

# TOXIC ATTORNEY

For those who are in need of legal representation in the family law area, beware of the toxic attorney. The vast majority of attorneys practice with integrity, strive to work in the client's best interest and do a noble job and public service. As all things are defined by their opposites, there are also toxic attorneys. A client on the brink of divorce naturally feels anger, bitterness and resentment. These feelings may diminish the client's ability to see his or her role in the breakdown of the marriage and fallibility as a spouse. A toxic attorney can prey on these feelings, pump the client up for a fight and convince the client the legal system is the avenue to punish the spouse. The old adage, "An eye for an eye leaves both people blind" is never more accurate than in the family law arena. Even more appropriately, "An eye for an eye leaves both people blind and broke." Extensive litigation is expensive and, many times, unnecessary. When children are involved, conflict between parents is devastating. At times, parents cannot see beyond their anger and hurt to the point the parenting skills deteriorate and the parent becomes a "Toxic Parent." However, an effective family law attorney uses experts, counselors and other outside interventions to improve the psychological health of the parent, helps the parents communicate effectively, and (shockingly to some) eliminates or minimizes conflict. If a case blows up into a massive, dramatic disaster after hiring the attorney, a toxic attorney is likely involved. The method of operation of a toxic attorney is to create conflict, keep the client in court on motion after motion, and inflame the client to the point of exterminating the desire to cooperate and resolve problems short of judge's rulings. Do not think that an attorney who refuses to file a motion for every grievance the client perceives is weak or ineffective. The truth is quite the opposite. The attorney should address the client's concerns in a way that seeks a resolution to the problem. Keep in mind a Judge is making a decision on the limited information presented at a hearing. And hearing time, at best, is limited. Therefore, a Judge's ruling is just that, a decision. It may not solve the problem. It is the attorney's task to guide the client to a resolution and to a psychological state to be happy with the resolution without the emotional and financial cost of a trial or hearing before the Judge. If a client leaves an attorney's office feeling embolden and vengeful, with no appreciation for the worst case scenario, the client has likely encountered a toxic attorney. When family law is practiced appropriately, the parents and children are better at the end of the case than in the beginning. The one family has molded into two healthy family units working together to serve the best interest of the children.