

A High Conflict Divorce Education Program
After the Storm: Surviving High Conflict Divorce

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Introduction

Dr. Don Gordon and his Ohio University colleague Jack Arbuthnot created a commercially available standardized program called *After the Storm (AtS)*, after the West Virginia Supreme Court asked them to develop a course for high conflict divorcing/divorced couples. Their goal was to educate separated parents on the causes of anger and conflict, help them recognize when they engaged in harmful conflict, and give them some strategies for controlling their conflict and communicating more effectively with the other parent.

This chapter will focus in detail on the *After the Storm (AtS)* program. It has not been evaluated on its own to date, but it has been evaluated as part of an educational program that includes *Children In The Middle (CIM)*, a program for divorcing and separating parents with low to moderate levels of conflict. This creative combination of an evidence-based¹ program (CIM) with the AtS program allows for addressing the needs of parents with varying levels of conflict.

High conflict is often used interchangeably with domestic violence, but these terms have different meanings. As pointed out in a recent article on parenting coordination in domestic violence cases, "high conflict has been used to describe more intense and protracted disputes that require considerable court and community resources, and that are marked by a lack of trust between parents, a high level of anger, and a willingness to engage in repetitive litigation. Domestic violence refers to an intentional pattern of coercive behavior, including physical violence, sexual violence, threats of harm, economic control, isolation, ...with the purpose of achieving power and control over the other partner." (Koch & Pincolini-Ford, 2006). Domestic violence is present in varying degrees in most high conflict families. (Blaisure & Geasler, 2006)

¹ Evidence-based usually refers to interventions that have received controlled evaluations showing effectiveness. For Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Model Programs, of which CIM is one, the highest level of scientific effectiveness is required for this designation. This means there have been several well-controlled evaluations and an independent evaluation showing significant positive effects, and the program can be implemented with fidelity by others.

Theoretical Basis for Program

The theoretical underpinnings of the *After the Storm* (AtS) program rest on social learning and cognitive behavioral theory. It assumes that the causes of conflict are primarily learned responses to frustration and stress. Divorce presents one of life's most stressful events, and under this stress many of us show immature responses. The opportunities for conflict between ex-spouses are plentiful, especially when children are involved. The immature ways many parents deal with this conflict involve poor impulse control, insufficient emotional regulation and anger management, impaired ability to empathize or take the other parent's perspective, inability to anticipate the medium and long-term consequences of their actions, and poor problem-solving. An important question is: What explains why some parents successfully manage their anger and communicate and problem-solve effectively with the other parent, while others engage in verbal and physical aggression?

Social learning theory can explain these differences in several ways. Exposure to influential role models, such as one's own parents and how they managed their conflict, has a lasting influence. Typically, we emulate the conflict resolution styles of our same sex parent according to social learning theory. We are more likely to imitate a model we perceive as similar to us and whom we respect, which usually is the parent of the same gender. A man whose father was verbally hostile and abusive towards his mother when frustrated is likely to mimic that style, unless he was exposed to another adult with whom he had a close and respectful relationship when he was developing his social skills or learned more effective and less angry methods of resolving problems. Learning theory can explain the process in which we acquire our styles of dealing with conflict and frustration as well as the process by which we learn new styles. If yelling or threatening is rewarded, such as by the target of our anger acceding to our demands, this style is strengthened. On the other hand, if showing consideration and cooperation is punished by the other person taking advantage of us, this style is weakened. Conversely, if we show another person consideration and kindness when they want something from us and this is reciprocated when we want something from them, this style is satisfying and is strengthened.

Social learning theory guides the practitioner to teach a parent better conflict resolution methods. First, parents are taught to recognize their maladaptive behaviors and cognitions. The practitioner points out the components of ineffective problem solving (such as attributing negative motives to the other parent, raising one's voice, blaming the other parent, threatening, and refusing to compromise). Then the components of effective problem solving and conflict resolution are described (self-calming, attributing benign or positive motives to the other parent, taking the other parent's perspective, presenting several choices for resolving the problem, and asking the other parent for their help). Following this description and explanation, these new skills are demonstrated via role-play or videotape. Parents are then asked to practice the new skills and receive feedback. Homework assignments follow to strengthen these new skills.

Cognitive behavior theory focuses on the role of thoughts or cognitions in mediating feelings and behaviors. When parents learn to identify thoughts that give rise to anger (such as thinking that the spouse is disrespecting them), they have an opportunity to replace these thoughts with more adaptive and calming cognitions (such as thinking that their spouse is feeling hurt and is protecting him or herself). The practitioner using cognitive therapy may ask the parent to keep a log of their thoughts just prior to expressing anger. Then the practitioner will ask the parent to generate a list of thoughts incompatible with the anger-inducing thoughts and to substitute these in situations that previously have resulted in conflict. A goal of cognitive behavior therapy when applied to high conflict couples would be to change each person's habitual thinking patterns, such as immediately suspecting the other person of ulterior motives for any request or comment. This negative attribution style may be a longstanding

one, beginning in childhood (probably by exposure to parent role models who were constantly suspicious of others' motives). Compared to lower conflict parents, in such cases changing these styles requires more diligence and motivation on the client's part, and more structure and support from the practitioner. When the attributional pattern is more recent and related to the couple's estrangement, change is easier and practice with new cognitions is specific to the divorcing situation.

Some court programs focus on cooperative parenting, that is, teaching parents to work together to resolve their conflicts, while other court programs focus on parallel parenting, in which parents are told to disengage and avoid contact, at least until the initial level of conflict subsides (Blaisure & Geasler, 2006). A standardized assessment of parents' likelihood of learning cooperative parenting vs. parallel parenting would aid in determining which approach to use. Research on the effectiveness of classifying parents this way is needed before widespread dissemination of the procedure. As of fall 2006, the authors know of no published studies evaluating the effectiveness of programs, either educational or therapeutic, for high-conflict parents. Clearly there is a strong need for such evaluations, particularly when parents are mandated to attend.

Risk and Protective Factors for High Conflict Couples

Couples who engage in repeated and intense conflict after the initial stages of divorce can be identified in advance by the presence of a variety of risk factors. Among such risk factors are:

- repeated court hearings related to divorce issues,
- family history of conflict,
- substance abuse,
- emotional immaturity, poor impulse control
- sense of entitlement,
- basic needs being unfulfilled (contact with children, poverty, feelings of self-efficacy),
- lack of education,
- cultural norms supporting conflict and dominance,
- one parent being caught by surprise on an issue of vital importance (affair, bankruptcy, being denied access to children), and
- lack of introspection and avoidance of responsibility for conflict.

Conversely, the presence of the following protective factors reduce the likelihood of continued high conflict between the divorcing couple/s:

- family history of problem-solving and cooperation,
- emotional maturity,
- open-minded, tolerant attitude toward others,
- success in other areas of life (work, relations with children, relatives, friends),
- cultural norms supportive of cooperation, and
- openness to mediation and therapy.

