Why Big Law Firms Attorneys Are So Likely to Get Divorced: Stressed, Tired, Mad and With Nothing More to Give

By Harrison Barnes from Los Angeles Office Managing Director

Summary: Attorneys working in big law firms are much more likely to get divorced one or more times in their life than those in other professions. Find out why in this article.

Attorneys are much more likely to get divorced than people in other careers, especially attorneys in big law.

There are many reasons for this, but it boils down to one major issue.

Attorneys spend more time and energy on their law firm relationship than their relationship with their spouse.

Lots of big firm attorneys get divorced. In fact, I would say that the rate of divorce among attorneys from the largest law firms is likely much higher than the divorce rate for attorneys in general--and much higher than the public in general.

I started my career in a large litigation law firm. With only a few exceptions--every single attorney in the firm had been divorced. Among large law firm attorneys, I believe that the divorce rate among litigators is higher than most other practice areas--but there are exceptions to that too.

If you are interested in practicing law with a large law firm--or are currently practicing law with a large law firm--it is important to understand how practicing law is likely to affect your romantic prospects. The odds are you will have a difficult time holding any relationship together if you want to get married and stay married in a large law firm.

Do you think I am wrong? Do you want me to be wrong? Are there statistics out there that indicate lawyers do not get divorced more than people in other professions? Whatever statistics you review about the divorce rates of attorneys compared to other professions, they do not capture the nature of working in a large law firm and just how unique it is. If you think working as an attorney in the Social Security Office in Dublin, Ohio, or as a solo practitioner in a Livingston, Montana can compare to what it does to the mind, body, and spirit of an attorney working in a large law firm, then you do not understand. Even more brutal to relationships is working in large law firms in large cities. It is stressful being an attorney everywhere, of course, but large law firms have that special something which grinds attorneys down.

It does not matter if someone is a partner or associate--the large law firm (in the large city, especially) is equally brutal to each relationship. In fact, partners have even more difficult times remaining married than associates, counsel, and others. Many people stay in relationships under the insane belief that things will get better when someone "makes partner." It is at that stage that the shit hits the fan, because there is even more stress, longer hours, and it is even harder to hold on to a job when someone becomes a partner than before they are a partner. That is when things often really go south in relationships, because everything just gets worse from there.

Why do you think big law attorneys get divorced so often?

Here are some of the reasons that large law firm attorneys get divorced so often. I could list more, but this pretty much summarizes the majority of them. Many of these apply to all attorneys practicing everywhere, but large law firms seem to bring them out more often:

The Identity of Large Law Firm Attorneys Is Often More Closely Aligned with Work Than with Relationships and Family
The attorney who ends up in a large law firm finds him or herself in a bizarre game that is almost impossible to win. Having won at everything most of their lives--academics, in particular--these attorneys have no interest in failing once they arrive at the large law firm. The large law firm creates a "game" that is so "all-consuming" on so many levels that things like family and relationships become far less important to attorneys than being part of the "tribe" of the large law firm and succeeding there.

The typical attorney who works in a large law firm has a major "sunk" cost in being there. They often have worked very hard in college and law school--and these are often solitary activities. Once they get in the law firm, they have spent their days working hard and also manage various political and social minefields on a daily basis to get and stay ahead. These are all sunk opportunity costs and very important to the attorney.

Large law firms pay a lot of money and offer a lot of prestige. They offer so much money and prestige that they can use that money and prestige to get whatever they want from the attorneys who want to work for them--and lots of them do. The best of these law firms will only allow the best of the best to work there. The typical attorney who goes to work for a major law firm is there because money and prestige are important to them. They have worked hard in college and law school, and are smart and highly motivated. They tend to care about what others think of them. They tend to be competitive and not want to fail--many have never failed at anything. This competition constantly motivates the attorneys to keep trying, and attorneys keep these other attorneys motivated by doing things like:

