

CHAPTER V.

The Family

Matrimonial Acts – Royal Commission – Reform Acts - Irretrievable Marriage Breakdown – Unreasonable Behaviour – Separation – Divorce - Child Custody – Family Discussions – Social Workers Report – A Clean Break – Divorce - The No Fault Rule – Divorce – Impact of Divorce – Resentfulness – Characteristics – Relocation – Public Health - Conclusion – Trends...

The passing of the Legal Aid Act in 1949 allowed the possibility of divorce. By the middle fifties there were about 25,000 divorces a year. Of those divorced three quarters remarried. Of the women married over seven hundred in every thousand went up the aisle. The average number of children per family was 2.3. The extended family group which persisted longest was mainly in the country, not the industrial towns. It was the professional family which split to form the nuclear family unit. The consumer society was born even though women remained in the home. Women were having fewer babies and some went out to work. Sharing the household chores began to take hold, particularly on the new nuclear families.

At the time of the Festival of Great Britain there were nearly eleven hundred thousand single men and women in the UK. Ten years later that figure hardly changed. The following ten years saw figures showing far more men – twelve hundred thousand to just over eleven for women. The statistics show that between the ages of twenty to twenty-four there were over twice as many women of that age group getting married. It was an age of early marriages.

Further statistics show that divorce reached a peak a couple of years after I was first married. Looking back I was not aware of the figures or change in the law and practice. Even though these figures were available conversations at work did not follow the advent of legal aid in 1949, to make comment.

In 1950 I was an apprentice in a printing factory. My job as a lithographic artist had changed little from the practices a hundred years before. The journeymen's social and political outlook, at home and in the works-studio, was very similar to those held between the two world wars – in the twenties. There was no talk of marriage, sex, children or divorce. They never mentioned the changing role of men in society or the advance of women's liberation.

However, it is true that Americanism was rife. What was happening there - seen through the news-reel camera, and drama on the cinema screen, was copied here. In both countries divorce was rampant... fifty per cent of all marriages were ending in divorce, and single parenthood was increasing.

A Royal Commission was set up, the same year as The Festival of Great Britain. It was charged with the task of suggesting a change in the law, from that, contained in the Matrimonial Act nearly a quarter of a century before, which permitted divorce only on the grounds of fault – evidence of adultery, cruelty, and desertion, of three or more years. It was thought that perhaps divorce should be possible when a marriage was irretrievably broken, after a period of time?

The Commission identified some changes in society – that people's lives were changing relative to the structure, proclaiming that it wasn't popular disbelief or disavowance of moral codes. In the end the commission was thought of as weak and ineffectual.

Later, newspapers asserted that family life was doomed. It was put down to: better education, higher standards of living and women's liberation... All these three were bound up in the emancipation of women and seen as a social problem and indeed a modern crisis. The general view was that the marriage vows were not being taken seriously – that there was no social slur attached to the act of divorce. It was summed up, describing it as an age that 'lacked stability'. Presumably, the

newspapers were as much looking at the industrial scene as the social one. Once convention had been undermined it was not likely to be propped up. In the 1960s Judges and Registrars were allowing liberal interpretations.

Irretrievable Breakdown in Marriage

The Divorce Reform Act 1969 allowed 'irretrievable breakdown' as grounds for divorce but it was still evidenced to one of the three causes – adultery, desertion and cruelty - known as the 'behaviour ground'. It was in fact a lessening of control – agreeing to permissive legislation, to allow a more satisfactory state of family affairs by replacing an unsuccessful union.

In this 1980s view of marriage, and subsequent divorce, the children were declared by Social Workers and Family Liaison Officers as 'of chief concern'. This was not wholly true; they were in fact, 'bit' players. The Legal Administrators saw the parent's happiness as 'of paramount importance', and this was mainly to do with the parent's financial wellbeing.

Child Custody

The mother almost always claimed and received the children's custody... this happened whether they were fitting or not... the woman received Society's blessing, because she 'carried the child and nurtured it' - was better able - and more suited by nature, to look after her own children.

Men were advised not to bother to seek custody because they were thought, 'highly unlikely to receive it' – even though they might well be more able. In most cases of divorce the guilty or injured male had to leave the family home to bring about some sort of stability and good will. It was rare for the wife to agree to sell the family home to share the proceeds so that both could start again. In many cases after the sale there might be very little left... the value depended on how long the marriage had lasted - for time to build up the collateral.

