WeChat Divorce Podcast

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THE MEDIATION READINESS CHECKLIST

Six things to know **before** you walk into the room.

Why this matters financially: *Mediation is not the place to discover you don't have the documents, don't understand the numbers, or don't know whether the proposed settlement works for your future.*

01 Know What Type of Meeting You're In

Mediation, settlement conference, and court-ordered are not the same thing.

- **Voluntary mediation**: you chose this path
- **Attorney-recommended**: common before contested hearings
- **Court-mandated**: you must attend, but you still have options

Each carries different pressure and different rules about what gets resolved

> "Know the type before you walk in. It changes your strategy."

02 Verify Your Financial Documents First

Exchanged ≠ verified. Reviewed ≠ complete.

- **3 years** of tax returns with all schedules and K-1s
- **12 months** of bank and credit card statements
- **Every balance** confirmed against an actual statement
- **Flag anything** that can't be supported with a source document

One recent spreadsheet was $400,000 off. Verification is not always part of the process

> "If a number can't be verified, it's a question, not a fact."

03 Know What Is Missing

The mediator won't find it. The judge won't find it. You have to.

- **Check** for deferred comp, stock options, RSUs, pensions
- **Confirm** all debts: HELOCs, tax liabilities, business loans
- **Account** for separate property calculations: pre-marital assets, inheritances, and gifts
- **Verify** real estate, business interests, retirement accounts are included and valued

What's left out stays with whoever controls it.

> "What's not in the room can't be divided."

04 Understand Settlement Options Before You Arrive

You don't need a perfect plan. You need to see the trade-offs.

- **Model** keeping the house vs. selling and splitting proceeds
- **Compare** support amounts, durations, and structures side by side
- **Understand** what each asset means after taxes and over time

$200K in retirement ≠ $200K in home equity: different tax, liquidity, and value

> "Model it before you promise it."

05 Know the Pressure That May Come

Fear is not a settlement strategy. Be ready for what you may hear.

- **Trial prep retainers** can be $50,000 or more
- **Attorneys** can withdraw from cases. It happens.
- **Deadlines** will be used as leverage, real or not

You may be asked to sign a mediated agreement on the spot, which can be considered a binding contract

> "'I can't afford trial' is not the same as 'this settlement makes financial sense.'"

06 Align With Your Attorney Before the Meeting

Know your attorney's goal for the session before you walk in.

- **Ask:** what is the expected outcome of today's session?
- **Ask:** do we have all the financial information we need?
- **Agree** on which issues are ready and which need more work

If you're not clear, reschedule. It's not too late.

> "If you're calling for help two days before mediation, reschedule."