



SOME THOUGHTS TO PONDER

You are reading this because you are separating. Before you make a decision about how you will get through this you should consider – carefully consider – the following:

- 1) you have choices – so take the time to think about this and the power you have to chose!
- 2) What matters most to you? Think about this ... your kids, a new career perhaps, financial stability or a quick resolution to your issues from separation, *etc.* Make a list of what is important to you. Keep that list with you at all times. Share it with your lawyer.
- 3) Take the time to “imagine” where you want to go. Put down on a piece of paper where you see yourself in twelve months, then two years and, if you are motivated, how about in five years.
- 4) Think about your interests – what are they? Your interest(s) may be financial stability, or as much time with your children as possible or not fighting with your “ex”, *etc.* Please remember that “interests” are not “positions”. You may ask for \$5,000.00 a month in support – that is a position – when a more thoughtful analysis will see you examining your “interests” – this may see you creating a financial solution for both you and your spouse without fixating on a specific dollar amount. Keep an open mind and remember what is important to you.
- 5) How are you going to act through the separation and divorce process? Are you going to be mean and angry – make your “ex” pay or are you going to be respectful, conciliatory and trusting? How you act will, in part, influence how your spouse acts and, of course, vice versa. This doesn’t mean you “roll over” any more than it means you have to be aggressive.



- 6) If you are one of those people who wants “everything you can get” then you can chase that goal but remember there will be a price. Please keep in mind that you can compromise and settle or you can pursue everything you are entitled to in which case you should prepare yourself for a long, expensive fight. Consider carefully which course you will follow?
- 7) Every decision you take will have consequences not only for you but for your spouse, your children, your family and your friends. Remember that list you made of what is important!
- 8) You cannot make decision in a vacuum so be prepared to gather all of the information you need. As an example, you cannot decide on an appropriate amount of support unless you know what you earn as well as your spouse. The same goes for the division of property. Under the *Family Law Act*, property is divided in Ontario in a particular way. It is not just splitting everything in half as some people believe so before your lawyer can advise you on the proper division of property, you will need the necessary disclosure to determine what each of you owns as well as what each of you owes.
- 9) If you want to engage in blaming behaviour then see a health-care professional. The law in Ontario does not - save for exceptional circumstances - concern itself with blame. While you may well have reason to be upset with your spouse, trying to deal with that upset through the legal system is both expensive and unsatisfying - because the legal system is not about therapy.
- 10) Many people view separation as a game of chicken - who blinks first. A lot of psychological games get played and you need to recognize these games, when they are played and how to respond appropriately. If you do not tolerate “game playing” then you should be ever so careful about engaging in any sort of litigation.
- 11) Life is fluid and that is nowhere more true than when separating. Be prepared to constantly re-evaluate where you are and where you wish to go. Circumstances change - so be prepared to adapt to the changing circumstances. Keep your goals and values in mind. Keep that list you made in front of you when setting priorities, especially when you find yourself having to decide what to do.