The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination

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PC Process II
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December 5, 2022

AFCC
ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS

Virtual Training
December 5,6,7,8, 2022

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The Parenting Coordination Process (cont.) & Court Specific Parenting Coordination Procedures– Module 2

Learning Objectives

- List the phases of parenting coordination and the primary objectives of each phase.
- Describe the PC role in facilitating communication between parents.
- Describe the conflict continuum and strategies to move parents beyond conflict

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Setting the stage for Parenting Coordination

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Stage I: Data Gathering & Framework Established

- Intake – initial assessments
- Screening for IPV, substance misuse, mi, suitability
- Data gathering
- Orientation
- Establishing infrastructure
  - Rules of engagement
  - Coparenting relationship
  - Establishing of the collaborative/support team
  - Communication and information-sharing between coparents, with the PC and the support team
  - Transitioning the children

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Information to Obtain Prior to First Appointment

- Surveys about parents' style, philosophy, skills, areas of conflict
- Surveys about children's development, temperament, adjustment, areas of concern
- Any relevant court documents
- Agreements between parents (i.e. mediated agreements or court orders) relevant to children

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Survey Examples

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) parent report for 4-17yo, 25 items, free

Parent Acrimony Scale (Emery, 1982) 25 items, free, validity data)

Parental Stress Scale (PSS) (Berry & Jones, 1995), 18 items, free



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Setting Boundaries

Define Role clearly – at onset and throughout process

Hybrid role

Define Collaborative Team: attorneys, mental health professionals, physicians, teachers, extended family

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Describe communication process with PC

- Email and copy all
- Agenda 24 hours before a meeting
- To settle disputes, information shared with other party
- When or if ex-parte communications will occur
- When and how to use phone
- Timeliness of responses
- Process by which decisions are made

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Establishing Priorities

Immediate Safety issues =>
Child and/or Parent?

- Risk Factors – Child
- Risk Factors - Parent



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Initial Coparent Appointments-Getting Parents Focused

Establish	Establish Communication Protocol
Discuss	Discuss Goals for their Children
Discuss	Discuss Goals for Parents
Discuss	Discuss Expectations of other parent
Discuss	Discuss Expectations of PC process
Establish	Establish initial meeting frequency and schedule



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Goals for Family in PC Process



- Resolve Disputes
- Contain Conflict – Shield Children
- Transition From One-Home Family To Two-Home Family
- Provide Safe Environment For Children To Adjust to New Family Systems
- Establish And Maintain Effective Coparenting Team
- Maintain A Reliable Access Schedule
- Learn how to CoParent
- Address Children's Changing Needs

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POLL #1

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POLL #2

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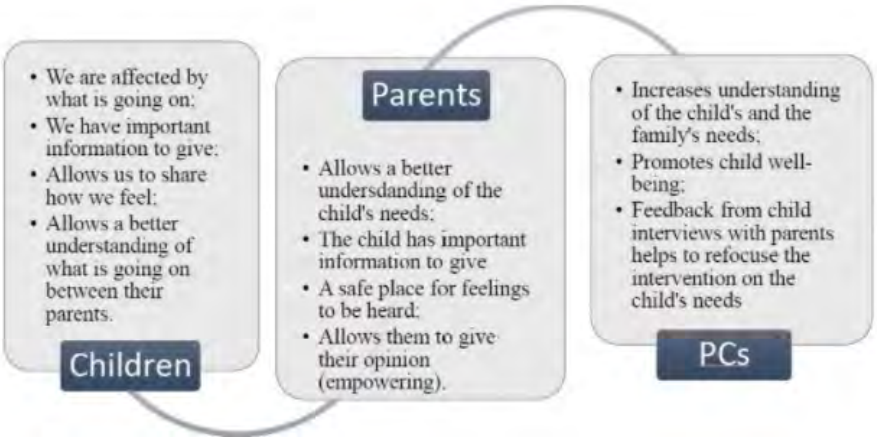
Parenting Coordination Procedures

- Individual appointments?
- Conjoint appointments?
- Will children be interviewed?
- Will step-parents or other parenting figure be included?
- Will extended family be involved?

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Main Themes In Favor of Child Inclusion In PC (Quigley & Cyr, LawNow, 2018)



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PC Directed Process

- Model healthy boundaries, limits, routines
- Establish and enforce rules of engagement
- Continual assessment and monitoring of each caregiving environment
- Continual assessment and monitoring of the child's needs
- Keeping watch through Collateral contacts
- Establish appropriate caregiving structures through co-parenting relationship
- Establish and monitor communication protocol

