The CLEAR Framework

Five simple steps toward practical, child-focused parenting decisions

When a parenting disagreement feels overwhelming, CLEAR helps you separate the decision from the conflict around it, focus on what your child needs, and choose a realistic next step. You can use it to prepare on your own or with a neutral. You do not need an agreement to make progress.

C — Clarify the Conflict

What specific decision needs attention?

Name the issue. Separate what you know from what you assume, and identify information you still need.

L — Look at What Matters

What does your child need?

Consider routines, relationships, safety, and everyday family life. Keep your child out of choosing sides.

E — Explore the Options

What could realistically work?

Consider more than one possibility. Think about timing, transportation, communication, and each option's impact.

A — Arrive at Workable Decisions

What can move forward now?

Separate your own next step, a proposal, an actual agreement, and any unresolved issues. Do not call a proposal an agreement.

R — Roadmap the Way Forward

Who will do what, and when?

Set a practical next step and a time to revisit it. A good plan should work outside the meeting room.

Try it this week Choose one parenting decision. Write down the issue, your child's needs, two realistic options, what remains undecided, and one next step.

Important: If there are threats, abuse, coercion, or immediate safety concerns, prioritize safety and seek appropriate individual help. Joint problem-solving may not be safe or appropriate. This educational tool does not change a court order or replace legal, clinical, or safety guidance.