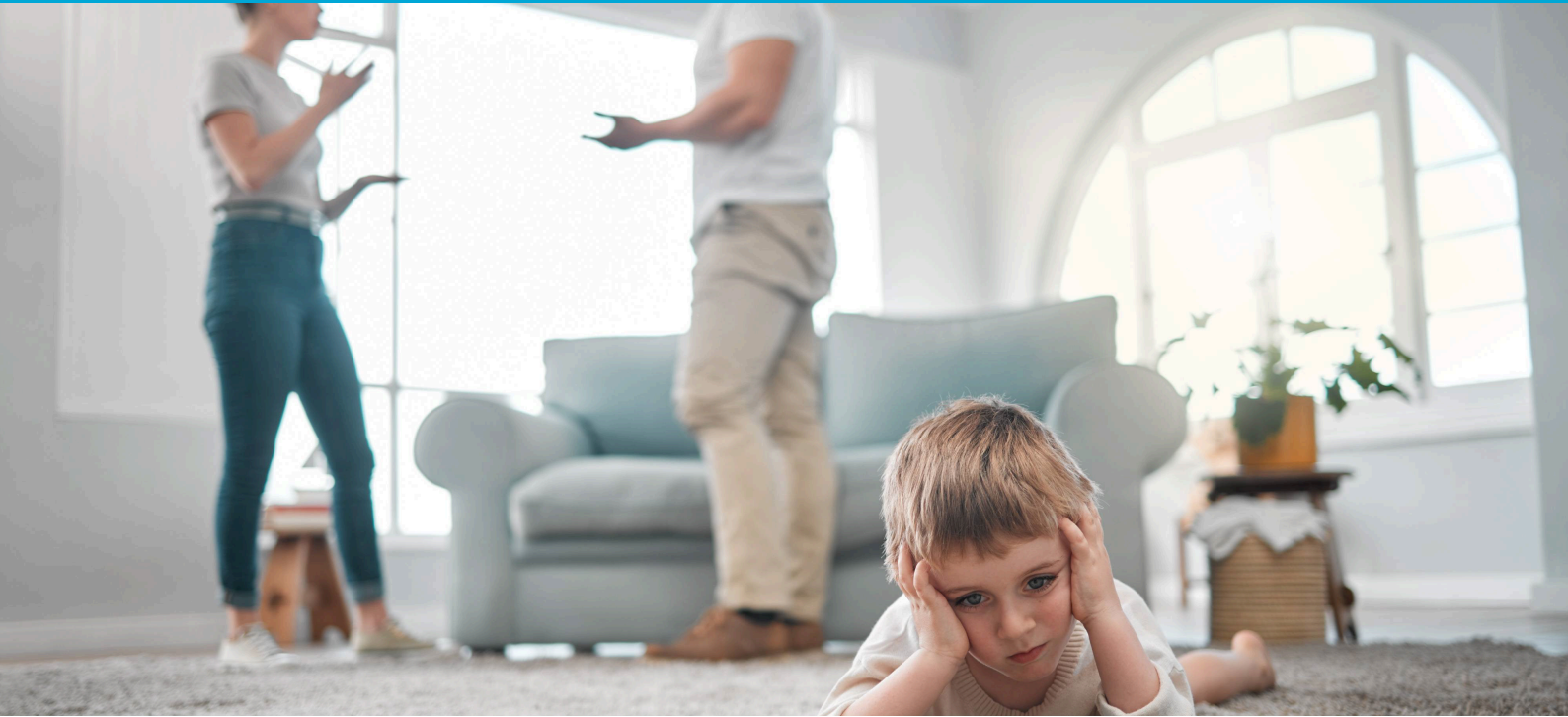


CHILD CONTACT CENTRE CASE STUDY



Mum and Dad's separation caused intense conflict between the two. This eventually led to Dad's contact with their 8-year-old son to be abruptly cut off, deeply affecting their son in the process. With the support of the contact centre staff, Dad was able to rebuild his relationship with their son.

Mum and Dad had been together for 10 years, a period marked by frequent separations and reconciliations. Their relationship began to deteriorate when their son was born, and they separated when he was 2 years old. This separation resulted in multiple disputes and allegations between the two. Dad alleged that Mum had been alienating their son from him, and he was frustrated by this. Conversely, Mum felt that Dad had not been sharing caregiving responsibilities equally with her, which had been difficult for her to cope with. This was especially a concern to her as their son had autism, and required a lot of care from both parents.

Despite these conflicts, Dad saw their son regularly after the separation. They went to the park together, had pool days, and even went on holidays together. However, this changed when a major argument broke out between Mum and Dad in front of their son with regards to Dad's contact arrangements. This was a distressing incident for their son to witness. The severity of the situation inadvertently put a stop to Dad's contact.

This sudden decline in contact was distressing for Dad, who had previously been spending significant amounts of time with their son. In response to this breakdown in communication, Dad engaged a solicitor and court proceedings began. The court ordered supervised contact between Dad and their son at Family Mediation West, where a supervisor would record her observations of their sessions in a report to be passed on to the court. Six sessions were to take place weekly, with each session lasting two hours.

Dad attended a pre-visit at the contact centre. Initially, he felt unsure about the new environment and was sceptical if their son would adjust to it. In order to ensure the son's comfort, the contact centre staff liaised with Mum, Dad and their solicitors to allow them to bring items to the sessions that would make their son feel at ease, like a packed lunch, sensory play activities, and ear defenders.



When contact began, their son was initially unsure of what to expect. However, he was always eager to see Dad, greeting him with a big smile and a hug each session. Dad was calm and patient with their son while he adjusted to the new setting and let him take the lead on their activities. They would play with slime, draw pictures, and play hide-and-seek. Dad also fostered their son's language development by using descriptive words for their activities together and encouraging their son to repeat them. He would also make their son laugh with his enthusiasm and light-heartedness during their imaginary play sessions. During one of the sessions, Dad asked their son if he loves him, and he affirmed that he did, which made Dad very happy.

The contact centre supervisor reflected these positive interactions to the court. As a result, contact has transitioned out of the centre. The contact centre staff were able to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for Dad and son to rebuild their relationship. After having been caught in the middle of conflict, their son was finally able to spend quality time with Dad and benefit from a healthy, stable bond between the two.

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