



The Role of Our Psychologists in Separation & Divorce: Ways We Can Help

**Communication Consultant Child Specialist Co-Parenting Consultant
Parenting Plan Expert Support Person/Therapist**

The issues in separation and divorce are complex, and men and women separating and divorcing have been seeking the help of psychologists during this process for some time, often at the suggestion of their attorneys.

When preparing for legal meetings and when identifying needs/interests ...

Communication Consultant: Our psychologists are experts in communication skills and the divorce process, and we know that distressing emotions often emerge during legal meetings between spouses, which then cause people to act in ways that can make reaching resolution much more difficult. We help people identify their possible triggers, and prepare for emotional reactions and how to deal with them in the moment. ***Our expertise in handling one's own emotions and the emotional reactions of others provides a highly useful addition to the preparation that attorneys provide their clients.*** In addition, we are trained to ask the right questions to help people understand their own underlying needs/interests, and to help them do this even when they first need to get past difficult emotions to achieve that clarity. ***This skill in targeted interviewing done in an empathetic manner by someone expert in helping people in times of high emotion make us an invaluable asset in helping parties identify their interests in a timely manner*** so that they can move on to discussing options.

When preparing to tell the children about the decision to divorce...

Child Specialist: Parents often worry about how they will tell their child of the decision to divorce. Our child specialists can work with parents to prepare for this important conversation. ***Based on our expertise in child development, we assist parents in making decisions about timing, messages that project the reality of the situation yet protect the child's emotions, and how to handle reactions and questions.***

When working to develop an amicable co-parenting relationship...

Co-Parenting Consultant: People who are newly divorced are also learning to co-parent anew, with a transition to two households and changing roles and responsibilities with regard to parenting. These practical changes combined with difficult emotions from the divorce can make co-parenting challenging at times. ***With our expertise in parenting, families, divorce, and conflict resolution, we help people develop a positive, cooperative, low-conflict shared parenting relationship.***

When children need help to have a voice in the process...

Child Specialist: Our child specialists can provide the child a voice in the divorce process by assessing the child's needs and concerns. ***Children are often hesitant to be open with parents during separation and divorce, and child psychologists are trained in talking with children and teenagers during difficult times, thus we may be able to elicit more information than parents regarding the child's true thoughts and feelings.*** In this manner we can be used to give the child a true, safe means of expression in the process. We also assist the parents in recognizing and meeting the child's needs during this difficult time and transition. The child specialist may work with the parents to develop and implement a parenting plan that reinforces a healthy, close relationship with both parents while instituting boundaries for the child's behavior.

When developing the parenting plan...

Parenting Plan Expert: Psychologists who are experts in child development, family relationships, and custody arrangements can be very helpful to parents as they decide what might be the best parenting plan for their child. ***Consulting with someone who is an expert in these areas can help parents make a decision that they have confidence in. A consult for parenting plan assistance is not a lengthy, expensive, or adversarial process.*** Parents describe the child and their family, describe their parenting strengths and limitations as well as practical concerns, explain their initial thoughts about the parenting plan arrangement, and share any uncertainties they are facing in making a decision. We ask several questions to gather additional relevant information and will also meet with the child if the parents wish. We then share our thoughts with the parents regarding what would likely be some good parenting plan arrangements for their child and family unit. We do not make the decision, but rather provide a wealth of information and a professional opinion that parents utilize as they wish in making their final decision. Our unique tiered approach meets the information and cost needs of every family. (Should the parents want a full custody evaluation, we can provide that as well.)

When discussing options moves slowly or gets stuck...

Communication Consultant: Our psychologists are experts in communication skills, and part of our communications expertise is in negotiation and conflict-resolution between people in relationships. ***As a relationship ends and emotions are high, we are skilled at strategies to help parties talk and listen in a way that they are able to negotiate effectively.*** We can work with individuals or meet with the parties together to help get them past a stuck point, and we can attend meetings as neutrals to work with the teams to break the impasse and get the process moving forward again.

When someone needs support or therapy...

Support Person/Therapist: ***The benefits of support/therapy during difficult and stressful times of life have been well documented.*** We provide supportive therapy for adults to help ease emotional pain, gain insight into the past and/or present, learn skills to prevent similar problems from occurring again, regain happiness, and feel good about and be prepared for the future. With regard to children, our child psychologists are specialists in the emotional and social development of children and teenagers. Parents may notice that their child is showing negative effects of the divorce, such as emotional upset or withdrawal, anger, anxiety, academic difficulties, problems with peers, drug or alcohol use, breaking rules, etc. There are many ways we can be of assistance during separation and divorce. We offer play therapy to children and supportive therapy to teenagers, to help them diminish any emotional pain they may be feeling, and develop coping skills to move through the divorce process with less distress.

At Lepage Associates our largest area of expertise is helping adults and children who are going through separation and divorce. There are many ways our psychologists can be of help during the process. Please call us or visit our website for more information, or call for an initial consult.
