

A small blue toy car is positioned on a map background. The map shows a network of yellow and red lines representing roads and streets. The car is a small hatchback model, facing towards the right. The background is a blurred map with various colors and lines.

**HELPING DADS
NEGOTIATE SYSTEMS...**



**BECAUSE...REAL MEN
DON'T ASK FOR DIRECTIONS**



Agenda

- About Parent Help
- Help seeking behavior
- Gathering Information
- Conflict
- Making Referrals
- Best Practices

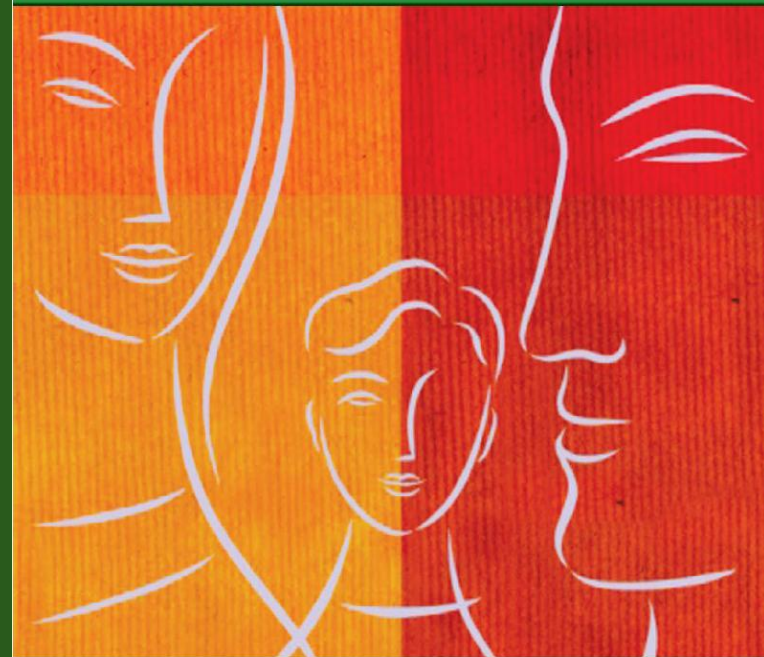
PARENT *HELP*

offers

***Free, confidential, telephone-based services to fathers and mothers living apart with problems sharing custody, kids & child support.

*** Free consultation to agencies, programs and caseworkers.

Dads and Moms... Living Apart?



Problems Sharing Kids? Custody? Support?
Need info about Visitation, Parenting, Going to Court?

For free telephone assistance for dads and moms living apart

PARENT HELP is a project of Child Find of America, Inc., a national organization working to prevent and resolve child abduction and child abuse. Visit www.childfindofamerica.org to learn more about our programs and services.

Funding for this PARENT HELP project was provided by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant: 90R0020101. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

TALK TO
PARENT *HELP*
Dial 1-800-716-3468
for free, confidential assistance

Over the past 4 years **Parent Help** has received nearly 10,000 calls resulting in more than 2,000 cases that required more than 3 hours of service



In 2010, **Parent Help** services were offered nationwide to human service agencies and their clients. **Parent Help** has served families in 47 states.

Parent *Help* callers:



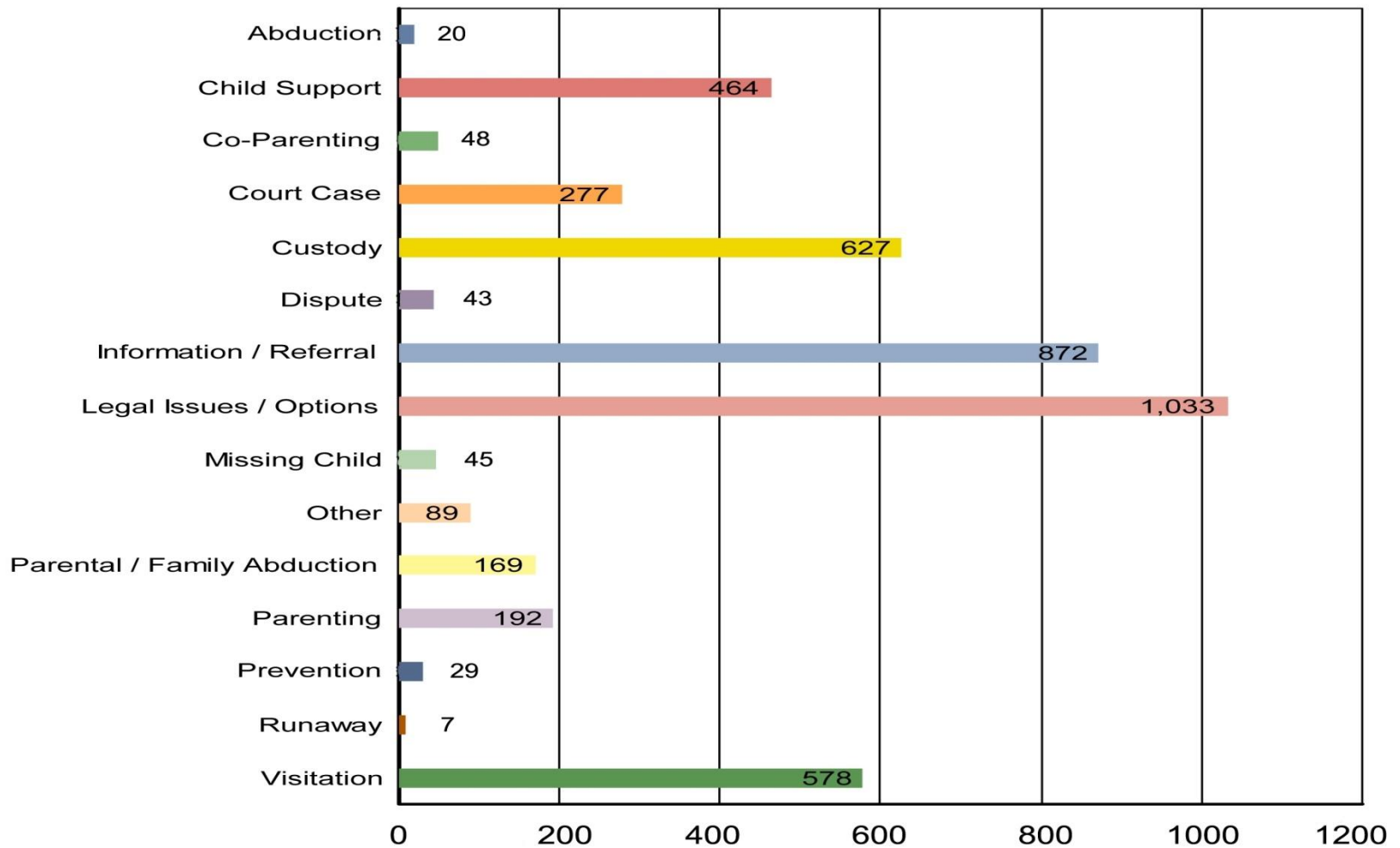
About 1/2 are moms, 1/2 are dads. They are parents who:

