

Mary Ann Aronsohn, MA, LMFT
1910 Huntington Drive, #15
South Pasadena, CA 91030-4887
626-441-5131

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Therapist Roles in Divorce

1. Standard supportive therapy for a person going through divorce
2. Child therapy in a divorcing family
3. Divorce Coach in Collaborative Divorce or Mediation
4. Co-Parenting Instructor
5. Co-Parenting Therapist
6. Child Specialist in Collaborative Divorce or Mediation
7. Child Custody Mediator
8. Decision/Discernment Counseling
9. Co-Mediator
10. Child Custody Evaluator
11. Parenting Plan Coordinator

Dangers to Avoid when working in Context of Separation or Divorce

1. If you are asked to do therapy with a child: First ask if this is a divorce (or separation, or parentage) situation. Then ask if the child is resisting or refusing contact with a parent (“resist-refuse dynamics”). Please know that “R-R dynamics” require very special assessment and training. Ask both parents! If a divorce, obtain the Court Order showing who has legal custody (wise to ask both parents for the court order, so you have a better chance of getting the most recent order). Parents may be confused or may lie about this. If parents have joint legal custody, get written consent to treat the minor from both parents. If there is a Minor’s Counsel, that person holds the privilege and needs to consent to treatment. Involve both parents in the child’s therapy.
2. Parents will sometimes pressure child therapists for recommendations on custody or the parenting schedule. DO NOT make such recommendations (or even sound as though you might be giving such an opinion) unless you are acting as a Child Custody Evaluator. (You could lose your license over this!)
3. Don’t evaluate or diagnose someone you have not met and worked with. If you are asked to write a letter, first call for a consult with a trusted supervisor or colleague, and ask an attorney as well about if you should write a letter and, if so, what to write.
4. If a parent is pressuring you in any way with regard to a divorce situation, do not act without consulting as above. It’s very easy to lose perspective in such a situation.
5. Court-ordered therapy: Be aware that Judges will write orders for “Conjoint Therapy” or “3190 Counseling.” While “conjoint therapy” sounds like normal family therapy, such as with a parent and child, it could very well be a mine field and therapy could actually be contra-indicated. Ask about the situation, ask if the child is resisting or refusing contact with one parent, ask for the Court Order, speak with both parents, and only then decide whether it’s a case you want to take on.

And you can consult with me at no charge: 626-441-5131 or m.aronsohn@protonmail.com