The likelihood of success for a relatively brief program like *After the Storm* is inversely related to the number and severity of risk factors present, and directly related to the number of protective factors. For couples with most of the risk factors listed above, ongoing work with a trained practitioner is likely to be needed in addition to several group sessions in a high conflict program.

A Description of the *After the Storm* Program

Don Gordon and Jack Arbuthnot created *After the Storm* with a similar educational/training philosophy used when developing the *Children in the Middle* program. They developed a video to be

used in group discussions with other parents, along with a manual to help service providers deliver the program without additional training. There is also a workbook for parents to keep that summarized what was in the video and provided skill-practice exercises to assist them in integrating new skills in their co-parental relationships.

Since both controlled research and feedback from practitioners and parents demonstrated that the *Children in the Middle* program was effective in reducing parental conflict and improving cooperation, they decided to continue with that approach. Central to this approach is providing videotaped examples of discord that most high conflict couples can relate to, thereby assuring their attention and respect for the program. Not only was the purpose to engage the couple's attention by recognizing themselves in the vignettes, but Gordon and Arbuthnot also wanted to break down the components of the conflict in ways that made it more understandable to their audience. In addition, they wanted to show vignettes with the same characters using conflict resolution and anger control strategies that were successful.² The video and workbook highlight the effective aspects of these strategies into skill sets that parents could learn to imitate. The discussion leader's guide was developed to assist practitioners who would lead groups of high conflict parents so that through discussion and practice, these parents could integrate these new skills into their daily lives.

Organization of the video. A professional narrator discusses a variety of topics in the video, and two families enact scenarios common to high conflict families. The video begins with a presentation of the causes of conflict and its cost to everyone involved (parents themselves, their children, and the community). For instance, the narrator lists common faulty assumptions parents make that promote conflict. The purpose of beginning with this information is to educate parents that their conflict is predictable and controllable, and then to motivate them to use the control techniques that follow. The video then presents various methods for avoiding conflict with the ex-partner. Among these are limiting contact, finding a sounding board, and separating parental from marital roles. Legal options for dealing with high conflict are also summarized. The role of specific communication skills to reduce conflict and improve cooperation is elaborated, focusing on a structured approach to learning the skills.

For instance, the video shows one family where a father arrives at the mother's house late for his appointment to pick up his daughter. Several hot-button issues are shown, beginning with insults as Mom unloads on Dad for being late. Each parent escalates the conflict, and Mom's boyfriend becomes involved. He also criticizes Dad, who doesn't take this well. When Dad complains about the boyfriend being there every time he comes to get his daughter, Mom tells him to stay out of her life. Dad then angrily pushes past Mom and her boyfriend and grabs his crying daughter by the wrist. Mom threatens to call the police, and Dad retaliates by threatening court action. Following this video scene, the narrator analyzes what occurred. Then each character from that scene gives his or her perspective of what happened.

Following the format of *Children in the Middle*, a more effective encounter between Mom and Dad is shown, where the parents use specific communication skills. Dad begins by taking a deep breath and apologizing for his lateness and not calling, reflecting that he understands why Mom is frustrated. Mom is less angry than in the first scene, and Dad explains in a non-blameful way why he has a hard time coming to Mom's house. Mom and Dad both use active listening skills and "I" messages to express themselves. When Mom's boyfriend appears, she sends him away saying that she

² Several well-controlled studies by Carolyn Web-Stratton demonstrated the power of video to teach parenting skills, equivalent to parent education discussion groups or meeting with a clinician (Webster-Stratton, C., Hollinsworth, T., and Kolpacoff, M. (1989); Webster-Stratton, C., Kolpacoff, M., and Hollinsworth, T. (1988).

and Dad can handle the situation themselves. Following this scenario, the narrator again analyzes why this encounter was less angry and more effective, focusing the viewer's attention on skills used.

A second family scenario demonstrates parallel parenting as a way to minimize conflict. A teenage son returns to Mom's house after a weekend with his Dad. When Mom finds out he had forgotten to do his homework over the weekend, she begins criticizing Dad. She telephones Dad, calling him irresponsible. He becomes defensive and soon hangs up on her. The narrator then critiques the interaction, and Mom, Dad, and the son share their perspectives of what happened.

A more effective scenario follows, in which Mom prepares her son, by discussing how his homework can be completed at Dad's house. She gives her son a choice: she can give Dad a note to remind him to monitor the completion of his son's homework, or she can go out to the car to speak to Dad when he arrives. A second effective scenario shows Mom calling Dad before their son joins him for the weekend. They each use better communication skills, and Dad suggests further communication be done via email. The narrator again critiques this method of avoiding conflict. He describes the structure of a polite request, which is an extension of an "I" message.

Discussion leader's guide. The guide offers advice for leading groups in utilizing this curriculum and is divided into six parts. The first section covers general principles for conducting classes for divorcing or divorced parents. Session length, class size, useful skills and training for group leaders, materials, funding, and security are topics to be covered. General guidelines for leading groups include encouraging participants to open up, keeping discussions productive, summarizing feelings, and dealing with self-absorbed and disruptive parents. The second section includes specific curriculum topics: children's reactions to divorce, moderators of harm in divorce, skills training, etc. The third section summarizes the video scenes and lists discussion questions to pose to the groups. The fourth section covers the risks involved with children losing contact with a parent, and how age determines how children react to this loss of contact. The fifth section covers managing anger and depression. A general strategy for anger management is given, followed by cognitive restructuring and relaxation strategies. For depression, brief guidelines are offered for referring to other professionals including cognitive therapy and medication evaluation. An appendix to this guide is a printout of a power point slide presentation. The actual power point slide show to guide the *After the Storm* discussion groups is included with the program kit.

Parent workbook. This 39 page workbook summarizes or reproduces the content of the *After the Storm* video. The first section covers the nature of conflict, its causes and costs, faulty assumptions leading to conflict, and exercises to increase parents' focus on their children. The second section covers conflict management and avoidance strategies. The script for the first family scenario is included, followed by questions that promote understanding of the causes of the conflict and sensitivity to its harmful effects. Legal options for dealing with severe conflict are summarized, as well as ways to avoid court action and minimize the conflict. This section also covers communication skills, such as active listening and "I" messages. The third section covers parallel parenting and conducting parenting as a business partnership. The script for the second family scenario about parents fighting over their son's homework is included, followed by questions and exercises that promote understanding of the causes of the conflict and focusing on skills the parents used in the scene showing a better method of resolving their issues. There are exercises that give parents practice in cooperative parenting by focusing on common goals parents have for their children. Polite requests are explained followed by exercises in the use of this skill. The fourth section covers common situations where children are caught in the middle of their parents' conflict (which are depicted in the *Children in the Middle* video). It also deals with the harm done to children when one parent has minimal or no contact with the

children. The workbook concludes with a list of recommended readings.