- Constantly firing low performers and laying people off
- Making very few partners
- Giving people bonuses for high hours
- Firing people for low hours
- Giving access to the best work to the most favored attorneys
- Rewarding attorneys for bringing in work and making senior attorneys without work feel like second-class citizens
- Constantly hiring lateral attorneys to compete with those already there
- Sometimes intentionally starving attorneys for work, so they work even harder and do better work when they do get work
- Creating classes of favored and unfavored attorneys and various competitions to become part of the favored groups
- Creating issues for attorneys making bad social or work-related mistakes
- Creating a culture where whatever an attorney does is never good enough, and where they are constantly told there is something wrong with them and they need to improve
- Cutting compensation for people because their business or hours are down--or just plain cutting it for no reason at all
- Allowing all sorts of internal competitions to fester among attorneys so that the attorney's peers are not their peers at all--partners are trying to hurt and undermine each other, just as associates are.

Even for the highest performers, the law firm acts as a parent, constantly berating the attorney and telling them they need to improve. Not wanting to disappoint the parent, the attorney is constantly coming back and doing what it can to please the parent--instead of realizing that this particular parent will never be pleased. The attorney is constantly trying harder and harder to do what is expected of them by the parent, and this relationship becomes so completely dysfunctional that the attorney will disregard their health, sanity, spouse, and children to please the law firm.

Because the large law firm attorney spends their entire workday involved in this drama, they hardly have the energy for a relationship when they are not working. They are more fixated on the game that the large law firm has created that they are playing it in their head even when they are not working.
The attorney does not have a lot of energy to give to a mate or family after work. They do not have a lot of interest in issues that their mate may be interested in discussing after work. The attorney is not interested in giving someone emotional support—but they may need it. They are 100% dedicated to the game inside of a large law firm—and their clients—and this game never ends. If they have spare time, they would often prefer to be billing rather than watching television with a loved one. They certainly do not have a lot of interest in leaving work early to watch a child’s sports game.

None of this is good for an attorney trying to maintain a relationship. Their relationship is with the large law firm and not with their spouse. The law firm does everything it can to make sure that the attorney’s relationship with them takes precedence over their other relationships—and it is very good at this.

Because the typical attorney is so attracted to prestige, money and being accepted by the group, they will play this game their entire careers—or until the large law firm breaks up with them, or they realize they cannot play it anymore because it makes no sense.

What kind of "games" does your law firm play with its associates and partners? How have these affected your relationships?

See the following articles for more information:
Why You Should Find Your "Tribe" and Not Just Focus on Money in Making Law Firm Job Decisions
The Top Reasons Why Money Is the Dumbest Thing Any Attorney Should Focus on When Joining a Law Firm
Four Union-Like Rules of All Law Firms You Need to Know About
The Interests of the Law Firm Clients Are Put Ahead of Spouses

If this sounds like a lot of drama, I have not even mentioned the demands of clients yet. That is a whole separate discussion. While trying to navigate the minefield that is a law firm, an attorney is also trying to practice law and be an effective advocate for their clients. Clients have all sorts of demands, are paying a ton of money for the help of attorneys in major law firms, and expect perfection. An attorney needs to give clients precedence over everything else—and they do. Also, when clients have a lot of work to be done, this is an opportunity for the attorney to earn a lot of money for the firm, and attorneys are expected to bill as many hours as they can.

Whether it is closing a deal or an important litigation matter, the demands of clients are something that always takes precedence over everything. The strange thing about practicing law is also the fact that the more client issues there are, the better the attorney is doing. The busier the attorney is, the more money they are making and more successful they are. If the attorney is an associate, the busier they are, the more employment stability the attorney has. Attorneys want to be busy, because this is a sign they are succeeding.

Law firm clients and their needs are more important than vacations, anniversaries, birthdays, weekends and other traditional "down time" that the average spouse looks forward to. After some time, a spouse will wake up and realize that a long-term relationship and sense of normalcy are going to be evasive because clients always take precedence.

