
HITTING BACK MEDIATION

Confidential Information for Emily's Parent, Pat Parker

You are Pat Parker, a 40-something single parent of 9-year-old Emily. Emily had always done well in school until this year's move into a new district. At one point, her teacher, Chris Cooper, told you Emily was having problems keeping up and paying attention in class. You met with Chris and the two of you worked on a plan to help Emily improve. It was too soon to tell, but you thought she was improving. However, a couple of weeks ago, Emily had obviously been crying before she came home from school. When you asked her about it, she said Chris had grabbed her and kept hitting her. Shocked, you asked Emily to tell you the whole story.

Emily explained that she and two other children were playing outside the school building, waiting for the bus. At first, they were playing tag, and everything was fine. But at some point, the children started making fun of her; they were teasing her about her weight and wouldn't leave her alone. Desperate to get away, Emily pushed one child and ran into the school. The children followed her. When they got inside, the children ran to Chris and said Emily had hit them. Emily burst into tears and said they were lying. At that point, Chris grabbed her and began hitting her. Emily showed you red marks on her arms and back. There were no bruises.

You immediately called the school administrator, who promised to talk to the teacher and get back to you. When a week went by with no follow-up, you called the school administrator again. He said the matter was under investigation. At that point, since you had had a good relationship with Chris, you decided to call them directly. When you reached Chris on the phone, they denied doing anything wrong and refused to talk about it. You decided to file a formal complaint.

You heard nothing before receiving a letter a few days ago indicating the matter had been referred to mediation. You are not sure what a mediator can do, but you are willing to participate. You can't imagine what a teacher could say to justify hitting a child.

Your Core Concerns and Behaviors in Mediation

Appreciation: You don't feel anyone at the school understands your daughter has been assaulted; they are certainly acting as if nothing is wrong and have denied any wrongdoing. You also fail to understand how Chris can justify their behavior.

Behaviors to exhibit in mediation:

- Interrupt a story unlike Emily's saying, "That's not true, Emily wouldn't lie".
- Listen at first, but at some point, physically turn away as the teacher is speaking.
- When telling your story, say you think the teacher has been picking on Emily for some time (i.e., calling you in to talk about her).



- State that you think the teacher is biased against single parents.
- Dismiss the teacher's explanation as "ridiculous".
- Repeat that no one has listened to you.

Autonomy: You will not tolerate the runaround by the teacher, or the school system, or the mediator. Emily is your daughter. You will get to the bottom of this and see that justice is done. You are tired of being put off and want them to know you are a force to be reckoned with—or else they will hear from your attorney!

Behaviors to exhibit in mediation:

- State that you intend to have your say!
- Threaten, "If this process does not work, you'll hear from my attorney."
- Question the school district's complaint process, i.e., "In Emily's former school system, the teacher would want to have me involved in this immediately, not put me off for a week!"
- TALK A LOT.
- Tell the teacher how they should have handled the situation.
- Insist that the teacher give Emily a written apology for hitting her.