



**This post is about strategies for getting what we need from a very broken system.**

I don't think anyone who has encountered the family court and Child Protective Services system would say that it functions well. But what I am looking for are ways that it can be navigated—ways that we can approach these institutions and get as much as we can from them that actually help our situation. I am sure there are corrupt people, but I am going to go with the assumption that not everything is set in stone from the beginning and we do have things we can do.

In my post [Putting out the Fire with Gasoline](#), I touched on the importance of not feeding the alienator with getting emotional. I am seeing this as a theme all through this process. Getting upset does nothing but entrench what doesn't work well already into getting worse. Not to say there isn't a time and place for displaying emotion, but the court or CPS system is NOT it.

We (my ex and I) had a parenting plan meeting. I was fortunate enough to have a support person there who helped me keep calm throughout the process. He is familiar with CPS in particular and said afterwards that my affect was probably one of the biggest deciding factors in the outcome.

## Here's what I learned:

1. **Know what you want before you go in.** I had to listen to them say things about me I knew weren't true. It is counterproductive to try and convince them why they are wrong. I am not saying don't address things you think are inaccurate, just don't mistake convincing them they are wrong with the goals you are after.
2. **Go slow and stay calm.** If you're like me you may get riled up, especially when you know what's been going on and the crap the other parent has been pulling. I practiced for a week speaking at 1/2 the speed I normally talk at to make sure I was coming across calm and measured. I probably slowed down 1/3 in the meeting but even that was dramatic.
3. **Be cooperative.** Right or wrong, if you try to correct the system's flaws you will do little more than put the system in defensive mode. Find out what they need you to do that you can show, then do it. Give them what they want and keep your child in your life OR try and show you're right and risk losing them.
4. **Go above and beyond.** I am doing 2 activities above what they are requiring to show I am committed to making the changes they want to see. Show you're willing to go all in.
5. **Remember that these are people, not a "system".** These people there have to cover their asses, and will err on the side of caution. They also can't tell if a fighting couple is just really angry with each other or if it represents a true danger to the child. If you don't get upset when your ex gets upset, it can't escalate. Staying calm de-escalates everything. And, it is likely some workers, if not most, are there because of personal experiences and are likely already wired to overreact to stress and tension. Refer to point #2.

## [<< "Unfounded" Part 1](#)

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