- ❖ want the other parent out of their lives
- ❖ want the other parent more involved
- ❖ tie child support to access
- ❖ deny or are denied visitation
- ❖ are overwhelmed or confused by family and child support courts
- ❖ want to improve their fragile or broken family situations

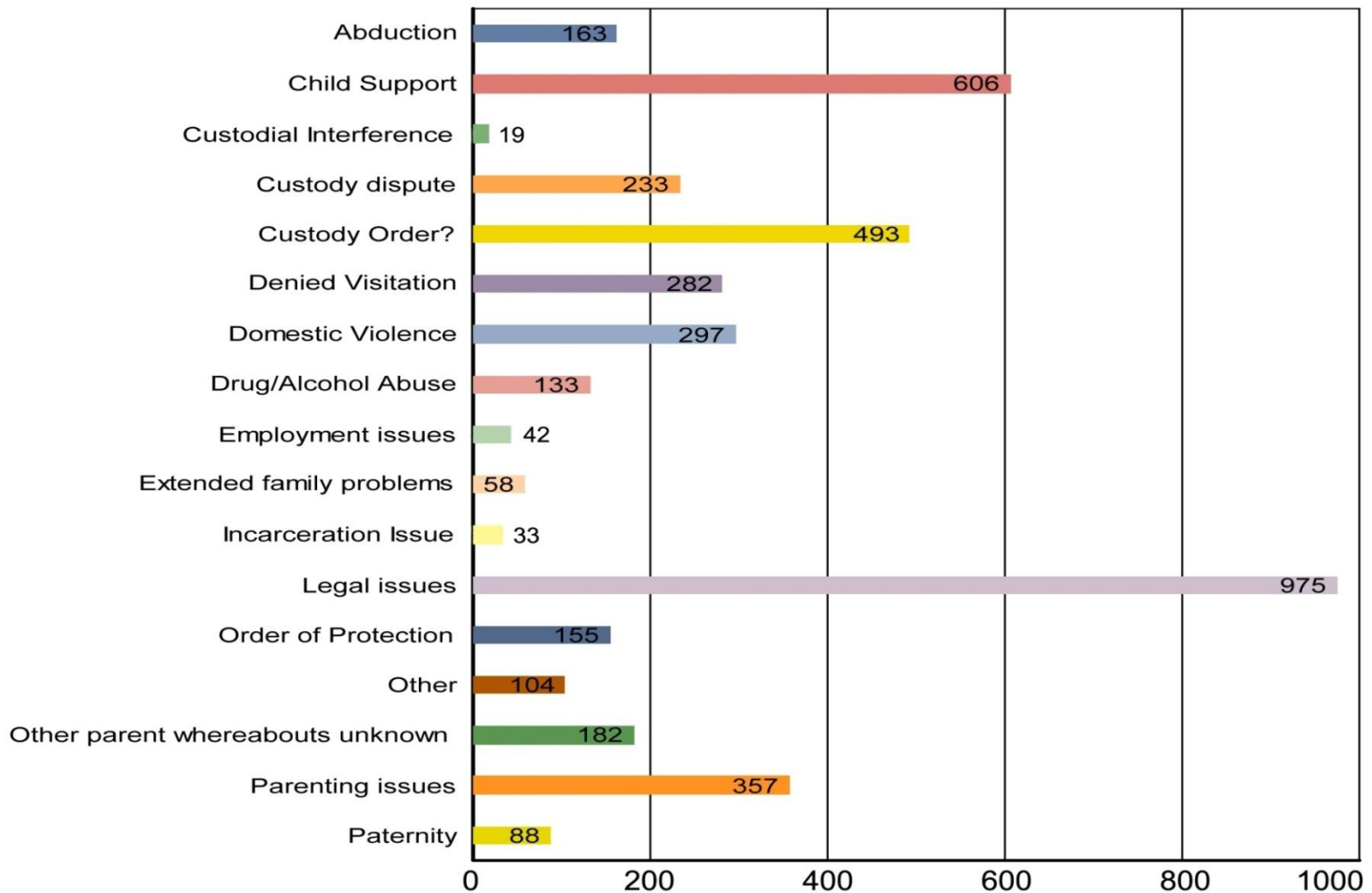
Other Parent *Help* callers are:

