5 TIPS FOR A HEALTHY SEPARATION

Most people have heard very sad and scary stories about divorce, and they do not want this to become part of their experience. Adversarial divorces have an enormous impact on physical and mental well-being, finances, and are harmful to children. Fortunately, you can work through your separation in a better way.

Here are some strategies to help you have a healthy separation:

1. Treat the other person like you would a coworker or business associate.

Be courteous, answer emails, texts, and phone calls in a timely and respectful manner, communicate important information, and model desirable behavior. Avoid saying negative things about the other person or their family, especially on social media. Follow through on what you have agreed to do. These types of behaviors may come naturally when you are not in conflict with someone but can be easily forgotten when a dispute arises.

Keep in mind, you will need to work together until you reach a resolution. If you have children, you will have an ongoing relationship as parents for years to come, even after your children become adults. Try your best to not do anything you will regret down the road.

2. Delay making any significant changes.

Don't withdraw or spend significant sums of money without the other person's consent. Continue to pay bills as you have been until you have reached an agreement about your finances.

In cases where people have children, and it is possible and safe to do so, wait to move out until you and the other parent have put together a parenting agreement and made financial arrangements for your home and living expenses.

3. Wait to start a new relationship.

Most often, a new partner on the scene can significantly disrupt the negotiation process and cause intense emotions, regardless of which person initiated the separation. This can lead to complications when trying to work out your finances, parenting arrangements, or even spousal support.

4. Seek professional mental health support for you and your children.

Separation can be a devastating and overwhelming time. There aren't only legal matters to work through. Intense and complex emotions can arise. These will most likely not resolve on their own, and people's ability to work through issues and reach agreements may be impaired. They may refuse to engage in a discussion, get stuck on a particular issue, or create conflict over uncomplicated matters.

You may have the support of family, friends, and coworkers; however, you can benefit from speaking with a counselor or therapist who is objective and will provide emotional support without judgment.

Children are almost always affected by their parents' separation. Some may seem fine and others may act out. Either way, they too will need time to work through their emotions. Having someone neutral for them to talk to is important. Children have loyalties to both their parents and do not want to hurt their feelings. Sometimes it can be easier for them to be open with someone who is not involved in the situation. There are many types of counseling available. Do your research and see what the best fit is for you and your children.

5. Discuss your options for an amicable divorce.

Look at using a collaborative process such as Mediation to resolve your separation matters. This process gives you the opportunity to talk and work out issues in a more timely and economical way. Start your dispute resolution process as soon as you are able. The longer uncertainty continues, the more likely it is that communication will break down and conflict will arise. However, keep in mind that people are usually not in the same place in the separation, and one may need more time to process information and work through emotions.

Once again, do your research and get recommendations when looking for a mediator. Find someone who you both feel comfortable with and who has experience with these matters. You can still get legal and financial advice even if you go to mediation.

Separation and divorce can be challenging. You are dealing with a loss and are experiencing a mixture of emotions. By following these 5 Tips, you can set yourself up for a healthier separation where you can reach resolutions more quickly and affordably. It will take hard work and willpower, but it will be worth it.

Michelle M. Garneau
B.Sc., Registered Family Mediator | Garneau Mediation Services

Office: 780.417.3119
Cell: 780.499.9815
Email: michelle@garneaumediation.ca
Website: www.garneaumediation.ca
Address: 15-2016 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park, AB T8A 3X3

Garneau Mediation Services

If you would like to talk to us about how you can resolve your separation and divorce matters through mediation, we offer a 20-minute free phone consultation that remains confidential. A professionally trained and certified Family Mediator can answer your questions and provide you with support.

Contact Michelle