



STAND BY ME

Professional lawyer-mediator and collaborative lawyer RAJAN CHETTIAR explores the emotive issue of divorce, recounting his own frustrations as he realised his unhappy marriage should end.

As a lawyer with counselling skills (and as a divorcee myself) I offer empathy, support and proactive solutions to people experiencing marital problems. Turmoil and confusion loom in the minds of those suffering marital problems. They often feel distressed and experience pain, anger, betrayal, and loss. Trying to cope with their emotions, they may speak to family members and friends, who offer care and support, but who can also add to the confusion.

People experiencing marital problems need clarity of mind - free of emotion - before they contemplate starting legal proceedings. You can achieve this clarity through counselling and soul searching. Ask yourself the following: "What do I want out of life?" "What are the problems in this relationship?" "Are there any possible solutions?" While some of you may find success with counselling, others may see no other solution than to contact a lawyer. My clients usually find relief in expressing their emotions. They often cry as they explain their circumstances and I always ask, "Is reconciliation an option? If so, what steps have you taken to achieve this?" If reconciliation is a possibility - however remote - we can then discuss the emotional challenges and possible resolutions. I recently helped a new client reconcile with her husband - she also gained some basic advice on divorce law!

Following an initial consultation with a lawyer, you may delay in taking further action; this isn't unusual. One of my clients stayed in a failed marriage for seven years. Another was so frightened of her husband she feared for her safety and discontinued proceedings. Another client ignored the problem, and others simply felt embarrassed. Suffering from low self-esteem and poor self-worth, they felt hopeless about their situations, but unfortunately, they continued to suffer.

I must admit I felt a sense of personal failure during my own divorce. I kept asking myself, - "Why did this happen to me?" "What did I do wrong?" - I was extremely angry, but at the same time, I did want to end an unhappy marriage. My inner voice told me to move on. There were lots of tears and sleepless nights, and I spent a lot of time alone - working late, locked in my room or travelling alone. After I made up my mind to end my marriage, I engaged a lawyer and didn't change my mind - despite objections from family and relatives. And, I did find happiness again.

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