



## **Negotiation Skills in Relationships**

Few of us were raised with the awareness of negotiation as a skill we might need in relationships. Negotiation, whether between parents and children, as couples, with a friend, or with elderly family members, can turn conflicts in relationships into opportunities for mutual understanding and greater clarity about the issues. Not all conflict is “bad.” It can be creative or destructive.

### **Negotiation as Parents**

Being a parent is a role we take on. A function. A job. We commit ourselves to being responsible for another life. No matter how confident we may be in other areas of our lives, most of us are afraid we don’t have enough of whatever it takes to be a “good” parent. Using the tools of dialogue and negotiation for decision making promotes collaboration between parents which provides the consistency children need to feel safe. A shared partnership as parents, means giving both loving criticism and support. Learning dialogue and negotiation skills in mediation can form the basis for a positive and ongoing parenting relationship.

### **Negotiating With Children**

It does not diminish an adult’s authority to negotiate with a child. This is a way to listen to, and validate your child’s views and needs. Negotiation between parents and children differs from other kinds of negotiation because parents are legally required to make the decisions. The child may give input, but making the decisions is the parents’ responsibility. Parenting as one part of a couple relationship, can become a tug-of-war if parents have different values they wish to pass along to their children, or different methods of discipline. Understanding how your child sees things can be enlightening and invaluable.

Learning how to engage in creative conflict is a valuable life skill for people of all ages. Avoidance of conflict, even with the intention of sparing someone else’s feelings, often results in long term build-up of resentment or increased hostilities.

#### **Destructive**

- loss of safety and trust leads to intimidation and withdrawal
- reduces communication and freedom of expression
- generates powerlessness and fear
- eliminates choice
- creates isolation, alienation and secrecy
- anger escalates into physical, mental, or emotional violence toward self and/or others

#### **Creative**

- people feel engaged and competent
- each person speaks his or her truth; increases respect for differences
- fosters productivity and strength
- promotes exploration of options
- furthers respect for separateness and privacy
- anger directed at issues and injustices produces clarity

**Common Ground Negotiation Services**

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