be brief, as the length of time is not as important as making a consistent connection. Generally, preschoolers dislike spending much time on the phone, as they are unable to hold an image of someone who is physically or visually absent.

Preschoolers will demonstrate their emotional distress readily and may have difficulty accepting lengthy separations. Parents need to pay careful attention to any regressions in behavior such as bedwetting, thumb sucking, baby talking, and/or excessive temper tantrums. If any of these behaviors re-emerge after being dormant, they are a nonverbal sign that their child is experiencing significant emotional distress.

### ***Elementary School Age Children***

- *Erikson’s Psychosocial Stage: Industry vs. Inferiority* - This developmental stage spans the elementary school years and is a time when children become highly motivated to learn and are eager to participate in extracurricular activities with their friends. The developmental task of this age involves increasing a child’s intellectual competency and acquiring various skills in order to feel competent.

Acquiring new information, learning new skills, and engaging in hobbies enable a child to develop feelings of accomplishment and purpose, which also enhance self-esteem and self-worth. On the other hand, if a child does not feel secure in these areas, feelings of inferiority will dominate.

- *Developmental Factors for Ages Six to 12* — Children at this age have more effective psychological resources to help them cope with the stress and change in the family structure. Still, many children find the divorce process painful, confusing, and as a result are more likely to

have difficulties separating themselves psychologically from their parents' influence and wishes.

Frequently, this occurs when children are placed in the middle of their parents' conflicts. What usually results is an increase in negative feelings such as frustration, anger, helplessness, sadness, and guilt. Generally speaking, boys are more likely to show anger and exhibit more aggressive behaviors, whereas girls are more likely to be sad and inhibited in their outward expressions of anger. Some children have tremendous difficulty verbalizing any unpleasant feelings and instead hurt, angry, and sad feelings become expressed in bodily complaints, such as headaches and stomach aches.

- *Psychological Input Regarding Visitation Issues* — During these years, children frequently develop interests, hobbies, and sport activities outside the home. There will be times when these activities can create havoc with the visitation schedule. These discussions should not be conducted in the child's presence, as it is detrimental to the child if it is either put in the middle or becomes the go-between for either parent. Hence, flexibility, fairness, and adaptability, need to be demonstrated and taken into consideration for the welfare of the child.

### ***The Adolescent: 12 to 18 Years***

- *Erikson's Psychosocial Stage: Ego Identity vs. Role Confusion* - This is the time when teenagers try to figure out who they are and what career path they would like to pursue. Psychologically, teenagers are also in the process of sorting out their beliefs, values, and ideals to incorporate into their identity. While adolescents need to have a sense of belonging, they also need to be encouraged to develop their self-sufficiency. Otherwise, they will become resentful, rebellious, or engage in self-defeating patterns, especially if they feel they are growing up in a world where the adults are controlling their destiny. If either parent notices that their son or daughter is starting to make harmful changes with regard to their choice of friends, daily habits, appearance, and/or his or her routine functioning, (e.g., a gregarious teen who becomes more withdrawn and isolated), these disturbing changes suggest the need for immediate intervention and parental action.

- *Developmental Issues* — Undergoing a parental separation and divorce during adolescence can be quite trying as this developmental stage encompasses considerable physical, mental, social, and emotionally charged transformations. The initial phase of adolescence (12-14 years old) is a time when teenagers are preoccupied with peer relations, social interactions, and how others perceive them. The middle stage of adolescence (14-16 years old) is when the focus shifts to the self and identity formation. During the last stage of adolescence (16-18 years old), a child's attention turns to issues of individuation, intimacy, and career.

It is a time of heightened emotional instability as well as uncertainty about one's identity or future career. Of course, family relationships still play an influential role on the teenager's self-concept and self-esteem. Although a teenager understands the reality of the divorce process, it is still disturbing because it raises questions about the future of their own relationships given the fact their parents' marriage has failed.

How much a teenager is affected by their parents' break up can create difficulties with their own ability to seek affection and intimacy in relationships.

- *Psychological Issues Regarding Visitation Issues* — The primary need at this age is being able to negotiate and maintain parental control and authority in conjunction with the teenager's desire for greater freedom and independence.

## Module 2: Emotional aspects of separation and divorce on adults.

Let's take a look at divorce:



According to the American Psychological Association “Marriage and divorce are both common experiences. In Western cultures, more than 90 percent of people marry by age 50. Healthy marriages are good for couples’ mental and physical health. They are also good for children; growing up in a happy home protects children from mental, physical, educational and social problems. However, about 40 to 50 percent of married couples in the United States divorce.”

### ❖ One of the top 10 stressors in life

[The Holmes and Rahe Stressful Life Events](#) scale ranks divorce as the second most stressful thing that can occur in life. Following the first most stressful event, which is death of a spouse. Marital separation is ranked number three on the scale. The Holmes and Rahe scale associates numeric values with the stressful events. To compute your score, add up your life events and based on the score it predicts your risk of illness. 150 to 299 is moderate risk of illness and 300 over is a high risk. Divorce accounts for 73 points and separation 65. The purpose of defining the stress and risk for illness of this scale is to convey that divorce and or separation is a very stressful event in life and everyone copes differently. It is important to recognize the stress and take care of yourself to help manage the stress.

### ❖ Uniqueness of each divorce

Divorces are as unique as the people filing them. Divorces are not alike. The only common denominator in divorce is the law that dissolves the marriage. The law is interrupted based on the situation, couple and facts provided. It is important to recognize that your divorce will be different than other divorces you may have heard about. Both parties contribute to the progress of the divorce. You may be experiencing a divorce where both parties can communicate and agree without mediation and or lawyers. Or, you may be in a divorce with some level of struggle, with disagreement in mediation and have your own attorney. Divorce itself is stressful, conflict with your former partner adds to stress, as well as the formalities of divorce (*i.e.*, paperwork) that can be confusing and sometimes warrant absences from work.



### ❖ Different levels of stress, coping and conflict

It is important to recognize your stress level, as well as the factors that contribute to your stress. Which contributing factors can you impact? What changes can you control to make things a little easier for yourself? Could you schedule a set time each week to handle or discuss divorce proceedings? This could help reduce the feeling of divorce taking over your time. It is also important to recognize there are factors out of your control. You cannot control people, their behaviors or the legal system. Acknowledging that these things are out of your control and letting them go can be extremely helpful to your well-being. However, you can influence all of these things through your own actions.

### ❖ Emotional and Mental Health

You may not feel like focusing on yourself at the moment but if you can take time to ensure that your well-being is taken care of, it will benefit you as well as your children.

Yoga, meditation, and exercise are all highly recommended for coping with stressful situations. Breathing techniques such as 4-7-8 breathing also known as relaxation breathing is recommended by psychologists to help calm physiological stress symptoms.

It works like this:

- First exhale completely through your mouth.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose while mentally counting to 4.
- Next, hold your breath and mentally count to 7.
- Then exhale while mentally counting to 8.

It is recommended that you complete at least 4 cycles but you can complete as many as you need to feel calm and less stressed.

### ❖ Physical Health

Stress can often cause illness. Exercise can be used to help reduce stress as well as deter ailments. A key component to remember is that you do not have to work out for many hours to reap the benefits. A brisk 30-minute walk at least 3 times a week can help reduce stress, fight sickness and add to your overall health.

### ❖ Adults handle stress and change differently

You may be experiencing different reactions, anger, depression, anxiety, frustration, insomnia. It is important to recognize that the other parent is likely experiencing their own reactions and they may be different from yours. It is easy in situations like these to add to the frustration and

challenges of divorce. At the end of all of this what do you really want? Will adding to the disagreement help move the divorce forward?

It is important to know what you want from the divorce, where you want to be, and what your negotiable and non-negotiable points are; contributing to your divorce in a civil and collaborative manner. This does not mean that both parties will approach the divorce this way, yet, collaboration is the quickest way to resolution.

#### ❖ **Impact on Social Behaviors**

Divorce will cause changes in your life that you may not have anticipated. For example, your social circle will most likely shift. Friends and common activities that you participated in together may change. You may find yourself rebuilding your social circle during and after the divorce.

#### ❖ **Impact on routine of daily life**

Your routine and schedule may be impacted based on your parenting plan. You may need to adjust your work schedule to accommodate dropping off or picking your children. Also, if your children are with the other parent you may find your residence empty or different.

#### ❖ **Parent guilt or reactions to the divorce towards your children**



It is human to feel guilt after a divorce. Your children's reaction to the divorce may hurt you and naturally parents want to ease their children's discomfort. Often parents resort to buying gifts or trying to make children happy. While these things may make them happy it is a temporary solution. Instead try focusing on some longer term solutions.

