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You may have heard of a practice within the legal profession called collaborative law. It's more commonly known as divorce mediation. I'm Marlene. And in this session, I'd like to talk with you about collaborative law. Let's start out by defining it.

Collaborative law, also called divorce mediation, is a conflict resolution process used to settle financial and/or child care and custody issues between divorcing or separating couples. So couples who are going to separate or divorce will work with their lawyers and maybe some family professionals that they want to bring in as well to achieve a settlement that they mutually will agree on. And by doing so, they will avoid a court decision, which could be uncertain, and they also, of course, avoid any kind of contested litigation. So it can be a really positive alternative for divorcing couples.

Now the couple may bring in a mediator to help them collaborate and reach their agreement. However, any mediated agreement that the mediator would help them reach needs to be evaluated and approved by their lawyers.

So how do you initiate a divorce mediation? How does it start? Well, it starts with something called a participation agreement. And here's what that is. A participation agreement is an agreement by a divorcing or separating couple required to initiate divorce mediation.

Now they sign this agreement. And it's a binding contract to the process. It binds them to this process. And it also prohibits their lawyers from representing them in the future in any kind of a family case. So that is what the agreement does.

So in summary, divorce mediation or collaborative law can be a wonderful alternative for couples who are divorcing if they're willing to collaborate together and work together towards a solution. They will avoid the contentiousness of court and, of course, the uncertainty of a court decision through collaborative law. So thank you for being part of this tutorial. And I look forward to seeing you next time.