The Current Void the Program Fills

The authors surveyed approximately twenty agencies using the *After the Storm* program and asked, “What need or void does the AtS program fill in your area?” Responses fell into three basic categories, which are : 1) provides support to their current parenting or court services; 2) provides a quality divorce education program where there was none; or 3) functions as supplemental materials used specifically with the Children in the Middle program. The following are examples of the responses we received from the surveys.

As an additional support to current parenting or court services:

- “High conflict families need more than the one time 4-hour classes mandated by our court circuit. This program is affordable and skills-based.”
- “The need for a High Conflict (Program) has been evident from evaluations from our regular Parent Ed program participants for a long time. Funding has helped to ensure that we can now offer such a program.”
- “It assists with our parenting classes and our Children in Divorce Seminars”
- It motivates people to be skillful and mindful parents. Many (1/2) sign up for additional parenting classes.”
- “It reinforces the skills/concepts taught in class.”

No affordable, effective, skills-based divorce education programs currently provided:

- “No other divorce education program offered in the county.”
- “Lack of affordable divorce parenting courses for court mandated clients.”
- “Realistic picture of how parental conflict affects the child and the community. Very pertinent examples of how not to communicate and how to communicate more effectively.”
- “Provides participants visual/audio models of detrimental and constructive co-parent communication, model of using I-statements, goals & objectives of constructive co-parent relationships.”

Supplemental with Children in the Middle program:

- “Rather than couples continually being referred back to the Children in the Middle program, they are referred to the *After the Storm* program for more hands-on teaching and help.”
- “It was integrated with the Children in the Middle program to provide materials to address high conflict divorce.”
- “It has been a very good help with the Children in the Middle curriculum. A four-hour class needs to include multi-learning activities and media usage.”

***After the Storm* Survey Results**

In an effort to assess how other agencies and mental health providers across North America are using the *After the Storm* curriculum and materials, information was collected from nineteen different programs that purchased *After the Storm* from the Center for Divorce Education.

Respondents were from across North America, with surveys coming from Tennessee, Missouri, Louisiana, Montana, Indiana, Wisconsin, Mississippi, California, Indiana, Georgia, New Jersey, and Canada. Of those 19 respondents, 16 are currently using the *After the Storm* program in working with

divorced and separated parents. Of those who are not using *After the Storm*, reasons include a lack of budgetary resources and a lack of participants for the program. Of the respondents, five conduct the program in a university/educational setting, and two each consider their program to be in a mental health agency, a court agency, and in private practice. Furthermore, one respondent was in a hospital setting and another was in a community center. Five more respondents considered their setting to be “other.”

Results of the surveys helped paint a picture of what a “typical” *After the Storm* program looks like. For detailed information regarding the results from the survey, refer to Table 1. While one court system serves 1,100 participants a year, and one private practice serves two clients per class, the rest of the programs report an average of between six and fifteen clients per class. Approximately half of the users separate couples while the other half allows couples to attend the classes together.

The majority (n=12) combined the *After the Storm* curriculum with the Center for Divorce Education’s *Children in the Middle* (CIM) program, while four programs have combined *After the Storm* with other programs and curricula. As well, 13 of the respondents have added their own materials to the *After the Storm* curriculum in varying degrees, which has allowed for a significant amount of variance in the content of the various co-parenting programs. As will be shown later, for many who have chosen to utilize *After the Storm*, the program’s adjustability was a significant factor in making that decision.

Further analysis showed a very high correlation ($r = .67$; $p < .01$) between agencies that have in place a method of screening their participants and agencies that serve primarily high-conflict couples rather than couples with lower levels of conflict. In other words, it appears that almost all agencies that serve high-conflict couples tend to screen intakes; those agencies who serve divorcing parents “in general” tend not to screen participants. Most programs encourage attendance, using referrals from trusted sources. Since many programs are working with court-mandated and court-referred clients, the legal system often forms the basis of this referral system.

The reasons for choosing this program varied, with many focusing primarily on the quality of *After the Storm* and also having had a positive experience with the *Children in the Middle* program. Moreover, while many do receive supplemental funding, the source of such funding ranged widely across respondents, including public and private grants, as well as donations and fee-for-service. Finally, most programs hold classes on both weekdays (n=13) and weekends (n=10), in the evenings (n=10), while some provide morning (n=8) and afternoon (n=8) classes as well. Most teach the entire *After the Storm* curriculum in one class session (n=13), the length of which is often two hours (n=6) or four hours (n=5), depending on whether other material has been included.

Recommendations

While findings show that the majority (68%) of respondents are implementing some form of evaluation of their co-parenting and divorce services programs, in an age of increased accountability and interest in outcomes, it is also recommended that some form of program evaluation be conducted. One of the key factors in the program’s positive relationships with courts has been the ability to provide qualitative and quantitative data that demonstrates its positive effect on the participants, when evaluations are used. Courts are often more willing and likely to continue referring and mandating clients to providers that are able to demonstrate continued evidences of effectiveness. Furthermore, by collecting evaluative information, it is easier to compare the results with those of other similar programs both locally and nationally, and improving the ongoing effectiveness and focus of the program.

In regard to providing services for couples together or separately, there is certainly room for discussion. However, experience with this program has shown that, when working with high conflict co-parents, unless the program is geared very specifically for couples to attend together – and the class size includes a maximum of three or four couples – there is often a loss of participant engagement and focus; additionally there may be a potential increase in dangerous occurrences when two ex-partners share the same class. While there are certainly reasons that make separating ex-partners impractical (wait time between classes, budgetary constraints, etc.), in the interest of participant involvement and safety, it is recommended that ex-partners attend different classes.

Table 1. National survey regarding AtS adoption and implementation from 19 different providers.

