

MEETINGS WITH KIDS AND TEENS

I typically meet with all of my clients' children (ages 9-18) to learn their perspectives and give them an opportunity to ask questions in a casual environment.

Are the meetings required? No. They are optional, but almost all clients choose to have their kids participate, and the kids enjoy and benefit from the meetings. Even when parents believe their children will not talk to me, or that they have no concerns, I consistently find that kids almost always have plenty to say, and it is usually positive but still very important and informative. Most concerns that kids have are possible to address and accommodate, even when the parents or kids believe that nothing can be done.

Where are the meetings held? We meet in the same suite (BG Plaza #167) where you attend your adult meetings. I have a separate room for kids and teens, furnished and decorated very casually with a sports theme. If a child might have difficulty focusing in an environment with visual distractions, I'm happy to meet in my personal office, where adult meetings are typically held. During warm weather, we can also meet outside in the courtyard.

When can the meetings be scheduled? The meetings with the kids happen before the first or second adult session (usually before the first full session if the parents have already had a one-hour consultation with me). They can be scheduled any time of the day, evening, or weekend.

How long do the meetings last? It varies. I try to schedule meetings with kids and teens during periods when I don't have another appointment immediately following the session, so that the kids can stay as long as they wish. The conversations often go on longer than parents and their kids anticipate. Typical length: 30-45 minutes for kids 9-13; 60-90 minutes for ages 14-18. It is not unusual for meetings to exceed 90 minutes, particularly with teens.

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.

May a child attend more than one meeting? Yes, as long as I have available time. Many kids do, especially teens. Additional meetings with the kids are also free of charge.

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

Can we schedule a family meeting in addition to the individual ones? Yes. Occasionally, parents want to schedule a meeting that includes the parents and the kids in the same room, with me, to discuss certain issues. Those meetings are billed at the standard rate for an adult meeting.

If a family has more than one child, do the children meet together or separately? If the children are all within three years of age and are the same gender, I usually meet them together. If not, I try to separate siblings by gender and age, as I have found that doing so makes the communication better. If there are separate meetings, they can happen on the same day but are most often on different days, as it is hard to predict how long each meeting will last.

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 are not thick enough to be truly soundproof, I ask that parents respect confidentiality by waiting outside the suite and not in my own waiting room. There is seating near the exterior doors, and I can provide access to the lunchroom down the hall if parents want a table where they can work. Free internet access is also 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.

Will parents be told what was discussed? Out of respect for your children's confidentiality, I do not disclose the content of our conversations unless the kids expressly permit me to do so. I always tell them that they are free to share anything with their parents that they wish, but I will not repeat their words without their permission. **One exception** is that if I become aware or have strong reason to suspect that a child has been abused, I will disclose that information to 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.

If my child contacts you on his or her own, will you inform me? Yes, if you ask me. However, as to the content of the communication, I will disclose it according to the same limitations as in-person communication.

IF YOU HAVE FURTHER QUESTIONS...
please contact me at 503-643-5284
or email me: matthew@mediatormatthew.com

Some additional information is available on my website:
www.mediatormatthew.com