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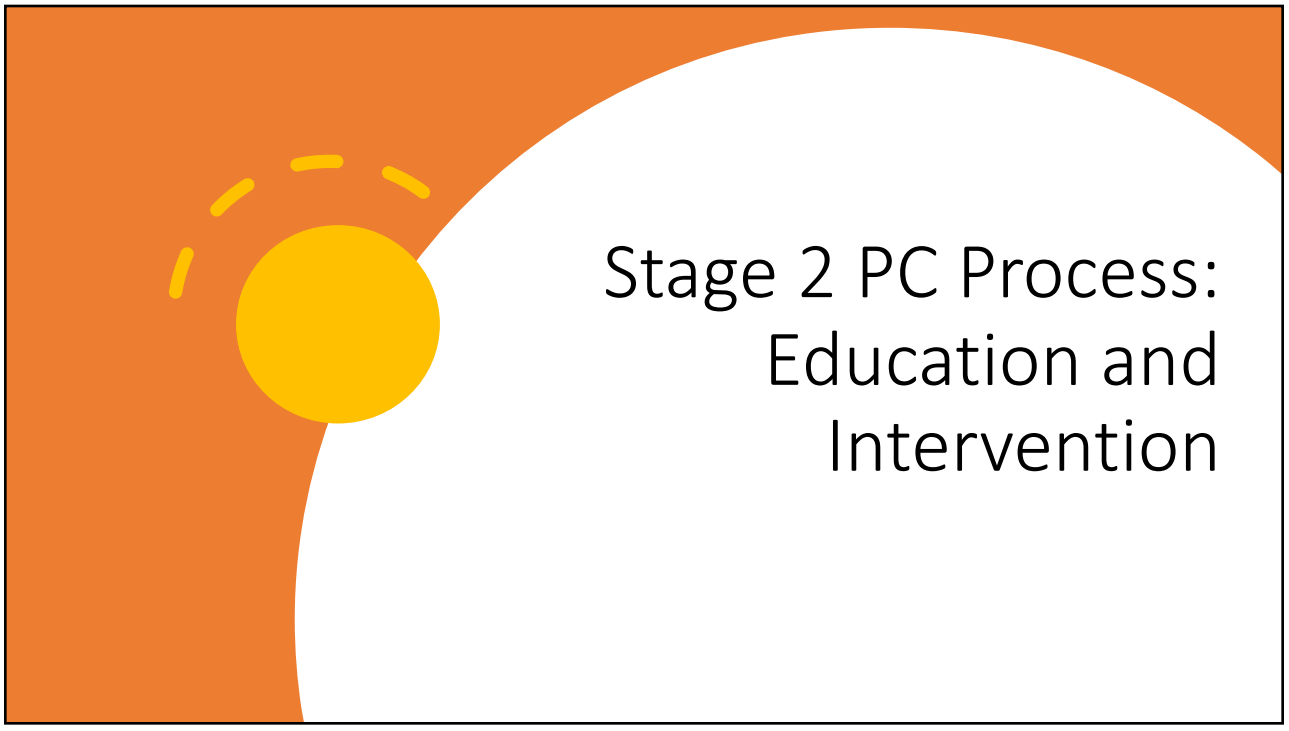
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Documentation

- Documentation of PC contact – in person, telephone, email
- Communication to parties, attorneys, court
- Agreements
- Decisions

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Disengagement: Structuring Co-parenting in High Conflict situations

- The PC is the interface between the parents -
  - **Titrating** the communication/contact so that it is functional and manageable
    - Face to face meetings - structure
    - Telephone conference calls
    - Email - timely, can control receipt, response vs. text
    - Fax, letter
    - No contact, except through PC



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Email communication

Maintains distance between sender and receiver

Documentable



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Email/Text difficulties

- Problem with reactivity – can say anything at any time and press send
- No feedback loop: no facial or body language cues
- Projective process: "what was that about?"

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Email success: parallel parenting structure

- Nothing is assumed
- Everything is documented
- Email structure sets ups rules of engagement
- Transition email: child-focused communication link for seamless transitions

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Email structure

Identify number of emails per week and structure of email

Title each email: distinguish between transition update , scheduling issue, activity issue, information sharing (e.g. itinerary)

Rules for Businesslike Communication

- Everything in writing
- Identify information sharing structure before or after transition

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Structure: Child information for feedback loop between parents

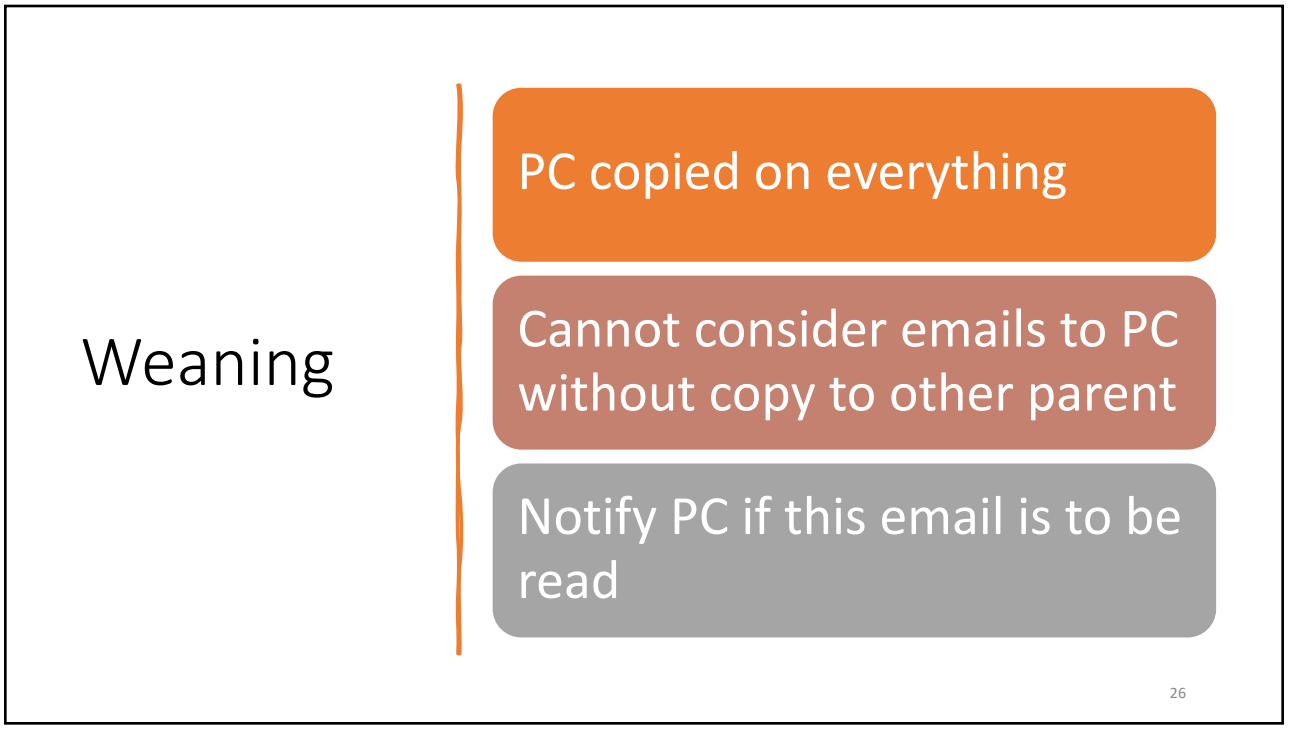
- School
- Health
- Friends and activities
- Behavioral issues/changes
- Eating, sleeping, toileting (child under 5)