<u>What methods do you use to encourage attendance? (Mark all that apply)</u>	<u># of Programs</u>	<u>With what group do you use AtS? (Mark all that apply)</u>	<u># of Programs</u>
Referral	12	Court-referred	13
Advertise	9	Court-mandated	13
No Cost	5	Self-referred	10
Food	4	Individuals	10
None	2	Groups	10
		Couples	6
<u>What about AtS helped you decide to choose it? (Mark all that apply)</u>	<u># of Programs</u>	<u>Who teaches your co-parenting class? (Mark all that apply)</u>	<u># of Programs</u>
Quality of Program	13	Licensed Therapists	7
Respect for <i>Children in the Middle</i>	11	Students	4
Skills-based	9	Pre-licensed Therapists	3
Research-based	9	Volunteers	1
Adjustability	7	Religious Professional	1
Cost	4	Paraprofessionals	0
Reputation	4		
<u>Where do you receive supplemental funding? (Mark all that apply)</u>	<u># of Programs</u>	<u>What setting is it taught in? (Mark all that apply)</u>	<u># of Programs</u>
County Grant	2	Community Center	6
State Grant	2	Private Residence	2
Court Funding	2	Mental Health Clinic	1
Public Donations	1	Church	1
Federal Funding	1	School	1
Church Funding	1	Court House	1
<u>What is your average attendance?</u>	<u># of Programs</u>	<u>When are classes held? (Mark all that apply)</u>	<u># of Programs</u>
2 to 6	5	Evenings	10
7 to 9	4	Afternoons	8
10-18	7	Mornings	8
92	1	Weekdays	13
		Weekends	10
<u>Do parents in the program attend together or separately?</u>	<u># of Programs</u>	<u>What have you added to AtS?</u>	<u># of Programs</u>
Together	8	<i>Child In the Middle</i>	12
Separately	9	Curricula from other programs	5
		Our own materials	13
<u>Do you conduct an evaluation on your services?</u>	<u># of Programs</u>	<u>Do you offer class in Spanish?</u>	<u># of Programs</u>
Yes	13	Yes	2
No	4	No	15

Implementation and Evaluation of *After the Storm*

One of the advantages of the program is its ability to be adapted and modified to fit the needs of many different types of programs and communities. Thus, it is not the authors' intention to say that the method outlined in this section of the chapter is the ideal way to implement and run *After the Storm*, only that this is how they were able to apply the program to meet the needs of the local county they serve.

A key component to the success of this particular program was the involvement and collaboration with the county family courts from the inception of the program. After first meeting with family court mediators, judges, and staff to gather information regarding the void that currently existed in the county, they set out to develop a divorce education program that could meet the needs of their local community. Based on the feedback received from the courts, they discovered a significant need for a low-cost, skills-based, effective, short-term, co-parenting program that could specifically serve high-conflict couples. After researching many different programs, it was determined that combining the *Children in the Middle* and *After the Storm* programs best met the needs for the population the program was intended to serve. The first five hours of the course utilize primarily the *AtS* program, which appears to be more applicable and engaging for the high-conflict couples served. The *Children in the Middle* program was added in large part because it has been found effective in creating safer and more supportive family environments for grade-school children and parents. Previous studies showed the impact of the program which includes, but was not limited to, a 57% reduction in legal litigation (e.g., child-access, change of custody, and/or child-support disputes); 30% to 53% reduction in parental conflict; reduction of parents' anger towards ex-spouses and dramatic reduction of their children's exposure to their conflict; 70% fewer school absences; 54% fewer physicians visits by children; and 22% reduction in child-reported stress (Arbuthnot, 2002; Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1995; Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1997; Arbuthnot, Kramer, 1998; Arbuthnot, Kramer, & Gordon, 1997; Arbuthnot, Poole & Gordon, 1996; Kramer, Arbuthnot, Gordon, Roussis, & Hoza, 1998; Kurkowski, Gordon, & Arbuthnot, 1993).

The end result was a program that combined *Children in the Middle* and *AtS* into a 9-hour, 4-week skills-based co-parenting class for separated and divorced parents. The classes utilized videos, booklets, role-plays, small group activities, vignettes, homework, and therapeutic group conversation. Classes are offered at four different locations throughout the county, during weekday evenings and weekends. This was done so the program could serve multiple court districts, providing each district a local location to which they could refer parents. Teams of three to four mental health professionals take portable audio/video equipment (i.e. laptop, LCD projector, and speakers) to these locations to teach the classes. Classes are offered in schools, community centers, and mental health facilities. In large part due to the collaboration with the courts, approximately 240 parents were served within the first seven months of operation.

After the Storm Evaluation

It is recommended that agencies implement an evaluation when providing this or any psycho-educational program. Providers of most mental health and psycho-educational programs have all begun to feel the pressures to "prove" and demonstrate that the services they provide are effective. The days of being able to develop and run a program with no outcome data to support its effectiveness are quickly disappearing. As more evidence-based programs are developed in different areas, the need and importance of measuring the effectiveness of one's individual program will play a crucial role. Programs must not only have an evaluation component built-in, but agencies must learn how to use the evaluation to provide feedback that will improve and modify their program to better serve the

community and individual clients they serve.

Using the Co-Parental Conflict Scale - Revised (CPCS-R) developed by the authors as a Pre-Post-test measure, and verbal/written feedback received from participants, an ongoing evaluation was conducted on the program. The first step in the evaluation was using an Intake Form, which collected demographic information to provide a picture of the population served. This information was used to determine: 1) whether services are impacting all participants equally across the demographic variables, 2) from where the bulk of the population is coming, and 3) what are the primary referral sources directing parents to the program. An intake worker collects this demographic information at the time of the initial enrollment over the phone (See Appendix A).

The second step was for an intake worker to perform a brief screening (See Appendix B) on the phone to insure the client is appropriate for the services. This screening process looks at variables such as recent and current depression, whether the parent or the parent's children are currently in therapy, any recent changes in the parent or child's health, any past involvement with anger management classes or other outpatient programs, and whether the parent regularly carries weapons with them. There are situations when participants state that they regularly carry a weapon and, when asked to not bring the weapon to class, they are not willing to comply. This can be a common response if the participant is a police officer. In these situations participants are not admitted to the program, and are provided referrals to other services. The other screening information, allows facilitators a sense of what kinds of additional points to cover in the material and additional resources that may be helpful for the participants.

The third step in the evaluation takes place when participants arrive at the first session. When parents arrive for their first class, each participant fills out the CPCS-R. At the end of the final class, each participant is asked to complete the CPCS-R to provide a comparative score that comprises the pre- and post-test data.

When possible, a follow-up evaluation is recommended, to be conducted several months after the class to see if gains are maintained, increased, or lost. Long-term follow-up, at 18-24 months after the class, would allow for the comparison of re-litigation rates. Also, a comparison group or control group that did not receive this program is necessary to demonstrate with confidence that the changes found were due to the program rather than the passage of time or other factors.

The CPCS-R

The CPCS-R is currently being revised a third time, in an attempt to verify the psychometric properties of the scale, and reduce the overall length of the scale. It is anticipated that the scale will be released after this revision of the scale is complete.³ The first version of the Co-Parental Conflict Scale (CPCS) had two subscales: the parent-parent conflict subscale and parent-child conflict subscale. The parent-parent conflict subscale was designed to look specifically at the variables that gauge the level of conflict between partners in terms of the continued co-parenting relationship. The program's aim is to reduce the parents' conflict by providing the bulk of the intervention at this level of parent-parent interaction. This reduction in parental conflict is expected to decrease the majority of negative effects on children, which are often attributable to contact with persistent, chronic, parental conflict.

³ If you are interested in receiving a copy of the current version of this scale please contact Donna Smith-Burgess, Behavioral Health Manager, with Loma Linda University SACHS Norton Clinic. She may be contacted via email at dsmithburgess@llu.edu.

