

# Goals for Coparent Counseling

*Coparent counseling can be difficult and challenging work for most therapists due to the fact that, in many cases, either one or both of the parents do not want to engage in the process. As the result therapists are often working with at least one, and often two, resistant and/or hostile clients. Therapists can enhance their overall effectiveness for this type of counseling by being 1) directive during sessions, 2) strategically oriented in their approach, 3) well-informed regarding the various developmental issues of children, 4) very familiar with the dynamics, dilemmas and problems associated with separation/divorce, both for parents and children and 5) possess a dynamic approach to working with couples.*

## Objectives for the First Session :

1. Ensure **safety** of both parents by taking control of the session in order to assure each client that you can intervene on arguments and heated discussions and that you won't let the session get out of control. This is most important, especially for cases that are referred by attorneys or Family Court.
2. **Qualify** the type of work to be done in coparent counseling. Explain that this is not traditional relationship counseling and that it is; **a)** brief, **b)** focused on improving overall communication and **c)** oriented toward the present and future, as relates to their children, and not having to do with the couple's previous personal relationship.
3. **Advocate** for the children. Remind parents that the reason they are here is to improve their children's lives – not for each other.
4. Maintain a **neutral stance** toward both parents. It is important to be perceived of as not being biased as this can confound the process entirely.
5. Provide **hope** to both parents that they can resolve their differences and come to terms with one another regardless of how far apart they perceive themselves to be.

## Overall Goals and Objectives for Coparent Counseling :

1. Help parents achieve emotional separation as well as help them to set and maintain effective and appropriate boundaries with each other.
2. Assist parents in transforming their current relationship into a business-like, coparent relationship designed to help them raise their children cooperatively.
3. Help parents restructure their communication in order to facilitate cooperation and diffuse resistance.

4. Assist parents in resolving any/all outstanding problems involved with the custody agreement or ongoing behavioral or developmental problems with their children.
5. Encourage and help foster a sense of trust between parents by showing them how to negotiate, create and maintain agreements with each other.
6. Whenever possible provide parents with relevant information concerning the practical, emotional and developmental needs of their children , especially as relates to divorce.