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Monitor communication
Key to inhibition
Accountability
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Weaning
PC copied on everything
Cannot consider emails to PC without copy to other parent
Notify PC if this email is to be read
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Email purposes



SCHEDULING



AGENDA: RULES APPLY

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Cyberspace resources

- Google calendar
- ICAL
- Our Family Wizard
- UptoChildren.org

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Who to Involve?



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The Collaborative Team

- The evaluator
- Attorneys
- Mental health professionals
  - Child therapists, parent therapists
- Other professionals
  - Physicians, nannies, teachers, coaches, tutors
- Extended family/significant others

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The Role of the Parents' Lawyers

- Support the PC process – give it a chance to work
- Move out of litigation mode with client
- Available to client for consultation
- Available to PC for consultation
- Supportive of PC decisions
- Check in with PC if necessary for rationale for decisions and client's response
- Become background rather than foreground

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Relationship between PC & Attorneys

- Counsel for each coparent should be willing to participate in joint calls with the PC when requested.
- A helpful PC/attorney call at the commencement of parenting coordination work will include:
  - identification of all court orders and documents important to the case (assessments, final parenting plans, modifications, and evaluations);
  - discussion of any IPV or abuse issues, and exchange of any current orders of protection;
  - discussion of the PC fee agreement and billing processes;
  - specific scope and authority issues to identify client and attorney goals and ensure the goals coordinate with the PC's authority;
  - guidelines for how the PC will communicate with the parents and the lawyers, including discussion of *ex parte* communication;
  - and exchange of any relevant upcoming dates including court dates, vacation schedules and the like (Fidler and Greenberg, 2019). Poll #2

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Attorneys Role

If needed, clarify PC role

If needed, file contempt if a parent is not following agreements

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Role of PC with Therapeutic Interventions

- Evaluate existing interventions
- Referrals
- After-Care
- Collaborative team
  - Communication: meeting, email, phone
  - Roles
  - Dispute resolution
  - Include other professionals

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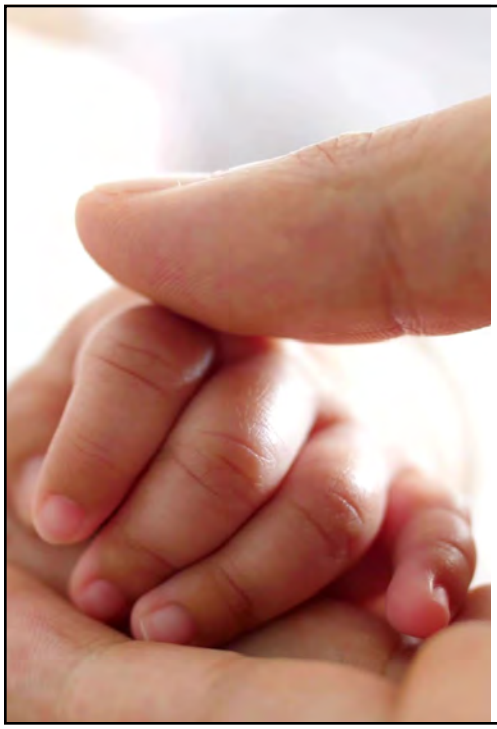
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Coordinating Therapeutic Interventions

- Conflicting alliances between therapist and a parent may escalate conflict
- Lack of communication or absence of balanced communication may escalate conflict
- PC may be appointed to address a conflict over treatment or to find a therapist for a child
- If appropriately qualified, the PC may offer guidance and support to an appropriate child therapist (NOT supervision)
- PC may also recognize dysfunctional treatment and intervene

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Involvement of Children

- FOR
  - Focus is on child
  - Research suggests children do better when feel their voice is heard
  - Child's perspective on their family, parents, situation may differ from either parent
  - Children can provide important information regarding disputes between parents
  - Child information enhances PC credibility with parents and children

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Involvement of Children

- AGAINST
  - Wishes do not always equal best interests
  - Decision making and judgment undeveloped
  - Alignment with one parent
  - Wish to be fair
  - Fear of hurting or rupturing a relationship
  - Fear of punishment by parent

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Hearing the Child's Opinion Methodological Choices

Aim for developmental appropriateness-no specific information sought from child?

