**Emotional Readiness Assessment Practice Aid**

**Background**

Emotional readiness is the emotional (often unconscious) aspect of motivation to change. This can conflict with a conscious intention to change and result in ambivalence. In separations parents can often be in an ambivalent state. Cantwell (2014) argues that the ability to retain a focus on intention to change is key to effective dispute resolution. Research also suggests that some of the emotional states following separation will influence the ability of parents to negotiate over children’s arrangements and impact on co-parenting (Houlston et al 2019). Early intervention (including mediation) can prevent parental conflict from becoming intrenched, however, where this is attempted with parents who are not emotionally ready this can risk further entrenchment in the longer term (Houlston et al 2019). It is argued that those who are not ‘emotionally ready’ will require additional support such as communication skills development or psychological intervention (counselling). Therefore, it is highly relevant that the Cafcass assessment identifies and indicate emotional readiness to change to inform the selection of the most appropriate way froward from the menu of options.

The state of emotional readiness will depend on acknowledging feelings, listening to others, the ability to mentalise, empathise and set aside one’s own feelings for the benefit of the child(ren). Mental health, personality, resilience, personal history and misuse of drugs or alcohol will also impact on emotional readiness.

This practice aid provides questions to assist the assessment of the level of emotional readiness that will impact on co-parenting (parenting together) and agreeing arrangements that best meets the needs of the child(ren). The **emotional readiness ruler** provides a scale to measure responses of both parents (carers) and contribute to an assessment regarding their emotional readiness to participate effectively and positively in family proceedings, leading to improved communication, reduced conflict and the best possible arrangements for their child(ren). It draws on techniques found in Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick 2012).

**Emotional readiness to change – screening aid**

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| **Child record number:** | **Date:** |
| **Name of parent/carer:** | **Applicant (A)/Respondent(R):** |

**Emotional Readiness Ruler**

The Emotional Readiness score is not to be added up or shared with parties. The practice aid should only be used to assist with FCA thinking and assessment on readiness, leading to appropriate recommendations for further work.

Please ask parties to respond to the following questions, gauging their response on the scale below - 1 being *I completely disagree* and 10 being *I completely agree*.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| I completely disagree |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | I completely agree |

**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions:** | **Score** |
| I am committed to working with my ex-partner to resolve the dispute over our child(ren’s) arrangements. | 0 |
| I trust my ex-partner’s parenting. | 0 |
| I feel angry towards my ex-partner. | 0 |
| I respect my ex-partner. | 0 |
| I value co-parenting with my ex-partner. | 0 |
| I feel partly responsible for the dispute with my ex-partner. | 0 |
| I believe it is important for my child(ren) to have a good relationship with both parents. | 0 |
| I can understand the views of my ex-partner, even if I don’t agree with them. | 0 |
| I am able to get into the shoes of my child(ren) and understand their experience of the dispute. | 0 |
| I am confident that communication with my ex-partner can improve. | 0 |
| **Total:** | 0 |

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| --- |
| **Analysis and recommendation for next steps**  *Higher scores are likely to indicate an emotional readiness to change. The analysis needs to be contextualised and the responses of both parents considered together. Only the analysis and recommendations should be shared, not the score.*  *See Co-Parent Hub in Cafcass Connect. Your analysis should consider:*   * *The parents’ capacity to acknowledge their own feelings and any negative thoughts they have about the other parent.* * *The parents’ capacity to understand the position and views of the other parent.* * *The parents’ capacity to understand the individual views of their child(ren) and the impact the conflict has had on them.* * *The parents’ capacity to manage and regulate their feelings.* * *The parents’ capacity to shift from their own feelings to acting to support the well being of their child(ren).* * *The parents’ capacity to accept their own part in the dispute.* * *The parents’ willingness to improve communication with the other parent to promote co-parenting.*     Completed by (Name/role):        Dated |
| ***Important****: This practice aid has been developed from existing evidence base and research, however is not a validated practice aid. It should be used to inform the assessment and analysis and is not a replacement for the practitioner’s professional judgement.* |

**Andy Hyde & Charlotte Cooklin November 2023.**

**References**

1. Saini,M. Pruett,M. Alschech,J & Sushchyk,A. Journal of child and family studies. May 2019.
2. Barlow, A., Hunter, R., Smithson, J., & Ewing, J. (2014). Mapping paths to family justice: Briefing paper & report on key findings. London, England: University of Exeter.
3. Houlston et al. Development and Practical use of an Emotional Readiness Assessment. for Support in Family Justice Processes. Family Court Review 18 July 2019
4. Co-Parent Hub, Cafcass Connect.
5. Brian Cantwell. Emotional Readiness: a key factor in successful DR practice? Family Law 45 (4) April 2015 p461-466.
6. Miller, W & Rollnick, S. Motivational Interviewing-*Helping People Change.* Third edition 2012.