



A Race To Settle May Leave You Short

Now that the ink has dried on your settlement agreement, can you rest assured that once the children are grown and independent, you can afford your lifestyle and your kids will be the best they can be? If you are guessing at the answer, you or your children may be at risk.

Most persons attention to a separation or divorce settlement agreement focuses on the here and now; keeping or losing the house, sharing the care of the children at the current age, divvying up the assets, determining support obligations. Hence, the long-term interests for financial survival and children's optimal functioning come their adulthood and your life-long relationship to them, may be at risk.

The challenge in developing a robust settlement agreement that meets present and future interests is in balancing the immediate need for emancipation from the couple relationship and forging a new relationship that recognizes and respects ongoing connections. The ongoing connections will be the result of continuing financial obligations and/or the care of children as they grow and change with age.

Hence a primary focus on emancipation may produce an outcome that is mal-aligned with long-term interests. Mutual long-term interests of financial security and life long relationships with adult children require just as much attention in the settlement process.

The dual focus, respecting the need for emancipation while respecting ongoing connections, can achieve a better balance between short and long-term interests. The dual focus requires the couple to contemplate the quality of life and relationships they would like for themselves and ultimately with their adult children.

The thought of ongoing connections can be distressing for some couples, particularly with increasing needs for immediate emancipation. Separating couples may need considerable help to manage ongoing connections and in particular, the points of intersection for their ongoing connections.

To help and best address long-term financial interests, a certified financial divorce specialist can generate projections with regard to spousal and child support that take into account earnings and holdings into the future. Thus, separating couples have more robust information to determine the financial aspect of their separation agreement with concern for both persons' present and future interests.

The family-life specialist helps separating parents achieve parenting plans that considers present as well as the developmental needs of children for enabling their optimal growth and life-long relationships. Further, they can help parents overcome issues related to anger or grief for the demise of the relationship and/or help parents address barriers to reasonable parenting. This specialist can also help one or both persons make psychological adjustments to facilitate changes necessitated by financial realities and/or the developmental needs of children. The goal is to help the child as beneficiary of their parents' care, receive the best care possible for their life-long development and your life-long relationship to them.

Collaborative Practice lawyers recognize the profound contribution financial and family-life specialists make to your divorce or separation agreement. By including all these professionals from the outset of the settlement process, you stand to devise a more robust and durable agreement.

Before hastening through the settlement process, don't sell yourself or your children short in the long run. Seek a settlement that provides for both short and long-term interests. Include other specialists

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Gary Direnfeld is a social worker. Courts in Ontario, Canada, consider him an expert on child development, parent-child relations, marital and family therapy, custody and access recommendations, social work and an expert for the purpose of giving a critique on a Section 112 (social work) report. Call him for your next conference and for expert opinion on family matters. Services include counselling, mediation, assessment, assessment critiques and workshops.