Have you ever had to put your law firm’s needs above your spouse or family’s needs? What happened? See Love Your Work and the People Who Give It to You for more information.

The Costs of Failing in a Law Firm Appear Greater to the Attorney Than Failing in a Relationship

If an attorney fails in a large law firm—especially the more senior they get—they will often have a difficult time getting another job. Their reputation could be harmed, and it is not easy to get back on their feet. Moreover, once an attorney starts succeeding in a large law firm they have massive sunk opportunity costs regarding
time, political victories, finding supporters and more. Let's not forget the time they spent working hard in law school, college, and learning whatever practice area they are in--and maybe getting clients. All of this took the attorney a massive amount of time. Failure is often not an option for most attorneys.

Large law firm attorneys are successful (financially at least), have positions that give them status in society, and on the surface appear to be desirable mates. Just about every attorney I have seen get divorced is back on their feet in no time. I'm not making judgments about this one way or another, but attorneys do not seem to have that much trouble finding new mates once they get divorced--whereas an attorney who loses their job with a major law firm often has a difficult time getting a new one.

The emotional and financial toll of a divorce can be terrible--especially when there are children involved. Nevertheless, the cost of losing their job and career will often appear even worse to an attorney. The large law firm and the games it plays with the attorney become so all-consuming that many attorneys cannot imagine themselves doing anything else.

Which are you worried about more, your legal career or personal life?

See the following articles for more information:
- The "Systematic Reason" Why Most Attorneys Fail in Large, Prestigious Law Firms
- How to Not Fail, Die or Go Crazy Practicing Law
- The #1 Attorney Career Killer That Attorneys Are Never Taught
- 25 Reasons Most Attorneys Hate the Practice of Law and Go Crazy (and What to Do about It)
- Legal Career Suicide: Quitting a Job without Having another One Lined Up
- No, You Should Not Quit Your Job before Securing a New One
- Take This GIFT for Granted and Your Legal Career Will Be Dead
- The Large Law Firm Attorney Is Often Combative with Others at Work and Brings This Home

The large law firm attorney spends their days arguing with opposing counsel, judges, peers and is constantly angry with someone. This happens daily--day in and day out. Attorneys do their best to beat up on one another, and the best of them do a lot of this. An attorney finds themselves fighting for survival in their firm, to hold on to clients, and convince someone of something. This takes its toll on the attorney, and they come home and are not often very pleasant people to be around. The attorney is often very emotionally unstable and will have emotional fights with their spouse about strange things such as the location of snacks in the cupboard. None of this is sustainable over the long run, and spouses often do not understand what it going on and do not want anything to do with it after some time. Avoidance is common.

Has being an attorney ever affected your personality at home? If so, how?

See the following articles for more information:
- Emotions and Our Careers
- The Top 5 Regrets of People Who Are Dying: Five Reasons You Need to Change and Live Your Life Now
- The Large Law Firm Attorney Is Often Paranoid and Brings This Home

The large law firm attorney often suffers from a certain level of paranoia. In the office, attorneys play all sorts of games to undermine each other and to try to get a leg up--whether it is with clients or superiors in the firm. Just based on what happens in the typical large law firm, attorneys become quite paranoid as a general matter. However, this paranoia is not just brought about by what happens with others at work. An additional source of paranoia is caused by the sorts of games that opposing counsel play with one another on various matters. By the time the attorney has practiced for a few years, the attorney is on pins and needles most of the time and paranoid about everything and everyone around them. This paranoia seems to get worse over time. Partners become paranoid other partners are trying to steal their clients or get close to them. Partners
become paranoid that the law firm is trying to cut their compensation. As an associate gets more senior they become paranoid that the law firm isn’t going to make them partner, and they’re going to get fired. Paranoia just seems to run rife through the entire large law firm environment.

