

Have You Ever Been Afraid of Your Partner or Ex-partner?

Are you worried he would get back at you for what you say or do?

Is it hard to stand up to him and say what you want or need?

If so, you are like thousands of other women going through divorce and custody cases each year.

And, just like them, at some point in your case, you will be sent to mediation to work out an agreement with your partner or ex-partner.

What Is Mediation?

A mediator helps people talk to each other about what is important to them. Together, you and your partner decide what divorce or custody arrangements are best for your family. If you reach a final agreement, a judge will read it and make it into a court order.

Here's Why Some Women Said Mediation is Right for Them:

"Even though my ex-husband has been abusive, I know I can speak up and say what I want."

"Having a trial could make things worse. He's never forgiven me for testifying against him last time."

"I felt like it gave me a chance to have more control of our agreement, instead of letting a judge decide things for us."

Why Do Some Women Decide NOT to Mediate?

"He's such a sweet-talker, I know he'll run the show."

"He'll use it as a chance to do something to me."

"I don't want to give him the chance to pressure me."

Even if the judge says you have to call a mediator, you don't have to mediate with your partner if you think it isn't right for you.

A rectangular sign with a black background and white text that reads "CAUTION".

If any of these things are true you should carefully think about how good mediation will be for you.

- You are only considering mediation because of the cost of an attorney.
- You think if you give your partner what he wants, he'll leave you alone.



If any of these things are true, mediation is likely to be dangerous.

- You know you will be hurt, stalked, or harassed at the mediation or after it.
- Your partner can scare you so that you don't speak up for yourself and your needs.

What If I Want To Try It?

These things might make mediation better for you:

Have a secret signal between you and the mediator that means, "stop! I need a break". Ask for breaks whenever you need one.

Bring a crime victim advocate or other support person.

Make a plan with the mediator to arrive last and leave first.

Try 'shuttle mediation'. You don't have to be in the same room as your partner. The mediator can go back and forth between you.

Visit where the mediation will happen. Decide where you want to sit, find the exits, or anything else to make you feel comfortable.

Be realistic. Mediation isn't counseling. The mediator isn't there to decide which of you is 'right'.

Tell the mediator your concerns. They can't help you if they don't know what's going on.

What It Doesn't Work?

That's okay. You can stop any time you think it isn't working. The mediator can stop the meeting if it seems unsafe or you can't reach an agreement. Your case will then go back to a judge.

What If I Don't Want To Mediate?

Tell the mediator. They can tell the court your case isn't right for mediation. They do not have to tell your partner why the two of you aren't going to meet.

Who Can Help Me Decide?

Your attorney, a mediator, or an advocate can give you more information. Talking to someone can help you sort out what is right for you. To find a victim advocate close to you, call the Iowa family violence hotline at:

1-800-942-0333.

Is Mediation Right For You?



A Guide for Separating or Divorced Women