Focus on rebuilding your 'house' into a home. Children need stability and their physical environment is very important. If you stayed in the home there may be gaps of things missing from the other parent moving out. Try to find solutions for the empty spaces. The key here is to reduce the stress and reminder every time they look and see a hole where something used to be.

If you moved, make sure your kids have some personal space. Help them unpack their bedroom, put familiar things up on the walls that bolster positivity like their awards, happy pictures or art work they've created.

Secondly and very importantly, be positive and kind to your children regarding your former spouse. **Parents divorce each other, children do not divorce parents.** Even in cases of abuse,



children still love their parents. Hearing derogatory comments puts them in a stressful situation because they may feel torn or like they need to defend the other parent.

Lastly, make sure you do not use your children as friends. Confiding in them can cause them to carry more burden and stress. This is why a support network is critical. You are human and you are going through a very stressful time it is healthy to talk about your feelings and challenges.

How will divorce impact me personally?

#### ❖ **Activating your support network**



How do you activate your support network? First assess your friends that are not caught up in your divorce. Do you have friends you can trust to not share information with your ex? Also, having someone that will listen and not take sides can be very helpful. There are support groups for divorce as well as counseling resources available.

### **Module 3: Emotional aspects of separation and divorce on children.**

#### ❖ **How to tell your child you are separating or divorcing**



Telling your children that you are separating or divorcing is a very personal decision and how you approach it should depend on the ages and nature of the situation. If possible, it is helpful for the children if the parents can deliver the news together. This is the best option as long as the situation is safe physically and psychologically. This demonstrates stability and cooperation amongst the parents. Children will also need help transitioning and by telling them together, it helps demonstrate that you will be supportive and cooperative through the

transition. It is also important to note that children may have questions even as they get older. They may revisit your divorce years later as they begin to learn and conceptualize the changes. Be patient and honest. You can use generalizations to explain the divorce without providing specific details.

It is important that you are honest without placing blame or providing too many details because this can add stress to your children. For example, option is explaining that you and the other parent had grown-up problems that couldn't be worked out. Or if your children are a little bit older, you can explain that you and the other parent couldn't communicate effectively to work through your problems. Children need to know the reasons for the separation or divorce without the specific details.



It is ideal if you and the other parent can agree upon what to tell your children so the reasons are consistent and united. Although, it may be tempting to share, especially if the other parent is not cooperative, topics like support payments, legal proceedings, arguments, mediation and visitation disagreements. These are topics that should remain between the parents. This is a difficult time and it is tough situation to navigate. Sometimes, you want to show your kids how much you love them or explain why something is so difficult at the expense of the other parent. However, blaming or talking negatively about the other parent hurts your children more than it will hurt the other parent.

#### ❖ **The Perspective of the child or children**

Regardless of their age children want their parents to get back together. This feeling is natural and can be handled by reassuring them that they will always be your children and you will continue to love them regardless of the divorce.

#### ❖ **Feeling responsible for divorce**

Your children although they may not say it need to hear that your problems and reason for separating or divorcing is not their fault. That your decision was made with the other parent for the better of the family. Even though, it may not seem like it now, things will get easier and the divorce was in no way shape or form because of them.

If you or your children were subjected to domestic violence or abuse you may want to approach the conversation differently. Discuss alternative options with your lawyer, counselor or psychologist.

#### ❖ **Internalizing Feelings**

Children will look to you to see how they should cope with their feelings. It is ok to let them see you are sad and not hiding your feelings. It is important to express your feelings without blaming or speaking negatively about the other parent. Helping to build a safe environment where they can talk about their feelings and the changes will help them adjust. Remember to also not take what your children say personal. This may be extremely challenging when they say things like they are sad or wish you could get back together. They need to express their feelings and getting upset or defensive will not help them work through their emotions.

### ❖ Externalizing Feelings



Children will often display feelings of sadness, anxiety, anger, resentment and confusion. Sometimes they may display loyalty or create loyalty conflicts. They can express physiological symptoms as well such as headaches and stomach aches. Their grades might even decline. It is important to keep in mind that while divorce or separation causes stress for you as a parent it is also stressful on your children. You may see these reactions immediately as well as several months after

the divorce or separation.

### ❖ Conflict between parents

The most important factor for your children is the level of conflict between their parents. Their reaction to your separation or divorce will be dependent on the level of conflict between you and the other parent. Parental conflicts have negative effects on children – whether you see it or not. Thus, minimizing the conflict is the best approach.

Children love both parents and they are not divorcing their parents. Unfortunately, they can internalize or believe they caused the break-up. Their symptoms or reaction to the divorce can vary. However, if there is a loss of contact with one parent their reaction can be more intense. Children can have long term emotional or behavior problems. It is critical to remember that this is not inevitable and will depend largely on how the parents handle the family changes. Again, it's vital to remain focused on self-care and the care of the children.

### ❖ Children learn what they live

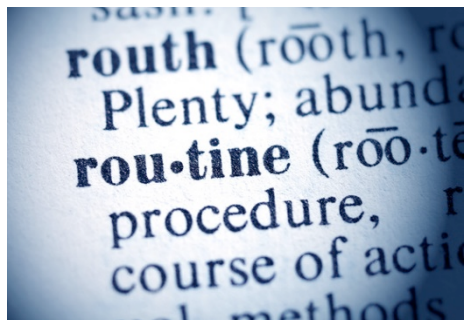
Adjustment challenges are more likely to occur and persist in children that are caught in the middle of their parents' conflict. You cannot control the other parent - you can control your actions and reactions and using your influence you can help reduce and mitigate conflict.

### ❖ How to reduce stress for your children

There are things you can do to help your children thrive after a divorce. First, be sure to work on your relationship with the child. Children need to know that you love them and building a quality relationship will help them manage the transition. Quality time is essential to building your relationship as well as positive comments.

Reassuring your children that their feelings are valid and that it is okay to talk to you about their feelings. It is important to help them express their feelings in a healthy way – let them know it is ok to feel angry, sad or hurt but expressing these emotions through negative behavior, such as punching their sibling or you is not ok.

One of the most basic things you can do to help your children is to give them your full attention and listen to you when they are speaking. Also, do not interrupt them but try to determine the message in what they are saying. Children can't or don't always possess the necessary communication skills to explain their feelings so their feelings might come out in a story or situation. Then re-state what they told you. You can ask them what solutions they have for the situation and if they need your help you can guide them.



#### ❖ **Structure and stability**

Another key factor in helping your children thrive during and after separation is maintaining structure and stability. Kids find comfort in routines and familiarity. Maintain the pre-separation or divorce schedule as much as possible. Also, try to integrate more quality time as discussed prior. Continue family routines or traditions especially those the children really enjoyed. If you never let them stay up past 9 before now is time the time to suddenly allow it. The change could alarm the children more than help them feel new freedom. If possible keep the same doctors and care providers that your children are accustomed to having.

Children need their space in your home. Even if the parenting plan is not split equal, you do not want your children to feel like they are visiting. Have a designated space for them to personalize such as their bedroom.

#### ❖ **When they go between parents**

It may be tempting to use your children as a source of communication with the other parent. Avoid talking to the other parent through your children regardless of the child's age or perceived maturity level. Children may forget the message and cause an argument which ultimately makes them feel bad because they will believe they caused the fight. Also, sometimes the messages are sensitive and need to be discussed by adults. It is important to realize that you cannot force the other parent to accept or not act on something because it came from their child. The parent will likely address the message regardless with the other parent and in the meantime the child might be feeling mixed emotions or turmoil because they were the sender. Discuss appropriate forms of communication in your parenting plan and then use the appropriate forms; asking your children to deliver messages ultimately hurts the children.

### ❖ When to seek professional help



If you need support, someone to talk to that will listen, remain subjective and not get involved in the situation and your current support system cannot offer that reach out and get professional help. The key to helping your children is ensuring that you are helping yourself and coping in healthy ways. Or if you or your children are experiencing intense feelings of anger, fear, grief, shame or guilt, find a professional that can help you work through those feelings and express them in a positive way.

## **Module 4: Family relationships and family dynamics. Cooperative Parenting**

### **❖ Acting respectfully to your child's other parent**

You cannot control the other parent but you can control your reactions. Remember that even if one parent is acting appropriately and coping well can make a positive impact on your children and how they also will cope with the changes.

If your children ask you questions about their other parent, do answer them honestly without including bias, anger or unnecessary details that will paint the other parent in a bad light.

Keep the other parent informed about the children and their well-being including but not limited to: medical issues, school activities, grades, counseling (if applicable) and general well-being.