- ❖ Guardians, caregivers, grandparents
- ❖ Extended family members, friends, step parents, other agencies

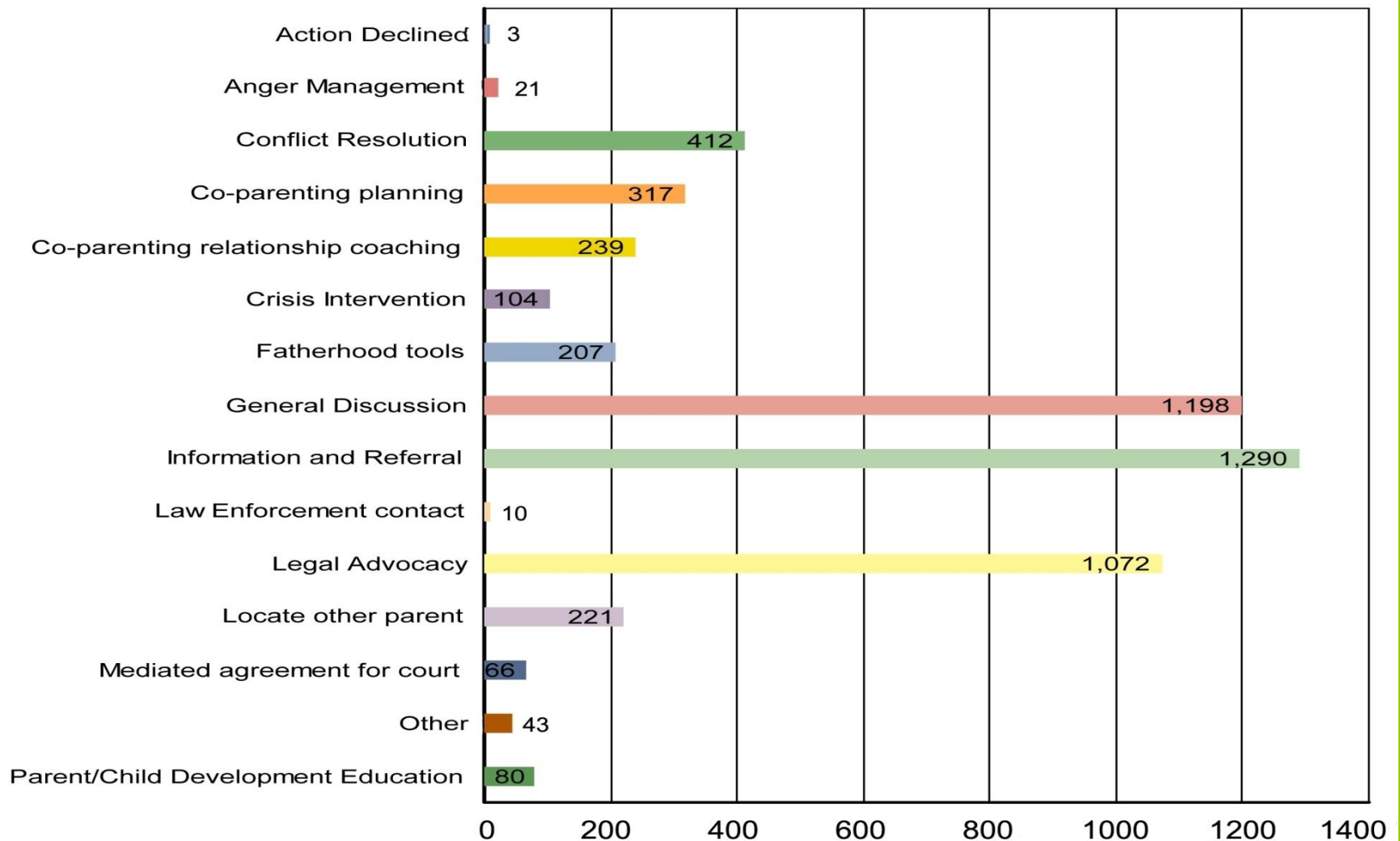
We ask why they called **Parent Help**...



We ask callers: *What's going on?*



Callers tell us what issues they want to work on.





What Services Do We Provide?

- Crisis Intervention
- Legal Advocacy
- Conflict Resolution and Mediation
- Information and Referral
- Parenting Education
- Location

By Telephone?!





