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Thinking About Divorce Or Ending Your Relationship? What Do You Do First? Do You Know Your Options?

By Susan Murphy-Milano

What is a mediator? It is a neutral person. They do not take sides and they are not there to be your marriage therapist. Their goal is to assist you by removing the drama and tension often associated with a long drawn out court battle. In fact, they are not even allowed to give you legal advice. The mediator begins, by meeting each party separately. You fill out questions and provide financial information. In addition, you list concerns over custody and parenting issues.

After the initial meeting, you will then meet with the mediator together and work out issues so that you can come up with an agreement that serves you both. That agreement is then submitted to the courts for final review usually by a judge. (States vary on this, so please check your local statutes.)

The goal of mediation is to not place any blame in the marriage, but rather promote and plan for a healthy future for you, your spouse, and your children. You create the divorce agreement between the two of you with the assistance of the mediator not the courts.

Before you say, "I am not interested in doing that, I want to hire a lawyer," you should seek consultation with a lawyer to understand your options. A lawyer can review the documents drawn up by a mediator and make changes and suggestions before it is submitted to the courts.

Have you ever sat in on a divorce trial? The answer most likely is no. Before you make that all important-life changing decision, why don't you go your local courthouse to family court or domestic relations (whatever it may be called in your area) and sit through a morning or afternoon of court calls and/or hearings of others going through a divorce. It is not a pretty site, especially if there is a lot of tension between the divorcing parties, the lawyers, and the judge. As you view the court process, try and picture yourself sitting there with your lawyer and your spouse sitting with their lawyer. Observe the fact that these two intelligent people have hired complete strangers to argue what can become "unimportant stuff" and a court reporter is taking down every word said for the court that will then become public record. Do you really want to participate in ending your marriage that way? Some of those people in court have been there a years or more and still are not divorced. Why? Because they

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could not resolve their own issues during their marriage. They are stubborn, angry, or want revenge. In the end, it is the judge—another—stranger—who will decide the final outcome of who gets what and when you and your former spouse may see the children. You ultimately DO Not get to decide.

Many lawyers now offer Divorce Mediation as part of their services. They, however, are not allowed to give legal advice. They are bound by the same rules as a mediator, and must remain neutral in the process.

No matter what, it is best to consult with a lawyer before an agreement is finalized to have that person review and make any changes before an agreement is finalized.

Understanding the Benefits of Mediation in Divorce:

A mediator does not represent either party. Rather, a mediator creates a cooperative environment when both you and your spouse can work together to reach an agreement on the terms of your

divorce. Both you and your spouse have the right to also consult individually with an attorney during this process. Once the agreement is reached, the mediator will write up the agreement into a document where both you and your spouse will then be able to file the document with additional court papers to obtain a divorce.

This process only works if both you and your spouse are willing to make a full financial disclosure, and if you both are willing to make a good faith effort to reach an agreement.

The benefits of mediation are:

ü Lower cost because this process is less time consuming. The amount of time involved to reach an agreement varies based on the level of conflict, the number of issues and the complexity of both your finances. A typical mediation where both you and your spouse agree typically takes approximately 10 hours.

ü Less painful for you children because you avoid the long court process and litigation involved with ending your marriage.

ü Mediated settlements can be prepared by a lawyer or a certified divorce mediator.

ü The benefit to a mediator is when you and your spouse have reached an agreement on all issues, and you simply are looking for the most inexpensive and yet professional completing the necessary paperwork to finalize your divorce.

Hiring a Qualified Mediator:

- Call your local County Clerks Office and ask for a list of mediators in your area.
- Check the yellow pages under "Divorce Mediation"

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- Make sure whomever you choose has been mediating for at least 3 years.
- Ask for a list of references.
- Ask for a fee agreement in writing once you have selected someone.
- Consult with a lawyer before an agreement is finalized to have them review and make any changes to the document.

Ending a Relationship is not an easy road to travel. It is survivable if you are willing to do the work necessary to move on with your life. You will make it.