Be on time and consistent when picking up your children. Try to avoid cancelling or changing plans. If it is absolutely necessary to make last minute changes, try to give the other parent as much notice as possible. It often hurts children when a parent often misses their time or constantly switches plans.

Give your children permission to have a loving and satisfying relationship with the other parent if it is physically and emotionally safe. If your children miss their other parent comfort them and reassure them of your love as well as the other parents love.

### **❖ Conflict affects adults and children**

In moments of anger and frustration sometimes parents can make unwise choices to involve their children in the divorce that will ultimately hurt the children.

- Avoid arguing in front of your children
- Avoid saying negative or hurtful things about the other parent in front of your children
- Do not ask them for information or to spy on the other parent
- Do not ask them to take sides for or against one of their parents
- Do not use the children to get back at the other parent or use the children as a manipulation tactic
- Do not compete with the other parent with gifts or money

### ❖ Becoming trapped in conflict

Becoming trapped in conflict to some degree means that you use the information you know about the other parent such as their vulnerabilities and weaknesses to consistently hurt them or put them on the defensive. It can also mean that instead of collaborating and looking for mutually agreeable resolutions you refuse to meet the other person halfway or be met halfway. This is a cycle of being trapped in conflict and it will create ongoing conflict and stress and not just for you but your children as well. It is in everyone's best interest to try and work collaboratively to a resolution and establish a new normal for your children as quickly as possible. If you focus on the present and future and make a goal of building a great future it will help you to try and resolve and put past hurts, in the past. This will also help your children accept the situation and move forward as well.

### ❖ Children are caught in the middle of their parents' conflict



Remember that children respond through divorce based on your reactions. If you are constantly caught in conflict and stressed, they will be too. The most alarming situation for children and when their problems are the most serious is when they are caught in a hostile ongoing conflict. This is distressing to children both emotionally and physically. Remember they love both of their parents and at this point they probably are hoping you will get back together. To hear or see a constant

struggle can be potentially harmful to their development.

This may sound familiar but it is critical to keeping children out of conflict:

- Do not use them as messengers
- Do not say negative things about the other parent
- Do not share too many details about the divorce, conflict or other parent with your children
- Do not use your children as ways to hurt the other parent

### ❖ Dating and your children



When to start dating is a very personal question. In general, it can take anywhere between one year and three years to emotionally recover from a divorce. While you will need to determine the appropriate time, there are some considerations. Once you start dating your children may react, positively or negatively, to you dating. At this point their hopes or beliefs that you and the other parent may get back

together may be shattered. Additionally, if up to this point they have had you to themselves they will now need to learn how to share you. It is also important that you do not bring people in and out of the children's lives. Professionals recommend that you do not introduce your partner to the children until things are relatively serious.

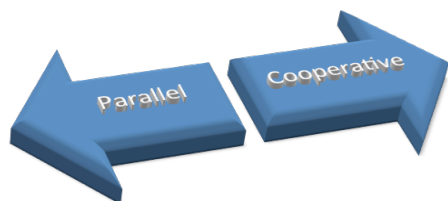
Your children may experience new loyalty conflicts between the new person and their parents. They can also fear being rejected by the new person or by their parents. It is also possible that your children may not like the person you are dating. This does not necessarily mean that you need to end the relationship but it does mean you need to take a moment to assess why they do not like him or her. If there are valid reasons for them disliking the person you need to address it with your new partner.

You are under no obligation to tell the other parent when you are dating. However, if you enter a serious relationship and the person will be around your children it is a common courtesy as well as for safety that you inform the other parent.

<http://www.divorcehelpforparents.com/dating-after-divorce.html>

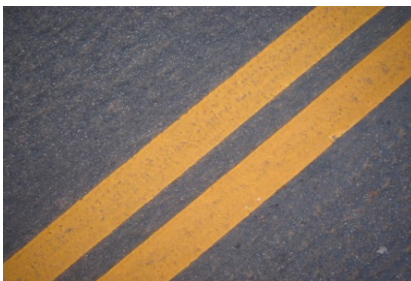
### ❖ Parenting Continuum

The parenting continuum goes from parallel parenting to cooperative parenting. Essentially these are techniques or ways to parent based on the circumstances of your separation and divorce. These styles can be used to help maintain a consistent and civil relationship for the well-being of your children. These styles are part of a continuum that exists over time which allows for movement from one to the other. Additionally, it is not an all or nothing system. Some parents can parent in a cooperative manner on some topics and then rely on parallel parenting for areas of more intense disagreement.



### Parallel and Cooperative Parenting

#### ➤ Parallel Parenting



What is parallel parenting? Parallel parenting is often helpful in divorces or separations with high conflict, significant unresolved issues or domestic abuse. Essentially, both parents remain as part of the children's lives and yet maintain separate contact.

- Email, a parenting notebook or third party (not your children) is used for primary communication.



- Both parties stick to the parenting plan, there are no negotiations or flexibility because this tends to result in conflict.
- Each parent takes responsibility of their children at the designated time and location as set in the parent plan.
- Parents often make this type of parenting work by adopting a business-like attitude towards the other parent. Using common courtesy and respect.
- Discuss the present and future and do not rehash the past.
- Remembering the goal is to keep conflict to a minimum for yourself and your children.
- Follow up any agreements or discussions in writing. Use communication or negotiation through a neutral third party when necessary.

➤ Cooperative parenting



Cooperative parenting is often successful when there is low or minimal conflict between parents. This is helpful when parents are able to talk to one another directly without arguing and come to an agreement. To some degree there is flexibility with the children's schedule. Adopting a business-like attitude is a good practice with this style of parenting as well. You will find that a low-key approach, being polite and not reacting negatively to the other parent will go a long way and often the same

courtesy will be extended to you.

- Be as specific as possible in communication with the other parent.
- Do not expect appreciation or praise from the other parent.
- Give the other parent the benefit of the doubt
- Regardless how friendly the terms are, do not use your children as messengers.

The biggest differences between parallel and cooperative parenting is the level of contact and formality between the parents. If there is a high conflict reducing contact and keeping communication direct and specific in writing is key. Remember that anything you put in writing could be used in court. Do not write anything you would not want a judge to see and to use in order to determine if a change in custody is warranted. Generally, the closer you get to cooperative parenting the more flexibility and agreement there is. As stated before, you can use these types of parenting as needed - it does not have to be one or the other.



## Module 5. Financial Responsibilities to a Child or Children.



When you divorce, the Florida legal system will consider several factors to determine what is necessary with regards to **alimony** and/or **child support**. **Alimony** is a payment from the higher earner to help maintain the marital lifestyle for a period. **Child support** is money that is paid to a parent based on income and custody.

### Alimony

Let's take a moment to discuss alimony. The courts will consider several factors when making a decision about alimony. First, the party requesting alimony must show that alimony is necessary. If the courts deem that alimony is necessary they have to determine if the other party has the financial ability to pay.

If a judge determines that there is a financial need as well as the ability to pay, Florida law requires the judge to consider these factors prior to deciding on an amount for alimony:

- Financial resources of the spouse seeking maintenance, including separate property and any award of marital property
- All sources of income, including investment income, available to either spouse
- Each spouse's earning capacity, educational history, vocational skills, and employability
- Any time and expense required by the spouse seeking maintenance to obtain education and training for appropriate employment
- Marital standard of living
- Length of the marriage
- Each spouse's age and physical and emotional condition
- Each spouse's contribution to the marriage, including homemaking, child care, education, and helping the other spouse build a career
- Any tax consequences of the alimony award
- Responsibilities each spouse will have for any minor children they have in common

It is important to be aware of the financial implications that can come with divorce. Divorce will impact your way of living as well as your children. On average families lose approximately 20% of their income when divorcing.

### Child Support

Florida Child Support laws are pretty clear: if there are minor children of divorcing parents, there is child support. The amount of child support is based on guidelines defined in [Florida law](#).

Child support guidelines are standards used to estimate the support needed for a child and the amount a parent has to pay for this purpose. Guidelines help ensure that child support amounts

are fair for the parents. Every state has its own guidelines, so they may differ from one state to another.

Guidelines are used for the first time when child support is ordered (when parents file for divorce) and then every time the child support amount changes based on changes that may occur in parents' financial situation or other unforeseen changes at the time of filing. They are also used to review the order and see if the support amount should be changed.

Child support guidelines consider the following factors:

- Income of both parents
- Child's health care and day care costs
- Standard needed for caring of the child
  - A list of support amounts based on the child's age and net income of the parents is in the [Florida law – standard needs table](#).