Services by Telephone are Easily Accessed and Immediate:

- Parties who need a one-shot intervention are more likely to make a phone call*
- Parties in emotional crisis (“*The Desperate*”) are more likely to make a phone call than an appointment*
- Immediate reduction of crisis-induced anxiety, improving problem solving skills*
- Immediate de-escalation of a pending crisis or conflict
- Immediate referrals, information & education
- There is **NO APPLICATION PROCESS**



*Source: *Crisis Intervention and Counseling by Telephone* by David Lester



Services by Telephone are Low-risk and Private:



- Parties who are not comfortable engaging help (“*The Isolate*”) are more likely to pick up a phone*
- Adolescents are more likely to speak on the phone*
- Victims are more likely to speak openly on the phone
- There is greater self-revelation and openness when caller identity is protected*

*Source: *Crisis Intervention and Counseling by Telephone* by David Lester





Services by Telephone are **Convenient, Accomodating** and **Unimpeded**

- No need to take time off from work to address issues
- Distanced parents get help, working interstate, inter-county and international cases
- No geographic* or physical mobility limitations
- Case sharing is uncomplicated allowing for enhanced case work. This means we're providing a *holistic approach* via pooled skill sets.
- Positive transference* occurs where the caller may imagine the caseworker/mediator as s/he prefers.

*Source: *Crisis Intervention and Counseling by Telephone* by David Lester





*Services by Telephone are **Voluntary:***

- **We can engage non-compliant parties** (those who do not show up to parenting and co-parenting classes, mediation, anger management, etc.)
- **We see increased compliance with agreements** or plan of action since the outreach is voluntary
- **Batterers are more likely** to speak openly on the phone and to stay engaged in the process
- **There is a good deal of openness** in hearing the caseworker's input





Male Help-Seeking Behaviors


Research has shown that :

Men are less likely than women
to seek help.

Research has NOT shown if that's due to :

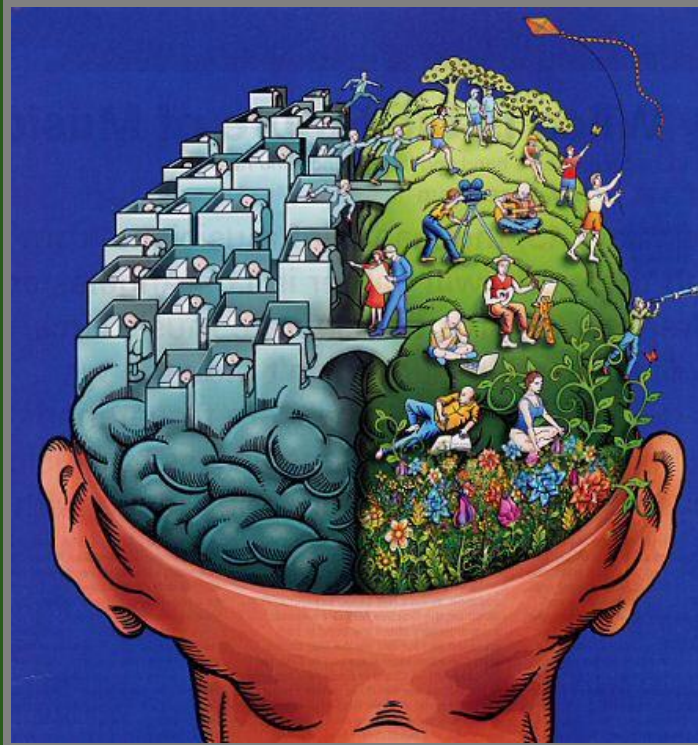
Nature or Nurture ??

Gender differences or Socialization??



**Exercise:
Am I Left-
or Right-
Hemisphere
Dominant ?**

- **Verbal, focusing on words**, symbols, numbers
 - Analytical, **led by logic**
- **Process ideas sequentially, step by step**
 - Words used to remember things, remember names rather than faces
 - Make logical deductions from info
- **Work up to the whole step by step**, focusing on details, information organized
 - **Highly organized**
 - **Like making lists and planning**
 - **Likely to follow rules without questioning them**
 - **Good at keeping track of time**
- Spelling and mathematical formula easily memorized
 - Enjoy observing
 - **Plan ahead**
- Likely read an instruction manual before trying
 - **Listen to what is being said**
- Rarely use gestures when talking
- Likely to believe you're not creative, need to be willing to try and take risks to develop your potential



Logical
Sequential
Rational
Analytical
Objective
Looks at parts
Reality-based

Random
Intuitive
Holistic
Subjective
Looks at wholes
Fantasy-oriented

- Visual, focusing on images, patterns
- Intuitive, **led by feelings**
- Process ideas simultaneously
- 'Mind photos' used to remember things, writing things down or illustrating them helps you remember
- Make lateral connections from information
- **See the whole first, then the details**
- **Organization ends to be lacking**
- Free association
- **Like to know why you're doing something or why rules exist (reasons)**
- **No sense of time**
- **May have trouble** with spelling and finding words to express yourself
- Enjoy touching and feeling actual objects (sensory input)
- **Trouble prioritizing, so often late, impulsive**
- Unlikely to read instruction manual before trying
- **Listen to how something is being said**
- Talk with your hands
- Likely to think you're naturally creative, but need to apply yourself to develop your potential



Seeking help, men consider...

- Is the problem normal?
- Is the problem a central part of me – central to my masculinity?
- Will I have the opportunity to reciprocate...can I pay back the one who helps me?
- How will others in my circle react?
- Will I lose control of the situation?



