

Be a Separation and Divorce Mediator

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“Hi my name is...and I will be your mediator. I will not make any decision for you. I am not a judge. I will help you to reach your own agreement. I am impartial and neutral. A mediation session is confidential...”

These are typical sample statements of how a mediation session begins, and it is the only “standard” part of a mediation process. From those opening moments, nothing is predictable. Every story is different and mediators use their skills to help the parties resolve their conflicts in each case. What are these skills? Staying impartial, reflecting, using empathy, active listening, asking open ended questions, looping...

How do you learn to mediate on your own? Even after completing basic and advanced mediation training, graduates may not be ready to tackle

a mediation case by themselves. Why? Because the best way to learn mediation is to practice. One way to do that is by participating in a practicum or apprenticeship training and volunteering. When I discovered the Mentorship Program at FamilyKind, I realized that program was exactly what I was looking for. I wanted a mentor, a person available to me, ready to answer my questions and able to help me to improve my skills with gentle guidance. The FamilyKind program offered additional benefits that matched the need to launch a divorce mediation career: meeting with the administrators to “check in” about the path of my progress, exposure to all areas of private practice, a visit to the courthouse to familiarize myself with filing a case and access to my mentor’s forms honed over time with the advantage of experience.

In my experience as a mentee at FamilyKind, my mediation skills are seen through the eyes of an experienced mediator. After the mediation session, my mentor and I debrief. We each share our observations and impressions and we state our opinions about what worked in the session and what areas could use improvement. With the mentorship program, I am building a relationship with someone I can trust to provide solid feedback, who sees my skills and enthusiasm, and can bring out my best skills. My mentor is confident, sensitive to diversity, and a good communicator.

A mentee should not be dependent on the mentor, but should find his or her own way with the help of the mentor who can provide observations and options. The mentor should not just lecture, but also listen and ask questions. It is tempting for a mentor to “tell” the mentee exactly how to solve a problem. Like the mediation process, the experienced mediation mentor should ask open-ended questions that can lead the mentee to a solution. Examples of good questions are: have you ever had this problem before? What other options have you tried? What was working in the process?

I was an informal mentor back in Italy to a more junior classmate in law school. From that experience, I learned that a good mentorship

relationship is mutually beneficial and helps both professionals grow. I certainly did when I was a mentor. As a mentee, I give back to my mentor by sharing my life experiences, thoughts, and my European and Italian culture. Mentor and mentee share real-life stories with each other. These discussions provide valuable insights. They pave the way for building a rapport. That way, the mentor and the mentee feel comfortable sharing perspectives about the sessions. The mentee will shape and more effectively model his or her mediation skills from someone with whom there is trust. The mentor can also provide career advice and guidance, encourage the mentee's career and personal development to the fullest, and provide suggestions for networking activities and information that will benefit the mentee's professional growth. A mentorship program provides a rich learning experience for both parties.

Learn more about the FamilyKind [Mediation Mentorship](#) program.