

Painful divorces can help or hurt careers

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Divorce is nearly always painful, and it can be a career killer or booster, lawyers and mediators say.

Besides the stress potentially hurting their work, those going through divorce may find their employer subpoenaed for information, their business in jeopardy or their chance for a promotion disappearing.

"You put a catastrophic or significant stumbling block in someone's life, and it affects their job," said Ken Gordon, a partner in Brinkley Morgan in Fort Lauderdale, which specializes in family law.

Divorce often is compared to a death.

"But it's the life that they knew, or the dream that they had, which is what's dying. It feels like a real death," Gordon said.

Phillip Lytle, a Hollywood police officer, went through a divorce two years ago. "It was tiring and stressful," said Lytle, 54, who was married for 20 years.

From separation to a final settlement, the divorce took about 18 months. He took refuge in the support of co-workers and friends. "That whole process is draining," he said.

Lisa Guarini owned a business with her now-former husband. During her divorce, she was locked out of her office, lost access to her computer, and finally had to shut down her business. Her husband had been the prime investor.

"It took a long time for me to get back on my feet," said Guarini, 50, who now works for a Delray Beach car dealership.

Jill Scott was a 19-year-old nurse when she met her future husband, a doctor. Twenty years later, with four children, she was facing divorce.

"My biggest challenge was finding my identity in my career after my divorce. At a relatively late age, I had to figure out what to do for a living," she said.

But Scott, 50, followed her passion for pets and now owns several businesses, including Animal Hospital at Market in Wellington. She struggled with reinventing herself, but now "I'm going after my career gangbusters."

Elinor Robin, a family mediator in Boca Raton, said people often do better in their careers after divorce.

"In the long run, divorce may ultimately prove to be a career booster. ... When the focus is off the marriage, the focus can be on the career," she said.

But family lawyer Stacy Beaulieu, in Delray Beach, said some clients find that divorce restrictions can hurt their careers. She had one client who had to pass up a promotion because it would have meant a move out of state.

Florida law requires that divorced parents with shared responsibility for children cannot move them more than 50 miles from a residence at the time of their agreement.

Divorced parents said they try to pass on their life lessons to their children. Business owner Scott tells her daughter to get an education and take care of her future.

"Marriage isn't forever sometimes. Be prepared," she said.

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