

Making a Second Marriage Work

By John M. Parr

When I first started thinking about a couple entering into a second marriage, I thought the basis for success was found in a number of technical documents that lawyers often help the couple prepare and sign. However, the more couples I assisted with second marriage planning and the articles I reviewed on the subject led me to a different conclusion.

The real answer lies in the hearts and minds of the couple contemplating the marriage. The parties usually have assets and income from their pre-marriage condition. Often both parties have children and grandchildren from an earlier marriage. Knowing how your future partner views his or her separate property and views his or her ongoing personal and financial relationship with children is very important information. Yet, the important questions concerning these matters are often not asked.

These questions and others have to be openly and honestly discussed prior to marriage. What is your income? What are your assets and what do you owe? How will we manage our income and assets? Will they be kept separate with each party continuing to control his or her finances? How will the ongoing bills be paid? When there are children and grandchildren involved, has one party or the other been providing financial assistance? Will it continue? Is one party estranged from children he or she is expected to provide for in his or her will? Does one party need financial assistance from the other now and in the future?

Second marriage is both a business decision and a matter of the heart. If the parties are unable to engage in an open and honest discussion concerning the

type of question set out above, I would suggest they consider talking with a counselor to help them develop the words and strategies to express themselves or to work with a facilitator to assist disclosure. Once the parties have reached an understanding then legal documents can be drafted and signed.