

*YOU HAVE A CHOICE*

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# HOW TO END YOUR MARRIAGE WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT

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**5 REASONS TO CHOOSE  
THE COLLABORATIVE LAW PROCESS**



**PETER J. RUSSO, P.C.**  
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**LAW OFFICES OF  
PETER J. RUSSO P.C.**

# WELCOME



Do you have questions about divorce, alimony, domestic partnerships or marital agreements? Do you have concerns about child custody, child support, adoption or paternity? At the Law Offices of Peter J. Russo, P.C., our attorneys have nearly a century of combined Family Law experience. Our goal is to utilize our experience and knowledge in providing our clients with supportive and effective legal help. We will walk you through your Family Law concern and options, allowing you to make informed, intelligent decisions.

As you begin the divorce process, our attorneys will provide valuable legal assistance based on decades of experience and hundreds of cases handled. In terms of spousal support, we have helped numerous clients successfully pursue their alimony goals. If you are unmarried, you and your same-sex or heterosexual partner need to know that you will not have the same rights as married couples in certain situations. The good news is there is something you can do about it, with the aid of an experienced Family Law attorney. We can address potential medical rights, estate planning and asset division issues. And marital agreements, whether before or after marriage, are becoming more common and are being recognized as beneficial to both parties. We can draft an agreement, review an agreement you are asked to sign, and review or litigate disputed agreements upon divorce.

Unfortunately, children are often the subject of Family Law disputes. We understand that your relationship with your child is your highest priority and we view our initial role in child custody disputes as that of skilled negotiators and facilitators, acting with your child's best interests in mind. We have dealt with hundreds of child custody and visitation disputes, including those litigated in court. We can also provide effective help in pursuing just child support resolutions. We work both with payers and payees to achieve a solution that is fair to both parties while serving the child's best interests. We are experienced in avoiding and addressing adoption law issues, from matters involving adoptions by relatives to same-sex adoptions to international adoptions. And, we have helped hundreds of individuals and families pursue family legal rights, including rights relating to paternity. We do not want you to make potentially life-altering decisions regarding paternity without informed legal counsel.

We are uniquely proud of our success in court, but we also take pride in our success out of court, as we believe the mark of an effective Family Law lawyer is the ability to achieve the client's goals while shielding the client from undue stress and hardship whenever possible. While litigation is often attractive when emotions are high, it can also be costly and lengthy. Substitutes for litigation in divorce and a variety of other Family Law matters can include mediation, negotiation and collaborative law, which may serve to reduce discord, facilitate communication, restrain costs and expedite resolution. We have handled numerous cases resolved out of court through alternative dispute resolution methods and are confident in our ability to assist you with your legal needs. If you face a family law legal challenge in Central Pennsylvania, please contact the Law Offices of Peter J. Russo, P.C.

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There are numerous reasons why marriages do not last, but just because a couple can no longer be together does not mean they must part mortal enemies. It is possible to divorce with privacy and dignity, without losing respect for your soon-to-be-former spouse, and with guidance from your chosen independent counsel.

We are all too familiar with the impact of a bitter divorce on not only the divorcing spouses, but also their children, extended families, and mutual friends. It is therefore telling that most psychological studies have concluded that the adverse long-term emotional impact on the children of divorcing parents happens not because their parents decided to divorce, but because of the level of conflict displayed by their parents during the divorce process. While it is easy to get caught up in the revenge seeking, eye-for-an-eye mentality when we have been betrayed, our children simply want to know their parents love them and that their family will always be a support system for them, even if the family dynamic changes. Mutual friends want to be able to maintain a relationship with both of you. Extended family members still want to be able to “face” your ex-spouse at family/kid functions.



Unfortunately, there is also a certain amount of side-taking that can occur when a couple divorces, but if you are able to conduct yourselves with respect and dignity for each another, others will follow your lead, emulate your behavior, and there will be less of a ripple effect of damage on your children, your families, and your friends. If you show them through your behavior and interactions with your spouse or ex-spouse that you are not asking them to “take sides,” they are less likely to feel pressured to do so and will be able to maintain a relationship with both spouses for your mutual benefit.



