Maximising Parental Alliance when Working with Children
Josette Gardiner – Child and Youth Counsellor
Our Practice

Our house of services is a supportive place for individuals, couples, families and children.

FMC Mediation and Counselling Victoria

FMC Overview

FMC established in 1983

Receives majority of funding from Commonwealth Government

Provides services across 18 locations in Victoria

6,200 clients per annum

Services provided:

- Relationship Counselling
- Individual, Children and Young People’s Counselling
- Family Dispute Resolution
- Legally assisted FDR
- Family Mental Health Support
- Bulk billed psychological services
- Financial Counselling & Financial Capability development
- Parenting after Separation groups
- Training services
Less Waiting…. Better Outcomes

For direct or warm referrals or for a secondary consultation call 1800 639 523
Parental conflict, not separation troubles kids the most.

Our program aims to improve relationships between parents and their children. Also aiming to improve co-parenting relationships.

- Engage children and there parents
- Safety Assessment
- The episode of counselling is around 8 sessions
- Parents receive feedback
- Parenting skills are discussed as identified by themes that children may bring up in counselling.
- Feedback is positive and often interactive

Sand tray play by an 8 year old boy. This is how he feels when his parents fight.
So what happens when our emotions take over?
For Kids - Flipping your lid

Handy Model of the Brain

The brain in the palm of the hand. This “handy model” depicts the major regions of the brain: cerebral cortex in the fingers, limbic area in the thumb, and brain stem in the palm. The spinal cord is represented in the wrist. From Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are, copyright © 2012 by Mind Your Brain, Inc. Adapted with permission.
For Parents – Engaging both sides of the brain.

Rational Mind
- Approaches knowledge intellectually
- Thinks logically and uses past experience
- Uses facts and research as well as planning
- Focused

Wise Mind
- Intuitive thinking
- Arrangement and balance between Rational and Emotional Mind
- Living Mindfully

Emotional Mind
- Reason and logical thinking difficult
- Uses only emotions to make decisions
- Reactive
- Tells us how we are really doing
- Uses core psychological needs

[online diagramming & design] creately.com
Messages from Children

When parents are fighting
I feel helpless and
like I can’t do
anything.

Talk to someone you know
about how you feel because if
you don’t tell anybody they
won’t know.

8 years old

If my parents are fighting I
would send them to the room
for 10 mins and then come out
say sorry to each other at the
same time.

I felt sad and I just kept
saying mum please don’t
fight I am just filling so sad
please I want you stop.

6 y.o.

5 y.o.
How do we maximise parenting alliance?
Case Study

Erin – Mother – 9 nights per fortnight
Ben – Father – 5 nights per fortnight
Conner – 10 y.o
Elise – 7 y.o

Parents separated early 2015 and engaged with SCASP late 2015

Both parents engaged well as did the children. Erin and Ben found it difficult to maintain positive communication. Both parents were of the opinion that the children were travelling well.

Throughout the episode of counselling it became apparent that the children were having a very different experience at both parents' homes.
Bringing the child into the room.
• Practitioner modelling behaviours

• Feedback done with both parents with a consistent message encouraging parental alliance and the importance of meaningful relationships.

• Focusing on what is in the best interest of the child.

• Educating the parents on the specific needs of their children from a child’s perspective and developmentally.
Encouraging Parenting Alliance – Key Points

• Informing parents as well as empowering them.

• Discussing what the parent is doing well and drawing on the parents individual strengths.

• Keeping parents in reward brain throughout feedback

• Communication. For the children to feel heard and understood by their parents. And the parents being receptive and willing to have some difficult emotional conversations with their children to help them become resilient adults.
What would you tell your parents if they were fighting?

I would tell them to be the principal of your brain!
Contact

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1800 639 523