FOR DISCUSSION...

- Did the men in your programs seek out your help? Or were they mandated?
- Were they scared? In pain? Angry?
- What did you do to make it easier for them to participate?




Our Intake Coordinator suggests...

For me it comes down to active and focused listening –

- ❖ listening to what the father is saying
- ❖ what they're not saying.

When a father describes to me the circumstances of their situation, I listen for


- ❖ what steps they have taken,
- ❖ what is important to them,
- ❖ what things they have not mentioned trying.



Convey to the father that you are tuned in ...
establish “an environment” for them to open up
more.

*Pay attention to small details in the conversation
and urge them to elaborate.*

Point out things that they may not have paid
attention to, been able to pay attention to, or have
not thought was as important as it may be.



Most importantly, take notice of what is *most pressing* for them at the time.

Even though you may have picked up on other potential needs,


they will not be able to focus on anything more until the initial reason for their asking for help has been addressed.



Break an overwhelming situation down into manageable pieces.

Describe how he can accomplish his ultimate goal by taking smaller steps. This helps to ease stress, de-escalate the situation, which in turn helps him to be more productive.

Remind the father that the more information they have, including from other agencies, the better they will be able to make decisions. **Prepare them to accept referrals to others**



For Discussion:
How does your intake
process work?




Non-judgmental Information Gathering

- Look for “probing points” where clarification is possible. (Statements like: “I’m tired of being blamed for everything,” and “I’m over it,” warrant further exploration.)
- Don’t assume you know the whole story after speaking with one parent. There are as many stories as there are family members.
- Get a clear chronology, even if it means going over things a few times, asking for clarification.
- Only ask for documentation when it’s necessary to better understand the options and/or you believe the documents will help you understand the history better.



Use open-ended questions:


- “Tell me about that,” “How would that look to you,”
- “What do you think brought that on,”
- “What do you wish things will look like 1 year from today,”
- “If I spoke to the other parent, what do you think I’d hear,”
- “What are your biggest challenges,”
-
- “Where did things take a turn for the worse,”
- “What are the things that are not negotiable to you,” et al.




- Be non-judgmental ... **ESPECIALLY** about gathering information about reasons for incarceration, law enforcement intervention, soured relationships, etc.

Don't ask for sensitive information if it isn't necessary.


- Remind fathers that you are there to provide services that make sense for them. Allow them to open up at their own pace.

- 
- Being non-judgmental allows fathers to share sensitive information. If the father is telling you information you're uncomfortable with, continue to listen without comment.
 - Ensuring confidentiality and being patient with how fathers present their issues allows for much more information sharing.
 - Do not ask fathers to calm down. Stay calm when they can't. The more you listen and pay attention, the easier it is for them to relax.



- Don't seek "the truth" since people have their own set of truths. If there are no safety issues, it's fine not to point out that you're hearing contradictory information. Take it in and use it as an assessment and casework tool.

- Pronounce names correctly. Ask what people want to be called. Write names phonetically for other case workers when necessary.

- 
- Avoid Yes/No questions. Keep things open-ended to gather more information.
 - Unload the questions. (E.g., replace, “Why did you do that?” with, “What was happening at that point?”)
 - Don’t show that you’re having a reaction to what you’re being told.



For Discussion:

What difficulties have you encountered interviewing fathers?

How is face to face interaction different from our telephone based environment?

