



## **Building Mental Resilience: Divorce in the Age of Covid**

12.18.2020

By: David D. Mendes, Esq., Partner at Whitbeck Bennett, PLLC

Divorce is a daunting and mentally exhausting process even in normal times. Often, even the most mentally resilient among us find that getting a divorce is much harder and more painful than expected. It brings up feelings of loss, isolation, guilt, shame, and failure. Couple that with the worries about finances, the welfare of your children, the stress of the legal battle, and concerns about building a new life after divorce, and it can be mental health rollercoaster.

The Age of Covid has placed monumental stresses on families and marriages. As we try to protect ourselves and our families from illness, we feel more isolated and alone and have lost the benefit of our normal routines. For many, this has brought their marriages to a breaking point, leading to the decision to separate and divorce. By marshaling your mind, you will process the emotions of divorce without internalizing misplaced shame or guilt, make better decisions in your court case, and prepare yourself to thrive in the next phase of life

When people come to WhitbeckBennett, we stress the importance of protecting the “whole you.” As family law attorneys, we know that the divorce itself is just half the battle. As important as it is to us to win the legal fight, equally important is helping our clients to prepare for their new post-divorce life. The key to both is taking care of your mental health.

Many people feel like getting a divorce is a burden they must bear alone. It is not. Wisdom lies in seeking support when you need it. Now more than ever, it is important to take care of yourself. As a parent, we learn that to give our best to our children, we must take care of ourselves first.

From the start of the divorce process, we encourage clients to seek out the support they need. Many genuinely benefit from talking with a mental health professional to better understand and process the emotions that come up at the end of a marriage and during the divorce. Two of the best options in the area are professionals at [Ashburn Psychiatric Psychological Services](#) and Michelle Jabbour, LPC, CSAT, IFS, at [Michelle Jabbour Therapy](#).

There is a myriad of divorce support groups in the area and most have gone virtual during the pandemic. These groups offer divorcing spouses a shared community where they can find advice, understanding, and acceptance. The process of separating and getting divorced can feel like a never-ending battle but engaging with others who have been through it helps to remind people that it does end, and you will get through it too. There are many well established great groups in the region, including [Separated, Divorced, Single Moms of Virginia, Maryland, and DC](#), which is a very active Facebook Group, as well as groups through [Second Saturday](#), or others offering faith-based approach like [Divorce Care](#). With so many options, there is a support group that is the right fit for you.

By building your mental resilience, you will make better decisions in your divorce case, advocate for yourself, be able to pick your battles with your ex-spouse, and be more confident that you are doing right for yourself and your children.

Author:

[DAVID D. MENDES, ESQ., PARTNER AT WHITBECKBENNETT, PLLC](#)

Mr. Mendes is an experienced trial attorney and civil litigator. His practice focuses on family law, mental health law, elder law, and estate litigation. His cases range from contested divorces and child custody matters to representing family members seeking to gain guardianship over an aging parent who can no longer care for themselves to litigating complex estate disputes.

**Law School:** University of New Mexico School of Law, J.D., Dean's List & Honor Roll, Lynda Latta Family Law Advocacy Award

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### **Biography:**

Mendes is an experienced trial attorney and civil litigator. His practice focuses on family law, mental health law, elder law, and estate litigation. His cases range from contested divorces and child custody matters to representing family members seeking to gain guardianship over an aging parent who can no longer care for themselves to litigating complex estate disputes. He prides himself on standing alongside his clients to solve their most challenging personal problems and navigate unforeseen circumstances. He views his role as multifaceted—he is a fierce advocate for his client’s legal goals, a trusted counselor and confidant, and an experienced strategist steering them on the best path forward for themselves, their children, and their family as a whole. Mr. Mendes, a former member of the District of Columbia’s Probate Fiduciary Panel, routinely represents family members, professional fiduciaries, and other lawyers in litigation arising from estate administrations, guardianships and conservatorships, and estate-related real estate matters.

Prior to entering private practice, Mr. Mendes served as a criminal prosecutor and handled hundreds of drunk driving, criminal traffic, and domestic violence cases. He managed a leading civil litigation law firm’s personal injury practice and represented victims against insurance companies and state and local governments. Prior to becoming a lawyer, Mr. Mendes was a successful business development and consulting professional and has extensive experience advising business owners and senior managers on strategic growth planning and human capital matters.

Mr. Mendes received his Juris Doctorate at the University of New Mexico School of Law. In law school, Mr. Mendes was honored with the Lynda Latta Family Law Advocacy Award for his work representing indigent clients through the UNM Student Law Clinic. Mr. Mendes also served as the President of the Mexican American Law Student Association (MALSA). For his term, MALSA was awarded the American Bar Association National Achievement Award for Diversity, the ABA's highest honor for a student organization, for substantially advancing access to legal education for underrepresented minorities throughout both urban and rural communities in New Mexico.

Mr. Mendes earned his B.A. in Liberal Arts from Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo, California, and an M.A. in International Security from George Mason University's Schar School of Government and Policy in Arlington, Virginia.

In his free time, Mr. Mendes enjoys fast cars, cooking for family and friends, and spending time with his wonderful wife and young son.