

# **FAMILY LAW RIPPLES**

*"A pebble drops, transforming the lake"*



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## **About Family Law Ripples**

"Ripples" is a bi-monthly publication focused on legal matters affecting families. It promotes responding to family change with an eye to cooperation, connection and positive values.

## **The Leopard's Spots**

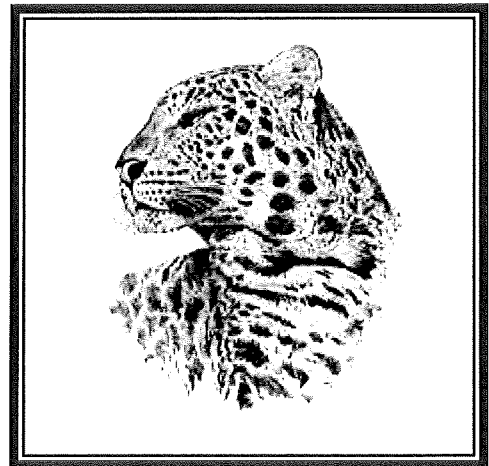
Years ago when I was a young associate, a senior attorney used the phrase "You can't change a leopard's spots" when a client complained about their opposing side. True enough, but could you do something to influence the leopard to change something about itself?

The answer for the leopard and certainly the opposing side is maybe, depending on what change is desired.

Like the leopard's spots, some aspects of people are difficult if not impossible to change, such as personality and long-held beliefs and values. For most people, other aspects such as some behaviors are more susceptible to change.

People are more likely to change aspects of themselves when they have: motivation to change, support while making the change, opportunities to practice the change over time, and feedback on progress towards the change.

When behaviors or other aspects of another person cannot or do not change, then the issue becomes how can I work with this person in an effective way – at least on the most significant things?



"Figuring out" the other side is sometimes the last thing that a client wants to do at the point of divorce, separation or a new post-decree issue. However, the effort of trying to put yourself into the other person's shoes and analyzing past joint behaviors can bring new insights into various aspects of a family law matter. Those insights might change the way you proceed, legally and practically, in ways such as the following:

1. When to start a discussion or legal action.
2. What words to use in describing and discussing issues or resolutions.
3. How to start a discussion or legal action.
4. How to develop information and identify resolutions regarding an issue.
5. How much weight to give to the other side's interests and desires.
6. Whether there is a likelihood of reaching agreement on some or all issues.
7. How to address any foreseeable difficulties in implementing or enforcing an agreement.

8. Which forum for resolution is most promising, whether in court or out of court in some type of alternative dispute resolution such as mediation or parenting consulting.

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## quote of the month

**If**

**If freckles were lovely, and day was night,  
And measles were nice and a lie warn't a lie,  
Life would be delight,-  
But things couldn't go right  
For in such a sad plight  
I wouldn't be I.**

**If earth was heaven, and now was hence,  
And past was present, and false was true,  
There might be some sense  
But I'd be in suspense  
For on such a pretense  
You wouldn't be you.**

**If fear was plucky, and globes were square,  
And dirt was cleanly and tears were glee  
Things would seem fair,-  
Yet they'd all despair,  
For if here was there  
We wouldn't be we.**

**e.e. cummings**

Each of these factors impacts the overall effectiveness of most legal and practical plans to address issues in family law cases. Trying to "figure out" the other side can pay off in increased effectiveness.

## IN THE MEDIA:

Larry Winget is a self-help writer who has been described as "the pitbull of personal development" with a "tough love approach." Some critics find him "frank, brutal, tough and sometimes even obnoxious" albeit with a big heart and solid advice.

Winget's message is straightforward: What you do, defines what you want – not what you talk about and not what you believe or feel. He would likely ask both sides of a family law matter – and what did you do to make things better? For a sampling of Winget's approach, try his book *The Idiot Factor: The 10 Ways We Sabotage Our Life, Money and Business*.

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