



## Is There Such a Thing as a Healthy Divorce?

*Attorney Pauline Tesler and psychologist Peggy Thompson tell how to end a marriage without going broke and damaging the kids.*

Los Angeles, CA ([PRWEB](#)) September 13, 2006 -- A PBS special, Kids & Divorce: For Better or Worse, airing Thursday, September 14, at 10 p.m. on PBS, focuses on how court battles damage the children, leaving emotional scars that can last well into adulthood.

In Collaborative Divorce (ReganBooks/HarperCollins) San Francisco attorney Pauline Tesler and psychologist Peggy Thompson, provide more in-depth answers to the questions raised by this groundbreaking program.

Their advice: Forget the high-priced lawyers. Hire a collaborative team that supports the entire family both during and after the divorce.

Collaborative divorce does away with messy litigation and pricey pit-bull lawyers, and provides psychological and financial counseling for the whole family, says Tesler.

“For roughly a third of the cost of a traditional divorce, you get a team of professionals who teach communication and conflict resolution skills, and give constructive financial advice,” she adds. “Most important, this process gives a voice to the kids so they emerge from this transition more resilient,” says Thompson.

“In my part of the country, a traditional divorce for a middle class client with a house and two children can run from \$30,000 to well over \$100,000,” says Tesler, author of “That’s only for one partner.” Americans now spend well over \$4 billion annually for the 1.1 million divorces reported by the National Center for Health Statistics. In the last few years, more than 80,000 people have chosen this process over litigation.

According to Tesler and Thompson, collaborative divorce costs one-third to one-tenth as much, and provides families with a forum to address the children's changing needs, both at the time of the divorce, and in the years ahead.

"A wide range of studies show that both parents and children in adversarial divorces are more likely to be hospitalized or treated for emotional problems the year following the divorce," says Thompson. "The collaborative process leaves everything healthier and more resilient at a fraction of the cost of a contested divorce."

Tesler and Thompson describe this innovative way to restructure the family and divvy up the finances.

When and how was collaborative divorce invented?

Tesler: The collaborative divorce movement was started in 1990 by Minneapolis divorce attorney, Stu Webb. Peggy Thompson and I began working with collaborative teams in the mid 1990's in the San Francisco area. There are now over 7,000 collaborative practitioners in North America and as many as 9,000 worldwide.

How does this approach differ from mediation?

Thompson: The mediator's goal is the same as a litigator's--a fast settlement. A mediator can't act as your advocate, provide emotional support, give you an impartial analysis of the finances, or help your children through this traumatic process. It's impossible for one person to do all these things. A collaborative team helps you through the divorce, and is there later on, when aspects of the settlement need to be revisited.

What are the psychological benefits?

Thompson: A new study reported in the current Journal of Marriage and Family indicates that divorced women have a greater risk of heart disease in later life than those who are continuously married. Other studies show that divorced men are more likely to commit suicide. And children from divorced families are more likely to have emotional or social problems.

Psychologist Robert Emery has found that families who do a better job managing the divorce are more resilient and can avoid these damaging consequences. A study from Arizona State University, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association indicates that divorcing families who participate in preventive programs do better over all: their children are much less likely to act out with drugs, alcohol and sexual promiscuity. Collaborative divorce focuses on this kind of prevention.

How do I find a collaborative divorce team?

Tesler: Collaborative divorce is now available in nearly every state in the US, and in many foreign countries. For a referral to collaborative professionals in or near your area---attorneys, coaches, and financial advisors---contact the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals ([www.collaborativepractice.com](http://www.collaborativepractice.com)).

Are there some cases that can't be solved collaboratively?

Tesler: Collaborative divorce requires two people working in good faith. For instance, it's not for people who want to use divorce for retribution, or those with a long history of abusive behavior or certain mental illnesses.

What do judges and family law experts say about this process?

Tesler: They're all for it because they know the damage that court proceedings inflict on families and children. Donald King, a highly respected California family law judge, has criticized the current system saying, "Family law court is where they shoot the survivors." Ross Foote, a retired judge from Louisiana says, "We don't need the courts for divorce. Collaborative practice is the best arena" to handle this.

Is it good for lawyers, too?

Tesler: Absolutely. This is a lawyer-driven movement, started by those of us who feel an adversary system is no good for families that are falling apart. In our training sessions, hard-boiled divorce attorneys often burst into tears and say, "I was on the verge of leaving the practice of law. But with the collaborative approach I can help families in transition, instead of putting them in the firing line."

**SIDEBAR: DIVORCE REFORM: BREAKING UP SHOULDN'T BE SO HARD TO DO**



An editor with the longest, and some say the most acrimonious, divorce in New York state has just released a new book on how to untie the knot.

Judith Regan, called by NY Magazine “hands-down the most successful editor in the book business” (her current author list that ranges from General Tommy Franks to Wally Lamb, Mario Puzo to Howard Stern) has now turned her formidable talents to the subject of divorce.

After 11 years in court, trying to split from her money-manager husband in a battle that the New York Times described as “the most hoary and bitter on the docket,” Regan has no love for lawyers or the adversary process. The 52-year old editor decided to change the system with a book about a better way to end a marriage called Collaborative Divorce, now available from ReganBooks (an imprint of HarperCollins).

In this book, pioneers in the collaborative divorce movement, San Francisco attorney Pauline Tesler, and psychologist Peggy Thompson, show how to avoid the horror stories of litigation. Collaborative divorce, they say, can move people toward a happy ending—one that is kinder and gentler for the kids, and a lot healthier for soon-to-be exes.

Collaborative divorce handles the split out of court, and provides the couple with a range of professional support. Both get their own attorneys. Both lawyers promise never to take the divorce into court. Individual coaches also help the couple deal with high-voltage emotions. A child development specialist is the “voice of the kids.” And an impartial financial consultant helps the couple and their lawyers devise more creative solutions than even the most Solomon-like judge ever could.

Collaborative Divorce is already making waves. It has earned the approval of judges and attorneys who are looking for a way to help struggling families and unclog the family courts. “Court is the last place we should be resolving family conflict,” says California Superior Court judge Donna Hitchens. “It’s not helpful, it doesn’t solve these problems, it’s expensive and it puts the family into poverty.”

“Having experienced first hand the trauma and destructive nature of divorce litigation, and knowing the pain it created in all of our lives, I was excited by the concept of a collaborative divorce,” says Regan who is now living in Los Angeles. “I feel strongly that everyone contemplating divorce should have the opportunity to survive a split without it destroying their lives, emotionally, spiritually and financially. Collaborative Divorce is a book I wish I had read and published before my divorce and certainly a book I wish my ex had read. In fact, I wish he would read it today!”

###



**Contact Information**

**Valerie Andrews**

ANDREWS WRITING AND EDITING

<http://www.collaborativedivorcebook.com>

310-228-6283

**Online Web 2.0 Version**

You can read the online version of this press release [here](#).