

## 6. Openly mirror

Restate, in a calm, neutral tone, the essence of what was said. For example: "You stated that you were angry because you felt I spent too much money on the children." Or: "You are concerned that you will have to live in an unacceptable place because of the divorce." By mirroring what the other person said, you have not agreed -- you are merely demonstrating your understanding of what you heard.

## 7. Voice open-ended questions

Follow up a mirrored statement with an open-ended question, such as: "What do you think is an appropriate amount to spend for the children? Please clarify."

Information questions are simple but formidable. Pose clarifying questions like: "What do you mean?" "How will that work?" "When can you do that?" "Can you tell me more about your proposal?" and "What is the basis for your reasoning?" These types of questions open the door to mutual understanding and problem solving.

## 8. Imagine solutions

Upon hearing responses from the open-ended questions, the parties can shift to the brainstorming stage of proposing various

options for settlement. Both spouses need to share:

- a) what they believe would be fair under the circumstances;
- b) what they really need -- and the basis for their suggested solution to the conflict; and
- c) what would resolve the issues for everyone, so that both parties and others involved would be able to accept the decisions agreed upon.

## 9. Non-aggression

No matter how aggressive the other person may become, stay calm, keep breathing slowly, and listen without engaging in anger. You may have to keep repeating steps one to four throughout the discussion.

## 10. Go away

If you find that the other person cannot act appropriately, remove yourself with dignity before you get hooked into their frustration. Leave the situation (or calmly get off the phone), allowing the other party to reconvene without groveling. You will have to deal with your spouse in the future, so release your anger before you speak again. Then start from step nine, and revive the problem-solving stage. Take a time-out, if

necessary, to make sure you both manage your own hostility.

Anger is a tough feeling to understand, but it's important to remember that you are not alone. Sometimes, you may believe you are furious at your spouse, but the problem is similar to an issue that you had with a parent when you were a child. Our emotions of challenging relationships need to be analyzed so we can learn important life lessons. Emotional counseling during divorce is a helpful way to clarify which issues belong to you and which are really dilemmas for your spouse. You are only responsible for 50% of the problems in your marriage -- no more, no less.

Seek quality individual therapy for yourself and, if you and your spouse are in agreement, try marital counseling to work on your joint issues. If you are beyond the point of marriage therapy, interview qualified attorney/mediators who have the skills to help you to resolve the legal issues of the divorce and decrease the hostility between you. With an innovative, holistic approach, you'll be able to "heal" the conflict so that you both can release the hurt, forgive one another, and move on with your lives, productively, to find new, healthy relationships. ■

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# Peaceful Divorce

*Mediation can help you minimize the financial and emotional costs of divorce -- despite the hurt, anger, and lack of trust that usually accompanies the breakdown of a marriage. Here are some of the most important keys to creating a peaceful divorce.*

By Mari J. Frank

"WE MUST PURSUE PEACEFUL ENDS THROUGH PEACEFUL MEANS."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

How is it possible to have a peaceful divorce when there is so much hurt, anger, and lack of trust? With the heartache of ending a marriage, how can you avoid the tremendous stress, pain, conflict escalation, and financial devastation of a courtroom battle? The key is to find a mediator whom you both can trust to educate you in the negotiation process, and to facilitate collaboration to resolve the conflict and create a satisfying settlement.

## EFFECTIVE MEDIATION PROMOTES PEACE

"It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it."

— Eleanor Roosevelt

For both of you to feel comfortable in divorce mediation, you must have faith that the process will be fair and that your rights will be protected. You need to trust that your mediator has the negotiation skills, legal expertise, conflict management tools, sensitivity, and problem-solving