

# ***BEST PRACTICE TIPS FOR PROFESSIONALS MANAGING HIGH CONFLICT SITUATIONS***

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## **Goals in working with high conflict families:**

- 1. Reduce parental conflict*
- 2. Promote healthy parent-child relationships*
- 3. Keep children out of the middle of parental conflict*
- 4. Promote adequate parenting and co-parenting skills*

3

1. **Understand** what's '**driving**' the conflict (level of engagement)
2. High conflict families can be like a '**puzzle**': there are many pieces and you have to figure out how they fit together to create the right image
3. **Understand** details about the separation
4. "**Dig deeper**"
5. Generate other **hypotheses** for understanding the conflict and solutions. Collect data from multiple sources
6. **Recognize** when high risk situations impact on safety of all family members (i.e. lethality)
7. **Know** the '**red herrings**'
8. **Recognize** the '**noise**' from the relevant issues
9. **Treat** each parent **fairly and equally**
10. Treat parents empathically-**don't blame or shame them**
11. Chronic High conflict situations **are a form of PTSD**
12. **Maintain** focus on the children
13. **Help** educate the parents around the **impact of conflict on children**
14. **Develop** a 'pathway' forward
15. **Understand** that conflict impacts on **EVERYONE** in the family
16. **Help** the parents remain focused on resolving conflicts vs. being problem-focused
17. **Use** your skill to **remove obstacles** to conflict (external parties)
18. **Figure out what people want vs. what they say they want**

19. **Challenge** people's 'assumptions' when they claim these are facts.
20. Find the hidden emotion that's fueling the conflict
21. Identify common interests
22. Think creatively for ways the parents can co-operate
23. Inspire trust in you as the professional
24. 'Edit the script' to help clients see their options in a different light
25. Who are the other people in this **family's network** that can be helpful?
26. **Consider** all new information and review the plan if required
27. Look for **inconsistencies** in terms of what people say and do
28. **Be aware** of conflicts of interest or role conflicts
29. **Don't** get drawn into the conflict
30. **Don't** personalize the conflict when parents or collaterals try to project their anger onto you
31. **What can I learn** from these complex situations so that I can better manage future situations?
32. **Consult** with colleagues or a supervisor when you get 'stuck'
33. **Recognize** your '**blind**' spots or **biases**....and manage them effectively
34. **Collaborate** with other professionals
35. Set **limits on misbehavior**
36. Don't be a **negative advocate** or enabler
37. **External control**: how can this family benefit from additional structure (i.e. Police; CAS; Parenting Co-ordination, courts)
38. **Knowing** when to close vs. keeping case open
39. **Research**: be aware of the latest research