

**“From Conflict to Cooperation:  
Supporting Parents in Child-Centered Family Restructuring  
and the Role of Co-Parent Coaching”**

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- I. Divorce Stories: Lessons in perception, concerns, and process
  - A. Divorce as an emotional, relational, financial, and legal process
  - B. The family’s needs and concerns: Common themes
  - C. Divorce stress and attachment loss
  - D. Address emotional and relational needs early and often to address drivers of conflict
    - 1. Child-centered, low-threat process meets the needs of children
    - 2. Consider interdisciplinary services to meet family needs
  
- II. The Importance of Effective Co-Parenting for Children and Families
  - A. Child development of “core capacities” and the need for a safe, secure childhood
    - 1. Core capacities for adult resiliency: Self-regulation, flexible problem-solving, executive functioning.
  - B. Effective problem solving and conflict management key factors impacting child adjustment
    - 1. Parents under “threat” act from “self-preservation”
    - 2. Threat, the brain, and stress management: From Fight-Flight-Freeze to Pause and Plan and the need to develop a “challenge response”
  - C. Factors affecting children’s post-divorce adjustment
    - 1. Child temperament
    - 2. Parent-child relationship
    - 3. Parent stress management and divorce adjustment
    - 4. Conflict between parents
  - D. Chronic parent conflict disadvantages children’s long-term development and well-being more than family structure (one home or two homes)
    - 1. Minimize Conflict: Reduces threat and increases safety and security
    - 2. Effective co-parenting: Increases consistency, predictability, reduces loss

- III. Essential Co-Parenting Skills: Strong Parenting by Non-Intimate Partners across Two Homes
  - A. Co-Parenting “the collaborative, child-centered relationship between 2 or more adults who share an interest in a child’s well-being.” (Garber, 2008)
  - B. Co-Parenting abilities
    - 1. Put child’s needs above their own
    - 2. Manage emotions and stress
    - 3. Share common goal/interest in child’s successful development
    - 4. Communication
    - 5. Conflict Management
    - 6. Cooperate and Coordinate
    - 7. Authoritative parenting
    - 8. Ability to and understanding of how to seek help
  - C. Essential tasks for transitioning from spouses in conflict to effective co-parents: New structures and boundaries
    - 1. New Boundaries: When, Where, What of communication
    - 2. New Structures: How of communication
      - a) More formal, less emotional
      - b) Business meetings
    - 3. Mindset and Intention: Child-Centered as Common Interest and Shared Purpose
  - D. Communication skills and conflict management: Essential to effective co-parenting
    - 1. Conflict is inevitable; resolving it requires resources
    - 2. What conflict resolution options are most efficient and cost-effective?

IV. The Conflict Communication Circle (The 5-C's)

A. Calm: Move from threat/self-preservation to pause-plan and address the challenge

1. Manage triggers, soothe self, seek support
2. Polite, respectful, business-like

B. Contained: Build safety and trust

1. Reliable and predictable
2. What, Where, When, How

C. Clarity: Clear communication

1. Awareness of self and other
2. Listen to promote understanding
3. Communicate clearly and respectfully

D. Creative: Focused on solutions

1. Thinking: flexible and accurate
2. Brainstorm options

E. Child-Centered: Mindset and values

1. Begin with this intention
2. End by evaluating solutions against this value

- V. The Role of Co-Parent Coaching
  - A. MH Professional with expertise in: family systems, child development, parenting, couples, communication, conflict negotiation, grief/loss
  - B. Goal to help parents reduce/resolve conflicts, learn skills, manage emotions, support effective co-parenting
  - C. Focus is child-centered and solution-oriented
  - D. Techniques
    - 1. Empathic attunement, compassionate listening
    - 2. Support
    - 3. Education
    - 4. Skill Building
    - 5. Structured
    - 6. Present and future oriented
    - 7. Supports respect, dignity, and self-determination
  - E. Different from
    - 1. Discernment Counseling
    - 2. Mediation
    - 3. Individual Therapy
    - 4. Family Therapy
    - 5. Parent Coordination
    - 6. Interdisciplinary team of Parent Coach + Coordinator

## VI. Professional Coordination

### A. Appropriate Referrals

1. Determining the best fit service
  - a) Client capacity: empathy, flexible thinking, emotion regulation
  - b) Client mental health or other risk factors (e.g. A/D, DV)
  - c) Client mental health issue pre-existing or a function of divorce stress, court involvement
2. Timing: early intervention to prevent escalation and entrenchment

### B. Interdisciplinary Coordination

1. Team as structured, coordinated, collaborative
2. Importance of clear boundaries, informed consent, management of confidentiality

### C. Power of Team

1. Awareness: Part of the solution not part of the problem
2. Intention: Child-centered and supportive of the transition to effective co-parenting
3. Professional skill level with 5 C's and parallel process with conflict communication between professionals on the team
4. Facilitating a necessary transformation
  - a) A new and effective co-parenting relationship is necessary for children's healthy development, to preserving their childhood, and capacity to develop resiliency as adults. Professionals have an intentional role to play in clients' divorce process.

