

## **Divorce; Your Best Revenge**

*- by Barry Lebow*

### It's all about the money!

I know this is a controversial statement. For every couple, divorce is emotionally wrenching as one or both partners crave revenge. Too many divorces are about revenge and are fueled by emotion. For me, this is wrong, wrong, wrong! It's actually all about money. And this money is the most important money in the world for it is yours!

So who am I to make this bold statement? I am a real estate appraiser and arbitrator/mediator and I bear scars from my own divorce. Over 40 years I have probably seen and heard it all. I've been involved in thousands of divorces, and, although I personally no longer appraise the residential part of divorce actions, I still supervise senior staff who do. I have watched as reasonably intelligent people fight obsessively to the end to get back at their spouse. In the end - it was not worth it.

Look again at what I just said: it was not worth it!

Let's face it, divorce can be a nasty part of one's road through life. You probably feel hurt, cheated, angry and want to get back at your spouse. Your reasons may be very valid, but keep one thing in mind - it should not be about emotion, it should be about money!

In a messy divorce, only the professionals make money. Lawyers, Realtors and appraisers all benefit from your emotion. But get this into your head; right now it is your money. If you go for revenge, it will be theirs. You have a choice, you can fight on obsessively, making the professionals rich and yourself poor or you can cut it out now and put your money where it belongs - in your pocket.

I'm sure you've heard a lot of lawyer jokes, but having serviced the legal profession since 1968, I have a great deal of respect for lawyers who are tops in their field. The real legal professionals get frustrated with clients who want their day in court, because these clients will never be happy with the result and never get everything they want. For them, the divorce case drives their lives, and this drives the lawyers crazy putting up with constant phone calls on minor issues. All to get revenge.

I say the best revenge in the world is to live well - financially, emotionally, physically and spiritually. If you use the system to get your revenge, you will suffer in all fronts. Unless you are one of the privileged, you will have to downgrade your way of life and living conditions. If you have kids, they will have to deal with months and maybe years of bitterness. When it is all over both of you will have lost. The professionals will have won.

There must be a better way.

I say the best way is to take a deep breath, think it out in terms of money and leave the emotions out of the process. The end will come whether you fight it or ease the process along, but the end will come. You will get your divorce or separation agreement. If you work through your lawyer to set out a settlement and your spouse does the same, you can mediate or arbitrate from there. You save time, and time in a legal process equates to a lot of dollars in your pocket.

An example: Want to hang on the house? Step away from the emotion and look at it this way. Ultimately the house will be sold. In the meantime, costs will increase and prices may drop. Why not maximize your return, sell and sell quickly with minimal fuss. Don't use your biggest investment to get even with each other. Treat the house for what it is, your largest financial source. No equity? Then cut the loss as quickly as possible, don't drag it out while interest and costs increase.

Am I advocating giving in? Absolutely not! What I am advocating is leaving the emotion behind. And if you're ready to do this but your spouse is not, why not start the process by sending him or her this article?

I want you to do a small test. Call a few friends or family members who have gone through a messy divorce. Ask them point blank: if they had the benefit of hindsight, would they have preferred to settle the whole thing quickly or were they satisfied with their process and the time it took? I'll bet 90 percent will say they lost in the long run because they couldn't take the emotion out of the process

In my own divorce, my wife and I focused on the love we had for our children. We acknowledged each other as loving and caring parents. We were very lucky: respect for each other on that level was never an issue although I know that is not always the case.

We both knew the ramifications of fighting and we both resolved to instruct our lawyers to work together on a mutually agreed upon settlement. We had some complex issues and had to retain a knowledgeable accountant, which was costly, but in the end we each saved a small fortune. Even more important, we are now better friends than we were when we were husband and wife. And best of all, the kids did not have to deal with the bitterness that is common in divorce.

So what are the issues? Your spouse cheated on you, ruined you financially, found a younger partner, hit you, is a couch potato, has bad habits, is into drugs? Get your revenge the smart way: get beyond the issue and live well. Give yourself a reality check - you are better off without them. Now think of yourself. Think of the money.

One last thing - why did I write this? Because I am tired, absolutely tired, of the nightmare I, as a professional and a divorced person, have seen people go through. If I only help one person come out of this process further ahead, it was worth doing.

Money in your pocket or revenge? The choice is yours.

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Starting in real estate in 1968, Barry Lebow is an Appraiser, Arbitrator, Realtor and Educator. He is CEO of Lebow, Hicks Ltd. a long established appraisal and consulting firm and CEO of the Real Estate Academy, a training company for Realtors. A long time writer, author and speaker Barry is considered one of Canada's most dynamic real estate facilitators. He can be reached at 416-781-5504, [barry@lebow.ca](mailto:barry@lebow.ca) or [www.negotiator.ca](http://www.negotiator.ca)