RICH MAHLER
MEDIATION & THERAPY
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CHILD-INCLUSIVE MEDIATION

As a Specialist Family Law Mediator and Child-Inclusive Mediator, I only mediate family law matters. I facilitate mediations both in person and by Zoom, as well as both with and without lawyers..

My mediation practice is informed by an understanding of the nuances of power imbalances in relationships and affording safety in the context of domestic and family violence. This can include the use of shuttle mediations, where the parties remain in separate rooms throughout the entire process.

My flagship **Child-Inclusive Mediation** service utilises my dual qualifications and experience in law and psychotherapy. As a Family Therapist and Child Consultant, I work with school-aged children and their significant caregivers (usually parents).

A Child-Inclusive Mediation empowers the child with a voice to express their lived experience and any wishes, and can involve art or play therapy.

I screen caregivers to safeguard against them weaponising the process against each other or the child.

I assess the child for signs of trauma, attachment issues and third-party influence such as coaching or parental alienation.

I reassure the child that the dispute between their caregivers isn't their fault, and encourage them to express their needs, concerns and wishes.

I discourage the child from attempting to make decisions about their relationships with caregivers such as who they live with and how much time they spend with them.

A Child-Inclusive Mediation has two parts. Part 1 is a lawyer-free zone and involves me spending time with the child and their caregivers. Part 2 generally involves lawyers and is where the caregivers mediate the issues in dispute as informed by the child's lived experience.

I spend the morning with the child and their caregivers in a professional yet relaxed environment such as my therapy rooms or a specialist mediation centre. I begin by building rapport with the child and explaining the process to them. The process then involves a first session with the child, then a first debrief with caregivers, then a second session with the child, and then a second debrief with caregivers.

Caregivers can observe my sessions with the child through glass windows to provide the child with the benefits of both safety and privacy.

If there are more than three children or complex issues involved, I'll facilitate the Child-Inclusive Mediation over two days.

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DO'S & DON'TS

Before the Child-Inclusive Mediation

Do's – What to say to the child

- *You haven't done anything wrong*
- *You're not in trouble*
- *You don't have to choose between us as your parents*
- *You don't have to decide how much time you spend with each of us as your parents*
- *Rich is going to talk to you about what it's like having separated parents*
- *You should tell Rich the truth*
- *You can talk to Rich about anything you want to*
- *You don't have to talk to Rich about anything you're not comfortable with*
- *Rich is going to try to help us make the best decisions for you as your parents*

Don'ts – What NOT to say to the child

- *Make sure you tell Rich about _____*
- *Don't tell Rich about _____*
- *You want to live mostly with me, don't you?*
- *What are you going to tell Rich?*

After the Child-Inclusive Mediation

Do's – What to say to the child

- *Did you feel heard when talking to Rich?*
- *Did you feel safe?*
- *Did you feel comfortable?*

Don'ts – What NOT to say to the child

- *What did you tell Rich?*
- *Why did you tell Rich _____ ?*

Do's – What to say to the other parent

- *How can we work better together to address _____ 's needs?*

Don'ts – What NOT to say to the other parent

- *See, I told you so!*
- *I'm glad _____ finally told the truth about you!*