This had long term detrimental effects on the husband's financial state. The house, his main source of collateral - likely to form financial stability in old age and provide a pension, was given away for a percentage [usually twenty-per cent]. This never compensated for all the intervening years of struggle nor did it take into account the furniture, furnishings white goods and fittings. It was highly unlikely that his financial stability would ever be recouped... even over time...

Family Discussions

Young children of separating couples were asked if they understood what was happening. Any child over sixteen was considered an adult – could leave the family home if they so desired. The eldest child under sixteen was the main arbiter... asked, 'who do you wish to stay with your father or mother?' In the event the child refused to answer, for whatever reason, the mother was given preference. Unless there was a positive unambiguous preference towards the father - by the majority of the younger children, the mother kept custody. At no time was the family drawn into a discussion to arrive at a sensible and fair conclusion giving all the family a chance to make their opinions known. For the nation to support first wives who had no work became very costly. Women with children not only did not remarry but if they did divorce soon came about.

Social Workers

When deciding on custody Social Workers were generally biased in favour of the mother. Mothers used unpleasant rows, unreasonable behaviour, or an impending assault, as reasons why

they should be given protection, custody, and a safe home. Any form of mediation was looked on with hostility because the sample of opinion was too small. The Social Workers did not consult wide enough to form a true opinion. This was as much a fault of lack of resource as experience. Family neighbours, friends, relations and work colleagues needed to be consulted to form a complete picture. But above all the social worker had to have an open mind and be receptive and flexible, of opinion as well as decision... this was lacking; searching for and issuing fault frowned on, considered an anathema.

A Clean-Break

By 1980 it was considered fitting after legal separation had been decreed that 'a clean break' ordered - the assets divided - the wife took up work to support the family whilst continuing to live in the home and look after the school children. The ex-father's portion of the Estate's assets was to be paid when the youngest child reached eighteen, or left full-time education. A clean break was considered a method whereby both parents were happily provided for. In reality it had to be unfair on one or other, or both, of the parties. It needed a great deal of financial planning to survive without becoming financially crippled.

The numbers of divorcing couples lead to a social change – a cultural shift; mothers of young children went to work, new relationships tried, family security was threatened, young mothers 'put themselves about', child carers abound, kindergartens opened, child welfare suffered and television watching and video games playing took the place of family get together, and family eating patterns changed. Parenthood took the place of mother or fatherhood. Young mothers lost the art of nurturing and close parenting. There was too much to do, and to think about!

The now separated fathers searched to find another partner. They found being on their own lonely and disquieting. Visiting their old home to take out the child brought back too many unhappy memories. The blame culture took on a new meaning for now they felt unwanted and cast aside... seeing a lack of moral duty, permissiveness and behavioral laxity, which historically the father demanded and controlled – as master of the home.

The application for divorce started a process that began with gathering the factual information together, leading to consultations, and a period of time to give space for reflection. Any form of meeting- get-together, or mediation, was used to help form cooperation, opinion and agreement... to include discussions about children's education and financial provision – holiday cover, the resumption of work and pension provision. Another period of time was allowed to pass for further reflection.

Divorce

The divorce trend rises - and has done so since 1910, and the marriage trend declines... Lone parenting and cohabitation have both been on the rise... The national shortage of foster parents worries local authorities. It is a worrying state of affairs.

At least fifty percent of all children are from divorced couples and women are more likely to have a number of divorces rather than men – 90% retaining custody of their children.

Divorce is expensive, immediately there is less money available... This supports the fear that it is this group – lone parents, suffers most from poverty; the reality is that a high percentage of divorced women receive no child support.

It has been recognized: women adjust quicker to the experience of divorce and register less long-term stress symptoms; are less shy about asking and receiving support; move on to new relationships in a shorter space of time than men; and that working women, whether married or lone

parenting, who place their child in kindergartens, during the close period, experience a greater feeling of guilt than men.

Men, react badly to the upset of divorce. They feel lost without the intimacy of women that is close. Suffer immediately: losing income, independence, power, confidence and pride... trying to recount their lost wives giving in to past disagreements. If they fail they quickly become sexually involved again, trying to regain something that has been lost. Those who give support - accepting the situation whilst taking over some of the wife's responsibilities, devote themselves losing a degree of self esteem and sexual confidence.

