

Kathleen and Paul Role Play

Common knowledge:

Kathleen and Paul have been married for eight years and have two children, Mark, 6, and Jane, 4. They separated six months ago, and Kathleen filed for divorce four months ago. They continue to live in the same city only a few blocks apart. The children have been living with Kathleen in the family home and Paul has had time with them on an ad hoc basis. They have agreed to share joint legal and physical custody, however, children's expenses and some personal items continue to be an issue. Upon the recommendation of their attorneys, they have agreed to mediate the issues through their local community mediation program.

These monthly costs for the children have been shared between parents prior to the session:

Clothes for school	\$200
Books, school materials	\$100
Mark's Hockey - fees and gear	\$400
Piano lessons for both	\$200
School lunches	\$100
Jane's Gymnastics	<u>\$100</u>
Total:	\$1,100

Kathleen:

You are a quiet, although sometimes emotional, person who is employed as a salesclerk part time. You are presently earning about \$15.50 per hour. You are tired of Paul's' attempts to undermine your authority with the children and the "Disney dad" role he plays whenever they are with him. He allows them to do whatever they want and then compares himself to their "strict" mother. You are aware he thinks you are "moody" and that is just his excuse to think he will get more parenting time.

You have always been the parent to take care of the children's needs and Paul has no idea what things cost. The child support calculator says Paul should pay approximately \$800 per month in support. Paul objects to that amount and yet he has enough money to buy gifts and go on trips with the children, while you barely have enough money to survive each month! You understand that basic support is for food, clothing and shelter, however, the children deserve to take part in the activities they enjoy just as they did during the marriage.

You helped put Paul through school and think that should count for something. As for property distribution, you want to remain in the family home, which is the only significant asset. You are willing to assume the mortgage on the home. You do not have a college degree, but your parents have agreed to help you until you get on your feet. You asked if they could attend mediation, but Paul said no. You are also asking for the household furniture and the antique lamp that was a wedding gift to both of you because it matches the living room set.

There is about \$5,000 in credit card debt, but as far as you are concerned, that belongs to Paul from all of gambling and drinking during the marriage. You have proposed an alternate weekend schedule and one weeknight each week with the children for dinner.

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Paul:

You are a graduate of the University of Minnesota and currently earn about \$115,000 per year as a city planner. You are a smooth talker and confident of your ability to express what you want. You are aware that Kathleen's parents have offered to help her with her finances, but feel they are too involved in the situation, just like they were during the marriage. Her parents once told you during the marriage that they were concerned about Kathleen's parenting. Although she is usually quiet, she is sometimes "moody", and Kathleen can sometimes be "harsh" with Mark when he does not listen to her. Kathleen has asked if her parents could attend the mediation session, but you said, "no way" and the mediator(s) have honored that request.

Kathleen accuses you of being a "Disney dad" but you just want your children to know that you love them. You aren't seeing much of them since the separation, and they cry when they have to leave you. Kathleen and her parents are very religious and believe that any drinking or gambling is a sin. Sure, you like to get out once in a while, but she makes it sound like that is all you do. Kathleen has proposed an every-other-weekend schedule and one night during the week with you, but you want at least two nights during the week and one of them needs to be overnight. Bedtime with your children is a very special time to you.

Kathleen wants to keep the home, but you don't think she can afford the upkeep. During the marriage, you always handled the finances. You are willing to give Kathleen a sum of money to set her up in an apartment while she finds some sort of full-time employment. You know that will mean daycare expenses and you are willing to pay that until Jane begins kindergarten.

The most you could pay in child support is \$300.00 per child. Kathleen is completely dreaming if she thinks you are paying the entire \$5,000 in credit card debt yourself. Much of it went to fixing up the home and furniture Kathleen wanted. You are fine with the furniture and antique lamp going to Kathleen if she can stay in the home. If not, then you would like to have some beds for the kids, and maybe some of the family room furniture.