The court or agency establishing support must use these guidelines to decide the amount of child support that will go in a Florida support order. Under special circumstances, support amounts may be higher or lower than the guideline amounts. For example, a judge may consider a child's high medical expenses as a reason to change the support amount. In most cases, judges have to give written reasons why support amounts are different from guideline amounts.

Child support pays for the for the children's residence and related utilities, food and other essentials. In many cases support also pays for health insurance. The parent that has the children the majority of the time receives support and the other non-primary residential parent pays support.

In most cases the amount of support is governed by the incomes of both parents and the amount the Florida child support guidelines provide. Support is also dependent on the number of overnights the children spend with each parent. Theoretically, if the parents have equal incomes and equal overnights with the children – child support would be zero. But that is not the case in most situations.

Both divorce and paternity cases with children involve child support. For a custody or parenting case, child support is calculated the same way. Even though there are Florida child support guidelines, the calculation of support is absolutely not black and white. There are specific considerations for taxes, daycare, medical, and other issues that can significantly change the amount to pay or receive.

### **How is the Process for Child Support Calculations Started?**

The process of determining the amount of child support payments, which parent will be the majority parent and which will be the non-majority parent, must be determined. After this determination is made, the amount of child support to be paid by the non-majority parent will be calculated. Each parent's net income is determined based on gross income minus any allowable deductions.

#### ***What Constitutes "Income?"***

The income of each parent is the starting point in determining child support. Gross income for each parent includes wages and salary, commissions, overtime pay, bonuses, tips, self-employment business income, income from partnerships or corporations, workers' comp benefits, spousal support from a prior marriage, disability benefits, pension, retirement, annuity payments, benefits from social security, unemployment benefits, rental income, interest and dividends. When one parent is unemployed or underemployed, the court may impute a monthly income for that parent. If such unemployment or underemployment is voluntary, earnings may be based on that parent's recent work history.

#### ***What are Allowable Deductions?***

The deductions allowed for parents in the calculation of child support include the following:

- Health insurance premiums for the children
- Daycare costs for the children
- Federal, state and local income tax deductions
- Child support and spousal support being paid for a prior marriage
- Union dues
- Federal insurance payments
- Mandatory retirement payments

#### ***How Are the Child Support Payments Calculated?***

After taking income and allowable deductions into consideration, and arriving at the parents' net income, the number of children from the marriage will be factored in. The court then allocates a percentage of the net income to be paid by each parent. Adjustments to the amount of child support determined can be made based on whether the non-majority parent has at least 73 overnights each year. Individual circumstances of the parents will factor in to the amount of child support ordered, however there are online Florida child support charts which allow you to get a good idea of the amount which will be ordered.

#### ***Can a Florida Court Deviate from the Florida Child Support Guidelines?***

While the “normal” calculations generally work well for most parents in the determination of child support, the Florida courts do have some discretion when setting child support amounts. Under Florida law, the court is only allowed to deviate by 5 percent unless there is justification for a larger deviation. A child who requires special or extraordinary medical, psychological or dental care could impact child support payments as could any outside sources of income available to the child. Deviations to the child support calculations could also apply when there are special needs related to a disabled child, the income or expenses of one or both parents varies seasonally, one parent has a large amount of personal assets, or when the child spends a significant amount of time with the paying parent. If a parent pays child support from a prior marriage, the total garnished for both amounts of child support cannot exceed 55 percent of that parent’s gross income. This means the current child support payment may be reduced.

### ***Can I Receive Retroactive Child Support Payments?***

Once child support payments are established, the paying parent may be responsible for retroactive child support for the time between the separation and the date the child support order goes into effect. Due to the mathematical nature of child support payments, this retroactive amount will be determined in the same manner as the regular child support payments.

If both parents enjoy equal time-sharing, child support will still be calculated according the [Florida Child Support Guidelines Worksheet](#), and is dependent on each parent’s income, the percentage of time sharing (usually overnights), health insurance, uncovered medical expenses and the costs of daycare when applicable. As the time-sharing of the paying parent increases (more overnight visits), he or she will likely pay less child support.

Most parents who pay child support operate under the assumption those payments will cease the day the child turns 18. In truth, there are other factors, which may come into play regarding when the parent can stop paying child support. In theory, court-ordered child support in Florida does end when a minor child turns 18. That being said, if your child support order was entered before October 2011, you may be obligated to take additional steps in order to terminate your child support obligations. If you have multiple children, you will be required to file a request to terminate child support each time a child reaches the age of 18. In some instances, a child who is over the age of 18, but still in high school, may continue to receive child support until graduation from high school. Children with disabilities may also require child support payments far longer than the age of 18.

### ***Can Child Support Be Modified?***

If the child support amount has not been reviewed in three years, it could be time to ask for a modification. There are also a number of other reasons, which may justify a modification of child support. Some of these include more overnights, increases in income for the person receiving support or decreases in income for the person paying support (through no fault of their own). The increase or decrease must be a minimum of 15 percent or \$500 for the court to consider a child support modification. If a parent who has been paying health care costs for the children is no longer paying those costs, a modification may be approved. A decrease in income must be related to involuntary loss of a job or income, or due to a disability or illness. Should the needs of a child significantly increase or decrease, a child support modification could also be in order.

### ***What is a Cost of Living Adjustment for Child Support?***

Some child support agreements contain a cost of living adjustment (COLA) clause. This clause takes into account the annual cost of living increase, then automatically increases the amount of child support based on that number. The theory behind a cost of living increase clause in child support orders is that it would largely eliminate the modification requests which are based on the increase in everyday expenses. The downside to a cost of living adjustment clause is that the paying parent's income may not be increasing at the same rate as the cost of living.

### ***What Is Necessary for a Modification of Child Support?***

Whenever two parents are no longer together, chances are that one parent will be ordered to pay child support to help meet the financial needs of raising the child. The parent who has less time with the child is the most likely to pay, though the amount is calculated based on other factors, including the income of both parties. While the amount that is set is deemed sufficient at the time, there may be situations where a modification of child support becomes necessary.

### **Identifying your financial change and options**

It is important to identify the financial changes that will occur as well as your options. Although, you may not know specifics it is important to know if you are requesting child support or alimony as well as the reasonableness of your request. When determining your parent plan you and the other parent can claim the dependents every other year or balance the taxes with other factors such as paying medical insurance. These aspects can be negotiated to some degree and can be distributed equally in the case of shared custody or used to offset additional expenses for the parent with primary custody.

When going through a divorce make copies of your previous tax returns, financial statements and get copies of birth certificates and social security cards and keep them in a safe place outside of the joint home, like a safe deposit box. It is also advised that you get a separate post

office box where you can get private communication from your lawyer, the courts and any other communication that needs to remain private. It is important to also maintain a separate checking out outside of a joint account that you had with the other parent.

You may also qualify for state resources if your income is lower than a specific amount or you have primary custody. These are state specific so check with your state economic office for additional resources.

### **Acknowledging the court mandated responsibility of the other parent**

If the courts determine that you or the other parent is responsible for child support or alimony it is a federal offense to not pay. Back child support or alimony can result in contempt of court, garnished wages, incarceration and suspension of your passport. Your court will provide an easy method of payment to deduct child support directly from the paying parents check and be deposited in the receiving parents account.

If you fall behind on payments or lose your job it is important to contact the court system to discuss your options. It is important to know that although alimony and child support may have been granted that you can request a modification to the original agreement if circumstances change significantly like a much lower income or much higher income for either party.

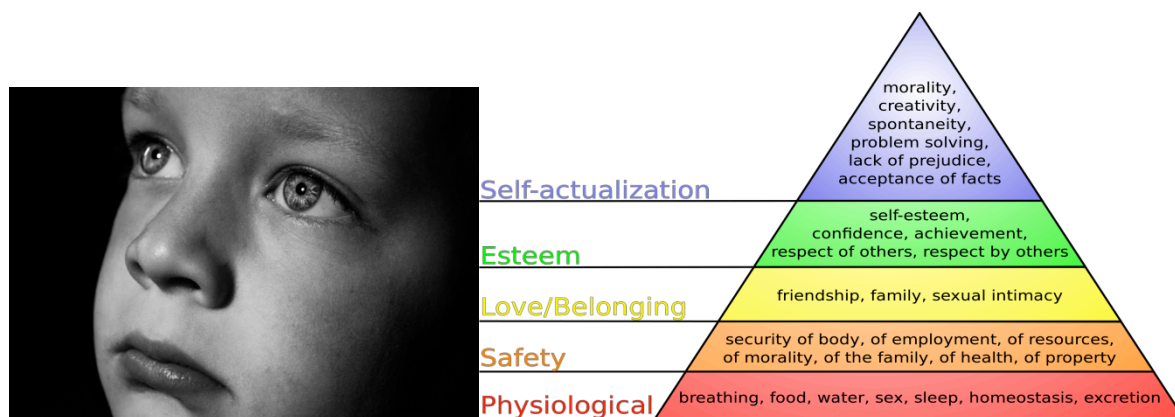
### **Keeping accurate and up to date records**

There may come a time that a situation exists to ask the court to consider changing the financial support. However, If you can't demonstrate reasonable proof of your situations that fall inside or outside of your parenting plan, support payments then getting your parenting plan or support changed is not likely. It is important that you keep accurate records of payments that you pay or receive as well as expenses that you pay such as medical, dental, vision, school expenses, emergencies etc. Also, this is why email or saved text messages are good forms of communication because you have it in writing. Remember; do not say anything you would not be comfortable with a judge using to make a decision in your case.

