



Family Mediation

Here at LKW Family Mediation we understand that separation is hard and it can be hard for lots of different reasons. It can also be overwhelming as you struggle to comprehend the huge range of potential next steps, or things you will need to do. We also understand that each couple will have different priorities for their family and that's why we work with you to find a resolution that is tailor made for your family.

We also work at a pace that works for everyone so that you are able to make choices together about what happens next. We can also introduce you to other experts that might help you to find that important resolution. But we will only introduce you to professionals we know well and when we're confident that they will be able to help you.

In order to help you contemplate the next steps you will need to take we have put together our top 10 tips for separating as constructively as possible and we hope that you will find these useful. For more ideas on how you can work together as constructively as possible why not follow us on Facebook or Twitter?

www.facebook.com/LKWFamilyMediation
@LKWfamMed

1. Time

Time is a huge factor in finding a resolution that will work for everybody. Sometimes it can take time for one or both parties to feel that they are able to make important decisions. They may need to come to terms with the breakdown of the relationship before they can start to talk about what happens next. There may also be further information that you both need to find, and understand, before you can make an informed choice about which option is best. We will work with you to find a timetable that will work for both of you. We can also help you look at what further information you might need.

2. Respectful Communication

Emotions can run high when the separation is very raw. It may be that one person made the decision that the separation was necessary and this has been a huge shock for the other person who may not have thought that the relationship was in difficulties. Hurt people will often lash out in order to try to wound each other in the way that they feel they have been wounded. This can particularly be the case where one person has formed a new relationship. It is far from easy but try to keep communication to practical matters and to

avoid high temperature arguments. There is nothing wrong with expressing how you feel and it may help to explain the hurt, grief and anger that you feel. But making personal comments, slights and accusations is unlikely to help you to move forward constructively. Use phrases like “I feel...” rather than “you have made me”. This is even more important where you have children. Being exposed to conflict and feeling guilty about wanting to see the “bad” parent can damage a child’s well being. Try to only speak positively about the other parent when your children are around – even if it feels difficult at first. This will have a big impact on how well your children are able to deal with the separation. It may also impact upon how they form relationships themselves in the future.

3. Take Responsibility for your own words

It can also be tempting to hide behind other people’s words. This may be the words of friends, or it may be the words of a professional, such as a solicitor. This enables the person to deny responsibility of the vicious words because they have come from the mouth, or the pen, of another person. But by taking responsibility for what is said to, or about, your ex partner you are likely to prevent a challenging situation becoming all the more difficult to deal with. You can and should confide in friends and family but do not use this as a smoke screen for starting rumours or encouraging others to attack the other person.

4. Be wary of amateur experts

It seems that any significant life event comes with a wealth of businesses that are set up around it. It also comes with various folklore tales about the worst experiences people have ever had. Some people are addicted to drama. Make use of the kind ears of those that will help you to deal with the relationship breakdown and consider what services may assist you with finding a resolution. But be wary of those that seem to exacerbate the difficulties of the situation and are not focused on the future and finding a resolution.

5. Be open to counselling and other expert help

When a relationship breaks down it can leave you in a very vulnerable place. It can make you doubt things that you always thought were certain. It can take some time to come to terms with what has happened and to be able to look to the future. Be open to the possibility that counselling or some form of therapy might assist you with coming to terms with what has happened. This does not make you weak, it simply means you have been through a particularly difficult time. Also be aware of whether your children may need to access professional help if they are struggling to come to terms with the relationship breakdown. Sometimes talking to another adult who is not involved can be helpful. Talk to your GP and your child(ren)’s schools to find out how they can access extra help.

6. Don’t assume you have to go to court

In recent years there has been very much a change in emphasis in the way that separating couples find a resolution to the various issues that arise when they separate. There are now a number of different ways in which the couple can find that resolution themselves, depending on what tools they may need.

Clearly the couple are best placed to make decisions about their own lives, as well as their children's lives, and most people would rather decide things for themselves rather than asking a third party to do so. Where the third party is a judge in a court room they are likely to have minimal information about the parties' situation and to have spent little time with them. At the initial mediation meetings we will explain to you the various ways in which you can resolve matters. We hope you will find mediation will be helpful, but if not, this does not mean that you will have to go to court.

7. Don't assume it will cost you thousands of pounds

We are always amazed at how many people assume that getting divorced will cost an awful lot of money. These assumptions arise partly because the divorces that are reported in the media tend to be the most difficult cases – often involving high profile couples with lots of money. There are also stories that circulate around offices and other places about *that person* that spent so many tens of thousands of pounds getting divorced. The reality is that if you can work together constructively the whole process is likely to cost you both less than £3,000 in total and it may even be less than that.

8. Compromise

There is no automatic, clear set of rules as to what happens when a couple separates. The legislation requires people to consider the needs that they have and how the resources that they have can best be applied to meet those needs. There is usually a bracket of fair outcomes with one end being best for person A, and worst for person B and the other end being best for person B, and worst for person A. By talking through the needs that you each have you can find a solution that you both think you can make work. Be open to options that you may not have considered. It may not be the ideal solution that you had each envisaged initially but to achieve a sensible, fair resolution through a constructive process will require compromise. If you find yourself unwilling to compromise then it is usually sensible to explore why you feel this way. Remember that the party that ended the relationship will not be punished financially for doing this – even if they are in a new relationship and have not behaved in the best possible way.

9. Honesty is the best policy

This is never more true than when it's with yourself. If you are not honest with yourself then it is hard to be honest with other people – and especially those who are trying to help you. Relationship breakdown is rarely all the fault of one person and sometimes it can be a hard ask to acknowledge that perhaps you too were at fault. It's also important to be honest with yourself about how you're coping. If you're struggling then talk to your GP or a friend or family member you trust. There is no shame in saying that this is hard. There is a reason that separation is one of the most stressful things you will experience!

10. Your children's well being is paramount

If you have children put them at the heart of what you are doing. Children do not automatically develop social, physical or behavioural problems as a result of their parents separating. It is being exposed to conflict and not being free to have a relationship with both parents that causes such problems. If you

can tell your children about your separation together then do that. Reassure them that they are loved by both of you and that you will still be their parents and be there for them – even though that will be in separate houses going forwards. Make sure that they have “permission” to love the other parent and to enjoy their time with them (no matter how that may make you feel initially). There are a number of books that can be useful for children whose parents separate and we recommend Mum and Dad glue and Jack and Black cat.