The effects of divorce on children are mixed. It depends on the age of the child: where in the birth hierarchy they are situated - which relates to the length and quality of their relationship to each of their parents; the build up to the separation of the parents, and eventual divorce; the effects separation and divorce has on the parents - that dictates the amount of quality time they can spend on each child; the sex of the child.

Young boys become vindictive, angry and hurt, losing concentration, motivation and energy. Young girls not only lose concentration become depressed, unfocused, and lack confidence... lose their appetite, have disturbed sleep patterns and suffer from headaches.

By far the greatest problem for family counsellors' is 'trying to describe to the parents how their actions are going to affect their children's lives forever!' It is all very well having the parents accept their errors, many years down the line - the damage by that time has been done. It is the Child's initial shaping by 'good parenting', which will stand both the child and its parents in good stead. At the core of that good parenting is discipline - by the child knowing 'what is right and wrong' behaviour? Society should exhibit and channel good behaviour in its workings, which unfortunately it conspicuously fails to do. So that in the end the parent has to be, even more, insistent upon good ethical behaviour prescribed in religious texts.

The No-Fault Debate

It was considered sensible to accept the application of divorce as enough proof that a marriage was irretrievably broken down, and that any question of why it had broken down and when was immaterial. If the application and acceptance of the divorce produced satisfaction and happiness for all parties, including any children, then that was a reasonable assumption. Unfortunately that was far from the truth. There must be very few divorces that occur when all the parties are happy especially where children are concerned.

Fixing the blame might require a lot of detective work. But if blame can be laid at the door of one or other, or indeed both, it makes a simple conclusion so much easier to arrive at. Responsibility and culpability does focus the mind. The object is to make people stop and think - that if they continue they will be the loser, which is only fair and just. It is not a case of preventing bad marriages or making a farce, less of a joke - or being reasonable and true. It is to allow both parties to move on. Glossing over irresponsibility, lack of commitment and blameworthiness is unreasonable and does lead to non-closure and injustice. It is also true that it is sometimes impossible to point the finger at one or other, both being at fault, each accepting they had both made mistakes.

Allotting blame directs society towards acceptable behaviour... Discovering the truth gives credence to a higher code. Society should fix moral stand points; irresponsible behaviour should be exposed for both set standards. Married couples should stand solidly behind vows made... for lifetime commitments support responsible and resolute behaviour. Fathers can then get on and provide security searching out the job market to give longer lasting work opportunities. Mothers can provide proper nurturing of young children and be at home, when the children return from school.

The children will benefit from a more stable home life, safe in the knowledge that their parents are behind their every thought, word and deed... so the family can go forward and plan years ahead.

A set of 'marriage statements', mutually listed and agreed upon, can save many disagreements later on. The subjects can be complicated and far reaching; the object being to cover as many hopes and fears each partner holds. There is no reason why a statement cannot be updated as and when further subjects are pin pointed. If society upholds a set of rules by giving rewards – a tax allowance, then it should legislate to punish deviant behaviour by the guilty party. If these rules are clear couples will be far more questioning and want to know how strongly each is prepared to be committed to their vows. In the event of a marriage breaking down the statement can be produced to give the court guidance.

Divorce harms everyone especially the non guilty party and the children. It does so in every way, both before and after the event. To think otherwise is not facing the truth. Now that we are committed to giving a reason why the marriage has failed and naming who is not abiding by their vows and promises we can seek a way forward.

The family needs to be housed, the equal 'division of assets' legally drawn up and enforced - to give each partner a dwelling - with their own front door. Either party then can decide whether to sell separately, at some future date. Here are four methods:

1. The house split, to form a maisonette: build a new permanent set of external steps, by, breaking through the external wall - at an upper level; create a new entrance – to form an upstairs flat. A new top floor kitchen designed, creating a self contained dwelling space.

2. By retaining the existing front door, create a lobby - by studding. Cut out two entrances, one to the existing stairs, and the other to the existing ground floor rooms. Build a new ground-floor, bathroom extension.

3. Retain the existing front door to service a new ground floor flat. Open up a second front door in the outer wall to access the existing staircase, create a new studded partition - to isolate the stairs. Build on a new ground-floor bathroom extension.

4. Build a new front porch, to act as an entrance lobby - to access a ground floor, and upper floor, flat. Cut out a new front door next to the existing. Partition off the inside to form two entrances, build a new kitchen to the top floor flat and a new bathroom extension to the lower – ground floor flat.

