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## DETENTION DYSFUNCTION MEDIATION

### Confidential Information for Dr. Miller, parent of Jan Miller

You are a physician at the University's medical center. You are a single parent (recently divorced) with two children, a seventh grader and a third grader. You recently moved to this city (from a more rural area) to take the job at the University. Your seventh grader, Jan, is new to this large urban high school. While she seems to enjoy the social openness and rigorous program, you find the place to be administratively repressive. You thought the principal's address to the parents in the fall's first parent meeting displayed their arrogance. It was all about discipline and bravado about the school's statistics.

At the beginning of the school year the area was hit with a record-breaking heat wave, with oppressive humidity. Jan has severe seasonal allergies and mild asthma, exacerbated when air quality is bad, and her allergies are active. One day, when the air quality was clearly unhealthy (according to the local news), Jan had a strange run-in with a teacher, while hurrying down the hall between classes. Jan is slightly built and was lugging a heavy backpack and breathing heavily. The teacher, Regi Cluny, stopped her and said: "You're breathing loudly." Jan was embarrassed and didn't quite know what to say. She mumbled something about it being a long way between her two classrooms, and it being hot. Cluny said: "Well, stop breathing so hard." You thought it was strange at the time but considered it fortunate that Jan didn't have Cluny as a teacher.

A few weeks later, Jan received a detention for the first time in her life. Apparently, her science teacher had a rule that if you were standing up or talking when the bell rang, you were considered late. If you were late three times within the first few weeks, you would receive a detention. The first two times Jan was a few minutes late, it was because she had trouble finding the classroom and getting there in the short time between bells. (Her prior period classroom was on the other side of the school.) The third time, she was at her desk, but standing and chatting with a friend when the bell rang. Jan was upset but reported to the detention room at the end of the day.

On that day, a Tuesday, Regi Cluny was the detention monitor. Jan tried to explain to Cluny why she couldn't stay late on Tuesdays and needed to do her detention on another day. Cluny basically wouldn't listen and told her she was marked for a detention that day and that was it. Jan didn't want to argue, but she knew that she HAD to get the bus on Tuesdays because you wouldn't be able to pick her up. (If a student misses the regular bus, a parent must pick them up. On Tuesdays, you work late in the clinic. You had told Jan that she must be careful never to miss the bus on Tuesdays, because you would not be able to pick her up until after 7:00, long after the school would have closed.)

After Cluny refused to hear Jan's plea, Jan picked up her backpack and headed for the door. Cluny stood in front of the door and bellowed: "Just where do you think you're going young lady?!?" Jan said, "Excuse me but I really have to do detention another day, I can't miss the



bus. According to Jan, Cluny stepped away, but then grabbed her hair and began to yank her back in. (Jan wears a long thick ponytail.) Jan yelled. Cluny let go, and said, “you’ll pay for this, you impudent idiot!”

Jan took the bus, but she was still crying when you got home from work. It took all evening to calm her down. When you went into school with her the next morning, you found that Cluny had marked her for *three weeks* of detention.

You attempted to contact Cluny by email but received no response. You contacted the OCT to file a complaint against Cluny.

You feel terrible that Jan had to suffer this injustice. It has affected her entire feeling about the new school. You feel guilty because Jan was torn between wanting to obey the teacher and needing to accommodate your work constraints. Before the move, Jan could walk to school. In any event, she could have called her other parent to pick her up, but they live two hours away (with a new spouse) in the old house. You don’t yet have neighbors or friends Jan would feel comfortable calling. None of this is Jan’s fault.

To enable Jan to make the three weeks of detention (including Tuesdays), you rescheduled patients or sent your office assistant to pick her up. Jan was humiliated.

[When playing this role, consider:

- You see yourself as a protector for your child. You feel powerless against the school just as you may have felt powerless in the divorce. It upset you that this led to your daughter’s change in schools.
- You feel that Cluny represents what is wrong with the school (and the world), which has no empathy, no caring for students or parents. You believe Cluny sees you and your daughter as “enemies” or inferiors to be disciplined.
- You want to protect your daughter’s reputation and will resist any implication that she may have contributed to the problem (even if she was somewhat inarticulate and unassertive before walking out). You are worried that Cluny might seek revenge, and poison other teachers against your daughter. You want to protect her from ever having to face Cluny in the classroom.
- You might be little bit irrational/not quite hysterical, not completely linear in presentation, indulge in bit of a rant. You may manifest upset and anger, accusing Cluny of having no humanity, no caring, etc.]