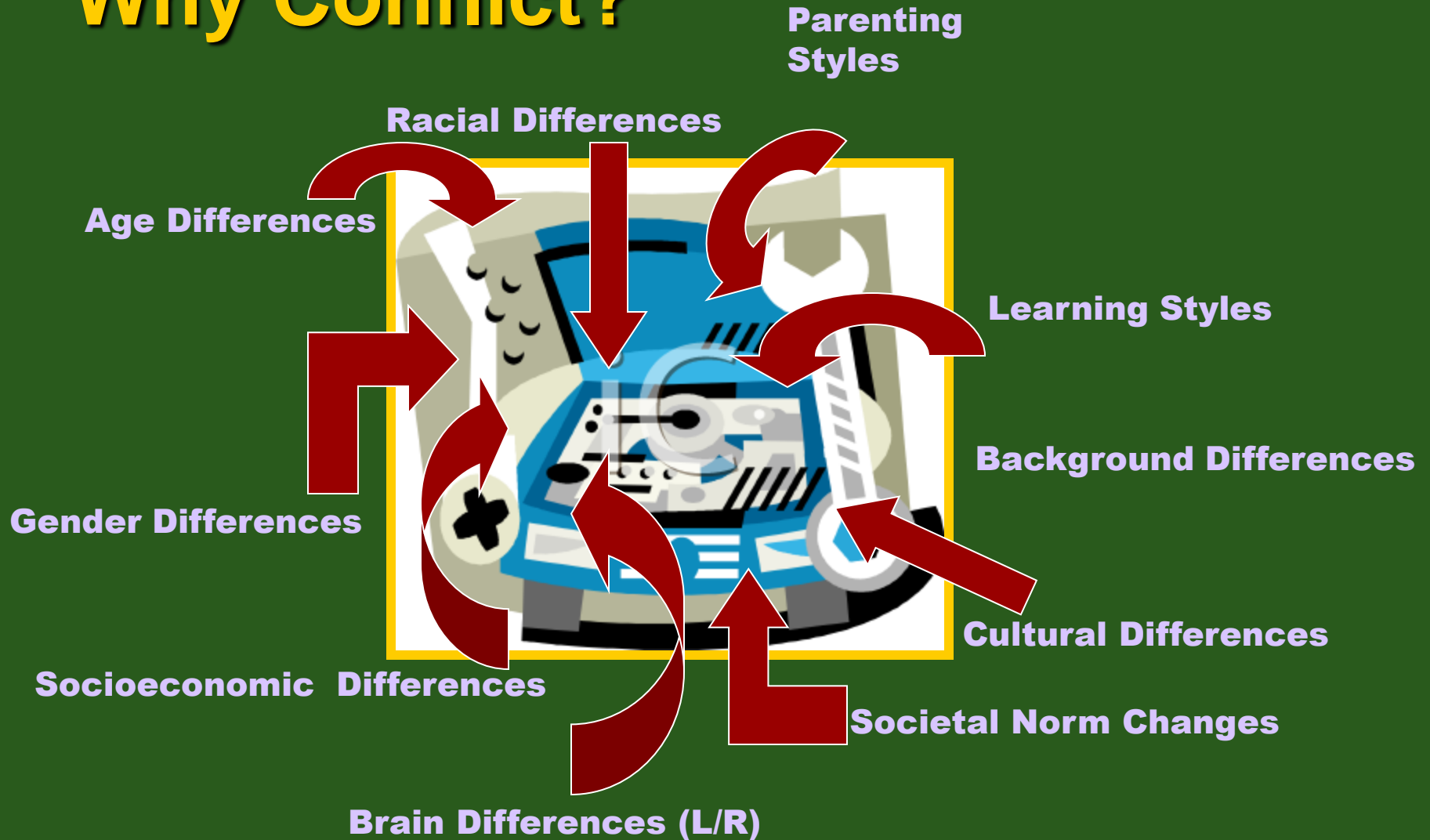


About conflict

Part of your job is to help fathers cope with and manage the conflict in their lives...

- Conflict between fathers and systems
- Conflict between fathers and mothers
- Interpersonal conflict with friends and families and employers

Why Conflict?





MY VALUES LIST : WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO ME?

Make a copy for each family member involved in making parenting plan decisions. Each person should circle up to ten important values. If your child is not old enough to do this, write your child/ren's top values below. Compare & brainstorm: "What plan can we come up with that will honor these values?"

Accomplishment	Control	Flexibility	Leadership	Persuasiveness	Selflessness
Accountability	Coolness	Forgiveness	Legacy	Philanthropy	Serenity
Accuracy	Cooperation	Frankness	Lightheartedness	Piety	Seriousness
Activeness	Courage	Freedom	Logic	Playfulness	Serendipity
Adaptability	Creativity	Friendliness	Love	Popularity	Sex
Adventure	Culture	Friendship	Loyalty	Power	Sexuality
Aggressiveness	Curiosity	Frugality	Making a difference	Preparedness	Social skills
Apologies	Decisiveness	Fun	Manners	Privacy	Solidarity
Ambition	Dependability	Generosity	Masculinity	Professionalism	Solitude
Approachability	Devotion	Gentleness	Maturity	Public service	Spunk
Assertiveness	Discretion	Hard work	Mellowness	Punctuality	Spirituality
Beauty	Diversity	Health	Mercy	Quiet	Stability
Being the best	Dominance	Honesty	Moderation	Recognition	Social status
Belonging	Drive	Honor	Modesty	Refinement	Strength
Calmness	Duty	Hospitality	Money	Relaxation	Success
Career	Education	Humility	Mysteriousness	Reliability	Support
Challenges	Efficiency	Humor	Nutrition	Religion	Tact
Charm	Energy	Hygiene	Obedience	Reputation	Teamwork
Cheerfulness	Enthusiasm	Idealism	Open-mindedness	Resilience	Thankfulness
Clarity	Equality	Independence	Openness	Resolving conflict	Thoroughness
Cleverness	Excellence	Identity with place	Optimism	Resourcefulness	Tolerance
Commitment	Excitement	Individuality	Orderliness	Respect	Tradition
Communication	Extravagance	Integrity	Originality	Responsibility	True to yourself
Community	Faithfulness	Intelligence	Outrageousness	Reverence	Trustworthiness
Compassion	Fame	Justice	Passion	Role Modeling	Variety
Competence	Family	Keeping promises	Patience	Romance	Vision
Competition	Fashion	Keeping secrets	Patriotism	Sacrifice	Warmth
Confidence	Fearlessness	Kindness	Peace	Safety	Winning
Conformity	Femininity	Knowledge	Perceptiveness	Scheduled time	Wisdom
Consideration	Financial stability	Lawfulness	Perfection	Security	Work ethic
Consistency	Fitness	Learning	Perseverance	Self respect	Youthfulness

OUR CHILD/REN'S TOP VALUES: _____

Conflict vs. High Conflict



- Conflict arises from differences. It occurs whenever people disagree. All ongoing relationships will experience conflict.
- Conflict can be very useful in that it has transformative properties.
- However, High Interparental Conflict is a pattern of sustained conflict resulting in harm or needs not being met. Many of our callers are in these types of relationships.