Parents seek info from the children and bring info to PC session? PC interviews children and reports to parents?

Guidelines for PC interview: with parents and children

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Hearing the Child's Opinion
Child factors to consider

- Ability to express him/herself
  - Alone?
  - In presence of siblings?
- Loyalty to one parent
- Unresolved anger at a parent
- Feelings of responsibility for parental well-being
- Willingness or fear regarding information being shared with parent
- It is important to honor children's wishes regarding whether or not to bring information from them into negotiation

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SITUATIONS/ISSUES for PC

- Many decisions benefit from child's input (camp, job, activities, change of school, special events, small schedule changes)
- Small Changes in usual residential schedule
- Activities/Camp: What? Who attends? overnight?
- Change of School
- Special events requiring temporary changes to schedule

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SUMMARY

- Assess whether child input can be utilized in the PC process
- Decide on methodology for seeking child input
- Be aware of pros and cons
- Be aware of your skill set
- Build in safeguards for the child
- Informed Consent

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Education: Factors Impacting Outcomes





- Coparenting Relationship
- Quality of Parenting
- Children exposed to interparental conflict

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Buffers that Protect Children from Parent Conflict

- Good relationship with at least one parent or caregiver, or mentor
- Parental warmth
- Quality of sibling support
- Encapsulating conflict

Emery & Forehand, 1994; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Sandler et al, 2008; Neighbors et al, 1993; Vandewater & Lansford, 1998;

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Protective Factors Reducing Risk for Children

- Good adjustment of "residential" parent
- Competent parenting of each parent
- Greater amount of involvement of adequate non-resident father
- Type of involvement and activities of father

Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Kelly, 2007.

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Protective Factors Reducing Risk for Children (cont)

- Reduced and/or encapsulated conflict between parents
- Parallel or cooperative coparenting relationship and style
- Limited number of family transitions
- Economic stability

Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Emery,1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Kelly, 2005; Kelly, 2007; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992.

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Important Parenting Skills

- Reflective Capacity
- Reflective Functioning
- Reflective Listening
- Resiliency
- Ability to Repair Ruptures in Relationship



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Understanding High Conflict (Contemplation)



- Unlikely that conflict will abate on its own if still present 3 years post-divorce
- Affects parenting
- High conflict couples have difficulty prioritizing child's needs and struggle to shield child from parental disputes and their own emotional distress
- Characteristics:
  - Anger
  - Hostility
  - Distrust
  - Verbal/Physical aggression
  - Frequent litigation/court involvement
  - Negative talk about other parent
  - Chronic communication difficulties (including refusing/avoiding communication required to coordinate child care)
  - Unilateral decision making
  - Children in the middle
  - Pull for alignment and loyalty

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What happens to mind, body, emotions when parents are in conflict



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The Brain Talk! (1 of 9) (Move to Preparation)

1. The Facts: The human brain does not fully develop until in the 20's

2. The Bad News: Chronic exposure to parental conflict creates toxic stress and scars and stunts the developing brain

3. The Good News: The power to save your child from brain damage due to toxic stress is in your hands! You can't fix the old pathways but can create new ones — your child is not doomed.

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THE BAD

- When children are stressed, it scars the developing brain.
- Stress results in the release of cortisol, which triggers the fight or flight reaction and freezes the brain.
- Cortisol release in response to fear now and again is generally normal and fine. But chronic sustained Cortisol release is bad for the brain; chronic release of cortisol in a steady drip, drip, keeps the brain flooded with cortisol

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- Here is how it works when a child has parents in ongoing conflict:
- The uncertainty of when the next stressful moment will occur keeps that cortisol turned on.
- It doesn't flush out.
- That is called toxic stress and it results in brain cell death and other significant problems.

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TOXIC STRESS

- Is a re-occurring negative experience that threatens the safety or security of an individual.
- Ongoing Exposure to conflict creates toxic stress; chronic stress results in Cortisol gone nuts. It takes longer to dissipate; there is a higher sensitivity to stressful experiences.
- It slows metabolism, often results in mood and anxiety disorders, makes working memory less accessible, inhibits concentration and disrupts sleep.

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- When YOU are fighting with your co-parent, your CHILD responds to your stress with a fight or flight or freeze response.
- Stress response does not turn off; adrenaline spills and Cortisol continues to elevate; the brain is in overdrive – excessive cortisol is released.
- And that excessive cortisol impairs immune functions, shrinks areas in the brain, and body functioning begins to suffer.

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- What is NOT operating? The prefrontal cortex – the front of your brain is NOT working;
- that part of your brain where impulse control and judgment lie.

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- Cortisol does not turn off when your child is constantly exposed to your stress and wondering when the next fight will happen- like a slow drip and it inhibits growth of the brain's neural connection
- Your stress causes your child's stress and harms your child's developing brain (until mid 20's!)

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The Good News!

- You are in charge of your child's developing brain!
- YOU want to model being able to control your impulses, regulate your emotions, use good judgment so you are not in stress or conflict mode.
- If you stay in that stressed, angry place, you are activating the production of cortisol and your CHILD's anxious brain.

