

## The Middle Stage

The middle stage is where separation becomes less about what has happened and more about how it is going to be resolved. The emotional intensity of the beginning has not completely gone, but it has settled enough that decisions now need to be made — and those decisions carry weight. This is the point where things can either remain steady and workable, or begin to escalate into something more difficult than they need to be.

By this stage, the practical realities are unavoidable. Questions around finances, living arrangements, and time with your children are no longer abstract. They require agreement, and agreement is not always easy when both people are still carrying emotion. It is this combination — emotional residue and practical pressure — that makes this stage particularly sensitive.

*What often complicates this stage is the feeling of losing control.*

When parts of your life that once felt stable are being reshaped, it is natural to want to hold onto something. That can show up as pushing harder in conversations, reacting more quickly, or taking a stronger position than necessary in order to feel like you are regaining ground. While that response is understandable, it is also where escalation tends to begin.

*Escalation rarely starts with something major.*

*It builds through smaller moments.*

A conversation that becomes sharper than it needs to be. A message sent too quickly. A refusal to step back when stepping back would help. Over time, those moments begin to stack, and once that pattern sets in, it becomes much harder to bring things back to a calm and workable place.

*This is where discipline becomes important.*

Not the kind that ignores how you feel, but the kind that allows you to choose how you respond despite how you feel. It requires recognising that every interaction contributes to the overall direction of the situation — and that direction will have a lasting impact.

*This is why mediation is so important in this stage.*

Not because it removes difficulty, but because it keeps the focus on resolution rather than conflict. It provides a structure for working through issues without turning them into battles. When lawyers become the primary way of communicating, the process often shifts toward winning rather than resolving, and that shift tends to increase both the cost and the damage.

*Mediation keeps things human.*

It allows both sides to be heard, and it keeps more control in your hands rather than handing it over entirely to a legal process. Choosing mediation does not mean accepting outcomes that are not fair. It means approaching the situation with the intention of finding workable solutions rather than escalating positions.

*That distinction matters.*

*It also matters for your children.*

They are not part of the decisions, but they are affected by how those decisions are made. They notice tension, they feel instability, and they are shaped by the environment created around them. The more conflict there is, the more difficult it becomes for them to feel secure within a changing situation.

*What they need is not perfection.*

*They need stability.*

That stability comes from how you handle yourself, how you communicate, and how you manage conflict when it arises. It means being aware of when something does not need to be pushed further, when a response can wait, and when calm is more valuable than being right.

At the same time, there is an internal shift happening that is just as important. Your identity is changing. The structure you were part of is no longer the same, and that can leave you feeling unsettled. It is natural to want to regain control quickly, but trying to control everything often creates more tension rather than less — because not everything is within your control.

*What remains within your control is how you show up.*

*How you communicate.*

*How you take care of yourself.*

*How you respond when things are difficult.*

Looking after yourself in this stage is not something extra — it is what allows you to navigate everything else. Without it, your capacity drops. With it, you are able to stay clearer, more measured, and more deliberate in your actions.

There will be moments where you feel frustrated or where things feel unfair. Those moments are part of the process. But they do not have to define how you act. Being able to feel those things without letting them dictate your decisions is what keeps this stage from becoming more difficult than it needs to be.

*The way you handle this stage sets the tone for what comes next.*

*If it becomes adversarial, that tends to carry forward.*

*If it remains focused on resolution, it creates a more stable foundation.*

This stage is not about winning. It is about navigating a difficult situation in a way that protects what matters most and allows you to move forward without unnecessary damage.

**Stay measured. Choose resolution. Protect your children. Handle yourself in a way you can respect.**