Abuse Continuum

Common Couple Aggression	High conflict	Abuse	Battering	Terrorism/Stalking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberrant Act • Remorse • Does not cause fear, oppression or control • No serious injury • Comes from escalating arguments • Could happen in any family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not solve problems well • Anger is an issue in family • May have remorse • May have sporadic and/or destruction of property • Not emotionally abusive • No fear • Comes from escalating arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sporadic physical aggression ▪ Name-calling, but not character assassination ▪ Verbal abuse, but not psychological ▪ Development of apprehension ▪ May be remorseful ▪ Threats of abandonment ▪ Threats of getting custody ▪ Aggression takes place without witnesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monopolization of perception ▪ More regular physical abuse, but may occur w/o any physical abuse ▪ Threat to victim's support system ▪ Isolation ▪ Name-calling - attacks character ▪ Jealousy ▪ Putting down family & friends ▪ Property destruction ▪ Sexual abuse ▪ Change in victim's personality ▪ More generally violent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monopolization of perception ▪ Insidious psychological abuse ▪ Well-thought out threats to kill – very specific ▪ Torturing pets ▪ Extreme isolation of victim by perpetrator ▪ More regular physical abuse, but may occur w/o any physical abuse ▪ Sexual humiliation and degradation

Beyond high conflict is Abuse

Children exposed to High Interparental Conflict may experience...

- ✗ Inability to form healthy relationships
- ✗ Poor coping responses
- ✗ Anxiety
- ✗ Self-blame
- ✗ Cognitive problems
- ✗ Developmental delays
- ✗ Health problems (pain, heart disease, digestive problems, obesity, autoimmune diseases, skin conditions)
- ✗ Risky sexual behavior
- ✗ Criminal system involvement
- ✗ Low levels of social competence
- ✗ Poor stress regulation skills
- ✗ Control and anger issues
- ✗ Behavior disorders
- ✗ Attachment disorders
- ✗ Sleep disorders
- ✗ Depression
- ✗ Insecurity
- ✗ Increased sensitivity to conflict
- ✗ Lower self-concept & self-harm
- ✗ Disengagement
- ✗ Hostility
- ✗ Aggression/Bullying
- ✗ Substance abuse
- ✗ Teen pregnancy
- ✗ Low academic performance
- ✗ Altered patterns of addressing conflict
- ✗ Repeated patterns of abusive partnering



You have the opportunity to pattern good conflict resolution skills for the fathers you work with.

CONFLICT PROFESSIONAL PITFALLS



ASKING FATHERS TO CALM DOWN



Better: WORK THROUGH THEIR PAIN AND ANGER WITHOUT JUDGING HOW THEY COMMUNICATE. LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE TO FIND THE CORE VALUES.

CONFLICT PROFESSIONAL PITFALLS



Answering personal questions

*such as “What would you do if you were me?” and
“Do you have any kids?”*

Better: Guide the conversation back to the party,
“I’m hoping we can focus on your situation...”
without talking about your personal life.

CONFLICT PROFESSIONAL PITFALLS

Two red lightning bolts with white outlines, one on the left and one on the right, pointing downwards towards the main title.

LOOKING FOR COMPROMISE

OFTEN 50/50 SOLUTIONS WON'T RESOLVE
CONFLICT

Better: HELP THEM TO TAILOR SOLUTIONS BY DOING THE
HARD – *BUT GRATIFYING* - WORK.

LOOK FOR COLLABORATION, WHERE NO ONE'S VALUES HAVE TO
BE COMPROMISED.



CONFLICT PROFESSIONAL PITFALLS



LOOKING FOR “UNIVERSAL” VALUES

Better: LOOK FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL VALUES
(THINK OF THE VALUES LIST) AND BRAINSTORM
IDEAS ALL CAN LIVE WITH.

CONFLICT PROFESSIONAL PITFALLS



FORGETTING TO LISTEN in REAL TIME

LISTENING, THINKING, RESPONDING

Better: ROLE MODEL GOOD LISTENING. THINK OF BAD ACTING (WHERE THE ACTOR IS WAITING TO DELIVER LINES).

THINK OF GOOD ACTING, (WHERE THE ACTOR IS TAKING IN, THINKING ABOUT IT, AND REACTING TO WHAT'S JUST BEEN SAID).

CONFLICT PROFESSIONAL PITFALLS

Two red lightning bolts with white outlines are positioned on either side of the main title, pointing downwards towards the central text.

MISSING MOMENTS TO CLARIFY

I'm just being real. That's her problem. I want him off my case.

I'm so over it. Whatever. She's being unreasonable. He's not getting it.

She's off doing whatever. He can't be trusted. She's crazy. He's lazy.

Better: Check in to make sure you know what the person means by this, look for opportunities to clarify. Help with emotional communication.

CONFLICT PROFESSIONAL PITFALLS



KNOWING THE ANSWER

NO ONE LIKES BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO.

Better: SEND THE MESSAGE THAT YOU BELIEVE THEY ARE CAPABLE OF FINDING ANSWERS. *(THINK ABOUT BEING TOLD BY THE WAITSTAFF WHAT YOU'LL BE ORDERING.)*

CONFLICT PROFESSIONAL PITFALLS



SEEKING THE “TRUTH”

Better: AVOID SUGGESTING SOMEONE IS A “LIAR,” AND MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT CASTING BLAME.
“You’ve agreed your child needs a replacement cell phone. What ideas do you have about that?”