This arrangement allows the children to be accommodated by either parent when convenient. This form of parental stewardship allows shared parenting across households, giving the children a chance to thrive whilst giving both partners the chance to live a private life.

There would need a lifting of various planning restrictions and planning approval – to allow such divisions, giving each flat its own main services. Any such division agreed by legally splitting the deeds, the lifting of restrictive covenants, and the preparation of new titles.

The Impact of Divorce

The splitting up of parents and the home causes an immediate drop in income. Keeping both homes places a great burden on both parents this naturally affects the less important financial considerations – extra curricular activities, meals out, frequent hair dressing, holidays, pocket money

and hobbies. If the mother is not working very quickly this becomes essential to maintain the standard of living.

The children's involvement with its departed parent strains the relationship with both parents. However well intentioned at some point there is a comparison of life styles and income. The children try to be non confrontational and fit into the new arrangement but unexpected happenings – colds, injuries, school activities and diary obligations tend to get in the way. If one or either parents take on stepchildren there is always a degree of comparison – the parent gives extra consideration and treats to strike up a friendly atmosphere. Giving everyone the space to become adjusted to the new arrangement is essential. This does not necessarily mean each child has their own room, although that is to be preferred, but it does mean, more consideration has to be made. Children are pretty alive to playing one parent off against another to procure extra pocket money or treats. Emotional blackmail is even more undermining and upsetting especially as the child gets older. Gradually the relationship falls apart and each party tucks their resentments further back in their consciousness until such times when it raises its head again – in times of stress.

There is absolutely no doubt that parents are only too well aware that what they are doing is wrong. That they are acting out their own weaknesses and faults. The children's well being is the most important consideration and nothing should come before it. However, we are dealing with human being who cannot rise above their own selfishness and feel they must come first in all things. There is a certain amount of wanting the status quo to continue to give everyone a chance to review this new situation which might evolve to suggest a better way out - where all will be satisfied. That is an almost impossible hope. As soon as the innocent party is confronted with their partners changed desires the marriage is all but over. From that moment on any attempt to recover lost ground is tripped up by the slightest reversal – telephone call, mail card, child's ill-considered remark and neighbour's nosiness. Later on in life the guilty party finally accepts they were at fault which unfortunately might make them feel better but the hurt lives on with their children.

Resentfulness

All human beings are resentful. It is a simple statement to make, but true. It maybe that you, as the eldest, are expected to look after your siblings, or you may be the second son and see all the effort being directed towards your elder brother or that you are being compared to that little horror in the next road. The list is endless... in normal circumstances these comparisons and gripes are easily absorbed and masked by everyday events.

There has been much written on letting such feelings go, to look on the positive side, whatever that is, or that you should not feel guilty. Such thoughts really do not cast aside, cover over or correct the hurt. Time too doesn't always prove to be the healer. What is needed is a more lighthearted view of the instance which has caused the bad memory. It is amazing how even the most applauded; endowed and blessed person can hold grudges, usually based on perceived lack of attention and support in their early stages of life. Some individuals are loath to grant concessions for another's humanity – weaknesses and tardy behaviour... as if they are perfect or not capable of a similar weakness.

Age grants knowledge and experience. No-one is perfect and we all suffer from ill chosen words false promises and forgotten dates. Having children guarantees that you are going to be in the firing line and that at moments of stress and anger you are going to get it in the neck. Although this is of little comfort in time everyone comes to the conclusion that ones parents were not so bad after all. Hopefully that realization comes about sooner rather than later and that you are still alive to see the day when it does!

Meek and Mild, Strong or Aggressive.

I wonder what type of human being you want your child to grow up to be. You may have visions of great statesmen, a motor racing star, golfer or tennis player; perhaps a beauty queen, pop singer or other celebrity. Would you admit to any or none, but want a happy and full-filled adult confident in its own ability appreciating the world about and the sky above?

Like all parents you want the best for your child and at first you have the confidence, strength and fortitude to make that dream come true. Unfortunately you are only human and wake up to reality. The world is not a simple place paving the way for you and yours but caters for many others all clamoring for a slice of the action!

Many parents consider that they should introduce their child to the sports field to keep them fit and healthy able to cope with success and failure; integrated with fellow team members achieving a similar goal all pulling together eventually becoming friends for life.

Children need a common goal that has at the end a reward. Achieving that prize accords attention and respect. Sports whether on the field, track or field requires coordination, quick reactions and strength. We know that practice makes perfection and practice needs dedication. Both of these goals stand us all in good stead.