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REMEMBER

- You are the one your child turns to for guidance, protection, safety.
- If you are not there to protect them because you are in stress mode, what happens to your child?
- Children who are raised in stressed environments are more likely to have:
- learning difficulties, attention problems and depression than children who are not raised in stressed environments.

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- For your child, the two people (you and your co-parent) who are supposed to be providing reassurance and protection are now the cause of their problem.

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Chronic environmental adversity (that does not involve physical or verbal violence) places



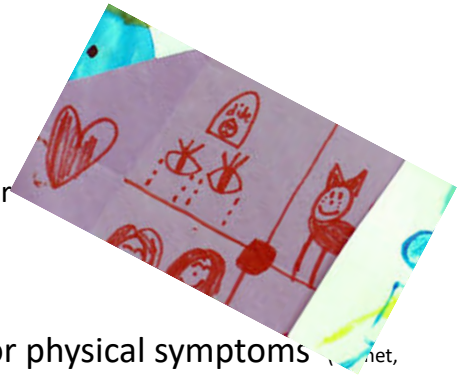
- **children's mental health** and
- **future development at risk** (Harold, Leve, & Sellers, 2017)

Need to **move beyond simple dichotomy (e.g. conflict present or absent)** to children's mental health outcomes at risk exist across a continuum of express severity

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New Diagnosis (DSM-5) = CAPRD = child affected by parental relationship distress

- Children react to:
  - Parental intimate partner violence
  - Parental intimate partner distress
  - Acrimonious divorce
  - Unfair disparagement of one parent by another



By showing evidence of:

heightened behavioral, cognitive, affective, or physical symptoms (…net, Wamboldt, & Narrow, 2016)

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Review of outcome studies

- Sleep Problems (Dahl & El-Sheikh, 2007; Gregory & Sadeh, 2016; Kelly & El-Sheikh, 2011; Mannering et al., 2011;Sadeh, Keinan, & Dain, 2004)
- Externalizing Problems
- Internalizing Problems
- Academic Problems
- Social & Relationship Problems
- Physical Health problems



Barker, Koot, & Tremblay, 2009; Campbell, Spieker, Burchinal, & Poe, 2006; Cui & Fincham, 2010; Davies, Winter, Cummings, & Schermerhorn, 2008; Davies, Woitach, Winter & Cummings, 2008; El-Sheikh, Harger, & Whitson, 2001;El-Sheikh, Keiley, Erath & Dyer, 2013; El-Sheikh, Buckhalt, Keller, Cummings, & Acebo, 2007; Finger, Eiden, Edwars, Leonard, & Kachadourian, 2010; Glendinning, Shucksmith, & Hendry, 1997; Harold et al, 2012, 2016; Masten et al, 2005; Merikangas & Swanson, 2010; Montgomery, Bartley, & Wilkinson, 1997; Narayan, Englund, & Egeland, 2013; Narayan et al., 2017; Natsuaki et al., 2014; Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002; Rhoades, 2008; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999; Sturge-Apple, Feldman & Masalha, 2010; Wolfinger, 2000.

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Identifying Red Flags in Children & Adolescents

- **Overview of research on primary factors associated with risk for children and adolescents following separation and divorce**

1. Exacerbated stress of the separation period
2. Mental health/illness in mothers & fathers
3. Quality and Style of parenting
4. Loss of important relationships
5. Effects of Exposure to Chronic High conflict and violence
6. Re-partnering and remarriage – effects on children & family
7. Moves to new locations
8. Reduced or unstable economic resources
9. Implications for parenting plans and decision-making

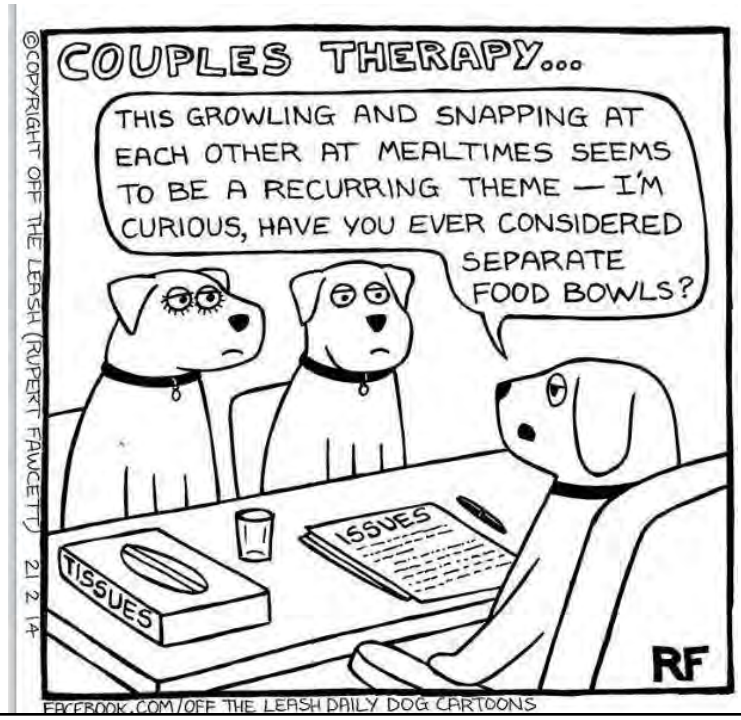


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Areas of intervention

- Clarity and specificity on all court orders regarding parenting issues
- Calendar whole year, including weekly routine, holidays, vacations
- Communication rules and structures
- Conflict management techniques
- Reframe relationship

