

Families Moving **Forward** »

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

MULTI-DAY FAMILY THERAPY INTERVENTION

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

Overview of Basic Elements

The Multi-Day Family Therapy Intervention implements a multi-faceted family therapy, 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 regulation; the impact of separation/divorce and loyalty binds on children/adolescents; differentiation of parent-child contact problems and the multiple contributing factors; effective parenting and co-parenting 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 to specifically meet the needs of the family members. During the intervention, the agenda/curriculum is tweaked and augmented in response to how events unfold. Meals are typically taken as a family and breaks and recreational activities occur during the day for the children and the resisted parent and for the family as a whole. The following is an outline of the daily format:

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MULTI-DAY FAMILY THERAPY INTERVENTION AGENDA OUTLINE¹²

- Orientation meeting with entire family: review of goals; confidentiality; what to expect during the three days; ground rules³; advising the children of the parenting time schedule their parents agreed upon; explaining the therapy is intended to assist to implement that schedule and that 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 children; and examples of decisions and choices the children will be permitted to make during the intensive.
- Morning Family Session
- Morning Breakouts (may include):
 - co-parenting sessions with parent therapist
 - children's sessions with child therapist
 - individual or joint parent sessions to provide feedback to parents on the children's concerns
 - individual sessions with parents to provide parent coaching
 - individual sessions with a parent or child
 - parent-child 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, with and without therapists)
- Dinner (family)
- Evening Family Activity (all family or parent-child)
- Closing Ceremony with Family

Last updated November 2017

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.