

Is Divorce Mediation Right For You?

By Tom Norton, CPA, CDFA

If you would like reduce both the cost and conflict in your divorce, you should at least consider mediation.

In mediation, you and your spouse meet with a neutral third party who helps you come to an agreement. The mediator is not an arbitrator, however, which means they won't make decisions for you. Rather, they help the two of you structure your own mutually acceptable divorce settlement.

You typically meet with the mediator in a series of meetings over a period of one to six months. Each meeting is about two hours long and can be scheduled weekly, every other week, or on any other time table that works for you, your spouse and the mediator.

Sometimes courts will require mediation in a divorce. Usually only two to four hours is mandated, though, which is almost never enough time to get the job done. But what those sessions can do is let you sample the mediation process to see if it is right for you.

In addition to the mediator, you should hire a divorce lawyer. While the lawyer will not usually attend the mediation sessions, they will be a resource for you in between meetings, and will look over the final agreement to make sure you're not agreeing to something foolish.

Speaking of agreeing to something foolish, the biggest knock on mediation is that an assertive, domineering personality can sometimes take advantage of a passive, obedient spouse. That's why having a good attorney is important, as is knowing yourself and your spouse.

By increasing the amount of time negotiating directly with your spouse (with the mediator's help), you automatically reduce attorney's fees for both of you. You also avoid much of the nastiness involved in a trial. That makes mediation a lower-stress, cost-effective alternative to a traditional litigated divorce.

For more information:

www.mediate.com
[The Divorce Financial Survival Series](#)