



# Why is New Ways for Families Going Online?

# New Ways for Families of Separation & Divorce

New Ways for Families is a skills training method for potentially high-conflict families in separation and divorce. It's a unique and innovative program, because it focuses heavily on the "4 Big Skills" of: Flexible Thinking, Managed Emotions, Moderate Behaviors and Checking Yourself. These are the interpersonal skills that are most difficult for high-conflict parents, yet teaching them the way we do has had a lot of success. They need to learn some very basic skills, rather than just being exposed to educational information about divorce, family court, conflict and parenting – which we also include.

Most high-conflict parents are highly defensive – especially when they have been identified as "high-conflict" by the courts and professionals. Brain science tells us that when people are highly defensive, their logical processing shuts down and they go into "fight, flight or freeze" mode. In this mode, they don't learn new behaviors and instead become preoccupied with defending themselves and blaming others. In addition, many of the parents ordered to take parenting classes because of previous behavior problems (substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, alienation, false allegations) have personality disorders, which makes them lack self-awareness and more resistant to change.

## Evidence-Based Success of this New Method

New Ways for Families reaches these high-conflict parents, because it is totally positive, it breaks the 4 Big Skills into small skills, they learn in small steps, there's lots of repetition, both parents learn the skills and both teach their children the same skills. This new approach is being used in several family court systems in the United States and Canada. Research is showing that these skills are helping most high-conflict families stay out of court, as well as cooperating better in parenting, sharing the children more so that the "non-custodial" parent has more contact with the children, and the children are feeling less stress, including sleeping better and doing better at school.

Summary available at: [www.NewWays4Families.com](http://www.NewWays4Families.com)



## What About Domestic Violence?

The New Ways for Families program in Calgary, Canada, is run by the YWCA, which provides much of the domestic violence counseling for perpetrators and victims/survivors in the area. They are having good success with New Ways for Families cases that previously had heavy police involvement, a history of domestic violence restraining orders and repeated court hearings about their children. The New Ways for Families skills have helped these parents “get on the same page” in the messages they give to their children and in making decisions – whether or not they have any direct contact, and whether or not there are restraining orders and supervised access. The New Ways skills are learned with a workbook, so that the parents never have to be together in the program. Learning the 4 Big Skills helps victim/survivors gain strength in their lives and in supporting their children. Perpetrators learn that the 4 Big Skills are very compatible with their group programs, since learning how to manage their emotions, use flexible thinking and check themselves helps them moderate their behavior and absorb the lessons of their programs.

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New Ways for Families Online:

# Co-Parenting, High-Conflict and Anger Management Class

While New Ways for Families was always intended to be an in-person method for learning interpersonal skills, we have been recently influenced by research about the potential benefits of online parenting classes. (A Review of Online Divorce Education Programs, Family Court Review, Vol 49, October 2011, 776-787.) In deciding to offer New Ways for Families online, as well as our in-person counseling, coaching and classroom teaching models, we realized several ways it will be particularly beneficial for high-conflict parents and parents dealing with domestic violence.

**Safety:** It can be used in a safe and confidential location. There is no risk of the other parent being in the same class or finding out where a class is held.

**Saves time:** Parents do not need to drive to and from a class, potentially driving long distances and/or dealing with rush-hour traffic. Parents do not need to leave work early or miss work, nor have a live class take time away from being with their children. Online learning is growing rapidly in all areas of life, from healthcare to higher education, because it is universally accessible without travel, including in rural areas.

**Self-Directed Learning:** Parents can take breaks during a class or take two classes back-to-back, based on their own schedules and emotional state. They can go back over material and review it again for better understanding. Many high-conflict parents say they need more review time.

**Reduces defensiveness:** By taking an online class, highly-defensive parents (whether perpetrators of domestic violence or simply high-conflict without violence) can listen, read, do exercises and learn, without having to be concerned about the potentially negative opinions of the instructor or other people in the room. High-conflict parents and perpetrators of domestic violence are repeatedly distracted from learning because of their preoccupation with convincing those around them that they don't have a problem and don't need treatment – a problem that is made totally unnecessary by an online individual course.

**Personal Tone of Voice:** The New Ways for Families Online classes are spoken by Bill Eddy, LCSW, CFLS, in a conversational tone of voice, developed from his twelve years experience as a child and family counselor. The listener can feel a direct connection with the speaker, without the distraction of other parents who may raise their own unrelated or frustrating issues. The material is also in writing, so that the parent is reading and hearing at the same time. Such learning through two methods of communication is especially important for high-conflict parents who have their own internal barriers to absorbing information by one method alone.

**Broad Knowledge of Law and Conflict Resolution:** The presenter, Bill Eddy, has been a Certified Family Law Specialist attorney for over 20 years and is an international author and speaker to therapists, mediators, lawyers and judges about the issues of high-conflict families in separation and divorce. He brings his knowledge of each of these professions into the class, including sharing recent research about parenting. He is on the part-time faculty of the National Judicial College and the part-time faculty of Pepperdine University School of Law. Based on his diverse background, he developed the New Ways for Families method specifically for high-conflict families, including domestic violence issues in its design.