

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Stormy Seas and Hurricanes

By K. Dean Kantaras

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT GOING through a divorce is a traumatic experience. Lives are changed forever. Children suffer. Everyone has lasting effects for years. Some spouses going through a divorce do things just to annoy or aggravate the other which then creates even more problems and costs in the case.

It doesn't have to be that way. People going through a divorce can be civil even though they literally hate each other. Unfortunately, most people think they want and need a pound of flesh; yet, my experience is that those who do act maliciously toward their spouse don't end up feeling better.

I could give thousands of instances where I observed this type of behavior. But, instead, I will refer to some of the recent insights described by others who have had extensive experiences with divorce cases.

Michele F. Lowrance, a Circuit Court Judge in Chicago, handles only divorce cases and has been doing so for fifteen years. In that length of time, she's probably seen most of the issues that can arise in these matters.

Judge Lowrance also responds to letters sent to her by individuals who have issues in their marriage. One man wrote Judge Lowrance and complained that his wife came to court with her new boyfriend. He said that this made him so angry that he couldn't even think about dividing his assets with her. Judge Lowrance responded by telling him several interesting things from a psychological point of view. First, she observed that the wife probably wanted moral support and that she wanted him to see that she was still desirable. The Judge acknowledged that the wife wanted to hurt the husband and was foolish to do so in such a manner.

The Judge then advised him not to confront the wife and her boyfriend, as that could harm his cause; since although the Judge assigned to the case would



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not appreciate what the wife did, a confrontation by the husband could cause the Judge's focus to be on that and not the wife's blunder.

In another instance, a woman wrote the Judge complaining about the husband's infidelity, although she had an affair early on in the marriage. The husband forgave her and they remained married. Several years later the husband came home and told her he had just had an affair. and she had a problem with that. The Judge had much to say about this situation, but the high points of her thoughts were that betrayal affects the loyalty of the marriage, including trust, security, love and ego. The Judge then said, "Forgiveness cannot be microwaved." It takes time before anger can turn to forgiveness. It comes in four stages, which are:

1. The pain stage. Pain is what you feel. You will not be able to think your way out of the pain. It is like flu. It has to run its course.

2. Resentment. You see it in all aspects of your life and everything you do. Your peace and health are affected until you make a decision that you don't want to live like this.

3. The Turning Point. You decide not to fuel your resentment. You want to rid yourself of it. Even though you don't know how, you think about ways to change your life.

4. Control. Betrayal has been controlling you. You want to lessen that control. You can decide not to be defined by your anger and resentment.

Finally, the Judge cautioned the woman that divorce should be the last resort, the "heavy artillery," as she put it.

From my point of view as a divorce lawyer, marriage is hard. There are always stormy seas. Sometimes, those storms become hurricanes. However, I agree with Judge Lowrance. Divorce should be the last option.

Think about it. ■■■

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