
Using Mediation to Keep Your Cool During Divorce and Beyond

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While most divorcing parents try to make their split an amicable one, wading through the issues of parenting time, custody arrangements and child support can lead to turmoil for even the most well-intentioned of parents. The stress of the situation can continue even after the divorce is over.

A recent example from the entertainment headlines provides great insight into how even couples who have gone through the "perfect" divorce can find themselves in turmoil. Two years ago, White Stripes lead singer, Jack White and his wife, model Karen Elson, announced their split by jointly throwing a party to celebrate their divorce. Certainly, they represented the ideal of what divorcing parents should strive to attain. That is, they seem to have worked out all of their issues and still liked each other enough to celebrate each other by throwing a party together. However, over the past two years things have gone poorly, resulting in a judge recently granting Elson a restraining order against White, allowing him to contact his wife via email only. This stemmed from a series of threatening emails from White, discouraging his ex-wife from communicating with her counsel in order to coerce her into acting against what he thought to be the children's best interests. According to the court filing, White has recently urged Elson to contact their children's private school to have their son placed in a different class from the child of another entertainer whom White feels has "ripped off" his music.

If a couple who went through such a seemingly perfect divorce could find themselves in turmoil two years after their split, what hope is there for the average couple who finds themselves in turmoil from the onset? One solution is to have a mutual third-party help find middle ground between the parents. The emotional issues that parents encounter during and after a divorce often require outside assistance, and while many will resort to litigation to get this outside assistance, the best way to maintain peace and civility during a divorce and beyond is to use a mediator.

Even though a parent may demand sole custody of his or her child, in most cases, custody will be split between the parents. Mediation can help parents decide how to allocate their time with their kids and set the ground rules that each must follow. In addition, it can help with questions such as who will decide what school the children will attend? Who will decide what activities the children participate in? Also, can one parent take the children out of the state for a vacation? Can a parent relocate the child out-of-state? Over time, issues like these are bound to come up, and it is important to have a neutral third-party to help find middle ground.

While most people believe a finalized divorce means no more negotiations, there will always be unforeseen circumstances that arise after the divorce. As children develop, new issues need to be dealt with. Many divorcees make the mistake of not returning to mediation as these issues come up, something that can lead to troublesome co-parenting. Pursuing mediation will help make co-parenting easier, and will keep the former couple working toward shared goals instead of fighting for his or her individual wishes which never benefits the children.

Like it or not, unforeseen situations will occur after a divorce is finalized, especially when children are involved. Having constant "check-ins" with mediators and immediately reaching out to a mediator when an issue comes up will allow divorced couples to diffuse any problems, and prevent co-parenting relationships from becoming toxic.