

## A Living Hell

That's how going through a divorce has sometimes been described. Sadly, and in far too many cases, truer words were never spoken. Even more unfortunate, is the fact that hiring the wrong lawyer will often contribute to that hell. In both emotional and financial terms, the toll it can take on those involved is like a nightmare come true. But it doesn't have to be that way. We help couples and individuals get through these difficult times with a philosophy that is unique and an empathy toward our clients that is uncommon in the field of divorce law. The services offered and the processes available to clients are diverse and we help you to determine which are most appropriate to your circumstances.

There are three distinct processes the traditional *litigation* process; the *divorce mediation* process; and the newly emerging *collaborative divorce* process. Each is discussed in detail so that clients can make an informed decision. Our goal is always to minimize the emotional stress and the financial cost of each case, and to bring matters to an amicable conclusion in as short a time as possible. We strive to maintain civility and foster understanding and cooperation among all parties at all times. When children are involved there is a special emphasis on protecting them from the harmful effects of family crisis. In an age where one in every two marriages ends in divorce, we feel clients are best served by a focused professional whose legal expertise is not diluted by extraneous activity. For that reason our practice is limited to only matrimonial and related family matters.

We make this promise to each client: Whether you choose to litigate, mediate or collaborate, you'll find that we are committed to achieving for you what all who embark on this road want and deserve: *Divorce with dignity.*

## GETTING STARTED

The decision to divorce is a difficult one. The process can also be very challenging emotionally. It is said that divorce is one of the worst things that ever happens in a person's life. During difficult or depressing times, the issues that we normally manage become much larger, and sometimes, overwhelming. You may find it helpful to consult with a therapist or divorce coach, individually or with your spouse, not only to help you decide if divorce is necessary, but to help you understand why the marriage is ending and ease the emotional challenges ahead. This can save time and make the process smoother.

One of the first questions I ask a potential client is, "Would your spouse be surprised to know you are meeting with me?" If the answer is yes, that probably means that you are much farther ahead than him or her in thinking about being out of the marriage. It probably also means that your spouse will need time to catch up to you emotionally. My goal is to make your divorce as smooth as possible. That means understanding a little about the dynamic of your relationship and figuring out the best way to proceed. Divorce is not a one-size fits all endeavor. By tailoring it to your individual needs we can insure a smooth process.

Which divorce process is best for you?

Before we can answer this question it is important to visualize what kind of divorce you'd like to have. The main differences between a traditional litigation and alternative processes such as mediation and collaborative divorce, are the goals and how you get there. In a traditional litigation the goal is to "get everything you can" without any regard for the other side. Lawyers argue and try to convince each other, and the judge, that their position is right. It's a costly winner-take-all battle. In certain circumstances, litigation is the right option. If that is so in your case, we will still make every effort to be respectful, and at the same time, make sure your rights are protected. In mediation or collaborative divorce the goal is to have an agreement that is fair for both of you and good for your children. You and your spouse create solutions together from the ground up taking each other's interests and concerns into consideration. This is a good foundation for being able to solve problems in the future and work together as parents.

## CONTROL

After you visualize what kind of divorce you would like to have you should consider how active you want to be in the process. In this information age more and more people are taking charge of their lives – and their divorces. The days of blindly following the advice of your lawyer are numbered. This is especially true when it comes to divorce, since the decisions that have to be made will effect how you, your soon-to-be-ex and your children live your lives. Another fundamental difference in the processes is that in a traditional litigated divorce you have no control. Your lawyer decides what is important and your lawyer decides how to achieve it. And if the other lawyer doesn't agree, a judge will decide for you. In collaborative divorce and mediation you choose the process, you participate in making decisions and you control how much time and money is spent.