

to some anxiety, with deep-seated concerns over what they want and need.

"I'm a neutral person, a facilitator. I don't present either one of them," Mr. Marcus said. "We try to help them do creative problem solving, instead of beating each other up."

Mediation was an answer to the nervousness of adversarial disputes, which pit one attorney against another, often without talking to the other. This strategy may ultimately backfire on the client, Mr. Marcus pointed out, using an example of "people in

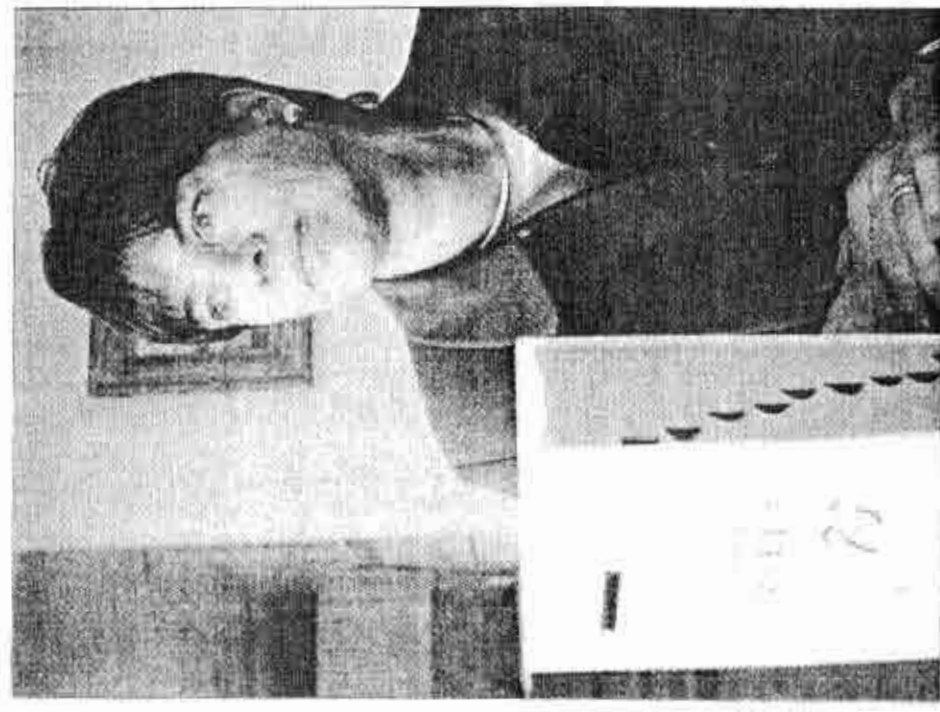


PHOTO BY CITIZEN NEWS (from *Mark Conrad's Peggy Post discusses divorce in her updated book of Family Post's Etiquette*)

an adversarial dispute wrapped up in trying to get the greatest amount of money, instead of considering what the tax consequences are.

Most often, what motivates a divorcing couple to seek the services of a mediator is to ease the split for the children.

Norwalker Shelly Smith, who with her husband Tom (not their real names) completed the mediation process last year, said their children played a part in their decision to go this route. So did the desire to remain friends.

The Smiths took the agreement to separate lawyers to get objective feedback, a recommended procedure for couples near-completing mediation. Both lawyers said the Smiths would be crazy to sign, because each was being too generous with the other, Ms. Smith recalled.

One of the couple's main issues concerned her staying in the area with their two children. "My lawyer said, 'You do realize you're limiting yourself enormously. I don't advise you to sign that.' I said, 'I'm choosing to limit myself because I want my children to have ready access to their father.'"

Ms. Smith in turn, wanted to give her more money than his consulting lawyer advised.

"I think it would have taken a lot more time and money and

damaged our relationship to do it the adversarial way," said Ms. Smith.

The Smiths' reasons are those cited by most couples for seeking mediation.

The process is typically less expensive. One divorce, Mr. Marcus has been working on, now in its second year, will cost the two parties roughly \$70,000 when final. A divorce mediation typically lasts three to six months and costs somewhere between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

Yet, according to attorney and divorce mediator Nancy Freeman, of Norwalk, saving money should be a secondary concern. The best reason for a couple to see a divorce mediator is to plan for *after* the divorce, she said.

What a couple should ideally glean from the mediation process, she said, is experience in communicating and negotiating skills that can be applied when potential conflicts arise later, such as when children's schedules or an ex-spouse's financial situation changes, or when new relationships evolve. Through the process, she said, couples often communicate better after divorce mediation than they did before it.

Ms. Freshman, who said she was one of the first in the area to offer mediation, is quick to point out, however, that this service is not for every couple ending a marriage. "If there has been abuse in a relationship or major power imbalance where, for example, one person has all the financial information and the other has no access to it, these cases are more difficult [to resolve]."

The couples who do the best, she said, tend to be those who have self-selected who don't want to hate each other.

Many divorcing couples don't use each other, said Mary Marcus, a clinical psychologist who focuses on negotiating with her husband, is chief of the section of psychology at Norwalk Hospital. They have just drifted apart, are disappointed with the way their marriages have turned out or have financial problems.

"If a marriage is getting along just fine, and you add financial pressure, you often see divorce. They think it will be better to separate, that life will be easier. Obviously, it isn't."

Hitting the standard of living in Fairfield County, she said. "In many cases it requires both parties to work. If they are working and have children, it's stressful financially and emotionally. They throw areas back and forth like a hot potato."

Some marriages, of course, do end acrimoniously, such as with an affair. Particularly

"They throw stress back and forth like a hot potato."

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for those who feel betrayed, but for any whose self-esteem has been wounded, Mr. Marcus recommends therapy.

