



Divorce And Laughter: They Go Hand In Hand



By MARLA MARINUCCI, ESQ.

It goes without saying that divorce is no laughing matter.

For anyone who has gone through it, it is quite often a very traumatizing experience. In my practice, I embrace not only the challenge to get the best result possible for my client, but I also make it a point to make them laugh.

Some clients are tougher than others, but I always succeed. Sometimes they laugh not because of something that I may have said or done, but something that may occur, for example, during a mediation session or a court proceeding. I am grateful that I inherited my father's sense of humor which is highly sarcastic, witty, and extremely dry. While I never quite understood it as a child, I can't thank him enough now as it helps me everyday, especially in my job as a divorce lawyer.

One of the funniest moments I can remember where laughter erupted unintentionally was during the course of a rather tense media-

tion involving myself and my adversary as well as our respective clients. We were attempting to negotiate a divorce settlement and things were moving along fairly well, despite the presence of friction between the parties. The big issues had all been resolved to both parties' satisfaction: the house, the cars, the bank accounts, custody of the children, etc. There was one final issue that my client raised and it involved "the puppycrusher." Certain that I had not heard her properly, and making sure there was total silence so that there could be no misunderstanding, I asked her to repeat what she had said. Once again, she stated that she wanted to keep "the puppycrusher." My adversary and I glanced at each other, and striving to be as lawyerly and professional as possible, he asked his client if it was alright with him that his soon-to-be-ex-wife retained possession of "the... ahem... puppycrusher." It was then clarified that the parties were breeding pure-bred pups and that Crusher was actually the name of one of the puppies. Thus, it was the puppy, (comma) Crusher, that my client wished to keep and not the inhumane animal torture device that I kept

picturing in my head. Despite the heavy tension in the room up until that moment, we all had a good laugh. I still think about it today and have shared this story with many of my clients.

Another light moment which happened by accident involved a sweet elderly man who, at the ripe age of 85, finally decided he had had enough and wanted a divorce from his wife of many, many years. At the final hearing in front of the judge I had to ask my client whether irreconcilable differences had existed in his marriage for a period of at least six months, which is all that is required under the statute to establish a cause of action for divorce based upon irreconcilable differences. The response I had anticipated was a simple *yes*. Instead, he gave me a very confused look and exclaimed with the honesty of a young child who had not yet been introduced to the art of lying, "No. It's been much longer: I'd say since the seventies at least!" While it was not my goal to get a laugh in open court in front of a judge, there was no way we could help ourselves, including the judge.

Very recently I was online and came upon a website about divorces and there was this list of so-called *commandments* to follow to guide people in a divorce.

My favorite one was this:
Thou shalt develop a great sense of humor, if you don't already have one. It is surely the only way you will survive.

I liked it so much I thought it was worth repeating here as it constitutes what I would call great words of wisdom. Truth be told, a lot of tears are shed by potential clients during initial and even subsequent consultations as divorce, by nature, is a very emotionally charged experience. However, in a very short period of time, the tides eventually do turn. I like to think it occurs with my assistance as I attempt to make light of every situation where appropriate, but some of it just happens due to

nothing more than passage of time. One client in particular stands out here in my mind because when I first met with her she was, as expected, an emotional wreck. Probably one of the worst cases I had seen where somebody was just completely beside herself about getting divorced. It didn't take long before the crying stopped completely and we spent time laughing. In fact, she even went so far as identifying her soon to be ex in her cell phone not by his name, but by some other word that, while hysterical, is better left to one's imagination.

Divorce is no laughing matter. But laughter is a great coping mechanism in such a difficult situation. To quote the great American comic, Mort Walker, "Seven days without laughter makes one weak." Contact my office for a consultation and I will help you stay strong.

Finally, what do you call a melon that's not allowed to get married?
Can't elope.

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