

What Matters in The End – Family Law

By Rebecca L. Palmer

Even though it's difficult, divorce can deliver much-needed clarity about what matters in life. In a marriage, a lot of time is spent making decisions together. What car should we buy? Where should we live? Should we have kids? What color should we paint the living room? At the time, they seem like significant decisions, and more times than not, one partner makes a compromise. Some compromises are easy but making compromises to keep the peace can be a way to avoid tough conversations, and by doing that, you genuinely sacrifice yourself.

From an early age, we have an idea of what we want our life to look like and what should be done to have a successful relationship. Just because you get married doesn't mean that you have to sacrifice your opinions or values. Giving in on what color to paint your living room, on its own, is not relinquishing who you are, but if you always give in to avoid conflict, and the compromise is a sacrifice, then it will add up over time and lead to deep resentment toward your partner down the road. If your marriage becomes the type of relationship where giving in is expected to be returned in kind, you start to get caught up in keeping score – no relationship will ever be fair or equal with this approach.

Repeatedly sacrificing your needs to avoid conflict and not standing up for what you believe in has the power to destroy a marriage. Often, compromising means giving up what you know to be best – and if you are being asked to do that or feel you have to each time, then something is wrong.

With each compromise, you should ask yourself if you are being

honest or just avoiding conflict. From the first utterance of “I want a divorce” to the signing of the final paperwork, being honest with yourself about the outcome should be a significant component of the process. What car you drive, where you live, and the living room color no longer matters. Instead of comprising your wants and needs, communicating truthfully about finances, custody, assets, and expectations is essential in navigating a divorce successfully.

Perhaps it is too late to save your marriage, but it matters how you come out of a divorce. Be honest with yourself and your partner about what is important to move forward. Since you are no longer “we,” try to see it as an opportunity to start a new chapter of life. This can be filled up with a stronger relationship with yourself and the people you love. Instead of spending time giving in on paint color – you can choose wallpaper!

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