

Worried about the break up of your marriage? *It doesn't have to result in a vicious battle.*

Make your situation better. Read the wise advice in this article series authored by experienced family lawyers. Then consider how you'll proceed in the best interests of yourself and your family.

Article 2: Surviving a breakup: ground zero – what to do when the relationship ends

This is the second of ten articles designed to help people understand the complex area of family law. The articles are not a substitute for legal advice. They are meant to help you focus on the issues that you should consider when faced with family conflict.

Families rarely decide to breakup suddenly or on a whim. It is even more rarely that issues get resolved smoothly and without hostility when the breakup happens.

No one enters a long term relationship expecting it to end. Some people might plan for the eventuality, but no one expects it to happen. So when a marriage or long term relationship breaks, deep feelings of grief, loss, failure, betrayal, and hurt tend to overwhelm rational thought.

If you are at the point of marriage breakdown, you may be feeling overwhelmed by one or all the above feelings. If you are, here are some actions you can take to cope with the situation.

First, recognize you are not losing grip on rational thought. The feelings you have are normal reactions to a very stressful situation. Your feelings have been felt by most people who have gone through a breakup. You are in acute grief. You are allowed to mourn your loss.

Next, get professional help. Your family physician, pastor, or mature friends can either listen to you or refer you to helping professionals that deal with marriage breakup. The professionals associated with Collaborative Family Law (www.collaborativefamilylaw.ca), are specifically trained in this area.

Finally, act. Seek legal advice and follow the advice given. Your lawyer is not grieving your loss - he or she will be able to help you through this difficult time with objectivity and professionalism. Ask friends about lawyers before hiring one, and make sure you are comfortable with the personality and style of the person you hire.

You could **consider hiring a member of the Collaborative Family Law team.** The resolution of your issues doesn't depend on the ability of lawyers to fight a vicious win or lose battle. It depends on their ability to assist you and your spouse to come to agreement in a cost effective and collaborative manner. Collaborative team members are lawyers who have indicated a preference for negotiation over court action. They have taken courses on resolving divorce issues collaboratively, professionally and tactfully.

After you and your spouse have resolved all the issues, you will need to get on with living and parenting. The choices you make at the time of breakup will profoundly affect your ability to move forward. However, I offer you this encouragement: most people who go through the breakup of a marriage survive the process. And they usually go on to live very fulfilling lives.

Ronald J. Smith and Glenda Peacock are family lawyers and mediators based in Kelowna, BC. They wrote this article series to help people learn about preparing for collaborative and constructive solutions to the legal issues involved in marriage breakup.

You can contact Smith Peacock for a consultation by phoning 250.860.7868 or 888.787.6484.

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