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- [Seni](#)
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Brandy Baker / The Detroit News

Divorce attorney Randall Pitler talks about collaborative law and amicable divorce while standing between movie posters for "Anatomy of a Murder" and "To Kill A Mockingbird" in his Royal Oak office.

**Local spotlight**

## Lawyer devotes firm to amicable divorces

Randall B. Pitler offers a kinder way for couples to separate other than fighting over every detail.

Karen Dybis / Special to The Detroit News

Whether it is Britney Spears, Reese Witherspoon or Kate Hudson, celebrity divorces tend to have one thing in common -- you rarely hear about the details in public.

That's because most famous people do everything they can to keep private matters out of court, explained Randall B. Pitler, a Royal Oak attorney who specializes in family law.

But even so-called regular people can have an amicable divorce that limits how much litigation is involved. In fact, Pitler has specialized in these less contentious divorce cases, helping couples part ways without all of

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the drama.

Pitler's goal is to corner the market on collaborative divorces in Metro Detroit. He opened his family-law practice up to solely divorce cases about a year ago, and he said the decision has been a financial and personal success.

"I'm used to some funny looks" when he tells people what he does, Pitler said. "But it would be hard for me to sleep at night if every day I'm fighting in court."

Pitler often goes to bat for a client before a judge, something that happens even in the friendly divorce cases. It's just that he prefers to find divorcing couples that are willing to revolve the problems in a reasonable way, limiting how much time is spent with a judge or attorneys.

"You can be creative in drafting a solution that lessens the impact on both parties. And, most importantly, by working together the parties can reduce the impact on the kids," Pitler said.

Pitler has seen enough examples -- both in real life and on television -- to know he was tired of seeing families struggle through a nasty split. The University of Detroit School of Law graduate had lived in Los Angeles and worked on the show *Divorce Court*, which is how he met his current wife.

Law expert Edward Poll said Pitler practices what he describes as "divorce without hostility."

"When done right, it is good lawyers taking the anger out of the process and looking at the need to move on in one's life," said Poll, an attorney and law-firm management consultant in Los Angeles. "Lawyers have a choice -- they can participate in the anger or they can guide it to resolution without acrimony."

Pitler said he believes more attorneys would like to practice this way if they could. In reality, the process works best if both parties in the divorce have attorneys who are committed to amicable settlements, Pitler added.

Those who do agree to work collaboratively agree in writing to complete the divorce harmoniously. The attorneys help the couple resolve any issues, voluntarily exchange information and negotiate in meetings where both husband and wife are present.

Other professionals, like financial specialists and family therapists, are often brought in to coach the divorcing couples throughout the process.

"When they decide to get a divorce, most people just want to get through it -- divide the property, decide on custody of the children and move on," Pitler said. "But they feel like they have to get a pit-bull lawyer and fight it out. There really is another option and another way to get divorced."

*Karen Dybis is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.*

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