



Mediation to Stay Married

Marriages – like people – are not perfect. All marriages experience conflict, and resolving conflict in a healthy way is a good thing. When a marriage is stressed, people may follow the “head in the sand” approach instead of taking affirmative steps to improve the relationship. In my work as a domestic relations attorney and mediator I have at times wondered if a couple is giving up on the marriage too soon. Clients have also expressed that mediation taught them how to communicate with their spouse and resolve conflict much more effectively, and that if they were able to engage in the process earlier that the relationship would have benefited and perhaps survived.

When the honeymoon is over, some people have unrealistic visions of what marriage is supposed to look like. (Obviously, my wife does – just kidding honey!) When a person or couple does seek professional assistance, the first step is oftentimes individual or couples counseling. Enlisting the help of a mental health practitioner is definitely worthwhile, yet marriage counseling may not provide the practical, timely solutions a couple desires. So, what other resources are available to help people stay together before problems lead down the path to a divorce?

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A developing trend is **Mediation to Stay Married, also known as Marital Mediation**. To start the process, a couple jointly hires a mediator to assist them in identifying areas of conflict and formulate a mutually agreeable plan to address them. The mediator does not serve as a therapist, counselor or lawyer. Throughout the mediation, the parties may consult or continue to work with other supportive professionals, such as financial advisors or mental health providers.

The goal of marital mediation is to strengthen an existing relationship by addressing areas of conflict whether financial and budgeting or agreeing upon parental and household responsibilities. If the couple wishes, a *Marital Agreement* can be produced as a written document that may be legally enforceable. Like other types of mediation, marital mediation is voluntary, non-adversarial, and guided by a trained neutral professional. Mediation also allows couples working to sustain their relationship a comfortable atmosphere conducive to such efforts. Communication skills and insights learned during mediation sessions can help couples mitigate the patterns of harmful conflict in a relationship. If a couple later decides that divorce is inevitable, the progress made in mediation can serve as the foundation for a divorce agreement, so the process has benefits even if the marriage ends.

Given that divorce mediators and divorce lawyers develop a great deal of perspective through their many contacts with clients, this experience can be utilized to work with couples hoping to improve their marriage, not just end it. Although not intended as a substitute for counseling or therapy, it offers couples the opportunity to craft solutions that should strengthen their marriage.

Contact our [marital mediator](#) serving Medway and Boston, Massachusetts.

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