Physical fitness makes a person confident, makes people alert and aware of all about them; reduces illnesses and prevents depression.

However, like all human endeavors care must be taken to see that too much emphasis is not laid on having to win, for not everyone can stand on the rostrum, there has always to be a loser and if you keep on losing you could give up and admit failure.

So the wise parent keeps a wary eye on their child's chances of success, channeling their offspring to a particular skill where they can succeed and become fulfilled. There is much to commend teaching craft skills that teach survival; constructing toys and games that need knowledge of operating hand tools and everyday materials. Having knowledge of the local fauna and flora – being able to recognize wild flowers and being able to identify a particular beetle. Joining a local rambling club or natural history or geographical group is a good way to advance knowledge of the local wild life and terrain. Climbing, walking, exploring and map reading are all good outdoor pastimes.

You do not have to be the toughest nor the most aggressive to have a fine circle of friends. But you do have to be interesting, knowledgeable and alert. Being the most popular child on the block because you are thoughtful, kind and considerate is a fine goal and you will most certainly have a far more fulfilled life. To be fit and healthy in mind and body is the aim... that you are able to become complete - as a happy individual, is the prize.

Relocation

Increasingly parents are of mixed nationalities. In the event of the family being split-up - through separation or divorce, one or more children may wish to live with either one of the parents - who live abroad. In the normal course of events, it is frowned on for families to be split, if it is possible to keep them together; in this instance, it maybe more sensible to allow the children to live apart. In most custody arrangements, particularly in the past, it was though more in keeping for the younger children to live with their mother. Fortunately, it is becoming recognized that past practices were often at fault – that fathers were, in many cases, far better custodians. Now it is believe that young children many be better served by living with their custodian abroad – in the parent's home country. As with many family disputes - involving children, the sensible course of action is not always the one chosen. But as a rule, it is far better to keep all options open and not allow either

parent to believe one arrangement is for life. Situations change, opinions differ, and people forget. Keeping up a line of communication must be the right course of action...

Public Health

Social Engineering refers to 'the active manipulation of individuals, by national and local government agencies, to improve their education and training; this generally focuses on the poor, underprivileged and handicapped – to raise their expectations and social class level. All education and training establishments set out to accomplish this goal.

Social engineering's prime aim is to change society: to improve the chances of women, to actively recruit more comprehensive students into Oxbridge, to achieve at least five good 'O' levels for each child, to raise the quality of life for the majority. The government now includes: helping the unemployed to move to areas where there is work... giving tax incentives to businesses to move to areas of high unemployment.

Life expectancy is greater for the rich. This statement is not necessarily obvious because if compared to a family living 'the good life' the rich may overindulge. Nevertheless, the rich may include those blessed with greater common sense to work out for themselves what is likely to improve their life chances. The increase of people living longer is attributable 'to that person's life style' – fitness, diet, food nutrition, choices, environment, abstentions, mental stimulation and education; above all maybe the will to live longer.

If the state believes rising expectations is good then it will concentrate on, 'the improvement in all young children's education'. If they further believe in the worthwhileness of social engineering they will plough even more money into infant schools. As a first step the necessary teachers need to be selected and trained, class sized reduced, and infant school facilities improved.

The cost of the government's decision will be born by the present rich, and they are no different from those of past ages. Those who have more wish to keep it and to add to it. It is not in the personal interests of the rich to spread largess – they will lose power, influence, prestige and position – the poor will demand more, will not work, consider themselves easily satisfied.

To meet the desired aim: 'to help more of the lower class into a higher class' the sought for improved education must include 'personal responsibility' as a highly desirable prerequisite to social advancement.

Conclusion

When researching this work - reading the experiences of others - their separations and final divorce, it remains difficult to suggest better solutions for an age old problem. The difficulties arise, as in all marriages; along way after reasonable discourse is possible. Positions are rigidly held, resentments harbored and fostered, and opinions shouted from the rooftops. Any sensible mediation is impossible until each party genuinely apologizes to the other for mistakes made [1996 Family Law Act [7] Informal meetings].

If a third party is involved who is part of the reason why the marriage has broken down the remaining partner is facing separation and loneliness whilst coping with shattered dreams and destroyed plans... it is not always the case that the guilty party walks away, they maybe in daily contact, rubbing salt in the open wounds. The mental stress having to pick up the pieces and start again when energy levels and perhaps health not so good compounds the situation.

