

## **Three Reasons Why Child Custody Mediation Is For You and Your Children's Best Interest**

Divorce is never an easy option and many couples avoid the decision for too long, trying, for all the right reasons, to make things work. Often one of the main 'right reasons' is the children the couple share, in the belief that a stable, traditional nuclear family is always a better option than divorce. People see divorce as a failure. This can lead to prolonging a bad situation; the fact is, it's better for children to see their parents working together in a civil and respectful fashion apart than it is for them to see their parents in bitter conflict together. That's where mediation comes into play.

If the spouses agree to attempt an amicable dissolution – the so-called 'good divorce' – involving mediation, there are clear benefits for any children involved:

1. Custody and visitation decisions can be made by the family, not the court.

The court will seek the best interests of the child and assign custody based on the information available. Data points never tell the entire story, however. If the parents are able to negotiate in good faith and acknowledge each other's role and value in raising their children, they can craft a custody arrangement that stems from the intimate knowledge of their children's needs and desires.

2. Children are insulated from further conflict.

Mediation, when entered into sincerely, immediately transforms an atmosphere of constant tension into one of cooperation. While the events may still be upsetting or traumatizing to children – who are almost always emotionally unprepared for divorce – at least they will be calm, with disagreements and conflicts resolved in the mediation process instead of through emotionally-charged arguments.

3. Mediation maintains the parent-child relationship.

Too often in disputed custody cases the children are asked to make decisions and choices, or to render opinions they are not emotionally developed enough to handle. Mediation keeps the decision-making in the hands of the parents, where the children expect it to be. Even if they are unhappy with specific decisions or the overall situation, this maintains the natural balance of power in the family and this is much healthier than asking young children to make decisions they are totally unprepared to make.

When children are involved in a divorce, mediation becomes even more relevant. Any responsible parent involved in a separation from their spouse must at least consider the benefits of an attempt at mediation, if only to protect their children from the unfortunate side effects of a bitter custody dispute.