

Taking the Sting Out of Divorce with Mediation

Even when the dubious adjective 'amicable' is appended to it, divorce is rarely easy and never enjoyable. Divorce always represents the end of something, and that usually means there was a happier time, a beginning when everything seemed wonderful and plans were made. Divorce usually means those plans never came to fruition and along the way emotions have soured and where there was once affection and mutual support there is often antagonism and spite.

It's certainly not uncommon for couples undergoing a separation to have extreme difficulties communicating. A common pattern is agreeing to talk calmly and then falling into familiar angry ruts when actually in the same room. This causes an endless cycle of unproductive and often hurtful arguments that get nowhere. At the same time, many couples are reluctant to take their divorce to the courts because the process is very slow, extending everyone's misery. For couple who are filled with personal resentments and what feels like perfectly justified anger, the idea of allowing a faceless court system to grind away at the proceedings for months (a typical courtroom divorce takes 450 days) is simply intolerable.

That's where mediation comes in. Mediation's strengths in divorce situations are manifold:

It's Mutual. Often in divorce the negative feelings and resentments make any discussion a quick trip into argument and inflamed emotions, and it can feel like the two parties are always on opposite sides of every issue. Mediation is a mutual agreement, meaning it begins in a spirit of resolution and cooperation and carries that spirit throughout.

It's Fast. Mediation cuts the resolution time frame from 450 days on average to 110 days on average. It's also much more affordable; a typical divorce in the courts costs upwards of \$10,600, versus just \$800 for mediation cases.

It's Non-confrontational. Courts exacerbate existing divisions between people because they are by their very nature confrontational. There are sides and strategies, and someone must win and someone must lose. Mediation removes that structure and concentrates instead on finding common ground with a trained, experienced and objective mediation specialist guiding the way.

Not everyone is destined to remain friends after divorce or even enjoy each other's company. But this doesn't mean divorce has to become an emotional warfare. If the inevitable has come to your marriage and you struggle to have a civil conversation with your partner, mediation may be the ideal way to find solutions without going to war.