

The negativity and insults had reached a fevered pitch. Colleen McNamee couldn't take it any longer. Her mind began to slowly wander off. She just wished she was somewhere else. *Anywhere else*. Instead, here she was, a young attorney, entrenched in a divorce litigation case, listening to a wife rant and rail against her husband, who was not present.

As McNamee's mind drifted amidst the violent

It was at that moment that McNamee's life and career swerved 180 degrees. She decided that this form of combative litigation was not for her. Mediation was. She resolved from that point forward that she would devote herself to building a practice that would serve both husband and wife – together – and strive to minimize the damage done to the family unit as a result of the divorce.

Seventeen years later, McNamee is flourishing as the only Certified Family Law Mediation Spe-

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For 17 years, Colleen McNamee has flourished as a divorce mediator and is heralded by clients as an angel.

storm of slurs, she thought to herself, “Wouldn't it be great to hear the other side of this story -- we all know there are always two sides to every story? Wouldn't it be great to hear what the husband has to say? That would help me be so much more effective in my job.”

cialist in Orange County and is heralded by clients as a saint and angel. She has handled more than 4,000 cases and in virtually every instance the couple walks away on friendlier terms than when the process first began. *Some have even gotten back together again.*

Litigation vs. Mediation

McNamee points out that mediation is a combination of law and psychology, and having a strong skillset in both of these areas due to her educational background, years of experience, and dedication to helping others, she has emerged as one of the top mediators in the area, one who is now very highly sought after by couples.

As McNamee sits in her Irvine, Calif. office, she says, “Mediation is a true and effective alternative to the adversarial manner in which typical divorce cases are handled by attorneys. In litigation you’re essentially pitting one spouse against the other and taking as much as you can from them. It just doesn’t have to be that way. It doesn’t have to be so combative, abusive and adversarial. It can be the opposite, if you really want it to be. The bottom line is, especially if you have children, you are going to have to co-parent when everything is all said and done – why make things worse than they already are.”

And it will also cost far less – like 90% less.

Joe Brain’s original attorney said it would take two years and cost him between \$200,000-\$300,000 to settle his divorce. Mediator Colleen McNamee completed the divorce in four months for just \$13,000.

Joe Brain didn’t believe mediation was possible in his divorce case. He already had retained an attorney and his wife had one too. He was paying for both attorneys. “I was already into it for \$60,000” he says. The attorneys also told him, “This won’t be easy. You have a lot of assets and a lot of money. This is going to take two years and it’ll cost you between \$200,000-\$300,000.”

The argumentative and confrontational manner in which the attorneys were handling the case made it unbearable. So Brain and his wife Traci decided to find new attorneys. But then good fortune intervened when a friend mentioned the mediation experience they had with McNamee.

“At first I said ‘no way – there’s no way we’ll be able to settle this with a mediator,’” Brain says.



“But I was willing to try because I felt I’d be broke if we did it the other way.”

When Brain and his wife walked into McNamee’s office the first time, “I had no expectations,” he says. Yet all it took was 15 seconds for Brain to believe his world was about to change.

“I felt such a relief fall off my back,” he says. “Colleen came off as a sweet, genuine, down-to-earth person who was totally opposite of the at-

torneys we had. She wanted to get the divorce done, get it done quickly, and she wanted to save us as much money as possible.”

Brain pauses for a moment and reflects deeply to that difficult time in his life. “It was the first time I had hope that something good might come out of it,” he says.

Through the entire process, Brain says McNamee “was incredible.” Often times, he walked into her office miserable and dejected, yet “she would console me,” he says. “I was devastated. There were times I’d come in crying. But Colleen got me through it.”

Not only did McNamee save Brain mentally and emotionally, but financially too.

“Instead of two years, Colleen got it done in four months and it cost just \$13,000 instead of

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\$300,000. She is an angel,” he says. “I feel so strongly about her that I would recommend every single person in the world going through a divorce to go to her.”

By the time the case was complete, “Colleen actually got me to not despise my wife anymore,” he says. “I went in hating her. I left there as her friend.”

McNamee embraces and excels at the therapeutic part of her job – she takes it very seriously. It’s what makes her job so rewarding for her.

“The way I look at it, I have a great responsibility to my clients,” she says. “Not only is it imperative to keep the environment civil during meetings, without escalating fights or arguments, but I feel it is my responsibility to minimize the damage being done to each party and to bring the couple closer together, if it’s at all possible.”

Says Brain: “Colleen convinced me that since my ex-wife and I were going to have to deal with each other rest of our lives because of our two boys, we might as well be friends. To this day, my ex-wife is a true friend and I owe it all to Colleen. I was probably on the verge of having a heart attack because of all the anger that was inside of me. Colleen helped me get rid of that anger.”

McNamee had the same extraordinary impact on Carolina and Eddie Tourgeman, who were married 10 years, got divorced and then they amazingly got back together again, thanks to McNamee.

“Right from the beginning, Colleen makes you feel like she’s there for the both of you,” Carolina says. “It’s already a very tense situation and process, but Colleen’s calm, patient and understanding nature significantly reduces the tension and paves the way to sensible behavior.”

When the Tourgemans initially went to see McNamee, they were simply inquiring about the divorce procedure. They weren’t prepared to cross the line at that point.

“What I first saw from Colleen was that she reads people really well,” Eddie says. “After 30 minutes or so, Colleen told us, ‘I don’t think you guys are done.’ That stunned me.”

He goes on to say, “Colleen really saved us and our marriage.”

When McNamee envisioned her business model decades ago, this is exactly what she projected.

“I just wanted to be in a position to help people, to assist them in getting through this difficult period of their life, and I wanted it to be affordable,” she says. “I love what I do because it’s so impactful. I firmly believe the primary cause for divorce is a breakdown in communication. What I hope to do is open up those lines of communication and if there’s a way to help save the marriage, then I do everything I can to make that happen.”

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