## Module 6. Issues regarding spousal or child abuse and neglect

Spousal abuse is often referred to as domestic violence. Although, women on average tend to be the abused, it can affect all genders. Domestic violence often carries over to children, in the form of child abuse. Often the abuse takes place in the home and is not always recognized right away. Most professionals in the public sector who work with children (e.g., doctors and teachers) have been trained to watch for signs of abuse and report it if they suspect that it is occurring at home. For this reason, it is imperative that you use good judgment and determine if the situation is both physically and emotionally safe prior to subjecting yourself or your children to it especially if there has been history of domestic violence. Domestic violence can include but is not limited to physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Threats, insults, deprivation and harassment are also forms of domestic abuse. Aggression and intimidation can also be used. The purpose or goal of domestic violence is to gain power over another person through tactics that wear down the other persons self-esteem and relinquish their personal power. It is often one of the most unreported crimes in America.

### What is considered spousal or child neglect?



Spousal or child neglect is a form of abuse. It means that that the basic needs are not being provided by a parent or spouse and therefore basic needs are not being met. These can be both physical and emotional needs. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs illustrated above, humans have basic needs that are broken down into levels: physiological including food, water, warmth, and rest; safety and security; belongingness and love; and esteem needs - such as accomplishment or being good at something. Neglect can occur when basic needs are deprived such as food or water, or basic needs are met and another tier of needs are withheld. For example, all physiological needs can be met but a parent or spouse refuses to or avoids showing a spouse or child affection or the attention that they need.

### What constitutes and physical or emotional harm?

Physical harm can include any act against a person that causes physical injury. Emotional harm includes acts with malicious intent to harm someone psychologically or emotionally. It is also



important to note that emotional abuse is repetitive and ongoing - it is frequent enough to cause you or your child psychological harm.



The law promotes safety of children. As we mentioned earlier, a judge is not simply going to take your word at face value that abuse is occurring in the home unless you have documentation of the abuse that you have shared with officials such as the police. This can be



a tricky situation to navigate if you are worried for the safety and well-being of yourself or your children. The courts will rule in what they feel is the best interest of the children. Therefore, you can ask for a custody evaluation, when a psychologist or third party appointed by the court will interview the child to assess if there is abuse and to what extent. Also, in cases of domestic violence or abuse you may want to consider hiring a lawyer. They are familiar with legal responsibility and procedures that will

keep you and your children's welfare in the heart of the matter.

### **How does family violence impact children?**



- Stress
- Feel unsafe, anxious, vulnerable
- Fear, shame, guilt, depression
- Difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite
- Loss of focus, difficulty problem solving, delayed cognitive development, loss of spontaneity

Family violence can mean that children witness the abuse first hand, it also can mean that they see the aftermath such as bruises, blood or torn clothing. However, it can also mean they hear it or sense that there is tension when the abuser arrives home

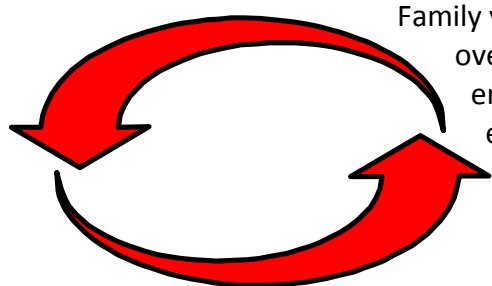
This course has stressed that conflict has negative impacts on children; abuse is living in constant conflict for children. Temporary impacts can be that they never feel safe, they are anxious, vulnerable, they can experience fear, shame, guilt, depression, difficulty sleeping, and loss of appetite. Often it impacts performance at school (e.g., loss of focus, problem solving, cognitive development, loss of spontaneity).



Parents can also become preoccupied with survival and unintentionally neglect their children which causes them to feel isolated and often abandoned. If any form of abuse does exist, children can suffer traumatic, psychological and self-esteem damage.

Long term effects of physical violence ultimately teach children that violence is the answer to solve problems. It can lead to disrespect for the abused gender. It can lead to children growing up and seeking out relationships that mirror the abuse they witness as children or becoming abusers themselves. Children that grew up with abuse in the home are more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs, have PTSD, and head towards a path of juvenile delinquency. They are more inclined to have depression or attempt suicide. This is often the reason for adolescents running away from home.

### Domestic Violence Florida Statutes



Family violence is a person's way of declaring power and control over another person through abuse. Injury can be physical, emotional, sexual or neglectful, and is usually targeted toward either a spouse or a child. Spousal and child abuse are often interrelated and may occur together or at different times within the family.

- Domestic Violence is defined as a pattern of coercive behavior used by one partner to control and / or dominate the other.
- It cuts across socioeconomic, educational, racial / ethnic, and religious lines. It is one person scaring the other into doing what the abuser wants.
- Abusers use physical and sexual violence, threats, money, emotional and psychological abuse to control their spouse or intimidate partner in order to get their way.

### Domestic Violence Defined by [Florida Statutes: ss. 741.28-741.31](#)

(2) "Domestic violence" means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member.

(3) "Family or household member" means spouses, former spouses, persons related by blood or marriage, persons who are presently residing together as if a family or who have resided together in the past as if a family, and persons who are parents of a child in common regardless of whether they have been married. With the exception of persons who have a child in common, the family or household members must be currently residing or have in the past resided together in the same single dwelling unit.

(4) "Law enforcement officer" means any person who is elected, appointed, or employed by any municipality or the state or any political subdivision thereof who meets the minimum

qualifications established in s. 943.13 and is certified as a law enforcement officer under s. 943.1395.

### **Florida Penalty for Domestic Violence - [741.283](#)**

Minimum term of imprisonment for domestic violence. If a person is adjudicated guilty of a crime of domestic violence, as defined in s. 741.28, and the person has intentionally caused bodily harm to another person, the court shall order the person to serve a minimum of 5 days in the county jail as part of the sentence imposed, unless the court sentences the person to a non-suspended period of incarceration in a state correctional facility. This section does not preclude the court from sentencing the person to probation, community control, or an additional period of incarceration. History. s. 3, ch. 2001-50.

### **Florida Mandatory Reports of Child Abuse - [39.201](#)**

Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, as defined in this chapter, or that a child is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision and care shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department in the manner prescribed in *subsection of this statute* ...

### **Child Abuse Defined [§827.03](#), Florida Statutes**

Child Abuse Defined §827.03, Florida Statutes – the intentional infliction of physical or mental injury upon a child; an intentional act that could reasonably be expected to result in physical or mental injury to a child; or active encouragement of any person to commit an act that results or could reasonably be expected to result in physical or mental injury to a child. A person who knowingly or willfully abuses a child without causing great bodily harm, permanent disability, or permanent disfigurement to the child commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in §§775.082, 775.083, or 775.084, Florida Statutes.

### **Florida Abuse Hotline Information**

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline>

A new and improved online abuse reporting tool for the Florida Department of Children and Families' Florida Abuse Hotline is now available. This new reporting tool is available to professionally-mandated reporters, as well as the general public, as an additional avenue to report suspected cases of abuse, neglect, abandonment, or exploitation of children or vulnerable adults. The new online reporting tool is in addition to the existing toll-free line at 1-800-96-ABUSE, TTY 1.800.453.5145, and fax at 1.800.914.0004.

Features of the new online form:

- Does not require a login and password
- Allows attachment of important documents

- Personal information of the individual reporting abuse will always remain confidential, and individuals can remain confidential.

The Florida Abuse Hotline accepts reports 24 hours a day & 7 days a week of known or suspected child abuse, neglect, or abandonment and reports of known or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult. To make a report you can:

- Report online at <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/>
- Call 1-800-962-2873
- Florida Relay 711 or TTY 800-453-5145
- Fax your report to 800-914-0004

If you suspect or know of a child or vulnerable adult in immediate danger, call 911.