In most cases, someone suffering from paranoia might see a therapist, start exercising, or maybe even meditate. The problem with spending an hour in a therapist office, a few hours in the gym, or even 30 minutes a day meditating—is that each of these things takes time and attorneys are evaluated by how many hours they bill and not the time they spend taking care of themselves. Therefore, trying to ask an attorney to get therapy, exercise, or meditate is not likely to be that productive because they are going to see this as trying to undermine their career.

Have you ever been paranoid about things going on in your law firm? Have you seen any paranoid attorneys in your law firm? Was there a reason for this paranoia?

See the following articles for more information:
Why Most Attorneys Are Depressed and Unhappy
Why There Are No Lifestyle Law Firms
Large Law Firm Attorneys and Their Spouses Often Have Affairs

Large law firm attorneys often fall prey to the paranoia that their spouses are having affairs. Many times they are right. The spouse of an attorney is spending the majority of the time without the attorney. When they do see their spouse, the attorney spouse is often combative or working. They too may need the comfort of another relationship, and it is very common for the spouses of attorneys to have affairs too. I hate to say this, but it is something I see quite frequently. Anytime someone is away from home 60+ hours a week you have to suspect that their spouse may be meeting people other than the attorney.

It is not just the non-attorney spouse who is in danger of having an affair. During the time the attorney is away from home, they are spending the majority of the time around other people. Because they are around other people, it is not unusual for friendships to form and relationships to develop out of these friendships—often at work. Moreover, an attorney working such long hours and having such little time at home may feel that their spouse does not understand them because their work environment is constantly creating issues at home. Affairs between attorneys and attorneys and staff in the office are often quite common.

Divorces often occur due to affairs in the relationships of big firm attorneys.

Have you seen any affairs going on in your law firm? What happened?

See the following articles for more information:
Four Pieces of Advice for Attorneys Having (or Considering) Office Romances
The Pros and Cons of Office Romance
Most Attorneys Have an Inability to Be Fully Transparent and This Makes Relationships Difficult as Well

Because of the extremely competitive nature of work in a large law firm, most attorneys cannot be fully transparent. Being fully transparent means showing weakness. Attorneys are taught from the time they are in law school that showing weakness is a bad thing. Attorneys are expected not to show weakness with each other and, more importantly, not to show their clients weaknesses.

Something that attorneys do not respect in other attorneys is showing weakness. This is something that seems fundamentally grounded in the legal profession. Attorneys are taught to portray their client's point of view and not to show their clients' weaknesses. This is true for all types of attorneys. If an attorney shows weakness, they are not considered a good attorney unless they are using the weakness to their advantage.
Because this fundamental concept of not showing weakness becomes such an important part of an attorney's character over time, they begin doing this with others with whom they come in contact—including their spouses.

The problem with not showing weakness is that if you cannot show weakness, it becomes very difficult for others to empathize with and care about you. An attorney needs to be able to be transparent to be understood. If someone has their guard up all the time, they become very difficult to relate to and care about. Because attorneys often have their guard up, it becomes difficult for them to maintain long-term relationships.

Are you able to be transparent and show weakness at home with your spouse and family? If so, how do you do it?

See Making Others Aware of Your Weaknesses Can Make You More Trusted for more information.

Because Attorneys Are Very Good at Zeroing in on Weakness, This Makes Them Very Difficult People to Like Much of the Time

Attorneys are taught to zero-in on the weaknesses of others—whether it be an inconsistent argument or something that is simply out of place. While this is a very useful characteristic to have when fighting with others on the opposite side of a matter, this is not something that makes for good long-term relationships. Attorneys not only do this with the other side, but they also do this with each other at work—this is especially prevalent in large law firms. Constantly pointing out weaknesses, and attempting to undermine others is simply not something that makes for positive relationships with spouses outside of work. While many attorneys can turn this off, at larger law firms, they may spend 12+ hours a day doing this all week long—including many weekends—and they often become very difficult to get along with. It's not that the attorney is attempting to be negative with his or her spouse, it's just that this is the sort of person they have become. The longer an attorney practices law, the more they may become this way and end up alienating their spouse the longer they are married.

