



Introduction by Alyssa DeMember

IN A WORLD OF CUTTHROAT COURT BATTLES, child custody issues and fighting over finances, [The Aurit Center for Divorce Mediation](#) seeks to change the way we approach the subject of divorce. Michael and Karen Aurit are transforming the divorce process into something that does not need to be ugly. As co-founders of the leading family mediation firm in the Valley, this husband-and-wife team is committed to making divorce more peaceful.

One moment after stepping into The Aurit Center's North Scottsdale office, visitors can feel the divorce mediation difference. Calming piano music softly plays. A single candle burns quietly in the lobby. French doors in the main meeting space open onto a balcony with sweeping views of the McDowell Mountains. Surrounded by chocolates and treats (and fruits and nuts for the health-conscious), divorcing spouses meet together with their mediator to reach agreements on divorce terms, rather than ever clashing in a courtroom. "The mediation experience here is quite possibly the antithesis of enduring visits to a law firm office and courthouse," Michael says.

An Arizona attorney who won't ever go to court or litigate a case, Michael acts as the firm's lead professional mediator and dedicates his entire practice to divorce mediation. Karen, the firm's Director of Mediation Services, helps clients move through the entire process. Her background in clinical psychology and family therapy comes in handy.

"When spouses first meet with Michael they may feel a bit anxious—a mix of many complicated emotions," Karen says. "But by the end of their initial consultation, many feel a sense of relief. They recognize that a respectful path to divorce is possible. Parents know that when they enter divorce mediation they are best protecting the well-being of their children."

As a neutral mediator, Michael helps spouses find common ground on every divorce issue: fair division of assets and debts, spousal support, and all parenting issues. "Mediation gives spouses control over their own personalized divorce terms," he says. "By keeping conflict low and discussing creative ways to meet both of their interests, mutual agreements are reached and a divorce war is avoided."

During mediation, couples will inevitably disagree at times. They probably wouldn't be divorcing if that weren't the case. But according to Karen and Michael, many initial disagreements stem from fears about what the other will demand.

"Leading up to mediation, each spouse may have made threats or made statements out of anger that the other has remembered," Michael says. "But mediation never actually results in either person's worst fears coming true. To the contrary, spouses most often wind up with their most mutually beneficial agreements."

After all agreements are reached, Michael writes their Divorce Decree rather than a judge. Spouses may each seek individual legal advice and then sign. The Aurit Center files the Decree to the court to finalize the divorce.

Divorce is never easy. For many, it is the hardest thing they will ever face. The Aurit Center provides a much-needed choice for how families go through the process.

"If the first thought of any parent considering divorce were '*We need to find a good mediator*' instead of '*I need to find an aggressive attorney*,' divorce would have a very different impact on spouses and their children," Michael says. "We're working on shifting that culture."