

THE MEDIATOR

Mediation Offices of Michael Becker
Experience Matters

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It happened on...

September 8, 1956, when Elvis Presley appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show for the first time. Ed Sullivan didn't host that night because he had recently been in a very serious car accident that left him in the hospital.

Quote me on it

"Everything is temporary; emotions, thoughts, people, scenery. Do not become attached, just flow with it."

— *Anonymous*

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Legal Update:

CT now Allows Remote Divorces

For as long as I've been in practice, divorcing couples in Connecticut usually had to appear in court to finalize their divorces. This is no longer the case — at least for now.

When coronavirus first hit our area, the Judicial Branch closed most courthouses. While most agreed that this made sense from a public health perspective, it also meant that much of the business of the court stopped, because it was done in person.

The Connecticut Judicial Branch has since developed a procedure by which divorcing couples with agreements can finalize their

divorces remotely — without ever going to court. While sometimes cumbersome, I've used it multiple times with clients. And it does work, most often well.

This is an obvious convenience to attorneys and clients. And it is, of course, safer in a health crisis.

Problems can arise when Judges have questions about agreements, often answered quickly in in-person hearings. They now require a more formal, often time-consuming procedure.

It's not yet known whether this will be a permanent change, so stay tuned.

Remarriage Update:

Combine Finances or Not?

When combining lives, remarrying partners must decide whether to combine finances or not. It's not always an easy choice.

Older couples, who often come to the relationship with significant assets or significant obligations from previous relationships, face a particular dilemma. And if they've been divorced before, new partners may be uncomfortable discussing finances in detail with a new significant other.

The Wall Street Journal advises that separate shouldn't mean secret. Whether or not couples intend to combine finances or keep them separate, they should have an honest discussion about their finances a few months before the marriage, so as to allow time to develop a financial plan.

A good start is to list assets, income, debts and day-to-day expenses, to avoid surprises and possible resentment later on.

Tax Stuff: **Remote Work Surprise?**

Earlier this year, in less than a week many workers went from going to the office every day to going to the kitchen table to work remotely. Some workers now hope to continue some form of remote work even after the health crisis.

Enter the taxman. People who do their jobs remotely in a state different from their physical office may have created a 'tax presence' in the remote state. And the remote state may tax income because services were technically rendered there. Some states tax workers who are there for as little as one day. Ask a consultant how many state income tax returns s/he files.

Some states, such as New Jersey, have agreed to relax their tax rules for remote workers working there due to coronavirus, but others — notably Connecticut and New York — have not issued definitive guidance at the time of this printing.

For advice related to your specific situation, it's best to consult your tax professional.

Tools & Tips

Committed partners often say they wish they could read their partner's minds. "What does s/he want from me?" **The 5 Love Languages** offers hope.



In this easy read, Gary Chapman outlines 5 key ways people show — and hence like to receive — love.

For example, some people like to give affirmation ('you look great in that suit'), and others show caring by physical touch (hugging and holding hands). Chapman says that we usually give love to our partners the way we want to get it back.

My takeaway is that everyone likes to receive love differently. Knowing how you like to be loved, as well as how your partner likes to, can lead to a more connected relationship.

It's a worthwhile read for couples clinicians and, for that matter, anyone in a relationship.

Michael Becker is a Westport attorney mediator/individual & couples counselor who holds a law degree, a Master's Degree in marriage and family therapy, and a Bachelor's Degree in accounting. An APFM Advanced Practitioner, Michael is one of the most experienced mediators in the area. He is also founding Director and twice President of the Connecticut Council for Non-Adversarial Divorce, and a James W. Cooper Fellow of the CT Bar Foundation.