Conflict Skill Building TECHNIQUES

Retelling

Repeating the facts – but not the perceptions – as you hear them. In this way, the parties know that they've been heard correctly, and there's immediate de-escalation. (“Did I get that right?” “Is this what happened...?”)

Reframing

Adding a perception and value (“It looks like you're upset about what Tracy feeds the kids, and that nutrition is important to you.”).



Conflict Skill Building TECHNIQUES

Open-Ended Questions

“When you say (FRUSTRATED / ANNOYING), what does that mean to you?”

Avoiding Yes/No Questions

“Can you describe your criteria for (BEING MORE RESPONSIBLE)?”

Unloaded Questions

“Why do you need both sets of dishes?” makes clear the professional’s bias and preference for resolution (e.g. one set to each party)

Conflict Skill Building TECHNIQUES

Brainstorming Questions


- ✓ **What else?**
- ✓ **What would that look like to you?**
- ✓ **Good, other ideas?**
- ✓ **What could work for you?**
- ✓ **How would you change that?**





Making good referrals...


ADMIT WHAT YOU CAN'T DO

- ❖ Locate an agency that does it.
- ❖ Research the agency's mission and who it will serve.
- ❖ Ask the father if a referral is desired before giving out a number.
- ❖ Go over with the father how to best present information to that agency.
- ❖ Inform the father what information may trigger the agency into taking its own action. (For example, there are many mandated reporters regarding child abuse allegations.)

- 
- ❖ Explain what the referral agency does and don't make promises that the parent will see sure success.
 - ❖ If a father has a bad experience with your referral, call the referral and respectfully ask for clarification on what the protocol and approach is. Ask how they would like you to make referrals to them.

- 
- ❖ Allow the fathers to move away from your agency if they choose to.
 - ❖ Let them know you're still there if they need you.
 - ❖ Be available if and when fathers return.
 - ❖ Call and connect the father to the referral if asked.

- 
- ❖ Respect your father's rights NOT to connect to the referral.
 - ❖ Continue to update your referral list.
 - ❖ Attend conferences, meet service providers, ask questions and share your information.
 - ❖ Outreach to agencies repeatedly. Sometimes brochures, phone numbers and business cards are lost.

- 
- ❖ Get to know someone at every referral source you can.
 - ❖ Don't overuse that person, but rather foster a good vibe and learn what you can about that agency.



BEST CASE PRACTICES

- ❖ Never chastise or insist fathers are not putting their children first
- ❖ If there are no safety issues, don't take sides
- ❖ Don't be solely pro-father or pro-mother or pro-child.
- ❖ Don't take action without the father's permission.
- ❖ Never assume you know more than the father does about his/her own situation.
- ❖ Be available to listen and never offer advice, just options.



❖ Never talk about what you would do under the circumstances.

❖ Let the father define their priorities.

❖ Don't look for "universal" values.

❖ Don't look for compromises. Look for collaboration, instead.

❖ Engaging a holistic approach, where parents multiple concerns can be addressed




Actively engaged fathers:

- Positively impact social, emotional and cognitive development in children
- Improve chances that children will grow up with greater opportunity through stable economic contributions
- Provide positive models for children's own relationships and eventual parenting
- Balance the efforts needed for effective parenting, strengthening the relationship with the mother and positively affecting children.



What is the Responsible Fatherhood Vision

- All children should have the love, care emotional, and financial support of both parents, regardless of whether the parents live together or not.
- Fathers should take personal responsibility for their children and have the necessary resources to fulfill their parenting roles.
- Policies and programs should affirm and promote responsible fatherhood.

- 
- What makes an agency father-friendly?
 -
 - How does your agency assess the needs of fathers?
 - How does your agency meet the needs of fathers?
 - Does your agency engage the other parent? If so, how? What restrictions or challenges does your agency have to doing this?
 - Do you think about a multidisciplinary approach?
 - Are you thinking about “value-loaded” language?



A Few Words from Our Callers



"Thank you so much for listening to me and for the information. You have a very patient ear!"

"You're really, really good at what you do."

"Do you know how I know God exists? He sent you to us."

"You are going to heaven. Even if you don't believe in God. It's a sure thing that you two are going to heaven."

"Wow, thank you very much. I am so used to everyone not being all that supportive, that what you wrote really made me feel good."

"This is the first ray of hope in 9 long years. I had lost all faith in the court system. I always thought this was a long road I had to travel alone. I am so grateful that your organization is out there to help people like me, who feel they have no where to turn."

**And over and over again:
You're the first person who listened to me.**

"I'm really glad I found your number. You're a real lifesaver!"

"I don't know what I would have done if I didn't find your number."

"You helped me by pointing me in the right direction. But most of all you helped keep me calm when I was so angry... You guys do wonderful things."

"As always you are so helpful, truly you are helping change peoples lives."

"Thank you so much for our discussion yesterday, and for these documents. I have felt very lost the past several months, and speaking to you gave me a lot more options. I appreciate the time you took with me. Thank you."



"You are the angel in my life. I have been telling my story over and over for the past two years and managed to get to you. I can not thank you enough for all that you and this organization has done for me and my family. Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!!"

"When this is all over, I would really love to be able to volunteer some of my time to an organization like Parent Help."





