

33 TIPS for Parents Experiencing High Conflict Situations
Justice Andrea Himel, Superior Court of Justice,
Family Branch (Newmarket) - 2023

Goals for Parents to Reduce Conflict Post-Separation:

1. *Develop a business-like relationship*
2. *Remember that children have 2 homes but 1 life*
3. *Protect children from exposure to the conflict*
4. *Accept that co-parenting lasts forever*

1. **Educate** yourself about the impact of separation, and focus on **supporting** your children rather than **blaming** the other parent
2. **If there are family violence or child abuse concerns, contact the police or CAS, and listen to their advice**
3. **Consider** in-person or online parenting programs (such as New Ways for Families or The Center for Divorce Education's Children In Between)
4. **Manage** your family members, as they can be part of the **problem** (or part of the solution)
5. **Understand** that the first two years post-separation are often the hardest for everyone
6. **"Step in the other parent's shoes"**
7. **"Step in your children's shoes"**
8. Obtain **Independent Legal Advice**
9. **Remember** that there are usually a wide range of resolutions that are reasonable
10. If your personal or professional advisers are **worsening the conflict**, considering finding a new support network
11. **"Dig deeper"** towards empathy and resolution. **Avoid going for the jugular.**
12. Focus on your **interests (needs)** rather than your **positions (wants)**
13. When litigating, **avoid** taking unreasonable positions (and in doing so defend against costs)
14. If **self-represented** at Court, follow the FL Rules and practice directions, and **listen to the judge**
15. **Ensure** that the relief sought focuses on the children's best interests

16. Who are the other people in your **family's network** that can be helpful?
17. **Consider** alternate dispute resolution options, such as mediation, negotiation and collaboration
18. When preparing for **mediation**, know your **Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement**: (Know your "Best" day in Court)
19. **Be aware** of conflicts of interest or role conflicts
20. Conflict has hidden and obvious effects on parents and children; financial, emotional and social costs
21. **Don't** draw professional and personal advisers into the conflict
22. **Consider the children's needs**: (a) individually; (b) as a sibling group; and (c) developmentally
23. **Recognize** that children's needs change over time, and parenting plans may need to change as well
24. Make written communications: **Brief, Informative, Friendly and Firm (BIFF)**
25. Accept that **you or your children** may benefit from counseling
26. **Collaborate** with teachers and professionals
27. **Delay** introducing **new partners** until the relationship appears to be long-term
28. **Advise** the other parent of important milestones (remarriage, new baby...), before the children
29. **Always "take the high road"**
30. **Extricate** your family from the high conflict situation; **Avoid** becoming a **"High Conflict Case"**
31. Be **Smart....Not Right**
32. **Avoid unnecessary delay**
33. **READ AFCC-O Parenting Plan Guide and Template**
<https://afccontario.ca/parenting-plan-guide-and-template/>