Further exploration of the face validity and statistical analysis of the scale led us to create three other categories of variables found within the scale: 1) *perception of self and emotions*, which is considered to gauge the change experienced by the participant with regard to himself or herself; 2) *perception of other parent*, which is considered to be a good gauge as to how the participant views the other parent; 3) *perception of relationship* which aims to collect data on how conflictual the parent finds actual interactions with the other parent to be.

Statistical Findings

Results of the evaluation clearly show that the program is effective. In the first seven months of operation there were 238 participants that enrolled in the program. Of these participants, 61% successfully completed all 9 hours of the course. The highest dropout rate (21.5%; n=50) pertained to those participants that called and enrolled for the program but never attended one class. Thus, 82% of participants that walked through the front door for at least once class, successfully completed the four week course. There were approximately an equal number of males (46.2%; n=108) and females (53.8%; n=126) that enrolled in the program. Across multiple variables such as dropout rates, positive or negative change, ethnicity, and location, males and females appear to have similar results, with the exception of income level in which men in general report higher levels of income.

With the use of pre/post outcome measures, statistically significant changes were observed with participants during the four-week program. On average participants experienced a statistically significant positive change in decreasing the level of conflict in regards to co-parenting. Specifically, using a 2-tailed paired sample “t” test, participants were found to have statistically significant change at the .001 level with the overall level of conflict and within the subcategory of the parent-parent relationship. In addition, when examining the parent-child subscale, participants as a whole showed a statistically significant change at the .001 level using a 2-tailed paired sample “t” test.

A large portion of the content for the course is designed to stimulate cognitive shifts and behavioral changes in: 1) perception of self; 2) perception of other parent; and 3) the co-parenting relationship. Overall, the results of these analyses show that 52% to 63% of participants report improvement in all three of these target areas. Approximately 7% to 16% of participants reported no improvement, and 29% to 34% of participants reported negative change. The fact that 52% to 63% of participants reported a positive change after just three weeks of classes is especially noteworthy. Initially, it was puzzling as to why 29% to 34% of participants reported negative change. Obviously, in some cases during these same three weeks there were a few instances where couples increased in conflict, and the program may have had minimal immediate positive impact. However, after further analysis and interviews with participants, it was determined that in many cases this result is actually indicative of a positive change for two reasons.

First, one of the major limitations to this initial evaluation process was the short period of time between the pre- and post- administration of the CPCS. Since the goal of this program is to impact behavioral changes and not just attitudinal changes in participants, a three-week lapse between measurements provides very little time for behavioral changes to occur. Information gathered reflects that most class members will first have an attitude or emotional shift, which may result in changes in behaviors towards their co-parent. It is a two-step process: they first become more aware of how damaging their behavior and the ongoing conflict with the other parent can be, before being able to make the actual changes in action. Once they make this cognitive or emotional shift, it takes time and practice to successfully implement the behavioral changes necessary to decrease some of the conflict. Thus, in many of the cases what occurred was an increased awareness of negative thoughts and behaviors, but insufficient time (i.e. three weeks) to make or implement positive behaviors to address

the problems. After three weeks, many participants rated themselves and the relationship in a more negative light, but possibly a more honest light than when they had begun the course. Essentially, the negative scores from pre- to post-tests indicated an increased awareness of how damaging their ongoing conflict was on their children and their relationship with the other parent. Given enough time to implement the skills taught in the class, it is hoped that many of these participants will be able to experience positive changes in their co-parenting relationships.

Second, for those participants that made the cognitive shift and began implementing some of the behavioral changes, they may have discovered initial frustration. Some participants found that when they became less reactive and more business-like with the other parent, this caused the other parent to try even harder to get a reaction from them. This initial increase in anxiety and stress is often a natural process that many of these couples will need to go through to develop a healthier pattern of interaction with their child's other parent. The positive change these participants made to remain calm appeared to trigger increased anxiety in the partners, resulting in preliminarily higher conflict levels. Unfortunately, this process can take time, and thus a three-week period between pre- and post- measurement does not always allow sufficient time for this new pattern to unfold.

A participant that had been separated for seven years shared an example of this phenomenon of "negative change." At the third session of a class, after asking the class to share their "successes," the facilitator asked if anyone had tried any of the techniques where their experience did not go as well as they had hoped. One woman immediately raised her hand and commented that she did not usually speak to her ex-husband. However, she had needed to take care of some pressing matters which required someone else to pick the children up from school. She had thought about contacting her ex-husband and, by using some of the self-calming and communication techniques from class, she went ahead and made the phone call. She reported that during the call she experienced herself as much calmer, but that her husband still responded in a way that was unsupportive; he would not help her with the children when she requested his assistance. She then said, "Thank you," and hung up the phone. When she related this story to the class, she felt that even when she used the techniques from the program, they did not provide her with the result she wanted and appeared to her to cause her ex-husband to be less helpful and more argumentative than usual.

This certainly seems to more accurately fit the idea of positive change on her part, rather than negative change. She was able to take a chance to attempt something that she otherwise might not have done, and, perhaps her different way of interacting increased the level of anxiety in a spouse who was accustomed to their previous conflict. While the class member may perceive this as negative change, it can also be positively reframed as, at the very least, evidence for her willingness to attempt new, more positive behavior.

The following three charts outline the statistical findings from these three subscales, and provide examples of questions asked to participants. The first table shows the raw percentage of participants who reported positive, negative, and no change relative to their perception of change within themselves cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally.

<i>Perception of Change in Self*</i>	
Report a positive change	52%
Report no change	16%

Report negative change (Or increased awareness of negative behaviors and negative cognitive thoughts)	32%
<i>*Example Items:</i>	
<i>I am a resource to the other parent in raising the children.</i>	
<i>I feel friendly towards the other parent.</i>	
<i>I feel hostile toward the other parent.</i>	
<i>I have a friendly divorce or separation from the other parent.</i>	

The following table shows the raw percentage of participants who reported a positive, negative, and no change based on their perception of change in the other parent.

<i>Perception of Change in Other Parent *</i>	
Report a positive change	59%
Report no change	7%
Report negative change (Or increased awareness of negative behaviors and negative cognitive thoughts)	34%
<i>*Example Items:</i>	
<i>My child(ren) feel friendly towards the other parent.</i>	
<i>My child(ren)'s other parent is a good parent.</i>	
<i>My child's other parent is always aware of when our child is fearful.</i>	
<i>My child(ren)'s other parent feels hostile toward me.</i>	

The following table shows the raw percentage of participants who reported a positive, negative, and no change relative to their perception of change within the interactions with the other parent.