Legislation, signed by Gov. Rick Scott, requires any individual who suspects that a child has been abused by any person to report that to the Florida Abuse Hotline. Any allegations a child was abused or neglected by a caregiver will be investigated by the Department of Children and Families, while allegations of child abuse by someone other than a caregiver will be accepted at the Hotline and immediately electronically transferred to the appropriate local law enforcement agency where the child lives.

*Penalties for those who suspect a child is being abused but fail to report it have been increased from a misdemeanor to a felony. Financial penalties also have increased.*

### **About the Florida Abuse Hotline**

More than 1 million children are victims of child abuse and neglect each year, according to state child protective service agencies. Many victims don't receive help because they are not reported to the system. These abused and neglected children span all ages, races, religions and socio-economic backgrounds. Child maltreatment includes actions that result in imminent risk of serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation of a child under age 18 by a parent or caretaker.

When parents can't, don't or won't protect their children, the Department of Children & Families steps in to help, providing a full spectrum of services, from parenting classes and respite care to transportation and childcare. The goal of the department is to keep children safe in their own families when possible.

The Florida Abuse Hotline serves as the central reporting center for allegations of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation for all children and vulnerable adults in Florida.

The Hotline receives calls, faxes, and web-based reports from citizens and professionals with concerns of abuse, neglect, or exploitation on children and vulnerable adults in Florida.

The Hotline assesses the information provided by the caller and determines if the information provided meets statutory criteria for the Department of Children and Families to conduct an investigation.

## False Reporting Guidelines

Anyone reporting in good faith shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability. Any person who knowingly and willfully makes a false report or counsels another to make a false report is guilty of a felony of the third degree punishable by up to five years in prison. In addition, the department may impose a fine not to exceed \$10,000 for each violation. Each time that a false report is made constitutes a separate violation. A false report is a report of child abuse, neglect or abandonment or adult abuse, neglect or exploitation that is made to the central abuse hotline which is not true and is maliciously made for the purpose of:

- Harassing, embarrassing, or harming another person;
- Personal financial gain for the reporting person;
- Acquiring custody of a child or vulnerable adult; or
- Personal benefit for the reporting person in any other private dispute involving a child or vulnerable adult.

Section 39.205, Florida Statutes (F.S.) states what the department has to do concerning false reporting for children and Section 415.111, F.S. addresses with false reporting for adults.

Florida Department of Children and Families - FLORIDA ABUSE HOTLINE - Reporting Abuse

Of Children and Vulnerable Adults:

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/abuse/publications/mandatedreporters.pdf>

## Statistics -Violence Has No Place in a Child's Life

- An estimated 3.3 to 10 million children a year are at risk for witnessing or being exposed to Domestic Violence.
- Approximately 90% of these children are aware of the violence directed at their mothers
- Children may be physically injured during assaults (by accident or because they try to intervene).
- Sons over 14 tend to protect their mothers most become injured as a result.
- 62% of sons ages 11-20 served prison time for homicide from killing their mother's batterer.
- Post-separation violence is high and children are likely to witness it (27% of Domestic Violence homicide victims were children).
- 40 to 70% of men who frequently abused their spouse, abused their children too.
- Children who grew up in violent homes have a 74% higher likelihood of committing criminal assaults against their partner.
- 81% of men who batter women had fathers who abused their mothers.

On the [Florida Department of Children and Families: Domestic Violence website](#) you can find information and statistics related to domestic violence crimes in Florida, per years, changes in percentages and types of offence.

## Research on children who live with and are aware of violence in the home:

- Children who live with and are aware of violence in the home face many challenges and risks that can last throughout their lives.
- There is increased risk of children becoming victims of abuse themselves.
- There is a significant risk of ever-increasing harm to the child's physical, emotional and social development.
- There is a strong likelihood that this will become a continuing cycle of violence for the next generation.
- 

Ref: Osofsky, Joy D., 'The Impact of Violence on Children; The Future of Children –Domestic Violence and Children, Vol. 9, no. 3, 1999.

## What Children Deserve



- Children need a safe and secure home environment.
- Children need to know that there are adults who will listen to them, believe them and shelter them.
- Children need a sense of routine and normalcy.
- Children need support services to meet their needs.
- Children need to learn that domestic violence is wrong and learn non-violent methods of resolving conflicts.
- Children need adults to speak out and break the silence.

## Module 7. Skill-Based Relationship Education; Communication and Conflict Resolution

### Relationship Skills



- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Parenting
- Financial management

Skill-based relationship education includes building skills to promote a happy and healthy foundation for relationships. Even though you are experiencing a divorce or separation situation, these skills can help promote a healthy partnership with the other parent as well as build a strong foundation for your relationship with your children and any future relationships you have.

The skills can have cross functional benefits.

These skills do not only apply to marriage or family relationships but can impact your performance in your workplace, school, neighborhood and civic relationship.

The skills that are the primary focus are communication, conflict resolution, parenting and financial management

### Communication & Conflict Resolution



- Avoid arguing or saying negative or hurtful things about the other parent in front of your children.
- Do not ask children to spy or take sides.
- Do not use the children as a manipulation tactic.
- Do not compete with the other parent with gifts or money.

## Tips to Manage Anger



- Take a “time out”
- Meet in public
- Ask for support
- Do not vent in front of children
- Do not vent with violence

Here are tips to acknowledge and handle your anger:

Assess whether there are other feelings behind your anger, like sadness, hurt or a need to still feel connected to your former spouse or partner.

- Agree to take “time out” and continue the conversation at a later time, after emotions have calmed.
- If it is safe to meet in person, hold any necessary meetings in a public place so there will be less chance of someone losing control in anger.
- Tell friends and relatives that you are trying to contain your anger for the children’s sake and ask for their support.
- Do not use your children as sounding boards to vent your anger with their other parent.
- Remember that venting anger in violent ways is dangerous, destructive, and always wrong.

### Use “I” messages

Using “I” messages is a technique to reduce the other parent feeling attacked. “You” statements start with “You did this, or did that.” I statements shift the focus from the other person feeling attacked to expressing a way that you feel. These statements start with “I.” Powerful “I” statements state your feelings or concern and then ask for a change. Another example, “I feel upset or am concerned about the kids getting home late. Can we agree that we will work harder to get them back at the designated drop of time?”

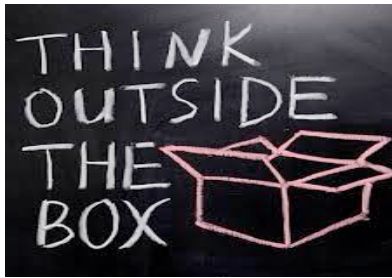
### Being a good listener

Being a good listener can be difficult especially in heated situations. Often you are so focused on preparing what you are going to say that you really are not listening to the other person. First, give them your undivided attention, reduce distractions as best as possible. Listen intently, then paraphrase what they said. Also, avoid always and never language. This creates a generalization and the other person may feel attacked.

- Undivided attention
- Reduce distractions
- Listen intently
- Paraphrase what they said to make sure you understood



- Avoid “always” and “never”



### **Be Creative in Problem Solving**

As a married couple, you solved problems one way, as a separated or divorce couple, it is important to try and handle problems with a new approach. The old ways in which you solved problems will likely be ineffective as a single person. Try to achieve win-win solutions that are good for you as well as the other parent. Be willing to compromise and meet the other

person halfway. Avoid making a decision and then announce it to the other parent as if it is a declaration, this will add to the conflict. Strive for the following:

- Win-win solutions
- Compromise
- Negotiate, not dictate

### **Relation to each other as business partners**

As mentioned earlier relating to the other parent in a businesslike manner can help reduce your frustrations and help ease the tension in the relationship. It may feel awkward at first, it will eventually come to be the new normal for communication between the two of you.

### **Parenting**



Depending on your parenting approach (parallel or collaborative) you may approach how you parent with your former spouse. Consistency is key for children and it would be helpful to your them if you can agree on disciplinary measures that both homes follow. In order to achieve this, you need to problem solve for behavior, identify fair and consistent disciplinary actions and then collaborate with the other parent through open communication. This can reduce the

inconsistencies your children feel when they have shared parenting time and live in two different residences with two sets of rules and consequences.

