

## Preventive Medicine for the Bitter Divorce

By Pamela Donison

We are all familiar with the horror stories about nasty divorces, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars, taking years to complete, and leaving the family in ruins. Unfortunately, that scenario (or one similar) is pretty much the norm in our society. The emotion-fueled “intimate war” is promoted and glamorized by Hollywood divorces, daytime television, greedy lawyers, and unenlightened spouses who want to have their “pound of flesh” for sins both real and imagined.

Can you ever recover from such a traumatic and devastating experience? Maybe, with a lot of counseling and inner reflection. On the other hand, we are now seeing the fallout from those types of divorces in adult children – books and web articles abound and none other than Oprah has featured [adult children of divorce](#) on her wildly popular talk show. If you are the divorced person, there are (according to Google) **1.36 million resources** on the web, including support groups in every city, at most places of worship, and at community centers.

From where I sit, I think the best recovery program is **prevention**. Rather than having to experience and then recover from a bitter and harrowing divorce experience, why not nip it in the bud and avoid the mess in the first place?

What? Too difficult to bite your tongue and put aside your base instincts in favor of a peaceful divorce? Well, here’s a news flash. That’s what divorce litigators are counting on.

Want to drag out all the dirty laundry and make your spouse “pay” for their bad acts? Yippee! That means more (and more) billable hours!

Can’t bring yourself to have a civil conversation about exchanging the kids for the holidays? Perfect! Those after-hours and holiday calls are going to cost extra!

You get the drift. And, in the final analysis, who benefits from the fist-clenched, angry divorce? Not you. Not your former spouse / co-parent. Not your family-owned business. And certainly not your children ... even if they are grownups. Basically, it’s the *industry of divorce* that benefits: lawyers, judges, court staff, therapists, child custody evaluators, experts, accountants, etc.

So how do you prevent this travesty from visiting your family in the first place? Well, you can simply not divorce, but that is not the best answer for most people in a bad relationship. The better answer is that you can change your mind **right now** and decide (yes, **decide**) to have a peaceful, rational, amicable and healthy divorce, even if your spouse doesn’t want to go along with that plan. My observation is that the compassionate heart always wins and the spouse who is generous of spirit and extends an olive branch — even in divorce — will (more often than not) be met with kindness or at least acceptance.

One of the things we do really well in mediation and Collaborative Divorce is provide preventive maintenance for the bitter divorce. I (as mediator or collaborative team member) don’t condone nastiness and I work very hard to help spouses (especially those with children) understand and recognize their intertwined fates. What destroys your spouse will likely take you down in the process. What supports your spouse and children will likely buoy you up as well.

Recover from your nasty divorce before it even starts by adopting a peaceful perspective and finding the support you and your family need to prevent the long-term effects of an intimate war.

**About Pamela Donison:**

Following a 15-year career in journalism and book publishing, Pamela attended the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law, graduating in 1999. After a few too many high conflict litigation cases, Pamela created [Donison Law Firm](#), PLLC in 2005, with an emphasis on staying out of court, including arbitration, mediation, collaborative law, and negotiated settlements. Pamela has an undergraduate degree in Business Management which she uses to assist clients in Double Divorce.

Pamela is a Judge Pro Tem and Court Approved Mediator for Maricopa County Superior Court. She is the founder of Arizona Collaborative Colleagues, president of the Arizona Women Lawyers Association, on the board of directors for the Arizona Chapter of the Association for Conflict Resolution, arbitrator for the State Bar and the State of Arizona Personnel Board, and is an active member of a number of professional organizations.

When she's not changing the world, Pamela is a wife and mother, an award-winning photographer, active blogger, and mentor to other women entrepreneurs.