


MEDIATION CASE STUDY



“I thought mediation was going to fall flat on its face, but it was a really positive experience for both of us... Even the aftercare we have received has been incredible.”

A self-referral was made by Mum to the Family Mediation West service. Mum and Dad described their relationship as ‘on-and-off’ for several years until it ultimately ended shortly after their child was born. Initially, Dad had frequent contact with his child, now 8, who resided with Mum and had visitation with Dad 4-5 times a week. However, ongoing conflicts between Mum and Dad led to a reduction in Dad’s contact to only every other weekend.

Both parents were struggling to communicate and develop a co-parenting plan that satisfied both parties. Their child is very active and participates in numerous extracurricular activities. Mum was concerned about disrupting the child’s routine and recalled past difficulties when Dad made plans with their child without consulting her, leading to clashes with the child’s activities which would cause the child distress. Dad wished to spend more time with his child and be more involved in the child’s activities. He also expressed a desire for the child to have more time with their paternal grandmother and aunt, who had been significantly involved in the child’s upbringing and shared a close relationship with them. Until this point, Mum and Dad had been communicating primarily through solicitors. They sought mediation as they wished to be able to communicate directly and collaboratively create parenting plan that took account of both the child’s well-being and the parents’ wishes.

During the initial mediation session, both parents emphasized that their child was their top priority, and it was crucial to them that the child did not witness any conflict between them. The mediator helped them acknowledge that ,although they may have different parenting styles, this was not necessarily a bad thing, and it would be beneficial to foster a co-parenting dynamic that had established boundaries and made them both feel comfortable. They agreed on the need for flexibility in their co-parenting arrangements due to work commitments or potential illness and discussed managing sudden changes. To foster a positive environment, they agreed to greet each other at pick-ups and drop-offs, allowing their child to see them interact amicably.

As the sessions progressed, Mum and Dad's communication improved significantly. They reported that greetings at pick-up and drop-off were going well, and they were successfully communicating about childcare via text, with phone calls reserved for urgent or unexpected situations. They frequently exchanged pictures of their child using WhatsApp. Recognising that their child enjoyed sharing what they were doing when spending time with each parent, they agreed that WhatsApp could be used if the child wanted to call the other parent and they discussed suitable times for phone calls to occur. Over time, they became comfortable attending one another's homes to visit the child, recognising that it made their child very happy to spend time with both parents together.

Compromises were made between Mum and Dad to allow Dad to become more integrated into the child's weekly schedule, increasing his involvement in the child's school community, taking the child to peer birthday parties, and participating in the child's extracurricular activities. Mum and Dad also agreed on arrangements for holidays and school breaks to ensure they were split as fairly and equally as possible.

Mum commended the mediator for recognising their specific needs and providing tailored support that helped them move from a state of high conflict to a place of resolution. She also praised the ongoing support she received from Family Mediation West not just during the mediation, but also afterward.



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