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Structural transition from Nuclear to Binuclear

- Adequate functioning in each subsystem
- Adequate functioning between subsystems
- A set timeshare schedule

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Conflict Transformation



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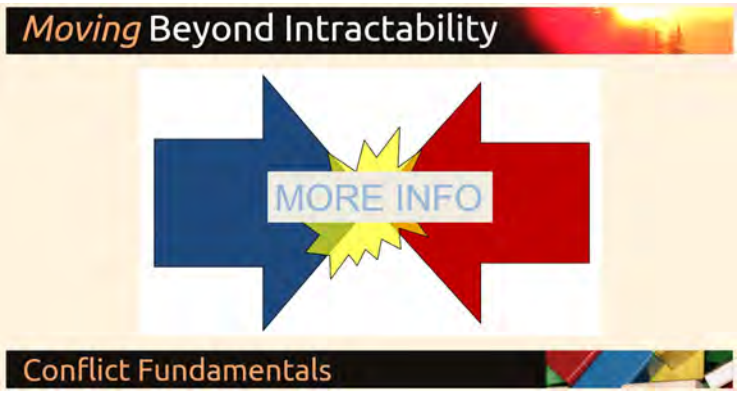
Contributors to Intractable Conflicts

- Adversarial Family Law System
- Attorneys
- Mental health providers
- Parental Pathology
- Family Systems Pathology

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Intractable coparenting conflict

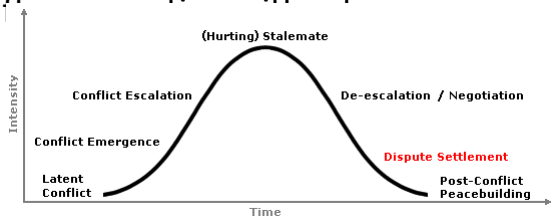
- Parenting coordination has different utility at different phases of intractable conflict



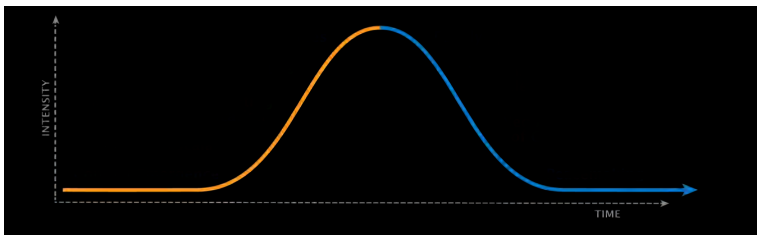
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Definition of Intractable Conflicts

- Intractable conflicts are conflicts that remain unresolved for long periods of time and then become stuck at a high level of intensity and destructiveness.
- They typically involve more than just the parents themselves and often include other family and community members.
- There may have been attempts to resolve issues before, during and af



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When parents minimize communication, involve third parties and have developed polarized, negative attitudes toward one another =>

Likely to be involved in adversarial/litigative court processes that are antithetical to functional coparenting

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Commonalities in Intractable Conflicts

- Common to all intractable conflicts is that they involve interests or values that an individual regards as critically important.
- Some of the central underlying causes of intractable conflict revolve around moral issues, issues of justice, human rights, human needs, and identity (Deutsch, 2000).



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Transforming Intractable Conflict

- **Consequences of maintaining conflict: making it real**
- **"Ripening" the conflict for resolution**
- **Transformative Elements**
- **Moving beyond stalemate**
- **Containment vs. Resolution**



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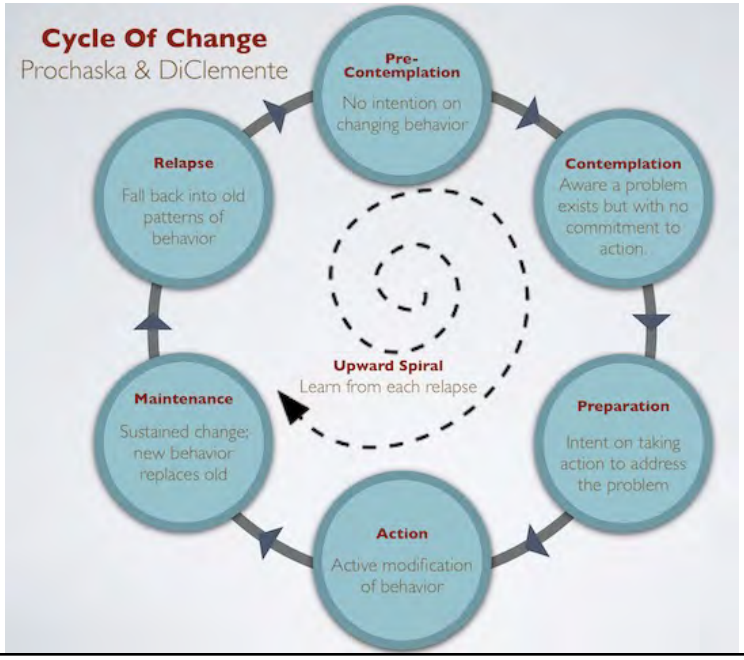
Climbing the Hill

Often involves failed peacemaking attempts followed by intensified conflict.

