

## **MEETINGS WITH KIDS AND TEENS**

I typically meet with my clients' children who are in middle school, high school, and college to learn their perspectives and let them ask questions in a casual environment. Here are answers to some frequently asked questions:

**Are the meetings required?** No, but almost all kids who are in middle school, high school, and college do participate. The kids enjoy the visits, and I have never received negative feedback about those meetings. Even when parents believe their children will not talk to me, or that they have no concerns, I consistently find that kids have plenty to say. Kids' comments and questions about their family situations are usually positive but always important and informative.

**Is there a fee?** No. Also, if you have paid a lump sum for a package of mediation hours, the meetings with the kids do not count against that quantity.

**Where are the meetings held?** We meet in my suite (#271). Some adult sessions are held in Conference Room 155, but sessions with kids and teens are in my suite because I have a room used only for that purpose, furnished and decorated very casually with a sports theme.

**Do parents attend the meetings?** No. Parents usually drop off their kids and stay for the first five minutes to get acquainted. The purpose of the meetings is to create a confidential and casual environment to encourage communication, so parents are not included.

**Do both parents need to be present to drop off or pick up the child?** No.

**What do parents do while they wait?** Because the interior walls of the suite are not soundproof, I ask parents to respect confidentiality by waiting outside the suite. There is indoor and outdoor seating near all exterior doors of the building, and I can unlock the lunchroom downstairs. Free internet access is available. Often, parents choose to shop or have a meal somewhere near the building so that we can contact them when the meeting concludes, as I cannot predict exactly how long the meeting will last.

**How long are the meetings?** It varies, but the typical length is 40-60 minutes for kids 11-13 years of age, and 60-90 minutes for kids 14 and older.

**May my child see you more than once?** Yes, as long as I have available time. Many kids do, especially teens. All meetings with kids, even after the mediation process, are free of charge.

**May my child continue to meet with you after the mediation is finished?** Yes, and many do.

**If a family has more than one child, do the children meet together or separately?** I usually meet each child individually, but I am willing to meet them with one or more of their siblings. I have found that one-on-one conversations generally provide for more candid questions and comments from the child.

**Are the conversations confidential?** I do not disclose the content of the meetings unless the kids expressly permit it, with one exception: In cases of abuse, neglect, or self-harm, I will inform you, and I reserve the right to report it to law enforcement or child protective services.

**May kids contact you on their own by phone or text message?** Yes, but only if they are at least 13 years old. If a child is younger than 13 and wants to reach me outside of a session, I ask that the parents do so on the child's behalf.

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Please contact me by phone (503-643-5284) or email: ([matthewmhousejd@gmail.com](mailto:matthewmhousejd@gmail.com)) if you have questions. My website, [www.mediatormatthew.com](http://www.mediatormatthew.com), also has information.