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Divorce Process Options (very brief description)

1. **“Kitchen Table Method:”** This method can work for simple cases with few assets and no children, and/or very amicable people. The people sit down together and figure out the best solutions to the decisions that need to be made (dividing assets and debts, addressing support, making decisions as to how to address children’s needs). This process is the least expensive; however, mistakes can be very costly to fix later. Also, power imbalances will not be addressed without additional support.
2. **Litigation:** Necessary when one person is determined to fight and unwilling to choose a more peaceful process. Also can be necessary if one person is likely hiding money, undermining the relationship between children and the other parent, dedicated to high conflict, etc., and sometimes with coercive control or undiagnosed and/or untreated mental illness or substance abuse.
Litigation tends to become quite expensive and very stressful, as well as to pit parent against parent and create more damage in relationships on into the future that can be very hard to repair. Most issues can be resolved in Litigation, and the court can order compliance.
3. **Mediation:** In its simplest form, mediation involves one neutral facilitator who guides the gathering of information and the analysis and choice of options, in order to come to agreements. The mediator will not give legal advice to either person, but will likely recommend consulting attorneys for that purpose. Mediation can include additional professionals (mental health, financial, etc.) either in the room or as adjunct to the mediation sessions. Mediation is almost always less expensive and faster than litigation. Some power imbalances can be addressed if the mediator(s) is aware of and skilled at this.
4. **Collaborative Divorce:** This is a designated team committed to staying peaceful and out of court. Issues are addressed by the professional(s) that are most skilled in that arena. The team strategizes together, respecting one another’s expertise, in order to best address the dynamics of the case. The team consists of two collaboratively trained attorneys, two therapists who act as divorce “coaches,” a neutral financial specialist, and a child specialist to represent the voice of the children. (All team members are collaboratively trained and mediation-trained as well.) Collaborative Divorce is usually much less expensive than the same case would cost if litigated. Many power imbalances can be addressed in this model. This is the only model in which the voice of the children is reliably addressed and that seeks to preserve family relationships on into the future.

Feel free to contact Mary Ann if you have questions, as this is a brief description. (626-441-5131, m.aronsohn@protonmail.com) Clients can be referred to free online educational workshops called “Divorce Options” that are standardized at a State level by CDCalifornia (Collaborative Divorce California) here: <https://collaborativedivorcecalifornia.com/find-a-divorce-options-class/>