

***Make any Divorce Better.*** Ed Sherman, Nolo Press Occidental, Santa Cruz, CA, 2008

***Make Any Divorce Better*** continues author Ed Sherman's excellent work of helping people become aware of the power they have to reduce the negative impact of divorce on themselves and their children. This is a rewrite of his 1994 work, ***Practical Divorce Solutions***, which we recommend to over 200 parents each month in our classes. Although some material is duplicated, ***Make Any Divorce Better*** is greatly expanded in its focus on the personal reality of divorce. Clear and concise legal guidance is always mingled with the message of personal responsibility for emotion, choice and action.

Even before the first chapter, in the Triage and Summary sections, Mr. Sherman creates immediate value by focusing on what to do first and defining the limited role of the legal system. Chapter 1 is a guide to the rest of the book in terms of the situation at hand. Chapter 2 gives more detail about the legal process. Chapter 4 provides information about the three areas that are the legal system's primary responsibility: property, support and children. Chapter 5 addresses concerns and strategies for difficult situations. Even in these cases, Mr. Sherman cautions the reader to "never start litigation or threaten it unless you have no better alternative, and even then ... stay alert for opportunities to move your case ... toward negotiation, mediation or collaborative lawyers ..."

The heart of this book is in Chapters 3 and 6. Chapter 3 comes from the perspective of a gentle but firm guide to how human beings work. Divorce is one of the most difficult experiences of life, especially when children are involved. Long-term, our greatest chance for healing and success lies in our awareness of the choices we make based on our own private belief system, and the power we have to change our beliefs and behavior. ***Make Any Divorce Better*** provides a unique look at this in relation to the work of divorce.

Chapter 6 entitled "Ten Steps to a Better Divorce" is about working through the "road map to divorce" introduced in Chapter 2 with the awareness provided in Chapter 3. It addresses first things first (safety, stability) and moves clearly through preparation, organization and taking care of the business of life (money, children, agreements, planning). A CD is provided with worksheets that can effectively guide preparation, organization and agreements. Helpful tips on dealing with passive resistance and negotiating address some of the behavior choices that can make all the difference.

Chapters 7 and 8 briefly but effectively cover options for getting help and handling the divorce without retaining an attorney. Chapter 9, entitled "How to Win and Survive a Legal Battle" addresses situations involving extreme conflict and behavior. Even in these cases, Mr. Sherman never loses sight of the primary goals — to protect, to minimize loss, to do what is necessary with integrity.

This is a book about divorce; but it is also a book about life with clear messages that can benefit anyone faced with stressful situations. This is summed up in Mr. Sherman's quote from ***Practical Divorce Solutions*** which is repeated in ***Make Any Divorce Better***:

I will do what's right, I will do what I must, I will do what I can, and I will do my best; but I will not worry about the rest — it is out of my hands and my well-being does not depend on it.

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