<i>Perception of Change in the Relationship *</i>	
Report a positive change	63%
Report no change	8%
Report negative change (Or increased awareness of negative behaviors and negative cognitive thoughts)	29%
<i>*Example Items:</i>	
<i>How often are visitations a problem between you and the other parent?</i>	
<i>How often do you have friendly talks with the other parent?</i>	
<i>How often do you and the other parent agree on discipline for the children?</i>	
<i>How often do you have angry disagreements with the other parent?</i>	
<i>How often can you talk to the other parent about problems with the children?</i>	

Case Examples of Parent-Parent Conflict Change

One activity conducted at the beginning of each session is to have participants share a “success” that they have experienced during the previous week. This activity helps participants gain a sense of ability and provides an excellent teaching opportunity for participants to redefine what constitutes success. Often one of the cognitive shifts that occur for many participants is learning to recognize small positive changes in the co-parenting relationship. It seems that many parents define success only

in large terms, like being able to sit down and have a full conversation with the other parent. It is important, however, that parents learn to celebrate and find hope in small successes. Parents are told in class: “If last week you started yelling five minutes into the conversation, and this week you start yelling five and a half minutes into the conversation, make sure you realize that you have just had thirty seconds of total success.”

The following are real examples shared by participants which seem to be representative of many of the success stories shared with regard to parent-parent conflict. At the end of one of the classes, a participant stated she had had no success. She later told the class, “When we made the exchange this last week, we got into an argument, and I didn’t hit him. I wanted to, but I didn’t.” She went on to say that before the class she probably would have hit him, and now, even though the couple still argued, she was able to be calmer. This provided the facilitator an opportunity to emphasize how success can come in small positive changes which are often overlooked if we are not searching for them.

A second example involved a woman whose ex-husband was currently in the military and stationed out of the country. She had initially expressed some frustration with the class and wondered how she would be able to apply most of the techniques in her situation when she and her ex-spouse were not speaking at all. Then, at the fourth and last session, when the facilitator asked for any success over the last week, she raised her hand. She went on to explain that she had been thinking about the goals and hopes that she had for her children because of several different components of the class. She had thought of so much to say that she logged onto the computer to “Instant Message” her ex-husband. She then politely asked him to call her so they could talk about their children. Her ex-husband had to wait in line for 20 minutes to use the telephone, and they were then able to have their first lengthy phone conversation without arguing or fighting, discussing their shared hopes for their children and possible ways to help realize those hopes. Furthermore, the woman explained that she had remained as calm as possible, using some of the communication skills learned during the classes. For her, this kind of conversation had a large impact on the kind of communication and relationship that she had even considered possible with her ex.

A third example involved a set of parents that were simultaneously taking the courses at two different sites. As mentioned earlier, this particular program has a firm rule that co-parents experiencing high conflict take the classes separately. The father arrived early to his second class. He appeared to be in a very positive mood. He came up to the facilitator before class began and asked what was covered in the third class. When asked why he was so anxious to find out, he stated, “My ex just completed the third class, and after our court hearing this week I approached her in the parking lot and asked if we could talk. At first she refused and said she would need to get her lawyer, because after four years of fighting for custody, and thousands of dollars spent on lawyers, we had gotten to the point where we did not speak to each other without our lawyers present. She finally agreed, and we began discussing ideas of custody; we ended up going out for lunch to finish discussing custody arrangements. She was a completely different person. We were able to sit down for several hours without blowing up at each other and work out all our custody arrangements. So I have to know what you teach in the third class that completely changed her.” The mother also came to her next class that week excited to show the facilitator the document they wrote regarding custody agreements. She said, “I was amazed at how much he had changed after completing just one class.” Ironically, both parents gave the other parent credit for the major shift in their communication pattern, but both were able to use the skills and ideas they had learned from the program to resolve years of conflict around custody arrangements in a very short time.

Case Examples of Parent-Child Conflict Change

Many of the changes participants report center on realizing that it is not helpful to take their frustrations regarding the parent-parent conflict out on the child. Usually, it seems that several parents from each class question how to interact with their children regarding certain subjects involving the other parent; these same parents leave later sessions voicing experiences that usually involve an increased calmness and understanding of their children's experience of the process of separation and divorce.

There also seems to be a significant amount of power in a particular intervention that focuses on parents' hopes and goals for their children. Several parents have described this intervention as "really helpful" in shifting the focus of their energy from guilt and blame of the other parent into positive interactions with their children. Recently, one parent echoed similar comments by other parents, describing how his young children had approached him in a demanding way; he remembered to take a moment to try and understand what his children really wanted to say, and actively listened to them. He noted that this moment was important for him and his kids, as he felt that perhaps he was becoming a more understanding father to them.

Finally, the story of one father has particularly touched those who facilitated the class. The father had been out of his children's lives for several years and now that his children were adolescents, he expressed concern about how to go about initiating contact with them, and even if he should initiate contact at all. Through the encouragement and advice of other participants in the class, the father left the session with a resolve to contact his children, and with several ideas for how to go about doing so. The following week, he returned to report that he had contacted his children, and although it felt somewhat awkward, the conversation had gone very well, and he had set up a weekly schedule to call his children. For this father, as well as the other parents mentioned here, the help and input of the rest of the class had a great impact on the quality of their relationship with their children. It should be pointed out that this is one of the advantages of providing these classes in a group setting: parents are able to support each other and provide information, allowing for a sense of group cohesion to form. One of the benefits of this process is that co-parents, already finding themselves feeling alone in the process of separation and divorce, begin to foster a support system in the other parents.

Advice for Effective Program Presentation

Working with separated and divorced parents, many of whom are court-referred or court-mandated, brings with it a unique set of issues to consider when facilitating the *After the Storm* program. Several highlights stand out when considering how to most effectively meet the needs of participants, facilitators, and referrers.

Regularly communicate with the referral source. Often, it seems that once a relationship with a referral source is established, a program only occasionally revisits that source with ongoing information about the program. Certainly, if the referral source is also providing funding, there may be the requirement of regular reports. However, in working with the courts, it was noticed that referral numbers began to drop off after three to five months. By scheduling an appointment with the key players (i.e. family court judges, attorneys, and mediators) and re-introducing them to the program and providing them with updated demographics and program performance, referrals often dramatically increased. If a program is finding that its referral numbers are less than satisfactory, it may be a good idea to present the current state of the program to the referral source. Additionally, keeping the referral source up-to-date can alleviate some of the need for participant screening. For example, by letting the courts know that the program is not intended for violent cases, less screening out of inappropriate cases

is needed.

Charge enough, but not too much. The issue of how much to charge for a workshop has many variables associated with it. In assessing this issue with *After the Storm*, at one point the decision was made to raise the cost of the program. While this decision was made based on a need to continue the feasibility of the program, the no-show rate was decreased and participant engagement and involvement increased. It is often said that people give more credence to what they pay for; so while offering a low-cost service is often a priority, it is also important to consider how the cost may be affecting participation levels in the class. As with most programs, the downside to increasing the enrollment fee is that the very low- to no-income population may choose not to utilize the services. In anticipation of this, funding was set aside as “scholarship” money to off-set the fees of those parents who could not afford the full program cost.

