



Divorce in Three-Part Harmony

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Divorce rates are high. In fact, some statistics claim that more than half of first marriages end in divorce and the rate is higher for subsequent marriages. This can be rather scary for all the individuals contemplating or involved in a relationship as well as for society!

In some countries, ending a marriage can be as simple as looking at the spouse and stating "I divorce thee" three times. In Canada, however, it hasn't been that simple. Traditional practice has been for each partner to hire a lawyer to "represent" him or her. That lawyer then would lead the individual through a complex process involving division of matrimonial property, custody and access, maintenance and child support. Judges have made often life-altering decisions that affect all members of the family.

The idea of professionals collaborating together to problem-solve is not new but a few years ago, some "pioneers" in Medicine Hat decided to introduce and apply it in divorce cases.

This concept involves working together with couples and children in order to craft tailor-made solutions for legal and relational problems associated with separation and divorce. This is done outside of the courtroom with a multi-disciplinary team consisting of such specialists as lawyers, accountants and health professionals such as psychologists.

Most people think that divorce is a legal process only and therefore one only needs to consult with a lawyer. Members of the Association of Collaborative Professionals (Medicine Hat), however, recognize that divorce involves legal, financial and emotional components. This group has therefore been working towards providing both individual and family services for the couple as well as for their children.

A Collaborative Divorce model places the decision-making back into the hands of those who are involved rather than in the hands of the Courts. It also recognizes that by providing support and expertise in the financial and emotional aspects each family member can deal with issues in the healthiest manner possible. Psychologists are concerned about the wellbeing of individuals. This model invites me to be part of the process rather than someone who is called upon to deal with the aftermath of a difficult divorce!

Working together in any endeavour is a good thing but especially when we can assist others making with healthy decision-making. Hats off to the pioneers who have brought harmony to discord!