



Minnesota Parent
The Journal of Family Living
March 2008
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★ EDITOR'S NOTE MARCH 2008

Divorced, but still family

When Julie Rappaport and Lee Liberman got divorced eight years ago, they decided they would do it differently. They would do it better.

"We knew we didn't want to have the kind of ugly divorce we were seeing all around us," Rappaport told me. "But everybody said you can't have a friendly divorce." Their friends and family members predicted dire consequences for their daughter Tasha and told them, "You're going to hate each other."



That's what many of us expect, isn't it? If you can't stay married, then all there is left to do is turn your hurt and anger into hate and bad feelings. And, while you're feeling hurt and angry, you have to fight your way through an adversarial legal system. It turns into a zero-sum game: More hurt for them, less for me. More money or time with the kids for me, less for them.

But Rappaport and Liberman are here to say it doesn't have to be that way. Although it was difficult — "There was a lot of ugliness that could have become bitter," Rappaport says — the two are now friends and coauthors. Along with Tasha, they wrote and published *Relational Shifts*, a guide to staying family, even after the marriage was over. They're also frequent speakers on the topic and maintain a web forum. You can learn more at SmokinYogi.com or go to CollaborativeLaw.org to find their March speaking engagements.

It was refreshing to talk with Julie about her experiences. We didn't have room in this issue to go into her story in depth, but I'm so glad we are able to bring you the story of two Minnesota lawyers who also wanted to find a way to help clients obtain a better kind of divorce. Read about Ron Ousky and Stu Webb's collaborative law project on page 16.

Not everyone will be able to — or even want to — come out of a divorce referring to their ex as their "best friend," but maybe there's some inspiration to be found in Rappaport and Liberman's approach: "We had this vision that we wanted to stay family." ★

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