

redefining divorce



Change: Friend or Foe?



Relationships are hard because they involve change. Even when the relationship begins with a mutual vision, the vision does not always last. At any given moment and often without warning, a person can choose a new goal, a new direction, or a new life. If the change happens when we are young and single, we can generally chalk it up to “transitioning out of youth.” As we get older and make more serious commitments, change affects

much more than just us. Our changes become more difficult to rationalize for others. Unfortunately, we are not in a society that teaches us “how to adjust to change” and as a result, we face judgment from those who do not want the change or do not know how to react to it.

As we make changes in our lives, some of our most dearly loved friends and family may feel threatened by the process. While they consciously want you to be content and happy, they may have their own subconscious conflicting intentions and be

highly invested in wanting to maintain their own comfort zone by keeping you in yours.

Another challenge is that after we realize we are changing, we aren’t always aware of why. We may not be able to explain ourselves to those who want to understand. If the change is for the benefit of the community, understanding it is less important. If the change is going to separate the community however, understanding seems crucial.

The fact is change is inevitable. It is necessary to grow and become more substantive, personally. It may seem like a never-ending nightmare for both people- the person changing and the person trying to adjust to the change. But the pain, fear and anxiety subside as we begin to walk on our new path. It is the fear of the unknown that intimidates us and makes us resist change.

So here is my humble opinion: Allow yourself and your people the space to change. Straddling the fence is what makes everyone miserable. It may be hard at first but when you decide to embrace it and move forward, you can breathe again.

Zina B. Gleason, J.D. Redefining Divorce
Family Law, Lawyer-Mediator
www.redefiningdivorce.com • 714-256-4689



“What’s best for the children should be first and foremost. It is often my role to help parents reset their priorities, ...”



As the Fullerton Chamber of Commerce Christmas luncheon progressed more members of the local business community revealed hidden musical talents, comedic timing and vocal ranges far beyond speaking voices.

One young lady brought the packed house to its feet. I was shocked to find out she was a local family law mediator, Zina B. Gleason J.D. The more I’ve learned of Zina, uncommon and unexpected apply to her personality in the same manner that committed and passionate fit her family law mediation practice, which focuses on amicable dissolutions.

Zina has built a readership (and a client base), by writing an on-going column which outlines the issues of separation and dissolution, especially when there are little ones involved.

“What’s best for the children should be first and foremost. It is often my role to help parents reset their priorities, remove the baggage from the room, and focus

on the most important thing and that is the well being of the little ones,” Zina offered while transfixed on something more felt than seen.

Without delving too deeply into personal motivations, her passion had been found after treading the waters of UCLA as a water polo player. While doing volunteer work in group homes for troubled teens, Zina decided her calling was to help children in pain as a result of family turmoil.

“Part of the problem for me with the teens was that I was so young they looked at me as a fellow conspirator. It was also part of the solution, as they related to a peer in ways others could only imagine,” laughed Zina, her bold color-streaked hair falling back as she shared the irony.

“But the experience of working with youth helped me find my niche. As I moved on to earn a law degree, I knew my real calling was helping families. I worked in family law firms where the attorneys billed clients anytime the client came into their head. I remember thinking to myself, “these people are losing their souls right now and they have no idea they’re also going to lose their wallets.’ It made me sick.” Again her frown and furrowed brows swept over me. How candid, how straight forward, was this woman.

As we sat on the playground blacktop, engaged intermittently with little kids at a transitional housing center, the warmth in her eyes brought instant attention from those in need of care. With pants covered in colored chalk, I better understood the walk that created a law practice built on “Amicable Divorce”

From contentious cases, to families that just need a mediator, a referee, or a life coach, Zina’s practice built on an amicable separation doesn’t always end with legal documents being filed.

“Sometimes there is some life crashing event that makes people reunite, others just need help communicating. I’ve learned

that if there is that much anger, there are still feelings. It’s the couples who realize indifference that are usually done. But whatever the circumstances, it’s about the kids.”

It’s this outlook, not being financially motivated, but touched by her experiences that defines Zina’s entire practice. She quotes a flat fee, as opposed to billing by the hour.

“Just because I clock out doesn’t mean their pain ends- the emotional needs aren’t met yet. But in the end you still have to be a parent.”

Best to be one amicably.

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