

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES ROLE PLAY

Judy and Steve are the never-married parents of Leo who is three (3) years old. They lived together from the time that Leo was born until about six (6) months ago. Steve does not see Leo on a regular basis, he just calls Judy when he has the time and demands to “see my kid”. Judy and Steve share joint legal custody and Judy has sole physical custody of Leo. Steve has an attorney, but Judy couldn’t afford legal counsel and will go to court “pro se” if they don’t settle the issues in mediation. This is their second mediation session. The first session was not face-to-face at Judy’s request.

Judy and Steve have had a volatile relationship ever since they met. On many occasions, Steve would go out drinking with buddies and then come home and start fights with Judy. On at least two occasions, he pushed her down during fights, once when she was pregnant with Leo. Another time, he grabbed a lamp and threw it at her, but missed and it shattered on the wall. Judy was holding Leo at the time and was so glad he didn’t hurt the baby.

Judy usually gives in to Steve because if she doesn’t then he starts the fighting to get his way. It is very important to Steve to always get what he wants. At the initial intake session for the mediation, Judy stated that she would like him to have a relationship with his son. The mediator asked if Judy wanted to meet face-to-face with him and said it “would be fine.”

Judy would like a more regular parenting schedule. She is tired of Steve just calling up and disrupting her life because it is convenient for him. If she doesn’t let him have Leo, then he gets angry and sometimes comes to her home anyway and starts a fight. Last time the landlord got angry with her and threatened to evict her if he came around again.

Judy is also concerned about Steve’s drinking and partying and does not want Leo to stay overnight with Steve. He has never taken care of Leo for more than a few hours and she can’t trust him to keep him safe. Steve thinks Judy is a worry wart who wants to control his son just like Steve’s mother tried to control him. He states that he is able to care for his son as well as Judy, but she doesn’t give him a chance.

Judy avoids eye contact with Steve during the session. It is so much easier to just agree to what he wants than to argue and risk being hurt again. Judy does not want Steve to have any overnights, but whenever she mentions this, Steve becomes irate and accuses Judy of “turning my boy against me!”