

PARENTING WITHOUT CONFLICT

COURSE GUIDEBOOK

This course guidebook explains the purpose, goals, theoretical base, target audience and content of the *Parenting Without Conflict*™, by New Ways for Families online course.

After learning skills in this *Parenting Without Conflict* course, parents can practice teaching them to their children using the online Parent-Child course.



Watch this 90-second video that explains the nuts-and-bolts of New Ways for Families
<https://youtu.be/GW-hfQW-740>

PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

The purpose of this course is to provide a skills-based, “no blame, no shame” online educational program for parents in divorce or separation who could benefit from learning new communication, emotion management, and problem-solving skills. The primary goal is to teach parents the skills necessary to effectively resolve co-parenting disagreements while remaining calm and protecting their children from the conflict. The course may be voluntary, recommended, or mandated by courts or other professionals.

GOALS

-
- 1** To immunize families against becoming high-conflict families during this time of transition, by teaching parents to avoid the three most common characteristics that keep families in conflict:
 - All-or-nothing thinking
 - Unmanaged emotions
 - Extreme behaviors

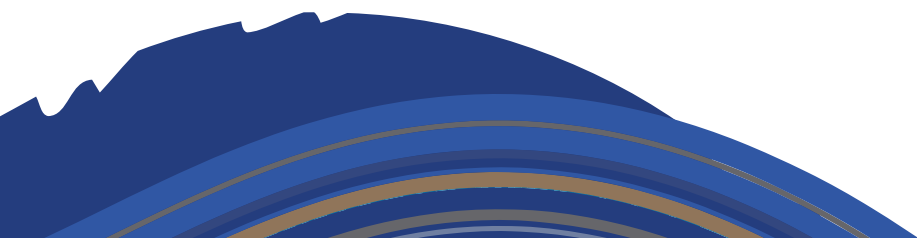
 - 2** To help parents teach their children skills for resilience during this time of huge and rapid change in the foundation of their family life. These skills serve children for a lifetime.

 - 3** To strengthen both parents’ abilities to resolve their co-parenting conflicts and make parenting decisions together, while relying less on the courts and other professionals to make decisions for them.

 - 4** To assist professionals in assessing each parent’s willingness and ability to engage in learning and applying new skills for the benefit of their children.

 - 5** To give parents a chance to change their behavior, prior to the court making long-term orders.

 - 6** To encourage mediation or another alternative dispute resolution process to make co-parenting decisions
-



FUTURE VS PAST: GUILT/SHAME VS EMPOWERMENT

Parenting Without Conflict™ focuses on positive future behavior – how to effectively co-parent, how to teach their child skills for resilience for future success, how to use appropriate problem-solving skills for future situations – rather than focusing on past bad behavior that only tends to increase the parent’s defensiveness.

Rather than taking a shaming or guilt-based approach, this curriculum focuses on future behavior for successful, long-term co-parenting – thereby empowering parents to manage their own emotions, maintain their composure when communicating with the other parent, and take responsibility for the behaviors they exhibit in front of their children.

The course focuses on the outcome for the child by helping parents create a co-parenting environment that is healthy for the child and teaches skills for resilience.

PROGRAM DEVELOPER



William A. Eddy (“Bill”) is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, lawyer (Certified Family Law Specialist), mediator, author and international speaker.

Bill developed this course to help parents teach their children skills for resiliency and life-long success. Bill has become an international expert on managing disputes involving high conflict personalities and personality disorders. He provides training on this subject to lawyers, judges, mediators, managers, human resource professionals, businesspersons, healthcare administrators, college administrators, homeowners’ association managers, ombudspersons, law enforcement, therapists and others. He has been a speaker and trainer in over 25 states, several provinces in Canada, Australia, France and Sweden.

As an attorney, Bill is a Certified Family Law Specialist in California and the Senior Family Mediator at the National Conflict Resolution Center in San Diego. Prior to becoming an attorney in 1992, he was a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with twelve years’ experience providing therapy to children, adults, couples and families in psychiatric hospitals and outpatient clinics. He has taught Negotiation and Mediation at the University of San Diego School of Law for six years and he is on the part-time faculty of the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution at the Pepperdine University School of Law and the National Judicial College.

RESEARCH BASIS

This program is based on the in-person *New Ways for Families* method, which is based on the following therapeutic interventions and theories:

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT): The key elements of DBT are teaching small skills in small steps with a lot of validation of the person along the way. The inability to regulate one's emotions—emotion dysregulation—contributes to ongoing conflict and blaming behaviors in times of crisis. Learning to manage one's own emotions is a focus of DBT. *New Ways* is based on similar concepts: teaching small skills in small steps, working on emotion regulation before learning communication skills, and approaching the parent as a partner in change.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT): Requiring written exercises helps reinforce the four basic lessons of flexible thinking, managed emotions, moderate behaviors and checking yourself. The course is designed to get parents thinking about their own behavior in a non-defensive way which facilitates maximum learning.