Parenting is also a great topic to discuss prior to a serious relationship. Parenting styles can differ greatly and add to stress in a relationship. Things like rewards, punishments, and traditions for kids can be a source of contention. However in the midst of a divorce, you may find yourself arguing over children eating or not eating all of their dinner, sharing rooms or having an allowance. Here’ you’ll think about the following:

- Consistency
- Discipline



- Collaborative problem solving
- Rewards, punishments
- Traditions

## **Financial Management**

Financial management is also a key discussion point in relationship. First, having your own financial situation managed successfully is important before you consider blending finances with someone else, prior to marriage. After the divorce, be open and honest with yourself about your finances. Set up a separate account for vacations or entertainment so you don't overspend your monthly bill budget. Also, avoid co-signing for loans. If you become involved with someone that you are serious about and plan to join your finances together, make a contract that explains the expectations of each person and how the bills will be paid. Also include how you two will handle date night or fun expenses.

- Consider separate accounts for specific purposes like entertainment or vacations.
- Avoid co-signing for loans.
- Write up a contract of expectations for joint finances.

## Module 8. Application - How to apply what you have learned

By now you have learned how to minimize the stress and pain of divorce for your children. If you recall, it all started with you. So we are going to step through an action plan in this module.

### Step 1:

#### Get clear on what you want



The first step is to get clear on what it is you want. This presentation is designed to give you an action step, allow you to pause the video for 10 minutes, complete the action step and then resume. If you need more than 10 minutes, feel free to keep the video paused. This module will take a total of 90 minutes.

Think about your life now and how the divorce will impact you going forward. Think about all the things that you don't like or that stress you out. Write those down. Again, feel free to

pause the video if you need more time.

### Step 2:

#### Visualize what you want



In step 1 you identified all the things that you don't like or are stressing you out.

Write how your life looks when you are at your happiest? What is it that you would love to have out of life? It might simply be to wake up refreshed or to make your kids breakfast or to sleep better.

Whatever it is, write it down.

### Step 3:

#### What can you change?



Step 3 requires honesty from within. Now, you should think about how your life looks and how you want it to look. What factors can you control that are contributing to the things you dislike?

For example, if you are not sleeping well. What can you do to help yourself sleep? Do you need to talk to someone and yet are not seeing a therapist? Are you angry and hurt and refusing to move forward? Do you and your kids fight every

morning because they do not have their clothes picked out or breakfast eaten?

Often times, small things that we neglect over time cause bigger challenges in our lives. Take some time to think about the things you can pay more attention to that will resolve your challenges.

#### Step 4: Action Plan



In step 4 you will make an action plan and life statement. Look back over your list for step 3. What things can you change? More importantly, why do you want this change? What will it mean for your life?

Sticking to a change requires resolve and purpose because will power will eventually run out. Why do you want this change? What is your motivating factor? Is it a peaceful life for your children? Is it tranquility within yourself? What is your

motivating factor?

Once you have found your motivation then write an action plan. What 3 things are you going to do daily to meet your goal?

You can add more if you like but three is a good starting point to build consistency and routine and as you get wins each day you can add more action items.

#### Step 5: List of To Do's



Step 5 comes purposely after you have established the vision of what you want your future to be like because this step may require you to tie up some loose ends and address some business with your children's other parent.

What are the items that you need to do that you haven't? For example, have you gotten a separate mailing address yet? Do you have copies of birth certificates, social security cards and pictures? If you are the spouse controlling these items, make a list or copies to provide the other parent the ability to also work towards closure.

To tackle this task think about life items first. What items do you need for yourself and your children to function in society? Here are some ideas.

- Separate mailing address
- Social security cards
- Birth certificates
- Bank account information
- New and private bank account
- Asset information

- Personal Property
- Other items to consider
- Children's pictures
- Memorabilia
- Personal shared items

Now it's time to make your list.

## Step 6:

### Deadline



Step 6 asks you to write out an action plan for you to accomplish your list in step 5. Give yourself a deadline to accomplish the task. Send appropriate communication or set appointments to gather the items. For example, if you need duplicate birth certificates see what your state requires to obtain a copy, get that in order and then order or set an appointment to go get the copies. If you need to take time off work then request it. The point of this step is to take action. What do you need to accomplish your tasks? Also, communicating with the other

parent begins to develop accountability for completing this task.

## Step 7:

### Finances



For this task you will have 20 minutes.

Changes in finances can be one of the most stressful and scary parts of a divorce. There may be alimony or child support requests and both parents may be worrying about how the changes will impact them.

For step 7 you need to create a budget that will accommodate the changes after divorce. There are a lot of free basic budget templates, find one you like or use one you already have and factor in your life changes. It is important to see this on paper because it will help give you an end goal. Even in the kindest divorces, separating bills and life style and establishing a new norm is challenging. You may experience bumps in the road, but this task will help you get a picture of the end goal and help you work towards it.

## Step 8:

### Self Care - Moving Forward

Step 8 once again requires brutal honesty with yourself. It asks you to assess where you are emotionally, physically and spiritually. What do you need to cope and progress forward? Make a list of the things you need. It can be something as simple as an hour alone, or maybe you



need more support. What is it you need to help cope in a healthy way? Make a list and then take the necessary steps to put it in motion.

Divorce can be difficult however, people have found that if they can establish a goal, make progress to that goal and begin to develop new normalcy that they are able to cope and move forward in a more confident way.

Thank you for joining us for module 8. Please continue to your test.

## Test

1. Parental responsibility is...
  - A. Time sharing
  - B. Decided by the courts
  - C. The legal obligation to care for the child
  - D. The physical time parents agreed to spend with their children
2. The courts can appoint sole parental custody responsibility with time-sharing to the other parent.
  - A. True
  - B. False
3. What is the deciding factor for the courts when making decisions?
  - A. Expressed desires of the parents
  - B. The child's best interest
  - C. Third party advisement
  - D. Lawyer counsel
4. The parenting plan determines when the child spends time with each parent.
  - A. True
  - B. False
5. The parenting plan doesn't need to be agreed upon by the parents.
  - A. True
  - B. False
6. According to which scale is divorce one of the top ten most stressful events?
  - A. Florida Court System
  - B. Personal Experience
  - C. Holmes and Rahe

D. All of the above

7. The decision to ask for or move towards divorce happens..

A. Over night

B. Over a couple months

C. Over a year

D. Over time

8. Your social circle may be impacted because of your divorce.

A. True

B. False

9. It is important that you make efforts to reduce the appearance or reminders of the other parent leaving the home, or that your children have a new house. Which are examples of this?

A. True

B. False

C. Your child having their own space

D. Hanging their art work up

E. Removing any sign of the other parent from the home

10. There are appropriate support groups available for divorce like support groups and counseling.

A. True

B. False

11. If possible it is best to agree on how and tell your children you are divorcing together.

A. True

B. False

12. Blaming the other parent can...

A. Help your children see their faults

B. Increase their loyalty to you

C. Cause Confusion

D. Can stress your child out and make them feel defensive of the other parent

13. Children are watching \_\_\_\_\_ to decide how they cope with their parents' divorce.
- A. The parent with the most custody
  - B. Both parents
  - C. The parent they feel closest to
  - D. Their siblings
14. Setting up a completely new routine will help your child adjust
- A. True
  - B. False
15. It is important to help your children express their feelings in a healthy way and avoid expressing their feelings through behavior.
- A. True
  - B. False
16. Children should be used to relay messages between divorced parents.
- A. True
  - B. False
17. With parallel parenting, the parents communicate...
- A. Through their children
  - B. Via e-mail or a journal
  - C. Through a third party
  - D. Either B or C
18. With this parenting style, it is recommended that communication between parents be businesslike.
- A. Parallel Parenting
  - B. Cooperative Parenting
  - C. Both Parallel and Cooperative
  - D. None of the above



19. Behaving respectfully toward the other parent includes keeping them informed about the children and their well-being including but not limited to: medical issues, school activities, grades, counseling if applicable and general well-being.

A. True

B. False

20. Professionals recommend that you do not introduce your partner to the children until things are relatively serious.

A. True

B. False

21. The judge does not consider the length of the marriage when making a determination regarding alimony.

A. True

B. False

22. When going through a divorce, you should keep which of the following documents outside of the home, in a secure location.

A. Previous tax returns

B. Financial statements

C. Birth certificates & Social security cards

D. All of the above

23. It is a federal offense not to pay child support.

A. True

B. False

24. Why should you keep accurate records of all child support payments, communication between parents, and parenting expenses?

A. So that you can use the records to manipulate the other parent

B. These records could be used in court in case there is a renegotiation of child support or parenting plan

C. Both A & B

D. None of the above

25. When determining your parent plan, you and the other parent can claim the dependents every other year or balance the taxes with other factors such as paying medical insurance.

- A. True
- B. False

26. Domestic violence only affects women.

- A. True
- B. False

27. Which of the following is an example of child neglect?

- A. Denying a child food, shelter, clothing, or sanitary living conditions
- B. Denying a child the opportunity to form close relationships with others
- C. Failing to provide needed medical care
- D. All of the above

28. Emotional abuse is....

- A. Done with malicious intent
- B. Repetitive & ongoing
- C. Results in psychological harm
- D. All of the above

29. Documentation, such as a custody evaluation, is needed in order to prove abuse or neglect for the purpose of custody determination.

