

picking up after the breakup

Family law attorneys mix compassion with tenacity to help those navigating the potentially tumultuous waters of divorce

"THE ONLY THING THAT IS CONSTANT IS CHANGE." The famous quote commonly attributed to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus applies to everything beneath the sun, humans especially. Kids grow into adults. Couples add to their families by having children or adopting. Middle age gives way to the twilight years. And sometimes two people who once loved each other dearly have change thrust upon them after they have grown irretrievably apart and have headed down the path toward divorce.

BY **Jill Lupine**



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Then there is Greg LaMonaca of The Law Office of Gregory P. LaMonaca P.C., a firm based in Media, who has, quite literally, written books on the subject with his "Brutally Honest" series.

"My first book, 'The Brutally Honest Life Management Journal,' was written to allow an individual to map out their short-term, mid-range and long-term goals and to put together a plan to achieve it," he says. "This [book was designed to help] them both during the divorce but also afterwards as they moved on with the rest of their lives. My second book, 'The Brutally Honest Pennsylvania Guide to Divorce and Custody,' ... was designed to allow individuals to get immediate answers to divorce and custody questions they may have that are causing them fear."

Attorneys such as LaMonaca suggest seeking out legal advice early so a prospective client can gain a good understanding of their rights and the divorce process, his or her financial picture and how to put oneself in the best possible situation should the divorce process decide to move forward with the divorce. At the same time, clients should not rush the process, asserts Karen Ulmer Pendergast of Karen Ann Ulmer P.C., a family law firm with offices in Doylestown, Newtown and Princeton, N.J.

"If someone may need a family lawyer in the future or needs one currently, we advise them to take their time and be sure they are ready for that step," she says. "We advise them of what they can expect to happen from the very beginning until it is final. We prepare them by letting them know various scenarios and how [those scenarios] may play out. We counsel people to make their own decisions and encourage them to settle their issues out of court as much as it is possible."

Although the search for a skilled family law attorney should be based primarily on the attorney's knowledge and experience in this particular area of law, the decision should also be influenced by a more intangible factor: chemistry.

"I definitely think it's important to feel like you can trust your attorney," Schimmel says. "Yes, you want someone who is knowledgeable and good at what they do. Beyond that, really it's just about finding someone you are comfortable with. For my clients, I

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"A DIVORCE IS LIKE A DEATH," says Eisenberg. **"You're splitting your kids, your pets and everything else in your life. People can get upset, angry, bitter and scorned; no one comes out of it unscathed, and everyone has scars. My job is to help them heal and focus on looking forward rather than looking backward."** **My job is to help them understand that 'this too shall pass.'"**

take the approach of handholding, to a degree; we're not coddlers, but at times we have to be attorneys and counselors because it's such an emotional time. ... In your search, you want to interview a few attorneys, picking two or three you like based on your research, because you can learn a lot over the phone and from reviewing their websites."

Interviewing can be incredibly helpful, though many clients zero in on a family law attorney of choice by way of referral. Once an attorney has been chosen, clients should then steel themselves for what lies ahead and, more important, ready for the prospects of brighter future in the days ahead.

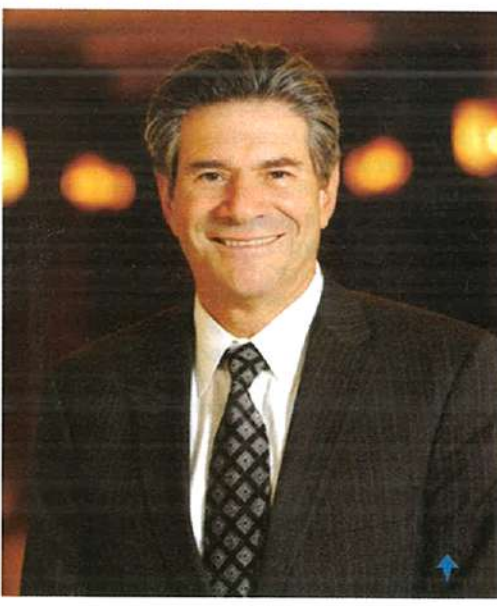
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Family Ties

In matters of divorce and other aspects of family law, turn to these legal minds in the Philadelphia area

WHEN IT COMES TO PROTECTING OUR FAMILIES AND OURSELVES, many of us will inevitably require legal assistance throughout the course of our lives. To help you in your search, we present our 2015 list of Top Family Law Attorneys. When we asked readers to share their opinions on which attorneys excel in family law, they responded in kind. Hundreds of readers cast votes to help compile a definitive list of attorneys to turn to for help and guidance in matters of divorce, adoption and other aspects of family law.

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