- Role of the PC during this phase:
  - Primary goal is to contain, manage and ideally reduce the level of conflict
  - Support adequate child-focused information-sharing and **decision-making**



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POLL #3

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During the phase of de-escalation of conflict

- PCs role is to structurally disengage the coparents (Sullivan, 2008):

- Create a parallel, disengaged model of coparenting
- Eliminate the opportunity for coparents to engage in ways that maintain or escalates conflict
- Minimizes the most toxic factors impacting children's developmental outcomes
- Detailed parenting plans
- Online shared parenting internet platforms

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Getting to the summit

- PCs can move coparents, despite their reluctance, to the right side of the intractability curve.
- **PC's role and functions shift** when parents move past the hurting/stalemate phase
- After a period of minimal, highly structured more positive engagement, parenting coordination can become a training ground to build function coparenting engagement terms "peacebuilding" (Sullivan & Burns, 2020)



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Confronting Cycle of Blame-Defense

- Anger Cycle
  - Purpose
  - Variables which sustain the cycle
  - Breaking the cycle
  - Future Focused – So, what's your proposal?

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Gardening Analogy

- Preparing the soil
- Planting Seeds of Peace
- Nurturing Growth
- Keeping out the weeds



PC's role and functions shift

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PARENTING COORDINATION:
PARENTING PLAN CATEGORIES

Parental Communication:

- How: email, fax, telephone, meeting
- Frequency
- Response time (e.g. respond to emails within 48 hours)
- Transition emails (frequency, content)
- Emergencies

Child Communication

- Timing
- Who initiates
- Call-back rules

Transitions:

- Pick up and drop off days and times
- Location
- Rules for parental behavior at transitions i.e., cordial, no exchange of child support
- Who does the transportation, e.g. for toddlers always drop off, don't pick up

Parenting Time and Changes:

- Days and hours
- Illness
- Cancellation policies
- Rescheduling/swap rules
- Right of First Refusal (overnights only?)

Holidays, Special Days and Vacations:

- Monday holidays: attached to weekend or alternate even and odd years
- Religious holidays: alternate years? Time of transition, place of transition
- School vacations: how assigned, when do they begin and end (day and time)
- Summer vacations: number of weeks-consecutive or not, first and second choice assignments, dates of notice
- What happens to the usual schedule when holiday schedule ends?
- Rules for continuation or change in usual rotation: no parent has children three consecutive weekends
- Child birthdays: alternate, each have a block of time, who schedules birthday party, who attends
- Parent birthdays
- Mother's Day and Father's Day

Extra-curricular Activities:

- Do both parents agree? Can parent schedule only on time they have child?
- Rules for sports games, recitals, special occasions related to activiClothing and equipment:
- Rules around clothing, washing, returning
- Rules for exchange of sports equipment, musical instrument, bicycles etc.
- Rules for lost and missing items

Day to Day Decisions:

- Scheduling of routine medical and dental: who does it and is other parent notified and when?
- Who attends?
- How is information shared? Response time
- Scheduling and attendance at parent-teacher meetings
- Sharing of school information
- Emergency contacts

Major Decisions (Health, Education, Religion):

- How are these decided?
- Exchange of Information

Travel:

- Communication rules for taking child out of town: itinerary details, notice rules
- Notarized travel letter: when is it provided?
- Phone access
- Sleeping rules
- Supervision rules
- Who holds the passports?

General Parenting:

- Shared routines regarding homework; communication regarding homework
- Agreements about discipline and supervision between homes
- Keeping children out of the middle
- No negative comments about the other parent
- Cordial parent behavior in front of the children
- Significant others and dating

Review and adjustment of parenting plan

- How initiated and when?
- Future dispute resolution

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Model Communication Protocol – OFW ?

Introduction

This Parenting Coordinator (PC) has been engaged, in part, to support you, the coparents, in transitioning into the business relationship of co-parenting by developing structures that support effective communication. The purpose of these protocols is to maximize the opportunity for respectful informative communication to increase the likelihood that you, the parents, will adopt the skills needed for successful resolution of conflict. Research has shown the impact on your child(ren) being exposed to conflict between you has both short- and long- term detrimental consequences. Accordingly, the terms of this recommendation are effective immediately.

Recommendation

The Parents shall exchange all electronic communicate regarding their children via www.Ourfamilywizard.com. Hereafter referred to as OFW. Each parent shall visit the website within 2 calendar days of the date of this recommendation, enroll with and pay for an account in his or her name by completing the online sign up process or calling the toll free number provided on the contact us page. Parents shall provide this PC with Professional Access to their account using the "Permission for Professional Access" document. Enrollment shall be for at least one-year subscription, and co-terminus with this PC appointment. In addition to the basic plan each parent shall purchase the "Tone Meter".

Within 5 days of activating the account each parent shall upload into the calendar section of the platform all of his or her parenting time as specified in the Separation Agreement. Additionally, if there are any standing appointments or extra-curricular activities involving the children the parent who is primarily responsible for the activity or event shall input that data to the calendar within the same 5-day period.

Going forward, all requests and/or offers to "trade" or "exchange" parenting time shall be made via OFW according to the time parameters specified therein.