- A. True
- B. False

30. Children are only affected by domestic violence if they are themselves physically abused.

- A. True
- B. False

31. The skills of communication, conflict resolution, parenting, and financial management, can help promote a healthy partnership with the other parent as well as transfer to other important relationships in your life.

- A. True

B. False

32. Children can communicate information between parents, as long as it is...

- A. Personal information about the other parent's dating life
- B. Information pertinent to the child, like discipline or school activities
- C. Information about gifts received from the other parent
- D. None of the above. Always communicate directly with the other parent.

33. Never meet with the other parent in public. You should always keep personal business private.

- A. True
- B. False

34. Which of the following is a healthy "I statement"?

- A. I feel sad when Bobby's visits with you are cancelled. I want him to have a consistent relationship with you.
- B. I can't stand seeing Bobby so upset when you always cancel.
- C. I need you to pick up Bobby for a visit when you say you are going to.
- D. All of the above.

35. Statements that use words like "always" or "never" create generalizations that often put the listener in a defensive position.

- A. True
- B. False

Thank you for joining us. This concludes the course of study.

*The End*

## Community Resources

1. Florida Department of Children and Families <http://www.myflfamilies.com/>

### 2. Domestic Violence and Abuse:

- **Florida Abuse Hotline Information:** <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline>
- To make a report you can:
- report online at <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/> »
- call 1-800-962-2873
- Florida Relay 711 or TTY 800-453-5145
- fax your report to 800-914-0004
- Reporting Abuse Of Children and Vulnerable Adults:  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/abuse/publications/mandatedreporters.pdf>
- <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/domesticviolence/publications/docs/DVAnnualReport12-13.pdf>
- **Domestic Violence Program Office** (Florida Department of Children and Families) serves as a clearinghouse for information relating to DV and provides supervision, direction, coordination and administration of statewide activities related to prevention of DV (section 39.903, Florida Statutes). <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/domestic-violence> ; domestic.violence@myflfamilies.com; Phone: (850) 921-2168; Fax: (850) 922-6720
- **Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV)** - operates Florida's 42 certified Domestic Violence centers <http://www.fcadv.org/centers> ; FCADV operates and manages Florida's 24 hour statewide hotline. The Florida Domestic Violence (FL DV) Hotline is a trilingual service provided 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Services include support and advocacy for survivors of domestic violence and their friends and family. FL DV hotline advocates connect survivors to their local certified center for shelter, support groups, outreach and ongoing advocacy. **FLORIDA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE-1-800-500-1119; FLORIDA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TTY HOTLINE-1-800-621-4202**
- Florida Domestic Violence (FL DV) Hotline also offers the opportunity to connect with the **Florida Legal Hotline** by choosing Prompt 3. The Legal Hotline is a non-emergency line for survivors in need of legal advice and referral. **FLORIDA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE-1-800-500-1119; FLORIDA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TTY HOTLINE-1-800-621-4202**
- **DELTA Program** (Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances ) <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/delta/> . Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances was developed and implemented by Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A committee was created and eventually took responsibility for creating a statewide prevention plan – DELTA State Steering Committee. FCADV supports local DELTA programs.

### 3. Child Support Services - Florida Department of Revenue:

<http://floridarevenue.com/childsupport/Pages/default.aspx>

**4. Get Help Florida Org** - created by the Pasco County Public Library Cooperative:  
<https://www.gethelpflorida.org/get-help-here/children-and-family/>. The site is intended to be a statewide assistance directory of valuable E-government resources for those in need of help.

## References

- Florida Courts website - Family Law Forms - <http://www.flcourts.org/resources-and-services/family-courts/family-law-self-help-information/family-law-forms.shtml>
- Florida Statute 741.28 - Marriage. Domestic Violence  
[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0741/Sections/0741.28.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0741/Sections/0741.28.html)
- Statute 743 - DISABILITY OF NONAGE OF MINORS REMOVED  
[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0743/0743.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0743/0743.html)
- Florida Rules of Civil Procedure - <https://www.floridabar.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/civil.pdf>
- Florida Rules of Family Law - [http://phonl.com/fl\\_law/rules/famlawrules/](http://phonl.com/fl_law/rules/famlawrules/)
- Florida Rules of Judicial Administration - <https://www.floridabar.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/judicial.pdf>
- Florida Statutes and Laws - <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/>
- RULE 1.060. TRANSFERS OF ACTIONS - <https://www.floridabar.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/civil.pdf>
- DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE; SUPPORT; TIME-SHARING -  
[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0000-0099/0061/Sections/0061.20.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0000-0099/0061/Sections/0061.20.html)
- Evaluation of minor child - [http://phonl.com/fl\\_law/rules/famlawrules/famrul12363.htm](http://phonl.com/fl_law/rules/famlawrules/famrul12363.htm)
- 61.14 Enforcement and modification of support, maintenance, or alimony agreements or orders.—  
[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=0000-0099/0061/Sections/0061.14.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0000-0099/0061/Sections/0061.14.html)
- Florida Child Support Guidelines Worksheet - <http://www.flcourts.org/core/fileparse.php/293/urlt/902e.pdf>
- Florida Statutes: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2013/61.30>
- Office of Child Support Enforcement, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/parents>
- See attached resource material: A Handbook for Military Families - Helping You with Child Support - can also be found on Office of Child Support Enforcement website
- Florida Statutes - Child Support  
[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0000-0099/0061/Sections/0061.30.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0000-0099/0061/Sections/0061.30.html)
- 61.052 Dissolution of Marriage  
[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0000-0099/0061/0061.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0000-0099/0061/0061.html)
- Self Help Centers Near You (for legal help) - <http://www.flcourts.org/resources-and-services/court-improvement/family-law-self-help-information/self-help-centers-near-you.shtml>
- Legal Aid - <http://www.flcourts.org/resources-and-services/court-improvement/family-law-self-help-information/legal-aid.shtml>

- Domestic Violence defined by Florida Statutes - ss. 741.28-741.31 - [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0741/Sections/0741.28.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0741/Sections/0741.28.html)
- Florida penalty for Domestic Violence - 741.283 - [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=0700-0799/0741/Sections/0741.283.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0700-0799/0741/Sections/0741.283.html)
- Florida mandatory report for child abuse - 39.201 - [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0000-0099/0039/Sections/0039.201.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0000-0099/0039/Sections/0039.201.html)
- Florida Statute - Child abuse definition - [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0800-0899/0827/Sections/0827.03.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0800-0899/0827/Sections/0827.03.html)
- Florida Abuse Hotline Information: <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline>
- Reporting Abuse Of Children and Vulnerable Adults: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/abuse/publications/mandatedreporters.pdf>
- <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/domesticviolence/publications/docs/DVAnnualReport12-13.pdf>
- Domestic Violence Program Office (Florida Department of Children and Families) - <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/domestic-violence>
- Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) - operates Florida's 42 certified Domestic Violence centers <http://www.fcadv.org/centers>
- DELTA Program (Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances) <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/delta/>
- Effects of Domestic Violence on Children - Osofsky, Joy D., 'The Impact of Violence on Children; The Future of Children –Domestic Violence and Children, Vol. 9, no. 3, 1999;
- Behind Closed Doors - The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children <https://www.unicef.org/media/files/BehindClosedDoors.pdf>
- Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and society*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Childhood\\_and\\_Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Childhood_and_Society); <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html>
- Divorce Help for Parents - Dating after divorce - <http://www.divorcehelpforparents.com/dating-after-divorce.html>
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network • [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)
- Children and Domestic Violence Fact Sheet Series - <http://nctsn.org/products/children-and-domestic-violence-fact-sheet-series>
- Parenting After Separation (PAS) - Parent's Guide (Alberta Courts - Canada) - [https://albertacourts.ca/docs/default-source/Family-Justice-Services/fjs\\_pas\\_manual\\_12.pdf](https://albertacourts.ca/docs/default-source/Family-Justice-Services/fjs_pas_manual_12.pdf)
- The Divorce Case - by Lindsay Clandfield - suggested class exercises <http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/speaking/lesson-plans/pdf-content/speaking-skills-lesson-plans-divorce-worksheet/teachers-notes-intermediate-and-upper-intermediate/149713.article>
- Children & Divorce A Positive Parenting Approach - by Paul Maione, Ph.D. - <http://www.positiveparentingthroughdivorce.com/Download%20Files/children&divorce.pdf>