

Improving Family Mediation with *UpToParents.org*¹

Most people will spend more time planning for a beer and pizza party than for the mediation where they will chart their course through their greatest personal crisis.

The failure of mediators to invite parents to prepare for mediation with a child focus is particularly unfortunate given the numerous fundamental paradigm shifts parents must negotiate to move from a destructive to constructive family transition.

For more information on the demands put on parents who separate, see [The Paradigm Shifts to the Healing Divorce](#).

When mediators, starting with parents' preparation, lay the groundwork for parents to focus on children's losses, fragility, and needs, they give them the strongest incentive and clearest light for resolving all the issues they face. For these reasons, almost all parents can be helped by preparing for mediation via the work on:

- www.UpToParents.org (in divorce cases),
- www.ProudToParent.org (in paternity cases), or
- www.WhileWeHeal.org (in cases of parents working through marital problems).

More can be learned about the power of this opportunity from the following.

1. [Two-Minute Video Introduction to UpToParents by Judge Michael Scopelitis](#)
2. [Fifteen-Minute UpToParents Video Training for Mediators](#)
3. [Professionals' Introduction to UpToParents.org](#)
4. [Sample UpToParents Agreed Commitments](#)
5. [Sample UpToParents Exercise Responses](#) (in English and Spanish)
6. [Sample Feedback from Professionals and Parents about UpToParents](#)

We recommend that mediators interested in this approach try UpToParents.org as hypothetical parents going through divorce and watch this short [Video Instruction](#) (less than 15 minutes).

Mediators are also welcome to adapt and use the following free resources to ensure that all family mediation clients arrive with 3 to 8 hours of a child-focused orientation.

"If parents will agree on one thing, they'll agree on everything, if that one thing is, 'What do we want our children to look like when they're 25?'"--Patrick Brown, Indiana attorney and counselor

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*"Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him."
--Booker T. Washington*

¹ An electronic copy of this article is available in Part II of the "Professionals Corner" link of UpToParents.org. All underlined links can be opened from that electronic copy.

- Our [Standard Opening Email to Clients](#)
- Our [Electronic Intake Form](#)
- Our [Quick Help for Families in Transition](#).

With parents' website and intake work complete, mediators can take these steps going into mediation with parents.

- 1) Look over parents' work to both assess their current level of cooperation and develop strategies for their mediation success.
- 2) Use parents' website work to powerful ends at the mediation. We tend to make three specific, and quite quick, uses of this work with parents.
 - We always ask parents' permission to read aloud their Exercise C compliments and good memories about each other—when shared, these statements almost invariably have a restorative effect on the parents, their trust, and their interaction.
 - Gently and with great respect for the pain that parents feel over having hurt their children, we use parents' website description of their children (including their losses, hurt, and wishes) to build their focus on their children.
 - Unless parents are relating unusually and consistently well, we briefly go over some or all of their Agreed Commitments from their website work.

"We do not believe in ourselves until someone reveals that deep inside us something is valuable, worth listening to, worthy of our trust, sacred to our touch."
--E.E. Cummings
- 3) Consider using parents' website preparation for one additional powerful purpose: specifically honoring and complimenting parents' devotion and work on behalf of their children.

We think mediators will find these websites enlightening for clients and even beneficial in branding and expanding a mediation practice. Not only can this child- and preparation-focused approach to mediation improve outcomes for families, but it can also provide a compelling reason for parents and professionals to choose the services of a mediator using it.

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