Establish expectations for participant engagement. In working with separated and divorced parents, two competing priorities often exist: allowing the participants to share enough of their personal stories to engage in the program and to feel heard, while maintaining enough structure in the class to ensure that all of the material is covered and that individual participants do not monopolize the time. Careful and ongoing evaluation by the facilitators is required as to how much detail is too much, and when is it helping the engagement process. In the work with *After the Storm*, the following criteria is established early in the first session, with reminders throughout subsequent sessions: complaints specific to the child’s other parent may be inappropriate; but, if a complaint is focused on a general issue that others can relate to, like problems at transfer times, then a class discussion is of value. By defining and establishing this norm of appropriate disclosure, the amount of monopolization and storytelling that goes on in a class can be decreased, while increasing overall levels of participant engagement and involvement.

Well-trained facilitators make all the difference. While the *AtS* program requires no particular training out of the box, a comprehensive facilitator training protocol may be implemented. If you have a large staff of facilitators, and you desire consistency in the presentation, it may be advantageous to implement a training program. Often underestimated is the importance of well-trained and competent facilitators. While this can be costly and time-consuming, it is also incredibly necessary in maintaining a large, quality program. It is important to integrate basic public speaking principles and skill development in the training program. Conversely, those who are experienced speakers but who may not be as well-versed in the content of the program may begin to “preach their own doctrine,” so to speak, and stray from the content of the program. If one of the intentions of the program is to be as standardized as possible, then this kind of facilitation often distracts from that intention and may work to water down the effectiveness of the program. A well-considered facilitator training design will greatly impact a program’s ability to do what it claims it will do.

The following is one example of a training protocol used with this program. The training protocol includes an eight-hour training on group dynamics, public speaking, the *AtS* and *Children in the Middle* content, and the administrative issues of the program. After receiving this training, potential facilitators then observe the class being taught by an experienced facilitator, before becoming a co-facilitator and then a lead facilitator. By the time each facilitator is leading the class, they have acquired around 20 hours of training in the program.

Funding the Program, Training. The *AtS* program is purchased by the agencies offering it.⁴ The kit is designed as a stand alone, teach out of the box program, so no training is required. Along

⁴ *AtS* program kit is \$329, additional parent workbooks are \$3-\$4.

with the *AtS* video or DVD, a detailed discussion leader's guide provides structure and advice for conducting the classes. Also included in the kit are 25 parent workbooks. Because of the low cost of the kit and no training costs, agencies usually more than recover these costs from user fees. Some agencies receive funding from the court, county, or state. Many states have violence prevention funds available on a competitive basis. If training is desired, the authors can be contacted for information regarding availability and cost. Several agencies have combined *AtS* and *CIM* (12 of the 19 agencies responding to the survey mentioned previously) and some are able to provide training in these combined programs. The authors can refer you to the most experienced of these who have demonstrated positive outcomes.

Future Directions for Educating High Conflict Parents

There are several avenues that provide hope that the resources for high-conflict parents will improve over the current state, in which few programs and little scientific information about their effectiveness exist. As programs become known and disseminated, the research on their effects will expand. The emphasis on evidence-based treatment is increasing for all psychosocial interventions. Following the lead of the federal government, more states are making funding contingent upon providers using approved model or effective programs. The Oregon legislature, for instance, requires agencies to use an annually increasingly greater percentage of their funding for model programs. As a result, evaluation of program impact on clients is becoming commonplace, and practitioners, while initially resistant, often become supportive when presented with useful evidence of their impact. It is unlikely that governments will lose interest in funding effective programs and put the majority of their scarce resources into programs of unknown value or of unknown ineffectiveness. When more programs are standardized and disseminated, such as the *After the Storm* and *Children in the Middle* programs, the research base will grow, especially if the federal or state governments provide funding for these programs. Controlled research provides critical feedback to the program developers and those practitioners implementing them so that the programs can be modified and improved.

The Internet will become a major resource for delivering future programs for divorcing parents. Ease of access and privacy, low cost, and convenience are features of Web-based programs that parents will find very compelling. Not only can parents use a Web-based program whenever they choose and in a location of their choice (home, work, community, or while traveling), they may also get access to better programs than what is available locally.

One of the authors has modified the *Children in the Middle* video program, currently taught in discussion classes in many communities, into an interactive CD-ROM and online program. The design of this program is modeled after Parenting Wisely (PW), which has led to substantial improvements in parenting and family relationships (see www.parentingwisely.com). Both *CIM* and *PW* are Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Model Programs. An interactive video-based program, where the user's responses determine the next content provided and the user controls the pace of the program, is more engaging and effective than other forms of learning: lecture, discussion classes, watching videos, listening to audiotapes, or reading books (Fletcher, 1990; McNeil & Nelson, 1991; Niemiec & Walberg, 1987). Effectiveness is strengthened because learning skills through their demonstration on video is superior to just hearing about skills, and because the parent's defensiveness is lower since the program is self-administered and requires no self-disclosure.

Like *PW*, the interactive *CIM* is on a CD-ROM and available online. It is designed to be used by parents individually, without the assistance of a trained professional. The program gives parents choices of two different solutions to the initial scene where a parent puts their child in the middle of their conflict with the other parent. One of the solutions is another poor response that escalates

conflict.⁵ The other solution shows good communication and problem-solving skills, which results in improved cooperation and leaves the child out of the middle. After each of these choices, the user is questioned about the appropriateness of the method the parents in the video used to solve the problem. After thinking about or discussing the question with another person who might be using the program with the user the user then chooses to see the program's answers to the questions. The narrators then explain, on video, why the parents did or did not use good decisions and skills. The user then takes a quiz on what he or she learned from that scenario and receives immediate feedback about his or her answers. All five scenarios are structured in this way. The program takes about 90-150 minutes for a parent to complete, compared to two hours of class time.⁶ There is an "Ask the Experts" page where parents can choose among four nationally recognized clinicians with extensive divorce treatment experience, and contact them for a telephone consultation. As need warrants, the number of experts on the page will be expanded. Parents will also be directed to excellent websites for additional divorce-related information (such as UpToParents.org and OurFamilyWizard.com). An e-bulletin board will be added allowing parents to interact with other users through posted questions and answers (which will be monitored by the experts on the Ask the Experts page). Finally, users will have to answer at least 70% of the quiz questions correctly to pass the online course and receive a certificate of completion.

