

Choosing an Excellent Family Attorney—and 9 Things You Might Be Surprised to Hear from That Lawyer

- In most cases parents either win together or lose together.
- The parents’ cooperation will determine how well their children can be protected, how soon everyone can start building a better future, and how much money they can save.
- Legal maneuvering often produces more problems than it solves.
- Simple discussion, counseling, and mediation often offer much better solutions than does legal fighting.

#1. “Are you interested in saving your marriage?”	Every profession has practitioners who take a genuine interest in their clients and in helping clients define the objectives that will truly help them.
#2. “Most of what can help you is up to you.”	The key tasks in helping the family move forward rest with the parents. You have the power to make life better—for you and your children.
#3. “You might be better off if I do less, so work to keep my fees as low as possible.”	Remember, (1) only parents can do the things that over the years to come will make for a better life for themselves and their children and (2) excessive reliance on legal maneuvers may make these goals harder, not easier, to accomplish.
#4. “Let’s put your wishes aside for the moment; tell me what you think your children need.”	The sensible and conscientious family attorney will emphasize that children’s needs soar during and after divorce—and that children suffer when their parents remain in conflict.
#5. “Divorce is about winning with your spouse, not over your spouse.”	In most family cases, parents either win together or lose together.
#6. “Custody evaluations can be dangerously bad ideas—as bad as trials.”	In most cases, no benefit from the evaluation comes close to justifying the evaluation’s (1) promotion of the accusatorial interaction between the parents or (2) placement of children in the middle of the dispute.
#7. “Tell me what’s really good about your spouse—and your spouse’s parenting.”	Excellent family attorneys invite parents to build on their combined strengths, not to highlight each other’s weaknesses.
#8. “If you can do so safely, you should speak with and cooperate with your spouse/co-parent.”	Unless there’s a compelling reason (such as a threat of domestic violence), excellent family attorneys are not going to discourage parents from restoring communication and solving problems together.
#9. “What do you think your spouse needs?”	The best family attorneys know that cooperative accommodations between parents are absolutely necessary to raise children.