

## **Best Practice: Tools and Tips for Divorced Parents and Divorce Professionals**

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**It's about the interests. It's always about the interests.**

All negotiations, just like all sales, are about meeting interests. And the key element of any negotiation is identifying and meeting those interests – yours and the other party's.

What are interests? Interests are all the things you care about regarding the issues at hand – your concerns, needs, wishes and fears. Interests answer the question as to why you want one thing and not another.

Here is a simple example.

I recently went shopping for a new chain saw. When the salesman asked what I had in mind, I replied: "I want one with the best safety features, a good repair record, and capable of handling logs and trees up to about 18" in diameter. I will only use it four or five times a year – so I don't need the more expensive professional grade models for daily use."

Those were my interests: safety, reliability, capability, and cost. Easy enough.

But negotiating a parenting plan or settling a dispute with an ex-spouse evokes many more emotions than making most purchases. And it is when we become highly emotional – particularly when we are anxious or afraid – that we tend to demand concessions to our proposals rather than a thoughtful, reflective discussion about what each of us is interested in accomplishing.

The result? Thinking narrows. Creative solutions are ignored. Working partners become competitive opponents. Someone wins. Someone loses.

Don't forget:

***It's about the interests. It's always about the interests.***