Susan Murphy–Milano, respected Author and Nationally recognized relationship expert has just released her new book "Moving Out Moving On" when a relationship goes wrong. Her book focuses on protecting yourself legally, emotionally and physically. She is also the author of "Defending Our Lives" published by Double Day Books.

Deciding on Divorce: How to know you are making the right choice

By Kyle Chambers

It's a well known fact that in this day and age most marriages end up in divorce. When confronted with the possibility of "throwing a relationship away", you'll probably experience a lot of stress. There are some things you can do to decide if you are in the wrong relationship and if you need to get out.

I have written a few tips and guidelines to help you decide if you are making the right choice when it comes to divorce. This list is just a few key points that I think will help you. The list is not meant to be a complete list of all the steps you need to take, but will give you "food for thought".

1. Is your partner/spouse abusive? If your significant other has abused you in the past, they probably will do so again in the future. If you are in a situation where you continue to be abused you need to **GET OUT IMMEDIATELY!** Abuse usually gets worse over time. Even though it may be difficult to leave, there are many resources and support systems for battered people.

2. Has your partner cheated on you? For some people this is unforgivable. If your partner has cheated on you you need to decide if you will be able to forgive them or not. Be honest with yourself. If you know in your heart of hearts that you will never be able to forgive them – you need to end the relationship.

3. Does your partner make more money than you? Perhaps you would have a better life if you left. If your partner makes more money than you, chances are you'll get a nice alimony (and child support if you have kids) – when you combine that with your own salary you could have a better life. There are some secrets to getting more money from your divorce and also saving on the costs. If you want to be ruthless and get everything you can from your divorce you will have to find the right Divorce Method.

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4. Are you happy in the relationship? Sit back for a moment and think to yourself "Am I happy in my relationship?" If you are happy, then great! If you're not happy then you need to ask another question. Ask yourself "Can I forsee myself ever being happy in this relationship?" If you can see yourself being happy if some small changes are made, then it might be worth your effort to get marital counselling. I want to mention here that the small changes must come from inside you. You do not have the power to change anyone else (including your spouse). If can't see yourself EVER being happy you should probably get out of the relationship.

5. Is there anything wrong with Divorce? This is a moral decision you need to decide for YOURSELF. When people are confronted with the possibility of divorce, they usually think about how other people will judge them morally if they get divorced. You need to decide for yourself. Forget about what your parents, priest, minister, rabbi, friends, co-workers, etc.. think about the moral decision for divorce. Take the time to think to yourself "Based on my experiences in my life, Would it be morally 'wrong' to get divorced?" This may be a hard decision for you to make, but you need to make it. You should not do something that you believe is morally wrong. You also shouldn't be obligated to not do something that you want to do if you think it is morally acceptable.

I hope these 5 points have given you some resources that you can decide if you need to get divorced or not. The decision to divorce is never easy, but you do have options. You need to be able to look at your life as whole and decide if it is good or bad. You also need to look at every possible aspect of your relationship with your spouse and see if the good outweighs the bad, or if the bad outweighs the good. Sometimes your judgement is clouded when you only focus on the good or only on the bad. The bottom line is to do what you need to do to have a more fulfilling and happy life.

Good Luck in Life,

Kyle Chambers

Kyle Chambers is a specialist at getting the most financially and mentally out of your divorce. Hundreds of people have already benefitted by little-known tricks in getting more money, custody rights, and just about everything else you want from your divorce. To get the most out of your divorce go to

Deciding on Divorce: How to know you are making the right choice

When To Use A Divorce Lawyer And When To Avoid One

How To Identify What The Question "Should I get a divorce?" Means To You.

Reasons For Divorce; What Constitutes Viable Reasons For Thinking About Or Wanting A Divorce?

The Sting

How to keep up the SPICE in your Love Life.

Online Dating Secrets Revealed!

The First and Second Adam

How to Gain and Retain More Customers

Understanding Incontinence

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