The parents shall post all electronic communication between them exclusively via this platform. *That means no more texting except for a time sensitive matter of under an hour.* Parents are free to communicate by telephone so long as they can do so respectfully and employ the B.I.F.F. and Nonviolent Communication protocols that accompany this recommendation. Should either or both of the parents at any point become unable to have respectful mature telephone conversations either or both of them shall inform the PC as soon as practicable. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved then thereafter telephone conversations may be limited to matters of emergency regarding the child that must be acted upon in less than 24 hours.

In each and every case of oral communication the initiating parent shall memorialize the subject and general content of the communication by means of a Journal entry in the Calendar feature of OFW.

The parents shall utilize the Expense features of the website to record and formalize all potentially reimbursable expenses. An electronic copy of the receipt for payment must be attached to each request or record. If a parent is not capable of posting a photograph or scan of a hard copy receipt, he or she shall mail a hard copy of the document to their co-parent by regular first class mail on the day following the electronic announcement in the Expense section. Each parent shall preserve the original of any scanned or photographed receipt that is posted.

Since all parent entries in OFW are viewable to the PC it is not necessary to "cc:" the PC on each communication. If the PC is "cc'd" charges will be assessed for the time spent reviewing and/or responding to the communication.

If a communication requires a response the receiving parent shall respond within 24 hours *unless* the communication itself indicates that a longer or shorter time frame is appropriate under the circumstances. It is advisable that parents allow themselves sufficient time to process all communication before responding. If time is desired before providing a more complete response, then a useful structure one should employ is the "expectation-setter" that goes something like this:

> "Got it. I'll get back to you tomorrow afternoon."
> Or "I'm in the middle of something right now, I'll get back you to tomorrow evening."

This provides a timely response of acknowledgment and resets the expectation of the parties.

When one parent makes a change to the calendar OFW generates a "system message" that summarizes the details of the change. It is incumbent upon the recipient to promptly open and read all communication including these system messages. In the event that a parent fails to provide a timely response to a communication from their co-parent that parent may, in the discretion of the PC, forfeit the right to provide further input on the matter at hand.

The parents shall download "the app" to their phone and/or other mobile device and elect to receive alerts about new activity using the Daily Digest or On Action option of OFW.

*In order to create a clear and all-inclusive thread for each topic of discussion all instances of electronic communication shall be limited to **one subject**, the title of which shall be included in the subject line. The "reply" or "reply all" function shall be*

used in all communication on every given thread, until the matter is resolved. Each new topic shall be given a unique subject title.

Coparents will have no more than two rounds of communication between them before a matter is submitted to the PC. When it is necessary to present a matter to the PC the initiating parent shall add the PC to the thread with a "cc:" to the responding parent. If the matter has been the subject of electronic exchange between the parents the same subject line shall be used in the communication with the PC. Each communication with the PC – either to present or to respond to comments of the other parent shall be limited to the equivalent of one typed page containing no more than 300 words. If needed the PC may ask for more information or clarification.

Once the initiating parent presents a matter to the PC the responding parent may thereafter provide his or her response either via email or by posting a word.doc in the MyFiles section of OFW. The response shall be similarly limited to 300 words. Each party may have one opportunity to respond to the comments of the other (Therefore an exchange might look like this: Parent 1 presenting comment, Parent 2 response, Parent 1 reply, Parent 2 reply). Somewhere in these exchanges, each parent shall include a proposal for resolution with supporting rationale. If needed the PC may request further input from either or both of the parents. Subject to the discretion of the PC each parent may have up to 24 hours to respond to the other parent's posting.

Once a matter is fully presented to and accepted by the PC for consideration the PC will either contact the parties to arrange for a meeting, or may issue a recommendation based upon the information received.

The PC retains the discretion to disregard any undocumented oral or electronic communication exchanged between the parents that is not documented in and/or takes place outside of the OFW platform. If, on any given matter, there is a need to include information that is not part of the OFW exchanges then the communication shall be presented as screenshot, .jpg file, or a word.doc, that is formatted to contain the title reference of the matter in the upper left of the page and the submission date in the upper right of the page – similar to how this recommendation is captioned. This file or document may be attached to an OFW email or posted in the "MyFile" section of OFW – under the "Info Bank" tab.

Finally, in every instance where your child or children is moving between parenting time with you and your coparent a brief communication titled "TRANSITION" must be shared with the other parent. This communication is limited solely and exclusively to matters of interest and/or concern that occurred during your parenting time such as 'John had a 100 degree fever and took Tylenol at 3pm', 'All soccer equipment has been packed', 'special notice in backpack', or 'homework is

only partially complete' etc. Each parent shall address the following topics – at a minimum - every time they send a transition email to the other:

For infants and toddlers:

Feeding
Nap & sleep schedule (changes)
New ways to soothe and calm child
How a bump or bruise occurred
Potty training techniques and update
Emotion/ behavioral changes
Medical appointments
Illnesses & medication
Developmental issues

For Pre-school and School aged children:

Friends & social activities
School, Extra-curricular & religious activities
Homework & school projects
Scheduled events & activities
School progress & meetings
Behavioral & disciplinary issues
Bed, bath, & meal routines and/or issues

Most parents find it easier to just cut and paste the appropriate list from this memo into an OFW email and just fill in the blanks. Short bulleted updates are entirely appropriate. And if there is no change there is no need to comment. No personal or editorial comments are permitted and no other topic is permissible in the "TRANSITION" email. The PC shall be "cc:d" on each and every transition email.

Respectfully submitted:

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Adapted from Tony Pelusi