

## Top 10 Reasons to Use a Parenting Plan: Mediation in Divorce

By Tara Fass, MFT and Diana Mercer, Attorney-Mediator

The best predictor of the well-being of children involved in a divorce is the amount of conflict between parents. Mediation can humanize the divorce process by bringing both parents together to create a parenting plan that serves the best interests of their children.

- Through mediation, parental conflicts are more likely to be resolved, resulting in a more peaceful post-divorce family life.
- Mediation helps parents create thoughtful and child-focused parenting plans that are tailor-made to suit their children's changing emotional, developmental and temperamental needs as well as the family's schedule.
- By thinking through and discussing the parenting plan, possible problems can be identified and resolved before the court enters the final judgment.
- Mediation creates opportunities for parents to work together and build on their strengths as they redefine the parental unit within the family. Not surprisingly, parents who model good conflict resolution skills raise children with better conflict resolution skills.
- A detailed parenting plan sends a message to others, including the children, new partners, and school and court personnel, that parenting is an important priority for both parents, even if one parent assumes more hands-on time with the children.
- A detailed and thorough parenting plan pre-empts "He Said/She Said" arguments if differing views of the co-parenting history emerge.
- Agreements, including modifications, create a written record of what was mutually agreed to when one or both parents were thinking more clearly about the issues involved in successful and co-operative co-parenting.
- A detailed parenting plan provides a blueprint for resolving differences without having to go to court if circumstances change, or if new partners or reluctant children want to unilaterally modify the plan.
- Although co-parents may deviate from the parenting plan and fall into disagreement, the parenting plan still serves as a useful back-up until they return to mediation.
- Mediation provides both parents with the opportunity to explore co-parenting issues with an objective and neutral third-party professional, who is trained in children's developmental needs and knowledgeable about the research on children's adjustment to separation and divorce.

### About the Author

Tara Fass is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Since 1994, Fass has been a child custody mediator. Before joining Peace Talks Mediation Services in West Los Angeles, she was a Los Angeles Superior Court Child Custody Mediator and Evaluator in the Conciliation Court Office. She has also taught a Co-Parent Education Program with the Los Angeles Superior Court and maintains a private psychotherapy practice. Her mediation practice focuses on parenting plans and custody evaluation preparation. Peace Talks Mediation Services teams therapists with lawyers to help people resolve their divorce and family conflicts in a sane, sensible and fair way. Learn more about Tara Fass at <http://www.camft.org/Therapists/TaraFass-LaBrasca>