**FAQ’s**

**What is Mediation?**

Divorce mediation is a voluntary, non-adversarial process in which I, as a specially trained mediator, facilitate your conversation, help you hear each other in a new way, and guide you through the agreements needed to complete your divorce filing. When there are children involved, the primary focus is on their best interests, and work together to make the most of your financial resources. You'll decide things like [property distribution](http://family-law.lawyers.com/divorce/Yours-or-Mine-Dividing-Property-During-Divorce.html), [child support](http://family-law.lawyers.com/child-support/The-Importance-of-Child-Support.html), [parenting](http://family-law.lawyers.com/child-custody/Child-Custody-and-Child-Visitation-Terms-To-Know.html) time, and [spousal](http://family-law.lawyers.com/spousal-support/Alimony-and-Spousal-Support-Theres-No-One-Size-Fits-All-Answer.html) maintenance, if appropriate.

**Why Should I Consider Mediation For My Divorce?**

Mediation allows you and your spouse to take control of planning your lives, in an environment conducive to making good decisions about your future. It is especially beneficial for parents, as you will need to continue making joint decisions about your children well into the future. Parents who mediate their dissolution have been found to have better long term relationships with each other and their children. The decision-making process used in mediation can set the stage for successful future communications. Also, mediated settlements have a consistently higher compliance rate because you have created your agreement.

**What Does a Mediator Do?**

My job as your mediator is to create a safe environment for you and your spouse to communicate with each other and reach agreements. As mediator I am a neutral facilitator. I won’t give you legal advice or favor one spouse's preferences or desires over those of the other. Mediation provides a safe, confidential environment for you to share information with one another, to discuss, analyze and explore creative and alternative solutions. I encourage you to stay focused on the future, rather than what went wrong. We start with determining what your needs are and are then devising a plan on how to get there, making the most of the resources you have. Children need two happy successful parents.

**Do I need a Lawyer for Mediation?**

No, an attorney is not required. You may even choose to file your documents on your own (pro se) I can connect you to information about how to do that successfully.

At times, it can be helpful to use an attorney as an advisor. If you and your spouse disagree about a particular issue it can be helpful to ask an attorney what the court is likely to do in your situation. Knowing your best and worst case scenario can help you negotiate the best outcome with your spouse. You may also choose to have an attorney review your agreements prior to signing and/or prepare and file your final documents. I partner with a paralegal and attorneys who offer a reduced rate for clients who have mediated agreements.

**How does mediation differ from litigation?**

Litigation tends to be an adversarial process that puts you and your spouse on opposite sides of the table. You are advised to ask for more than you want with the hopes of negotiating down. This escalates conflict and causes couples to polarize and take unwinnable positions. If you can’t come to agreement the court decides often leaving both of you feeling like you have lost. Mediation helps you speak honestly about what you need, put your children first, and make the most of limited resources. You maintain control of the process and work with your spouse to create a parenting plan which honors both of your relationships with your child(ren) and fits your family’s unique needs.

**How long does divorce mediation take?**

The amount of time it takes to complete divorce mediation depends upon the level of conflict and the particular needs of each family. On average, 2 joint sessions for a divorce without minor children and 3 sessions for divorce with minor children will complete a divorce with minimal to mid-level conflict. I recommend at least a week between sessions in order for you to have time to process the work that you are doing. Often parents choose to take more time before completing the paperwork in order to ‘test drive’ the parenting plan before submitting it to court. Written Agreements are ready for your review within 1 week of your session.

The State of Washington has a mandatory 90 day waiting period for finalizing your divorce. You can file to begin the clock and mediate within the 90 days or you may file once mediation is complete.

**What does mediation cost?**

Mediation is a fraction of the cost of court battles. And we want you to know the full cost of mediation going in. We offer a flat fee which includes private meetings, joint sessions, mediated agreements and all phone calls and email correspondence. Our fee for a divorce with minor children is $1,880.00 and without is $1,230.00. We offer 3 payment options. Court and filing fees are not included. The court charges $314.00 and the cost of filing your mediated agreements ranges from $0 if you do it yourself to $600.00 if you work with one of our referral partners.

**Are there situations when divorce mediation is not recommended?**

Yes. Divorce mediation is not appropriate for all couples. For example, divorce mediation is not recommended in situations involving domestic violence. It is also not appropriate when one spouse is unable to advocate for themselves or to follow the agreements that they make, due to mental illness or addiction.

**What if We Can't Agree on All Issues?**

At the beginning of the divorce process, fear and hurt can make it feel like there are things that you won’t be able to agree upon. Once we begin to work through the things that you do agree on, couples often find that they agree on more than they thought and this helps them resolve their initial concerns and come to agreement on the challenging items. If you can’t agree on everything, we will prepare your agreements based on what you do agree. That way you maintain control of those decisions and a judge will only address the issues on which you disagree, saving you time and money.

**We Don't Get Along Well - How Can We Possibly Mediate?**

The most difficult time in the divorce process is at the very beginning. You may be feeling angry, hurt, and/or scared and that makes you question whether you can do this without an advocate. I have extensive training and experience in assisting couples who have high emotions but who still would like to work things out peacefully. Once you get into the mediation process things begin to feel a little less out of control, which helps you calm down and work together, focusing on the needs of your children.

**How to Choose a Mediator**

It is critical that you work with someone that you like and trust. Talk to the mediator prior to hiring them. Make sure that they are certified, have been mediating divorce for some time, and that divorce is a significant percentage of their practice. Make sure that you know the total cost of working with them: estimated number of sessions, document preparation fees, charges for phone calls and emails. Can they prepare filing documents for you? If not, what is the additional cost?

**Do you have questions that weren’t answered here? Feel free to call or email me!**

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