What is good for the children is used as an excuse to try and find a quick solution. This is obviously the wrong approach. One or other of the parents is still likely to be involved with their

children's care. If unhappy, stressed and momentarily mentally incapable, nothing is going to be done, of a satisfactorily long term nature, until that problem is resolved.

Children are far more likely to come through the trauma of divorce if their parents are properly housed and comforted - capable of giving them shelter, even though it maybe only for a short-term arrangement.

Many unsatisfactory marriages start when the couples see each other walk down the aisle. They question themselves what their motives are and if the right ones. Some divorce courts are right to seek who was at fault, especially when there are children involved – and the more children involved the larger the fault. The same applies if the marriage has lasted a long time. In both these cases a lot of history is involved which makes such decisions difficult to resolve.

Future Trends

It seems that the majority of families have problems bringing up their children... It is their children's teenage years that are the worst. Though they are traumatic, the six years are fortunately soon over... Those problematic events are profoundly disturbing, and tend to escalate – forming a pattern over many years – until eventually the child becomes an adult... Then the pressures of daily living and forming relationships overshadow adolescent difficulties. For others within this group the problems are 'of a self destructive nature' and carry on into and beyond adulthood. Both these two groups, once the problem faced and surmounted, can resurface in times of stress, when they can lash out at friends and family... then, once again, the pressures of daily living pushes the problem to the rear.

Families come in all shapes and sizes and their life is a dynamic process all contained in a structure that can be in turmoil or ordered calm. But whatever, they are intimate and individual..., and even though they are so personal they are based on life lived by thousands throughout the ages – they are not alone and isolated parents but suffering as many others have done before.

What can be said is that most problems start when children are young – in early childhood, when the family is going through a period of stress. The unhappiness maybe caused by the parent's problems and pressures at work, or, other trauma within the extended family. This does not mean that automatically the parents have withdrawn their support, they maybe distracted – have less time, patience, and concern for daily acts of affection...

The most penetrating of all troubles for the family is separation, absence of a parent, divorce, remarriage, change of school, serious illness, and finally, death. Children and young adult are hugely affected by change of routine – of instability. The greater the estrangement the greater the effect... especially in early teenage years.

Mothers, not being near to their child during the 'close period' [birth to three] may result in their child becoming demanding in later life... even if fathers take on that role the trend for assertiveness has still been noted. Fathers not close to the family during early teenage years stimulate - in their child - particularly boys, a protective stance towards their mothers. Girls remember not having the security afforded by close father relationship exhibit distrustfulness towards authority.

The object of good parenthood is to provide perfect training for life, and that requires a full-time commitment, security and love. When this has been accomplished the child is free from deep seated fears; displays confidence and assuredness, which allows them to feel happy, inquisitive, and relaxed - in the world around them.

Unfortunately, when a marriage breaks down the cause didn't just happen the day before. In most cases marriages stagger on for months, years and even tens of years. The delay in coming to terms with the disaster cancels out any hope for there might be for reconciliation. A soon as the

innocent party hears they are no longer loved – and perhaps the identity of somebody else, the die is cast for a divorce. There is much written about how both parents should consider the feelings of the children. I am afraid that when the first realization strikes home every party considers how they are affected, if they can survive, and will their life ever return to normal. Depending on when the guilty party's first transgression began, and how soon it was discovered lies how dedicated the innocent party plans their divorce.

Although all: religions, political parties, and the country's premier institutions, declare marriage as, 'the bulwark of social life' the divorce rate suggests the public's moral fiber is weak. What do they believe marriage brings to the society other than discordance? Government policy is directed to support marriage [the procreation of children] yet its lawyers assist marriages to end. My belief is that if society feels marriage is an important institution it should make the marriage state harder to enter and one way of doing that is to ensure couples fully understand, support and abide by their jointly held beliefs – a declared [amended at regular intervals] written agreement of intent, based on their own desires. Either party who breaks the agreement is at fault - jeopardizes custody and property rights. The Government should support this by statute and tax concessions. The object is to assist couples to understand each others needs. The guilty party's needs are the last thing the innocent party is concerned about.

When one or other of the parents elects to leave the family home by dint of self preservation - instances where the person creating the problem stays, causing unrest, unhappiness and disruption..., an effort should be made to separate the two adults, allowing the children to fluctuate between the two - retaining frequent contact. Courts should enforce a division of the estate to bring this about.