

## LI BUSINESS

# Using mediation to reduce stress of getting a divorce

### EXECUTIVE SUITE

BY JACQUELINE RIVKIN  
Special to Newsday

“Good divorce” may be an oxymoron, but Divorce Mediation Professionals aims to minimize the drain of time, money and emotion, helping spouses work together.

Senior partner Lenard Marlow began as a traditional divorce lawyer, but said he always had “certain misgivings.” He founded Divorce Mediation Professionals in Garden City in 1981. The firm also has offices in Commack, Manhattan and Westchester County, where lawyers and social workers work with couples to create agreements that are fair for all.

Mediation is generally a shorter and less costly process than divorce litigation. Marlow, who has written six books on the subject, said

most agreements can be finalized in a matter of weeks.

He said he was struck from the first by how mediation creates a more constructive dynamic than traditional litigation. “In the beginning I thought this was a self-selecting system where I got only the more civilized people,” he recalled. “I didn’t find myself having to deal with all of the silliness that I dealt with as a divorce lawyer.”

#### What is the biggest area of conflict in divorcing couples?

What’s amazing is how people can sometimes raise the silliest issues. People don’t get married to get divorced, and that gives rise to some very difficult feelings that are dying for expression. We could be talking about something no more important than this pencil. So one of the things I have to get them to see is that it’s just a pencil.

#### Tell me about the process.

When I meet a couple I

have to get to know them. It’s not about rights — what are you going to get and what are you going to get. We talk first about the children. That’s where we start out, because no matter what differences they have, this is something that still matters to both of them.

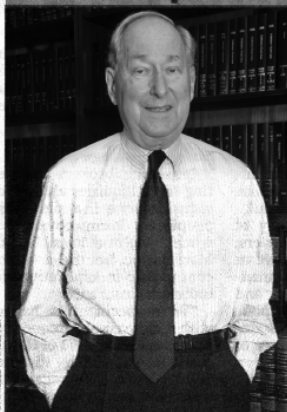
#### Divorce law can be extremely lucrative. How does divorce mediation compare as a living?

You’ve got to be out of your mind to go into this field. There are only seven or eight people in New York who do this full time. Most do it part time. There are very, very few people making what you would call a living at it.

#### Your firm has taken a special interest in causes — and cases — involving special needs children. Why?

I am dealing with more people with children with special needs [than in the past]. All children need parents who can

### CORPORATE snapshot



**NAME:** Lenard Marlow, senior partner and founder, Divorce Mediation Professionals, Garden City

**WHAT THEY DO:** Help divorcing families resolve problems and find equitable solutions

**EMPLOYEES:** 6

**REVENUES:** \$950,000

Lenard Marlow is senior partner at Divorce Mediation Professionals.

work together, but by definition, these children need parents who can work together in a different way. We direct them in the right direction, but more importantly we lay the groundwork for them to work together in the future.

#### How has being a divorce mediator impacted your marriage?

I have been fortunate. I am married to a very, very nice person. It’s not mediation, it’s age. At my age you realize how bloody lucky I am to have someone who I know is in my corner. I love my kids but she is the most important person in my life. . . Having been so successfully married has stood me in good stead here.