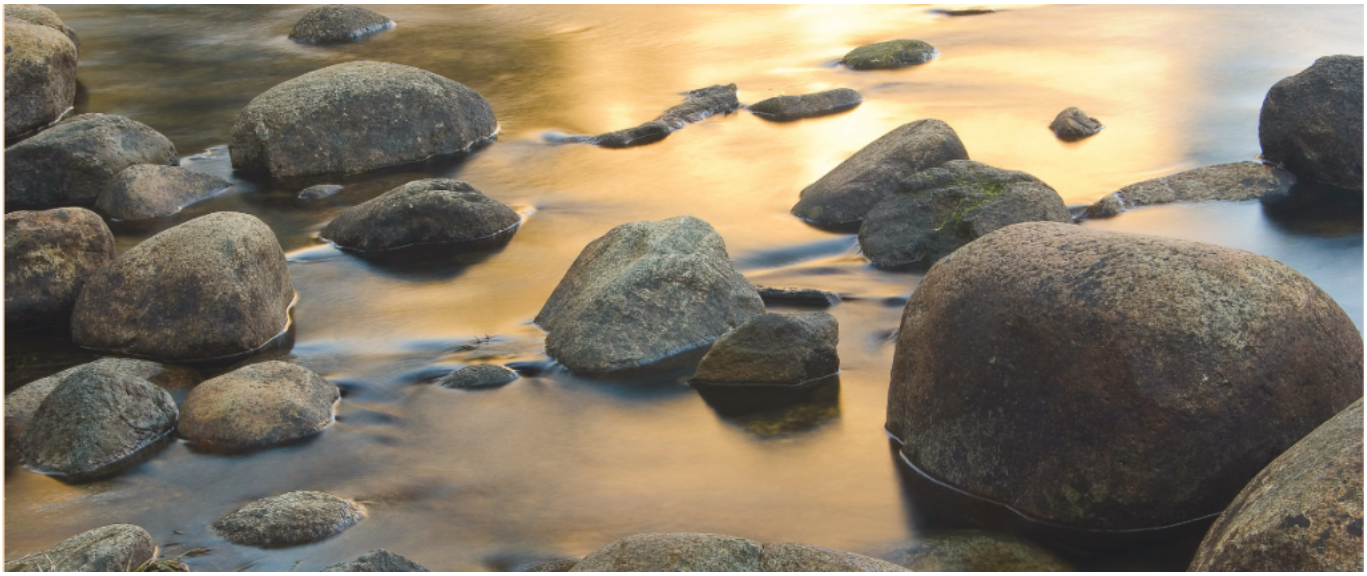
The Rock and Water Approach in Family Law: Finding Strength Through Flexibility

written by SRFL Team | 10 November 2025



Family separation is one of life's toughest emotional challenges. It's not just the end of a relationship, it's often the unravelling of routines, shared dreams, and the sense of stability. When emotions are running high, even small decisions can feel monumental.

This is where understanding the *Rock and Water* approach, a powerful psychophysical program used in education and emotional regulation, can make all the difference in how families navigate conflict and resolution.

What is the *Rock and Water* approach?

Originally developed in the Netherlands by Freerk Ykema, the *Rock and Water Program* is a social-emotional learning approach that at its core, teaches that in life we can respond like a **Rock** – strong, firm and grounded; or like **Water** – calm, adaptable and able to flow around challenges.

Neither is right or wrong. The true strength lies in knowing *when* to be Rock and *when* to be Water.

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What does *Rock and Water* approach have to do with separation?

When couples separate, emotions can be intense! There's understandably a lot of hurt, disappointment, maybe even fear of the unknown. It's natural to want to protect yourself, to stand firm, to be Rock in everything to "win". But when every issue becomes a battlefield, the process can quickly spiral into conflict and escalation.

Being "all Rock" might feel empowering in the moment, but it can make it harder to find common ground and often leads to an escalation and further breakdown of communication.

On the other hand, being "all Water", agreeing to everything just to keep the peace, can leave you feeling invisible, or like your needs don't matter.

The healthiest outcomes usually come from balancing the two.

There are moments where being Rock is essential and moments where being Water creates space for understanding, movement and increases the chances of an amicable resolution.

When to Be Rock

Being Rock means standing firm on the things that truly matter the values and priorities that reflect who you are and what you believe is best for your family.

For example:

- Your children's safety, wellbeing, and emotional stability.

- Clear, respectful communication and boundaries.
- Emotional boundaries to protect your privacy.
- Honouring meaningful family traditions, like celebrating important holidays together or keeping routines that help children feel secure.

These are the foundations that anchor you. Standing firm here protects what matters most.

When to Be Water

Being Water doesn't mean being passive, it means being strategic, emotionally intelligent and open to movement.

In mediation or negotiation, flexibility can be a powerful tool. Being open to adjusting schedules, exploring creative financial solutions, or trialling new co-parenting arrangements can lead to greater peace and long-term success. It can help build goodwill and increase the chances of reaching agreement on the issues that *are* your Rocks.

By being Water and allowing flexibility on topics that matter less, you show reasonableness and in turn, strengthen your position when you stand firm on what matters more.

Water finds the path of least resistance and in family law, that often leads to calmer conversations, lower stress, and faster resolutions. It helps shift the dynamic from *me versus you* to *what works best for our family*.

Being Water is about choosing peace without losing your principles. It's letting go of smaller battles to win the bigger ones, the ones that truly protect your family's future.

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Finding Smarter Resolutions

Separation is one of life's hardest transitions. It tests your strength, patience, and emotional balance in ways few things can. The *Rock and Water* mindset can help you navigate this storm, knowing when to hold steady and when to let go so that decisions are guided by values, not just emotions.

For us at **Smarter Resolutions Family Law**, finding smarter resolutions is more than a tagline – it's a philosophy. It reflects our belief that every family deserves clarity, respect, and a path forward that's both practical and kind.

Our skilled family lawyers work with you to identify your Rocks, the principles and priorities worth standing firm on and support you in finding your Water, the flexibility that leads to resolution.

True strength in family law isn't about being unbreakable; it's about being balanced. And sometimes, the smartest resolution is knowing when to be the Rock… and when to be the Water.

Free initial consultation: Contact us to discuss your personal situation.

We hope you have found this information to be of use in giving you an understanding of our firm and the work we do specifically in relation to Family Law and matters related to Family Law. We know that every family law matter is unique, and your personal circumstances require you to receive personalised legal advice that considers your specific needs, objectives, and circumstances. We strongly encourage you to contact our office to talk to us about your personal circumstances and how this information specifically applies to your situation. We welcome you to get in touch with us to book a free initial consultation with our team.

We are a boutique legal firm focused on family law. Our team has a depth of experience and expertise that cannot be matched by legal practices that work across numerous areas of law. Wherever you are in the separation process, our team can assist you. Book your free initial consultation with one of our family lawyers today, phone during office hours on 07 56 466 466 or book online via our meeting calendar here.