Therapy prevents negative emotions such as grief, sadness, sense of failure, or anger from getting in the way. "Therapy helps people work through those emotions. It lets people know what is normal in those situations, and that they may allow themselves to sit with those feelings and not act them out."

Not acting out is key to healing, to spilling the children, and to getting on with one's life, she said.

In therapy, she works through the two final grief issues and "encourages the person to understand why they are doing seemingly irrational or hostile things. She'll ask, 'Is that what you want to be doing? Is this a reaction to a terrible hurt you feel?'"

"Acting out does not make people feel better in the long run, it's a short-term fix."

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Amicable Divorce

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Parental game-playing because of unresolved feelings is just one topic covered in Putting Children First, a state government-mandated program aimed at all divorcing couples with minor-aged children.

In this section of the six-hour class, which focuses on co-parenting issues, parents look at their own behavior, to see if they're game-playing, for example, showing up an hour late for a visit to get back at the other parent. "We point out that that sort of game is not acceptable because ultimately it hurts the child," said family therapist Suzanne Wood, who teaches the course at the Family and Children's Agency in Norwalk.

The class stresses the importance of taking the same approaches to parenting.

"If [kids] learn by age 2 how to manipulate parents who are not coming up with parenting solutions together, imagine how easy it is when these parents live apart," said Ms. Wood. "I urge them to be on the same page. If gives a child a solid foundation to know parents create a united front, even though they don't live together."

Ms. Wood said she encourages parents to periodically discuss what the current issues are.

Lisa Burnit, a family foster care social worker at FCA who took the program in December, explained how doing so helped in a situation with her 4-year-old son.

When the boy began throwing tantrums, she spoke to her former husband, who was still

added. "It causes a lot less stress in my life to not have such an adversarial relationship."

Keeping communication lines open and learning to negotiate can actually save a marriage in the process of divorce.

Saul Mr. Marcus, he has seen couples mediating for divorce change their minds. "It happens occasionally. If people haven't burned their bridges, like they do in adversarial divorce, it's easier to go back. The divorce process hasn't caused more problems."

"One couple came to us, and it turned out they hadn't talked before. She said, 'You're out around a lot and if you had been, the marriage would have survived.' I saw him later, he was with the kids. He'd changed his lifestyle. And they're married."

Divorce Etiquette

Said Peggy Post, grand-daughter-in-law of Emily Post, who has recently updated Emily Post's Etiquette. "The purpose of etiquette is to smooth the way for relationships, based on being thoughtful and considerate. At such a stressful time as divorce, applying sensitivity and consideration are key."

Communicate at a firm or tactful way when issues arise. Etiquette does not mean ignoring one's own needs, she said.

The Fairfield County resident believes the goal couples should aim for is to

Everybody has had your basic pizza, but this versatile dish can be much more. For Super Bowl Sunday, why not be a little daring, like picking the AFC to win for a change. Here are some ideas to make your party more exciting, even if the game is over in the first half. These recipes will keep scoring through the final down.

Natural Turf Pizza Dough

For a 12-inch pie:

- 1 tablespoon dry yeast
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon oregano
- 1 tablespoon powdered milk
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups unbleached flour

For a 15- x 10-inch pan pizza:

- 2 tablespoons dry yeast
- 1 cup warm water
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons basil
- 1 teaspoon parsley
- 2 tablespoons powdered milk
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups unbleached flour
- 1 cup cornmeal

Mix yeast into water thoroughly. Let stand 2 minutes. Add remainder of ingredients in the order given. Hand knead until well-mixed and elastic. Bowl should be clean. Put a couple drops of olive oil in the bottom of the bowl. Form the dough into a ball and return to the bowl. Refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours.

in the refrigerator.

After the dough rises, spread some cornmeal on a clean counter and start working the dough out with your fingers. Starting from its center, press dough out evenly toward the edges, until its dimensions fit the pan. You may also use a rolling pin, just cover the dough first with wax paper.

When the dough is near the correct size, spread a little cornmeal in the pan and put in the dough. Use your fingers to work the dough, always moving from the center, into its final shape. Let stand about 15 minutes.

Green Bay Fan Sauce

10-ounce bag leaf spinach

- 1 head broccoli (for a milder taste, substitute 1 10-ounce package, thawed)
- 1 frozen whole string beans
- 1 teaspoon fennel

Steam spinach and broccoli until soft. Put, with fennel, in blender and puree it into a thick sauce.

Saute garlic and onion in olive oil. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for two hours.

Denver Fan Sauce

- 3 cloves garlic, diced
- 1/2 small onion, diced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 29-ounce can tomato puree, thick style
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 tablespoon oregano
- 1 1/2 tablespoons basil

Kick Off Super Bowl Sunday... With Pizza

Peel and steam sweet potatoes. Drain. Add parsley and lemon and puree it into a thick sauce.

What follow are some winning combinations, but feel free to concoct your own.

Packer Pizza

- Green Bay fan sauce
- Mushrooms, sliced
- Wisconsin pepperjack cheese, shredded

Denver Kickoff Pizza

- Denver Fan Sauce
- Pepperoni
- Mozzarella cheese, shredded

Denver Popskin Pizza

- Denver Fan Sauce
- Baked ham, diced
- Mozzarella and Longhorn Colby cheese, shredded

Old-Time Bronco Pizza

- Orange Crush sauce
- Tomatoes, sliced thin
- Longhorn Colby cheese, shredded

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Spoon sauce into center of dough. Swirl sauce from center toward edges until desired amount. Wet edges of crust with sauce to keep it from drying. Add desired amount of meat or vegetables. Sprinkle on cheese. Putting the cheese over the vegetables keep them from drying out. As a rule of thumb, a 12-inch pie takes about 8 ounces of cheese, a 10- x 12- x 4-