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*What are the top 5 reasons that our clients have chosen to utilize the Collaborative Law Process?*

## **1 We maintain respect and dignity for each other, privacy of our personal affairs, and control over the outcome without leaving major life decisions in the hands of a stranger or the Court.**

The choice to utilize the Collaborative Process in divorce keeps the public out of your personal affairs. Only a very generic Divorce Complaint will be filed and will become a matter of public record. The use of the Collaborative Process allows both spouses to understand their priorities and to keep these priorities at the forefront of their decision-making process. Your collaboratively-trained attorney will help you not only to understand the difference between your needs and interests and an entrenched position, but also will assist you in being able to articulate those needs and interests behind your position, which is much-better received by the other party than merely stating your position. Exploring needs and interests in the privacy of 4-party conferences with your attorney, your spouse, and their attorney while modeling effective communication techniques will allow you to voice your opinion and to be heard, giving you more confidence and a feeling of accomplishment that you were able to resolve these matters on your own.

## **2 We control how fast or how slow this process moves.**

The Collaborative Process is designed to assist you in disentangling your financial and emotional lives. Despite any urge you might have to make things difficult for your spouse, dragging out the divorce process hurts you, too. However, use of the Collaborative Process also allows you to be cognizant of where your spouse may find themselves in the grieving process and allow them the time and opportunity to process those feelings, making your meetings more effective. The more you are able to recognize, acknowledge and empathize with the other spouse's feelings, the more efficient your meetings will be and the easier it will be to reach a global resolution.



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## **3 We are seeking an option that is less-expensive than litigation, with the support we need, but without battling experts**

Working with a team of experienced experts helps the process flow smoothly and avoids pitfalls that can result in bitter feelings. Your team might include a financial specialist, a real estate professional, a divorce counselor, a child psychologist, etc. We will find the support you need to make important decisions based on your specific circumstances. If appraisals or valuations are needed, you will jointly decide who you will hire. This avoids the costly “battle of the experts.” The more knowledge and understanding a couple has when making these decisions, the easier it will be to move forward after the divorce.

## **4 We want to minimize the emotional and financial trauma of divorce.**

The choice to use the Collaborative Process allows spouses to work together to create agreements with which both are satisfied. You and your spouse have independent legal representation, but you are in control of the discussions and the final outcome. Since this avoids the win-lose scenario that arises from traditionally litigated divorces, most couples are able to walk away from their marriage without resentment and without the uncertainty that comes from litigated divorces and the potential for endless appeals. Avoiding the never-ending litigation battle certainly makes it easier to work together in the future, too, when it comes to raising children.

## **5 We want to make sure that we still have the benefit of independent representation by our own chosen attorney**

Finally, you need to choose the right legal representation for you. Our attorneys have years of legal experience in divorce litigation and in utilizing the collaborative divorce process. They are knowledgeable, always willing to serve as a sounding board, and will provide you the information and legal advice that you need to explore your options



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enabling you, as the client, to make informed and intelligent decisions. Knowledge is power and they will provide you the knowledge you need to make these difficult decisions. Ending a marriage is never easy, but it can certainly be easier when you commit to ending it with respect. If you end up with legally binding documents at the end, why choose a path that is destructive when you have other options?

When divorce or other family law issues bring sweeping changes to your life and family, you need effective legal help to formulate and pursue your goals, protect your assets, and provide continuity and stability for your children. The Law Offices of Peter J. Russo can help. Our firm has nearly a century of providing effective family law representation.

Mr. Russo's firm is dedicated to providing both the immediate and the ongoing legal help and support you need during this difficult time. If you would like to learn more about your legal options regarding divorce or you are ready to speak with someone about your case, please contact us at 717-591-1755 or by email at [reception@pjrlaw.com](mailto:reception@pjrlaw.com) to schedule a consultation.

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