

---

*"Finding a pathway is hard when you cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel. For this reason, a key part of divorce mediator's job is to communicate a hopeful perspective" (Spiegel & Duquette, 2009, p. 24).*

*"By encouraging full expression of emotion, by employing a tone that is relaxed and confident, by normalizing an experience that can feel unique and isolating, by focusing on the positive reality, and by acknowledging and appreciating accomplishments both large and small, mediators encourage hopefulness at a time when clients often feel that all hope has eluded them" (Spiegel & Duquette, 2009, p. 25).*

## **'We Are in Charge of Hopefulness' – An essential Part of the Divorce Mediator's Job**

By John Spiegel and Donna Duquette

Spiegel, J., & Duquette, D. (2009). 'We are in charge of hopefulness' An essential part of the divorce mediator's job. *ACResolution: The Quarterly Magazine of the Association for Conflict Resolution*, 8, 24-25.

**Note: Even though this article focuses on how divorce mediators can communicate a hopeful perspective to their clients, the specific strategies discussed can be applicable to other contexts also.**

Spiegel and Duquette (2009) argue that communicating a hopeful perspective is a key part of the divorce mediator's job, because clients often bring with them intense feelings of discouragement about divorce mediation. Such feelings can obscure positive possibilities from view and can interfere with clients' abilities to persevere, concentrate, and engaged in creative problem solving.

There are two mutually-reinforcing aspects to Spiegel and Duquette's hopeful perspective:

- Hopefulness that the mediation process will end successfully in a mutually-satisfying settlement
- Hopefulness that there is good reason to look forward to the next phase of one's life despite the deep sorrow over the loss of a marriage

Specifically, the authors advocate five key ways for mediators to communicate their hopeful perspective to their clients.

- Allow clients to express their discouragement
- Speak with a tone of relaxed confidence based on
  - genuine confidence in the clients' ability to figure out brilliant solutions to their problems
  - the effectiveness of mediation to facilitate this good thinking
- Normalize the clients' emotions and experience
- Look for positive aspects of the clients' lives and actions
- Acknowledge and appreciate the work of the clients

Spiegel and Duquette conclude with their belief that "We are in charge of hopefulness – until, as will happen, they (the clients) discover that they are ready to reclaim it for themselves" (p. 25). Also, the authors argue for the need to express their hopeful perspective very directly, explicitly, and tangibly in some instances.

**(Summary prepared by Yea-Wen Chen, FDR Graduate Assistant)**

---