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# The Increased Role Of Mediation Coaches In Shuttle Mediation

October 04, 2018 | **Carmela M. Miraglia**

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*Cape Cod mediator and mediation coach, Carmela M. Miraglia, explores how shuttle mediation increases opportunities for mediation coaches.*



*Shuttle mediation is a popular technique used by [divorce mediators](#) to help couples resolve their legal disputes amicably. While this technique can be [especially useful in high conflict divorces](#), it also aids mediations by reducing the emotional tension that is inherent in the divorce process. Because they include less direct interaction between couples, [mediation](#)*

*coaches* can sometimes play a bigger role in shuttle mediations, where coaches are well positioned to more actively walk the participants through the divorce process and help them to determine the best negotiating position in their divorce.

### *The Technique of Shuttle Mediation*

Although we have covered *how shuttle mediation works in other blog posts*, it is important to recall some of the basics in order to fully understand *how mediation coaching fits into the process*. Shuttle mediation (or shuttle diplomacy as it is sometimes referred to), is a negotiation technique that relies on separating the parties in the mediation context while relaying—or shuttling—their respective positions and interests through a neutral third party. In the divorce context, the parties are spouses, while the neutral third party is the mediator. In many cases, a mediator using this technique will separate the spouses in different rooms and interact with them separately. Shuttle mediation can also separate spouses by session, as well. Spouses can be given different session appointments to *discuss their goals with the mediator*, so they are not in the mediator's office at the same time or even the same day. For cases where distance or work schedules pose particular challenges for in-person attendance at mediation sessions, shuttle mediation can help bridge these logistical challenges.

### *The Out-sized Role of Mediation Coaches in Shuttle Diplomacy*

It is precisely because shuttle mediation separates the spouses that mediation coaches can have a larger impact on the process. Mediation coaches are typically experienced attorneys who understand the divorce and mediation process. In many cases, mediation coaches are also experienced mediators in their own right. When a party hires a mediation coach, they are provided with valuable insight into the divorce and mediation processes and the other party's *positions and interests*. A mediation coach can help a spouse organize his or her position and interests and “*game plan*” how to best pursue

those interests during the mediation and divorce process. There are limits to a mediation coach's participation during a typical mediation. Although some mediations include the direct involvement of divorce attorneys – or, as in *collaborative law*, the attorneys themselves fill a *quasi-mediation role*. However, a typical mediation coach acts more like a consultant, aiding his or her client from outside of the mediation. Mediation coaches are rarely allowed within the conference room during a mediation session. If a mediator adopts shuttle diplomacy, however, the opportunity for participation by the mediation coach often increases, particularly when the mediation sessions are scheduled at different times and/or on different days. In these instances, *communicating with a mediation coach between sessions* will allow the participant and the mediator to react to, synthesize, and analyze the other party's arguments—and can help to *prepare responses* to those positions in a productive and effective way. Speaking with a mediation coach between sessions, can sometimes help to predict the other party's maneuvers and decide how best to *respond with confidence*. Shuttle mediation tend to offer spouses a more structured, less organic approach to conflict resolution. This more structured response creates a greater opportunity for mediation coaches to aid participants in each chapter of the mediation process.



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### *A Different Approach in High Conflict Cases*

Mediation is a flexible, voluntary process. For many participants, the fastest and most cost-effective resolution will involve sitting down in a room with their spouse and a mediator, and negotiating a solution directly. In high conflict cases, however, a more structured approach – that involves less direct interaction *between couples who struggle with*

*communications and negative emotions* – can offer better options. For spouses who *struggle with boundaries*, a mix of shuttle mediation and mediation coaching can provide many of the upsides of mediation while avoiding the pitfalls of litigation.

***Carmela is a divorce mediator and mediation coach for South Shore Divorce Mediation, with offices in Hingham, Massachusetts and East Sandwich, Massachusetts. She is also a Senior Associate Attorney for Lynch & Owens, P.C., where she specializes in divorce and family law issues. Carmela is a statutory mediator under M.G.L. Ch. 233, s. 23C and a proud member of the Massachusetts Council on Family Mediation. To read more from Carmela Miraglia, check out her author page on the Lynch & Owens Blog.***

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