

Is Mediation Right for Us?

A plain-English guide to the conversation, the people and the next step.

By Charlie Silva, divorce mediator, member of the Statewide California Mediation Association (SCMA), and founder of FAST DIVORCE®.

What mediation is

Mediation is a structured discussion with a neutral person who helps participants communicate and explore possible agreements. The mediator does not decide the outcome. You decide whether to agree.

What mediation is not

It is not legal representation, therapy, a promise of settlement or a completed divorce. Private mediation does not replace required court steps.

Questions to consider

What have we already agreed on?

What remains unresolved?

Can each person participate freely and raise concerns?

What information is missing?

Which questions need independent legal or financial advice?

What would we like to understand before deciding whether to begin?

These questions are conversation starters—not an eligibility test.

Questions to ask the mediator

- What is your role, and what is outside your service?
- What experience do you have with the topics we need to discuss?
- How are safety concerns and unequal participation addressed?
- What are the fees and cancellation terms?
- What confidentiality rules and limits apply?
- What happens if we agree on some things but not others?
- Who prepares any resulting documents?
- Which services require separate agreements?

Prepare without oversharing

Make a short list of your questions and the records you may need. Ask how to share sensitive information before sending it. Do not include account numbers, children's personal details or private case documents in public comments or general website messages.

Keep the roles clear

A mediator helps the discussion. Your independent attorney advises you about legal rights and proposed terms. A legal document assistant prepares selected documents at your specific direction within the agreed service.

Safety and deadlines still matter

Tell the provider privately if you feel afraid, pressured or unable to speak freely. Mediation is not appropriate for every situation.

Exploring mediation does not pause a deadline or change a court order. Seek timely legal help when needed. Call 911 in an immediate emergency.

Your next step

Schedule a complimentary individual introductory phone call with Charlie, or use these questions when speaking with another mediator.

You are free to choose your own providers.

General education only—not legal advice. Charlie Silva is not an attorney. Mediation and Fast Divorce’s document preparation are separate engagements. Fast Divorce is not a law firm and does not represent clients in court. I am not an attorney. I can only provide self-help services at your specific direction.