



“I Don’t Know Why You Do This”

As I sit down to write this column, it is hard to believe that before long my term as Chair will come to an end. While we are more than halfway through 2021, we continue to function in a state of personal and professional chaos from managing virtual schooling, synchronous and asynchronous learning (I confess before COVID I had no idea what those terms even meant) for our children to internet connectivity and the daily “What’s for lunch?” to balancing our work schedules, obligations, virtual client meetings, and court. All the while, we remain socially distant from our friends and loved ones in a way we have never experienced in our lifetimes. To say it has been a rollercoaster ride is perhaps the understatement of the century.

In the midst of this bedlam, I am still confronted with a refrain I have heard countless times over more than twenty years of practicing family law: “I don’t know why you do this.” Now to be clear, this unsolicited observation has nothing to do with my personal life or obligations and does not come from family, friends, or acquaintances. Rather it comes from clients and other professionals with whom I interact. I expect many of you reading this column have heard this as well in one form or another, and probably on multiple occasions. Although I want to believe not intentional, it demeans the importance of the work that each of us do all day, every day.

My usual response, a quip: “I was not built for digging ditches.” But that’s not what I want to say. What I want to say is, if not me, who? Who will be there to represent a mother trying to get away from an abusive partner, or a father who may be alienated from his children? Who will be there to ensure a spouse gets his or her equitable share of the property acquired during a marriage or that a parent receives appropriate spousal or child support to enable him or her to meet basic daily obligations? Who will be there to advocate for the rights of children? Who will be there to help

a couple who wants a child but, for whatever reason, conception is not a possibility?

What I have always found most fascinating is that we do not force people apart, cause people to cheat, or make them say hurtful things to one another. We do not create the problems we are charged with solving. But problem solvers we are, carrying the heavy responsibility of crafting creative solutions with people who may not see eye to eye to help them move forward into the next chapter of their lives. And the work we do is not overlooked by those same clients who we help get through a difficult time even in the best of circumstances. One client recently wrote as a case concluded, “My late phone calls, weekend phone calls, texts, and emails—you were always there for me. It’s been a rough road, but you somehow helped me navigate and keep my composure.” We strive (and indeed thrive) for these moments. This is why we do what we do.

Without doubt, custody is the hardest part of the practice and the area to which this issue is dedicated. Covering an array of subjects regularly confronting family law practitioners, therapists, and the court, it is a true primer. As a Section through our online resources and communities (Family Law Connect), brown bag series, soon to launch podcast series, first-ever legal symposium (in partnership with New York Law School, the home of the Section’s *Family Law Quarterly*), topical books, and of course the *Family Advocate*, we continue to work and evolve to benefit our members from a distance and hopefully soon, once again, in person. Until then, continue to be kind to each other, support one another, stay well, and stay safe. **FA**

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