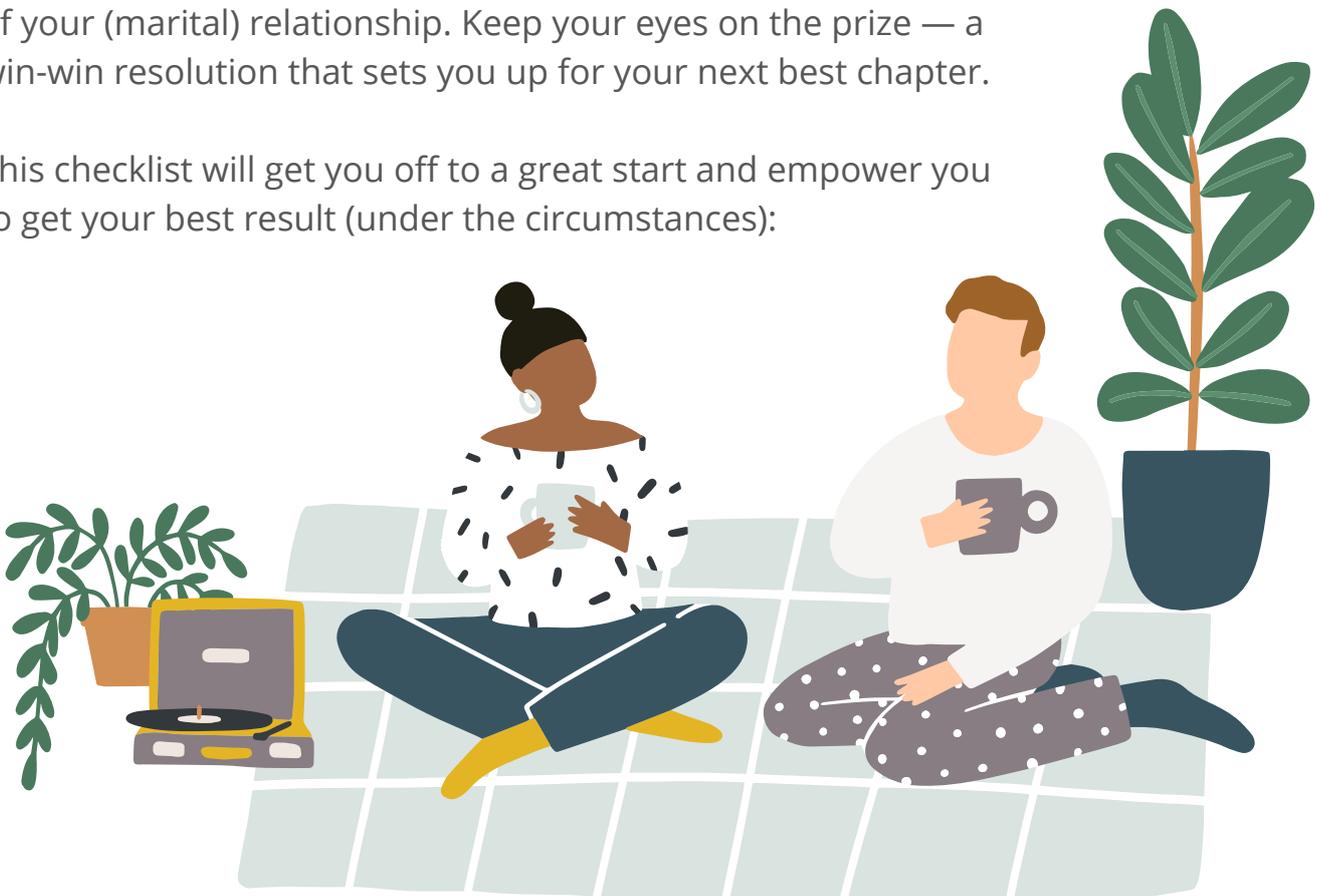


The Ultimate Guide to Divorce Mediation: 10 Point Checklist

So you have decided on a cooperative divorce. Congratulations! No really, we mean it. **You will be saving thousands of dollars in legal fees and be in control of your destiny** — not leaving it up to a judge who knows little or nothing about you and your life. Instead of throwing each other under the bus in court and rehashing old wounds — you are focusing on your future. Maybe the silver lining here is that you are living with intention and making deliberate choices as opposed to letting life just pass you by. Whatever your motivation is, we are here to help.

The hard truth: mediation can be grueling. Even a skilled mediator can't protect you from all the emotional triggers and frustrations that come up in the process of navigating the end of your (marital) relationship. Keep your eyes on the prize — a win-win resolution that sets you up for your next best chapter.

This checklist will get you off to a great start and empower you to get your best result (under the circumstances):



Preparation:



- Get a list of what you will need
 - Divorce is paperwork. Lots of it. Ask your mediator for a list of what you need to gather to make mediation productive and quicker.



- Determine your wants versus your needs. Your goal is to have all your needs met and to get some of your wants.
 - Note: at this stage you may not have all the specifics like the value of a retirement asset or how much credit card debt your spouse has. This analysis should be more general but keep you focused throughout mediation.
 - Example: I need to live in a good school district. I'd like to have enough money for a 3 bedroom home - OR - I need to have a car to drive. I want to keep the nicer one we own.



- Understand the process
 - What is the mediators timeline?
 - When will initial divorce forms be filed?
 - What is required of both of us?
 - Will we meet together or separately?



- Prioritize issues for max benefit
 - It's unlikely you'll resolve everything in 1 session. So what needs addressing now?
 - Example: I need to understand how we are going to pay existing bills before we can start addressing the bigger issues like how we are dividing the restricted stock units.



Process:

- Don't rush
 - It's a marathon, not a sprint. But don't be surprised if you don't get to the "substance" right away. You can't possibly negotiate without knowing what's available to divide. Disclose & exchange info first — before getting into the nitty gritty. Which brings us to...
- Get what you need
 - You know your life better than your mediator. If you think there's an asset that your spouse is not disclosing or maybe doesn't see it as something up for negotiation — NAME IT and ask for it. Transparency is important for mediation to work.
- Speak to a (mediation friendly) lawyer or a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst
 - Marriage = love + a financial contract. Falling out of love didn't just happen overnight and neither will dissolving the contract. This is a business deal and you may need some help — own it.
- Prioritize wellness
 - It's repeated so often it probably goes in one ear and out the other. But it's SO important. You can't make good decisions if you feel like crap. Your kids won't die from watching their iPad an hour longer so you can shop online for yummy groceries, do some yoga or binge watch a show. Put your oxygen mask on first!

Practical Tips:

- Give to get
- Have an open mind (but also have limits)
- Listen, I mean really listen. Your spouse feeling "heard" could be even more important to them than the couch etc.
- Prepare (know your best and worst case scenarios)
- Read our (other) resources
- Mediation Mantra: If it won't matter to me in a couple years, let it go
- Tie up loose ends
 - Your agreement is the goal but it's nothing if you can't enforce it. Ask your mediator what you need to do to carry out the terms. The last thing you want after a fairly peaceful divorce is to end up in court because no one put a time limit on a home refinance or prepared a QDRO to divide the 401k.

Want to learn more about Cooperative Divorce and our other Hello Divorce options? [Schedule a 15 minute planning call now.](#)