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Family Law Attorneys Can Make Or Break Your Case

By Pamela Edwards-Swift

I recently had a case in my office that the other attorney and I were able to work out amicably, just with telephone conversations. We never met in person throughout the entire case. The attorney was very pleasant to work with and we were able to save our clients a lot of money by avoiding court appearances.

Just a few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of meeting that attorney in person, when we coincidentally signed up for the same continuing education course. (Although this was not your typical continuing education course.) This was a three-day intense collaborative training course. It was the other attorney's first collaborative course, and my millionth (or at least it seems that way). However, what struck me was how he conducted himself throughout the course, and how he had worked with an attorney before he had the collaborative training. It was obvious to me that he instinctively has the ability, and desire, to look for the best path for his clients.

This same attorney called me the other day to discuss a thought he had concerning the current problems with family law and how the attorneys play a key part in the outcome of their cases. Specifically, he was concerned about the mental state of the attorneys and how their own personalities can interfere with resolving cases. The attorney's own personality, he said, was pivotal in potentially having a negative effect on the people they serve and the children involved.

My colleague made a great point. The more I do this, the more convinced I am that choosing the right attorney is one of the most important decisions you can make. It is important to know how the attorney is viewed by their peers and by the court. You should steer clear of an attorney whom other attorneys have difficulty working with. It may sound compelling to hire someone who has a reputation of being a "shark" or who is extremely aggressive, but in reality it means

you are going to pay attorneys fees through the nose; your family (which includes your children) will be damaged through the process and the ultimate bottom line will be no better than what it would have been otherwise. I have found that attorneys, who have a reputation of being difficult, generally have their own agenda and could care less about their client's agenda. On the other hand, you don't want an attorney who is going to be a pushover.

In dealing with a family law matter, you need an attorney who is experienced and educated in all forms of handling family law cases. Each situation is different and needs to be adjusted to the family involved. It is not a "one size fits all" situation. Choose an attorney with the experience and education to assist you in choosing the right path for your particular situation.

Pamela Edwards-Swift, Certified Family Law Specialist

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