

## The Emotional and Psychological Barriers to Collaborative Divorce

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This workshop is for Family Law practitioners and is a result of discussions which have highlighted the problems which arise from divorcing couples being psychologically and emotionally unprepared to progress the divorce from enough of an unsentimental and business-like position – and thereby in a collaborative way. For example, it has been said that some couples, perhaps because of overwhelming or unbearable feelings, use the divorce process as a means of retribution in an attempt to comfort themselves in the face of their emotional distress. Alternatively, they might use the divorce process to avoid the separation and ending and continue the unhappy and painful relationship, in hopes of reconciliation, rather than bring it to a close. In other cases, the client may fall into a depressive state and thereby being unable to respond to the demands of the divorce process.

The workshop will present an introduction to a psychotherapeutic view of some of the psychological and emotional difficulties faced by couples involved in divorce proceedings. Specifically, it will highlight some of the risks, and the reasons for those risks, that the petitioner or respondent will resort to irrational, inappropriate or unhelpful behaviours during the divorce process. In other words, the risk that the individual will engage in behaviours, attitudes and decisions which attempt to reduce psychological and emotional distress (e.g. feelings of shock, anger, anxiety, betrayal, revenge) rather than behaviours, attitudes and decisions which might facilitate the progress of the legal aspects of the divorce.

The workshop will address four key questions:

- How might we understand the emotional and psychological processes which a client might have to bear?
- How might we recognise irrational, or otherwise unhelpful, thoughts and behaviours which might prolong the process, stall the process, or otherwise undermine the collaborative endeavour?
- How might you assess whether a client is ready or suitable for a collaborative process?
- How might psychotherapy support the collaborative process?

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