## VII. Q & A



## 10 ESSENTIALS:



# TOOLS FOR EMOTIONAL FIRST AID™

<b>CALM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PAUSE</li><li>• BREATHE</li><li>• BODY</li></ul>	Reduce “Threat” Response, Be Aware in the Present Slowly and Deeply Notice Sensations, Tense and Release muscles, 5 Senses
<b>CONNECT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• COMFORT</li><li>• CONNECT</li><li>• COMPASSION</li></ul>	Soothing Self, Hand on Heart, Movement, Nature, Music With Others, Hugs, Professionals, Your Community Kind to Yourself, Common Humanity
<b>CLARITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AWARENESS</li><li>• ACCEPTANCE</li></ul>	Triggers, Feelings, Perceptions, Values Situation, Self, Others without judgment
<b>CHOICE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• THINKING</li><li>• PLAN &amp;</li><li>• PROBLEM SOLVE</li></ul>	Flexible, Accurate, Positive Assess Options and Consequences Choose Wisely –Will my action lead to desired outcome?

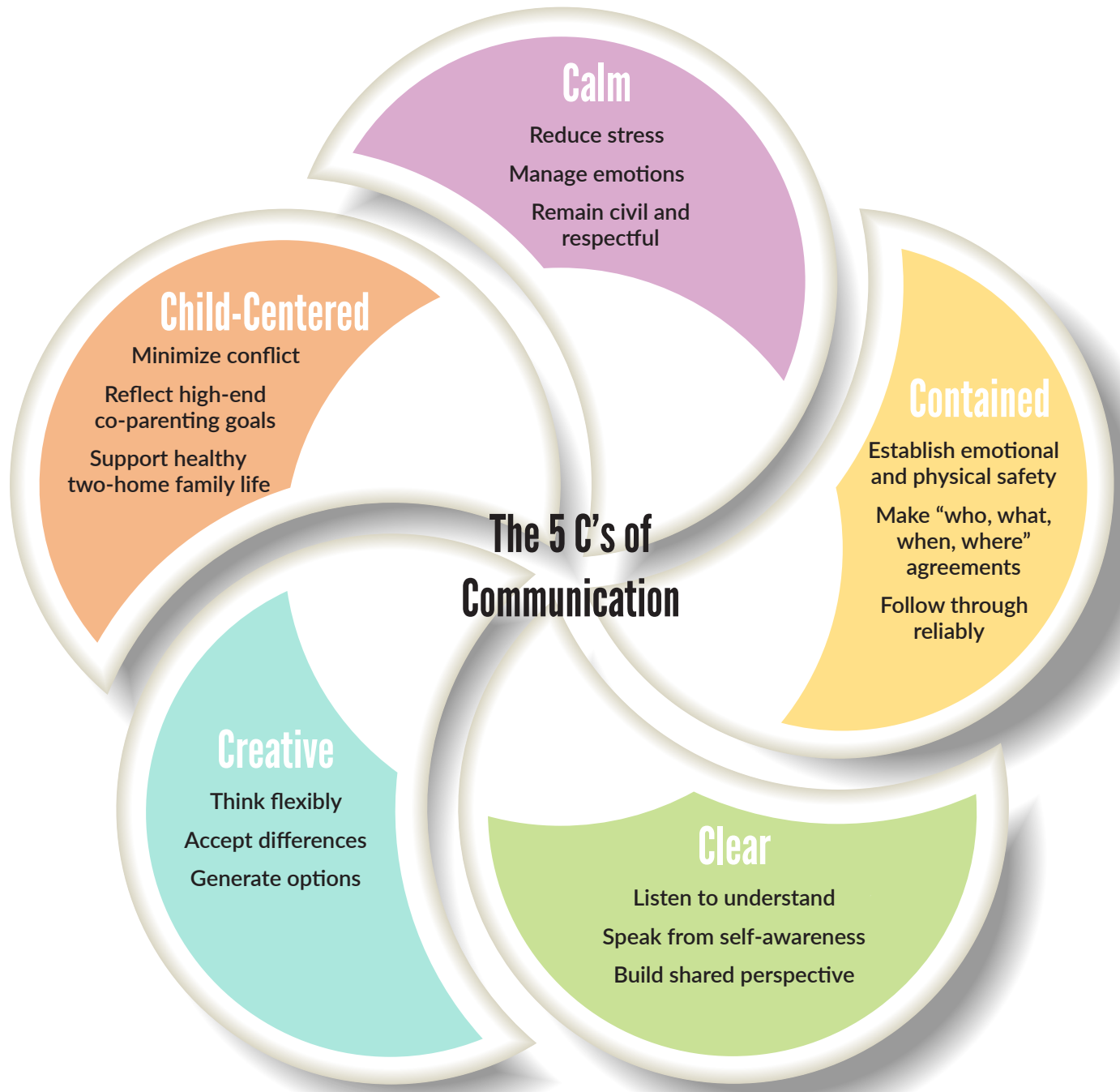
*Regulate~Relate~Respond~Repeat = Resilience*

**Lisa Gabardi, Ph.D.**  
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# CONFLICT COMMUNICATION CIRCLE



A non-linear logical progression