Cognitive methods emphasize thinking and changing one's thinking. Written exercises are a key method in cognitive therapies. A great benefit of cognitive methods is that clients can learn to use the skills throughout their lifetime, applying the techniques to each difficult situation s/he encounters.

Behavioral methods emphasize trying new ways of doing things. Between sessions, clients are encouraged to try new behaviors that fit with the lessons of each session. They are also required to apply the behaviors in future sessions.

In some ways it may appear that the exercises are too easy and too general; however, when working with difficult people who tend toward conflict, small steps with a lot of validation are what is really needed to be effective. Large, dramatic changes are unlikely and counterproductive to attempt for many of these clients.

Research indicates that many people who lack emotional management, problem-solving and general coping skills can change with (1) a structured learning environment, (2) small skills taught in small steps, (3) focus on future behavior, (4) validation and support.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After participating in this course, parents will:

- Learn and apply emotion regulation techniques to calm themselves during times of stress
- Learn and apply communication techniques focused on de-escalating conflict and productive conflict-resolution
- Learn and apply new problem-solving skills
- Learn to make proposals to the other parent during decision making discussions
- Learn and demonstrate knowledge of the difference between extreme and moderate behaviors
- Learn how to protect their children from conflict, and
- Understand how a child's brain development is impacted by experiencing ongoing conflict.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This program is designed for parents in the beginning, middle or end of their divorce or separation process, or even during ongoing co-parenting. The program specifically targets parents who have difficulty making decisions on their own, returning to court continuously to have the judge and/or other professionals make the decisions for them.

The program is designed for parents who are:

- Struggling with joint decision-making
- Are in need of improving their emotional management, communication and problem-solving skills
- In the beginning or near the beginning of their case. The longer conflict has been occurring, the harder it takes to change that behavior
- Currently engaging in a formal or informal decision-making process regarding divorce and custody decisions
- Literate at the 8th-9th grade reading level or higher (English or Spanish) and competent with basic computer skills and have access to an Internet-connected device, or they can partner with someone who will assist with reading and/or managing the online connections
- Provided with enough time to complete the program, practice the skills, and reflect on insights and ideas in between sessions

PROGRAM FEATURES

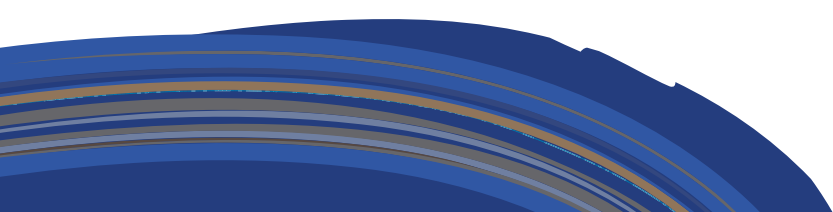
The reading level is between 8th-9th grade levels throughout the course

Language has been examined for cultural inclusivity.

Activities and frequent opportunities to reflect on and process the materials are included in each unit. We ask participants to assess their situation and set goals at multiple points in the curriculum. Such an approach simulates some of the characteristics of face-to-face programming.

A positive, strengths-based focus characterizes the materials. We believe that participants are more likely to make changes and feel confident about their ability to provide a positive atmosphere for their children if the materials help them identify and build on their strengths rather than reminding them of their failures. Although we provide some information about dangers and risks, we try to help participants to find the resources that exist in themselves and their environment that will help them make positive outcomes more likely for themselves and their children.

Parents are required to complete application exercises throughout the course, allowing them the opportunity to practice each skill multiple times, first applying the skills to a hypothetical situation, then to their own situation.



CONTENT OUTLINE

New Ways Introduction

This section introduces the four skills, explains their importance in everyday problem-solving and stress management, and explains the structure and design of the course.

UNIT 1 COPING WITH STRESS

- Teaches parents how to cope with stress by managing their emotions
- Explains how a person's brain reacts under stress
- Offers techniques for calming oneself
- Describes to parents how a child absorbs the emotions of others, thereby impacting their own emotions and stress levels