Individual parents can purchase a subscription to use the program, or agencies can purchase discounted subscriptions and give passwords to parents. By going to the Website with a password, agencies or referring professionals can get feedback about the date parents completed the program, how much of the program they completed, and how they performed on the quiz questions. Agencies can also add their own evaluation forms for their clients to complete online before and after using the program. It is expected that the research planned for this online program will show stronger effects than the CIM program has already demonstrated. A highly interactive program, such as one that is Web-based or on CD, is likely to be more powerful than attending a class, so we expect that high-conflict parents will learn sensitivity to their children's needs to avoid conflict and better communication skills. What online training involves that is not possible in parenting classes, is instantly linking to other Web resources. Parents have control and access to much information on the Web, which empowers them and increases the chance they will use the information they voluntarily seek. The effects of a divorce education program can thus move beyond the specific impacts of divorce to improving parenting skills in general. This will reduce children's risk for a myriad of problems linked to poor parenting, such as delinquency, substance abuse, school dropout, behavior problems, depression, teen pregnancy, violence, etc. For instance, in addition to teaching parenting skills such as supervision and communication, the online CIM program encourages parents to further improve their parenting by linking to the Parenting Wisely online program (<http://pwnline.parentingwisely.com>). The latter is designed very similarly to the online CIM program, so parents will be comfortable with and very satisfied with the interactive format. The Parenting Wisely program focuses on the four areas of parenting skills related to child behavior problems and substance abuse: communication, supervision and monitoring, discipline, and emotional support/bonding. These areas of parenting skills are closely linked to the problems in child behavior listed above.

Research on *Parenting Wisely* has shown that about half of the parents who used PW individually on a self-administered CD-ROM enrolled in parent education classes within six months (Paull, Caldwell, & Klimm, 2001). It is also expected that parents who use CIM online or on a CD-ROM will be willing to attend divorce education classes. It is recommended that parents use both kinds of interventions, as the effects should be additive and more powerful than either alone. Although

⁵ This video solution is new and not currently on the CIM video.

⁶ Although the online program can be completed in less time than the typical divorce education classes, parents are required to interact with the material continuously throughout the online program. The more active online (or CD-ROM) involvement than parents experience in classes should result in substantially greater learning. When users make choices about the content they receive and the pace of the program, they take responsibility for their learning and retain and use the material better than when they are fairly passive recipients of the content.

most parents require court mandates to motivate their participation in divorce education classes, the percentage of those who will use programs voluntarily will increase with the comparative ease of access and privacy that the Internet provides. The success of the CIM program in reducing further litigation depends upon early exposure to the program. The online program will make early exposure more likely, as parents will not have to wait until a class is offered and can even take the online course before filing with the court.

For the most conflicted and enmeshed couples, an online program and completing several classes of a program for high-conflict parents will not be enough. Work with a well-trained clinician will be required, as well as court sanctions for continuing their conflict. Child protective services may be involved to provide temporary placements for the children and consequently motivate parents to control their conflict. The authors are hopeful, however, that the majority of high-conflict parents can benefit from these psycho-educational approaches. Research will demonstrate if this hope is warranted.

Conclusion

After the Storm is a commercially available, standardized program for conflictual parents, which has as its goals to educate separated parents on the causes of anger and conflict, help them recognize when they are engaging in a harmful communication process, and give them strategies and skills for controlling their conflict and communicating more effectively with the other parent. Statistical findings and qualitative examples have provided preliminary evidence for the effectiveness of the *AtS* program when combined with the Children in the Middle course. Participants have reported improvement in their ability to reduce conflictual co-parenting relationships and to protect their children from parental conflict. Training of practitioners to be able to deal with this challenging population is highly recommended. The authors are hopeful that much needed objective evidence will show the impact of high-conflict programs as the public funding of these programs increases. The availability of Web-based educational programs should increase parent participation substantially, with resulting increased, voluntary attendance at divorce or parent education programs in communities that offer them.

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Appendix A: Intake Form

INTAKE

Date: _____ Court Case Number: _____

Are you court referred? Yes No Returning Court date: _____

Referred by: _____ Advanced Payment Discussed Yes No

Parent Name: _____

Address: _____

City

State

Zip

Phone: _____

Gender: Male Female Age: _____

The ethnic group with whom I most identify: African-American Asian Caucasian
 Hispanic/Latino Native American Bi-racial Other Decline to state

The approximate annual income of my household is:

Less than \$10,000 \$10,000-\$19,999 \$20,000-\$24,999 \$25,000-\$29,999
 \$30,000-\$39,999 \$40,000-\$49,999 \$50,000-\$59,999 \$60,000 and above

The other parent and I were married: Yes No Date (month/year): ____/____/____

If **no**, then the other parent and I lived together: Yes No Date (month/year): ____/____/____

If **no**, when did your relationship with the other parent begin? Date (month/year): ____/____/____

Date of Separation/Divorce (month/year): ____/____/____

OTHER PARENT

Name: _____ Age: _____ Phone #: (____)____-____

Ethnicity: African-American Asian Caucasian Hispanic/Latino
 Native American Bi-racial Other Decline to state

CHILDREN

Names, Ages, and Gender:

- 1) _____ Age: _____ Male Female
- 2) _____ Age: _____ Male Female
- 3) _____ Age: _____ Male Female
- 4) _____ Age: _____ Male Female
- 5) _____ Age: _____ Male Female
- 6) _____ Age: _____ Male Female

Alternative Contact Numbers

Cell: _____ Pager: _____

Family Member: _____ Phone number: _____

Friend: _____ Phone number: _____

-----Office Use Only-----

Fee policy explained & client advised cash pay only on 1st and 3rd sessions. Yes No

Client informed that **no** children are allowed at the class. Yes No

Client informed they are **not to attend the same class** as the other parent. Yes No

Client informed if they miss the **first session**, must re-register for next class. Yes No

Group **Location**: _____ **Date**: _____

Screening call to client within one week. Yes No

Call by _____

Case ID # _____

Appendix B: Phone Screening

Phone Screening Interview

Name: _____

Client Case #: _____

PHONE SCREENING INTERVIEW

	Yes	No
1. During the past month, have you felt particularly down, depressed, or hopeless?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Have you ever had thoughts about or hurting yourself? How recently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. In your relationship/family were you aware of any emotional abuse directed to either parent or children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Was there any physical violence in the relationship with your child's other parent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you ever get so out of control that you become physically violent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. During the past 6 months, have you begun or increased the use of alcohol or drugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Have you ever been referred to a domestic violence or anger management group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Have you ever been referred to drug or alcohol treatment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Have you ever been in trouble with the law? If yes, could you briefly explain?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Are you currently seeing a counselor/therapist?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Is your child currently seeing a counselor/therapist?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. In the last 6 months have you notice any significant changes in your physical health?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. In the last 6 months have you notice any significant changes in your child's physical health?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Would you be interested in hearing about any other services available at our clinic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Do you normally carry any weapons? If so, they may not be brought to this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional Comments:

Interviewer Name

Date