

32 TIPS for Parents Experiencing High Conflict Situations
Justice Andrea Himel, Superior Court of Justice,
Family Branch (Newmarket)

Goals for Parents to Reduce Conflict Post-Separation:

1. *Develop a business-like relationship*
2. *Remember that children have 2 homes but 1 life*
3. *Protect children from exposure to the conflict*
4. *Accept that co-parenting lasts forever*

1. **Educate** yourself about the impact of separation, and focus on **supporting** your children rather than **blaming** the other parent
2. **Consider** whether post-separation / co-parenting counseling may be beneficial
3. **Manage** your family members, as they can be part of the **problem** (or part of the solution)
4. **Understand** that the first two years post-separation are often the hardest for everyone
5. **“Step in the other parent’s shoes”**
6. **“Step in your children’s shoes”**
7. Obtain **Independent Legal Advice**
8. **Remember** that there is usually a wide range of resolution that is reasonable
9. If your personal or professional advisers are **worsening the conflict**, considering finding a new support network
10. **“Dig deeper”** towards empathy and resolution
11. Focus on your **interests (needs)** rather than your **positions (wants)**
12. When litigating, **avoid** taking unreasonable positions (and in doing so defend against costs)
13. If **self-represented** at Court, follow the Family Law Rules and local practice directions
14. **Ensure** that the relief sought focuses on the children’s best interests
15. **Listen to the Judge**
16. **Avoid** unnecessary delay.

16. **Avoid** “going for the jugular”
17. Who are the other people in your **family’s network** that can be helpful?
18. **Consider** alternate dispute resolution options, such as mediation, negotiation and collaboration
19. When preparing for **mediation**, know your **Best Alternative** to a **Negotiated Agreement**: (Know your “Best” day in Court)
20. **Be aware** of conflicts of interest or role conflicts
21. Conflict has hidden and obvious effects on parents and children; financial, emotional and social costs
22. **Don’t** draw professional and personal advisers into the conflict
23. **Consider** the **children’s needs**: (a) individually; (b) as a sibling group; and (c) developmentally
24. **Recognize** that children’s needs change over time, and parenting plans may need to change as well
25. Make written communications: **Brief, Informative, Friendly and Firm**
26. Accept that **you or your children** may benefit from counseling
27. **Collaborate** with teachers and professionals
28. **Delay** introducing **new partners** until the relationship appears to be long-term
29. **Advise** the other parent of important milestones (remarriage, new baby...), before the children.
30. **Always “take the high road”**
31. **Extricate** your family from the high conflict situation; **Avoid** becoming a **“High Conflict Case”**
32. Be **Smart....Not Right**