



Selecting the Right Divorce Coach

by Stephen F. McDonough, April 4, 2010

This post is Part One in my [series of how to select the right professionals to assist you through your divorce, and covers Divorce Coaches.](#)

In a [previous post](#), I wrote about what the role of a divorce coach is, and how they can help you survive your divorce and lower the conflict for you and your children. Once you decide that you want to work with a divorce coach, then how should you go about hiring one?

If you are going to work with a divorce coach, which regular readers know I am in favor of, just make sure you select someone with professional credentials and experience. The coaching field is unregulated, and anyone can declare themselves a coach after a few hours of internet classes although they may not have the professional education or experience in the mental health field to back it up.

My advice is to look for a coach that is a formally trained and educated mental health expert with significant experience counseling individuals, couples, and families. Some of the best coaches in the Norfolk, Middlesex, and Bristol County

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Massachusetts areas are also active in professional groups such as the [MA Council of Family Mediation](#) and the [Massachusetts Collaborative Law Council](#).

Please note that the designations below are *not* coaching certifications. Coaching certifications do exist, but seem to be geared to coaches that do not have professional degrees and may be coaching people in a corporate or job hunting setting. Much more importantly in my opinion for you is to select someone that has expertise and credentials in the field of mental health.

Designations to look for include:

Psychologist – Doctorate degree with designation of Psy.D or Ph.D. – These folks have 1,000s of hours of training and clinical experience, with specialized training in clinical assessment, diagnosis, psychotherapies, and research.

Clinical Social Worker – Typically a Master’s Degree level of education is required, and these professionals will have the MSW (Masters in Social Work) or the LCSW/LICSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) designation.

Psychiatric Nurses – Most psych nurses are trained initially as a regular registered nurse (RN) and then complete specialized training in psychiatry, psychotherapy, and also complete hundreds of hours of clinical experience. They can prescribe psychiatric medications in many states.

Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) – Although many MFTs have a Masters Degree, in some states they can have a Bachelors degree or even less formal education. Substantial clinical experience is normally required, although different states have varying requirements.

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Licensed Professional Counselor – Again, requirements differ from state to state, but this designation may be seen in addition to professional education degrees, but most are Master’s level pros with much clinical experience.

Other important factors cannot be quantified by designations. Feeling comfortable with your divorce coach and having a good connection clearly needs to be a priority factor as well.

The second part of this series will cover financial professionals, including Certified Divorce Financial Planners.

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