

Families Moving **Forward** »

A Multi-Day Intervention for Separated Families
When Children Resist Contact with a Parent

MULTI-DAY FAMILY THERAPY INTERVENTION

Objectives - see *Multi-Day Family Therapy Intervention Agreement* for list of objectives.

Overview of Basic Elements

The Multi-Day Family Therapy Intervention implements a multi-faceted family therapy as described in information document (previously provided), drawing from a vast array of educational materials, resources, metaphorical stories and video clips to address the identified intervention goals with the family members, individually, in dyads (i.e., parent-child, co-parenting), or as a whole. Educational materials are guided by cognitive science, psychosocial principles and selected on the basis of the family's needs and intervention objectives. Materials presented are intended to educate family members about: affect identification and emotional regulation; the impact of separation/divorce, parent-conflict, and loyalty binds on children/adolescents; differentiation of parent-child contact problems and the multiple contributing factors; effective parenting and coparenting styles and skills; concepts such as cognitive distortions, perceptual errors, selective attention; critical thinking and perspective-taking skills; steps to effective problem solving, communication and conflict management; social conformity; suggestibility; memory; adolescent brain development, and the importance of sleep during this stage of development; compassion, empathy and hope.

An agenda/curriculum is prepared in advance on the basis of the Clinical Intake Consultation tailored specifically meet the needs of the family members. During the intervention, the agenda/curriculum is tweaked and augmented in response to how events unfold during the intervention. Meals are typically taken as a family. Breaks and

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recreational activities occur during the day for the child(ren) and the resisted parent and for the family as a whole. The following is an outline of the daily format:

MULTI-DAY FAMILY THERAPY INTERVENTION AGENDA OUTLINE¹²

- Orientation meeting with entire family: review of goals; confidentiality; what to expect during the intervention days; ground rules³; advising the child(ren) of the parenting time schedule their parents agreed upon; explaining the therapy is intended to assist to implement that schedule, and the therapists are *not* responsible for determining the parenting time schedule; explain, while recognizing their input is important and will be considered, why some decisions (e.g., parenting time) are made by parents and not the child(ren); and, giving examples of decisions and choices the child(ren) will be permitted to make during the intervention.
- Morning Family Session
- Morning Breakouts (may include):
 - coparenting sessions with parent therapist
 - child(ren)'s sessions with child therapist
 - individual or joint parent sessions to provide feedback to parents on the child(ren)'s concerns
 - individual sessions with parents to provide parent coaching
 - individual sessions with a parent or child(ren)
 - parent-child(ren) sessions (with the mother or the father)
- Lunch (family)
- Afternoon Breakouts (possible combinations as above)
- End of Day Family Session
- Recreational Activities (all family, parent-child(ren), with or without therapists)
- Dinner (family)
- Evening Family Activity (all family or parent-child(ren))
- Closing Ceremony with Family

¹ This is a sample and subject to change as the format and specific curriculum/agenda is customized to meet the needs of each family.

² Bullet 1 is not repeated on Days 2 and 3, though aspects are reiterated as necessary.

³ For example, respectful behaviour (verbal and nonverbal/body language), speak up/ask, no wrong answer, honesty, can choose not to respond, electronic devices limited to designated times, and why children are not responsible for making all of the decisions pertaining to their lives.