

THE MEDIATOR

Mediation Offices of Michael Becker
Because Experience Matters

Winter 2013 Edition

It Happened Then

On January 23, 1957, toy company Wham-O rolled out the first Frisbee, named for Bridgeport, CT pie maker William Frisbie. Students would throw his empty pie tins to each other and yell "frisbie" as they let go.

Quote Me on It

"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."

Plato

Predictions: Summer Weather

The Old Farmer's Almanac has been predicting weather patterns for a long time. This year they predict a hot, dry summer for our area. Welcome news for many. Except farmers, maybe.

Contact us @

t: 203.454.4270
f: 203.454.4467
e: michael@michaelbecker.net
w: www.michaelbecker.net

All articles written by Michael Becker

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What I Would Do Differently: Advice from Divorcees

How do you avoid divorce? Ask someone who's been through it.

A 25-year study following 373 couples found that 46% have divorced. 210 of them were asked what they'd do differently. Five key points emerged.

15% percent said they should have shown their spouses more affection. 41% said they would discuss problems in ways that work toward solutions, not fights.

Looking at yourself as part of marital problems and hearing

your spouse's take — rather than just blaming your spouse — helps to move toward solutions.

Releasing negative emotions through journaling, exercise or writing to the person who has upset you helps to avoid relationship-corroding grudges.

And finally, almost half reported disagreements over money. Discussing views on money early on in the relationship, and then devising a plan both can live with, goes a long way toward reducing these problems.

He Won't Go: Couples Therapy with One Spouse

Can you do couples therapy when one spouse, usually the husband, refuses to participate? More and more, the answer seems 'yes'.

A five-year longitudinal study of 300 couples at the University of Denver found that women who received relationship skills training saw as much improvement in their marriages as those who got the same training as a couple.

Marriage and family therapists, who are trained as systems thinkers, would say this makes intuitive sense. When one person in the couple system changes his or her behavior, it changes the behavior of their partner.

Why not the same result with men? It seems that women were better at learning the skills and folding them into the marriage.

To Keep Receiving Our Newsletter...

We're going digital, so this is our last printing of The Mediator. To get our e-newsletter, just email your name and email address to info@michaelbecker.net. Be sure to put 'newsletter' in the subject header.

Ignore Your 401(k)? Managed 401(k) Plans

The 401(k) has become the main retirement planning vehicle for most Americans. But truth be told, most people really don't know that much about picking among the myriad of funds offered by a typical plan. And in today's volatile market, this can lead to costly mistakes.

Pension experts have for years worried that the typical 401(k) emphasizes investing over actual retirement planning — setting a goal and working backwards to find suitable investments. Enter managed 401(k) plans, where instead of a menu of funds, participants are asked questions about their age, current savings and retirement income goals. The plan then develops a customized portfolio for each participant's specific situation.

Managed 401(k)s, which attempt to take some of the guesswork out of retirement planning, are offered by more and more employers. Ask yours whether they plan to offer one, or better, already do.

Tools & Tips

I love Nolo Press. They do a great job of demystifying the law for laypeople through their publications and website.

One of their many good books is Building A Parenting Agreement that Works, now in its 7th edition.

In this easy to read resource, author Mimi Lyster Zimmelman takes readers through every step of putting together a parenting agreement — such as what these agreements usually cover, how to explain the agreement to children, and what to do when changes are inevitably needed down the road.

I especially like the worksheets in chapter 3 which can help parents determine what kind of a plan will work best for children and parents alike. As well, chapter 11 contains an excellent overview of mediation and arbitration and how they are used to resolve parenting issues during or after a divorce.



Michael Becker is a Westport CT attorney with a Bachelor's Degree in accounting and a Master's Degree in marriage and family therapy. An ACR Advanced Practitioner and an APFM Advanced Mediator, Michael is one of the most experienced mediators in the area. He is also founding Director and twice President of the Connecticut Council for Divorce Mediation, and a James W. Cooper Fellow of the Connecticut Bar Foundation.

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Mediation Offices of Michael Becker
Michael Becker, LLC
One Kings Highway North
Westport, Connecticut 06880