



### *A Note to Families with a History of Domestic Violence*

If there has been domestic violence in your relationship, against either a parent or a child, please consider the following thoughts.

First, **you must seek counseling.** In our view, there are no exceptions to this.

Second, that should include counseling during—or at least very close to—the time of making any major changes in the way that you relate with your co-parent. Whether you are ending a relationship or trying to improve the way you relate (either as intimate partners or as partners in raising your children from separate households), counseling is important. This is true for reasons of safety as well as effectiveness in making better changes.

Third, this counseling can be helpful to you as you make decisions about how to use this website. The powerful opportunity in this site to build courtesy and cooperation can help many families, but it should not be used, for example, to return to a dangerous or abusive relationship or try to cooperate when doing so would be dangerous. Sorting out the proper use of this website is usually best accomplished by having professional help during or, at least, very near the time you do this work.

Counseling can help you decide which of the possible Commitments on the website would really work for you. Remember there is no grade on the website and there is no “correct” number of Commitments you should endorse. Pick the ones that would be helpful and appropriate *in your circumstances*. Certain pledges of courtesy and close cooperation may not be best or safe when family circumstances have been dangerously abusive, so choose what you and your counselor believe would be right for you and your children.

We wish you the best.

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