UNIT 2 SOLVING CO-PARENTING PROBLEMS

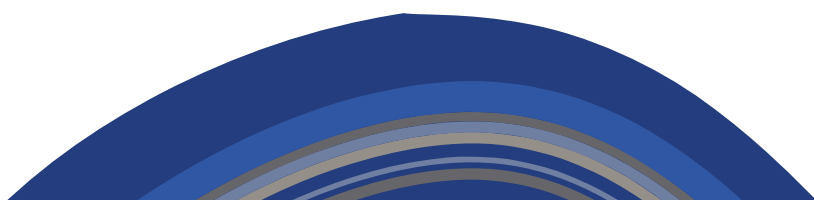
- Teaches the parent to modify their thought process by learning and applying flexible thinking, the concept that there is more than one solution to each problem
- Teaches the parent to recognize and overcome all-or-nothing thinking
- Introduces the technique of making proposals for productive decision-making discussions
- Allows parents to practice the skill of flexible thinking by applying the concept to their own situation, in preparation for the next decision-making situation with their co-parent

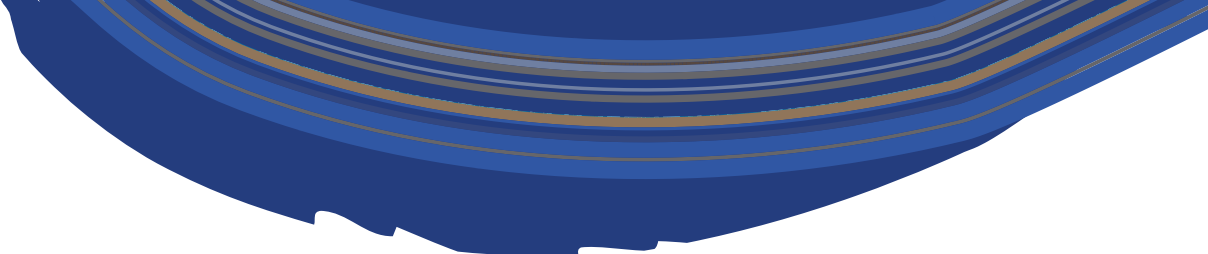
UNIT 3 AVOIDING OVER REACTING

- Teaches parents to recognize which behaviors are extreme and which are moderate, using examples and video explanations
- Explains to parents the importance of using moderate behaviors to avoid overreacting and escalating the conflict
- Teaches parents to respond to emails, texts, social media, and other electronic communications with the BIFF® method (brief, informative, friendly, firm)
- Provides video demonstration and practice exercises of moderate behaviors and moderate responses to emails using the BIFF method

UNIT 4 CHECKING YOURSELF

- Requires parents to write down the ways in which the parent has used these skills in the past week
- Helps parents prepare for upcoming discussions, mediation, or a court hearing by applying the skills to their situation, addressing problems that will need to be addressed during the next decision-making opportunity





UNIT 5 EXTREME BEHAVIORS

And the Effect on Your Child's Brain

- Addresses the most common extreme behaviors seen in high-conflict cases: substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, anger management, parental absence, false allegations, and child alienation
- Explains the effect of extreme behaviors and ongoing stress on a child's brain development
- Educates the parent on the benefits of resolving conflict out of court
- Provides tips and guidance on how to talk to children about extreme versus moderate behaviors

UNIT 6 RAISING HEALTHY CHILDREN

- Introduces the common decisions that will need to be made for the children related to healthcare, education, and extracurricular activities
- Gives the parent the opportunity to practice "making proposals" in relation to these decisions
- Provides general standards for decision-making around these issues

UNIT 7 CHILD DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Explains the developmental milestones for each age group, and
- Explains how these developmental milestones impact decision-making for child/ren

UNIT 8 PARENTING SKILLS

- Offers guidance on appropriate parenting schedules for the child/ren's age
- Explains standards related to parenting schedules
- Explains common issues that arise and should be considered when writing a parenting plan

Each unit or module begins with an introduction to the topic and the importance of the topic. All units include text, videos, practice exercises (for application purposes), and reflective journal entries (for self-reflection purposes) that must be completed by the participant in order to move to the next page of the course. Each unit ends with a multiple-choice quiz. Answers to both correct and incorrect answers are explained.

UNIT 9 USING PROFESSIONALS

- Describes the roles of various professionals often involved in the divorce and child custody process
- Provides considerations for deciding whether or not to use particular professionals
- Encourages parents to use these professionals only in their appropriate roles, rather than relying on them for all decision-making

UNIT 10 NEW PARTNERS, NEW FAMILIES

- Describes standard approaches to issues that arise when introducing new partners to child/ren
- Describes the appropriate role of a new partner in co-parenting and making decisions for the child/ren
- Provides factors for consideration when forming a new family

UNIT 11 HANDLING FINANCIAL ISSUES

- Describes five common financial issues
- Provides general standards and considerations when resolving financial issues
- Do's and don'ts when preparing to address financial issues

UNIT 12 HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A “HIGH CONFLICT” CASE

- Reviews the four New Ways skills
- Reviews the moderate behaviors that will help prevent ongoing conflict
- Reviews the impact on children and how best to act in their best interest and protect them from conflict during the divorce and custody process