What are some ways you remain focused on the positive at home despite focusing on the negative as an attorney?

See the following articles for more information:
Concentrate on the Positive, Not the Negative
People Around You Can Shape What Happens to You: Avoid the Negative Affirmations of Others
The Power of the Positive
The Top Five Ways to Be Positive (When Everyone and Everything around You Is Bringing You Down)
The Attorney Becomes Very Ego-Centeric and Concerned with Themselves and Puts Their Needs Above Others

Practicing law is, for the most part, a solitary sort of occupation. Most of the work that a large law firm attorney does is done alone, sitting in front of a computer monitor typing away while looking at papers. Attorneys in large law firms are rewarded for their achievements, which most often include how many hours they bill or the amount of business that belongs to them—and them only. When attorneys were in school, they were rewarded for things like their test scores and their grades, and this is how they got into good law schools. Very rarely is an attorney rewarded for a task involving others. Certainly, an attorney needs to be able to give work to others in a law firm, but the majority of what an attorney does is rewarded based on what they do as an individual and not their ability to do a lot of things outside themselves.

Because an attorney tends to be quite focused on themselves, they tend to not have as much orientation towards others as people in other professions might have. The law firm does not allow them a lot of time for orientation towards others. While an attorney may have some client orientation and certainly needs to in order to be good at their job, the attorney's individual success will often come down to the quality of work they
do and the number of hours they bill. Attorneys are portrayed in the media as being very self-centered for a reason: because they often are. Attorneys learn very early-on that they need to look out for themselves by undermining those around them, billing as many hours as they can and keeping their clients and information close to the vest at all times.

**How do you keep your ego in check as an attorney? Share your tips.**

See the following articles for more information:

*Flow, Your Ego and Your Career*

*Rolls Royces, Your Ego and Choosing Who You Are Controlled By*

*Do Not Be Controlled By Your Need to Feel Significant*

*The Large Law Firm Attorney Never Feels Secure and Relaxed*

The attorney in the large law firm never feels secure. As mentioned above, the law firm plays all sorts of games, like with the compensation of attorneys, favoring certain attorneys and not favoring others, how work is distributed, and more. Furthermore, even when an attorney does become successful and gets clients, the attorney always has to worry about someone taking their clients away if the attorney does not do sufficiently good work. Because of all these pressures, the large law firm attorney never feels secure enough and always feels like they need to give more. Because the attorney always needs to give more and never feels satisfied, they are constantly on edge and feeling like they need to continue working harder.

There are always plenty of attorneys that are willing to take a given attorney’s place in a large law firm. Because there are plenty of people willing to replace the attorney—and often work for less money in exchange for the prestige—working in a large law firm often breeds an incredible level of insecurity among attorneys. Almost all attorneys in large law firms have seen their friends and peers lose jobs for seemingly trivial reasons. Because these attorneys know that they could be next, they constantly feel insecure and want to make sure that they do not lose their jobs. This means that they will work harder and be even more detail-oriented to prevent this.

Being around someone who is never secure means that the spouse will never feel secure either. If two people are not secure, they feel constant tension, no matter how successful they are as a team. Because a large law firm attorney is never secure, they tend also to be difficult to be around, nervous, and may even have substance abuse and other issues.

**Do you feel secure in your career? Why or why not?**

See the following articles for more information:

*The Seven Deadly Burdens of Being a Law Firm Attorney: Rejected, Criticized, Never Enough, Marginalized, Lied to, Insecure, and Cast Out*

*Do Not Be a Victim of the Insecurity of Others*

*The Large Law Firm Attorney Often Has Substance Abuse Problems*

Many large law firm attorneys discover that the only way to calm down at the end of a day of conflict is to start drinking alcohol, smoking pot, or taking some pills. This can often work for some time, but does not end well. Pot, alcohol, and other substances can often become addictive when used to cope with issues, and these substances often become a “crutch” that the attorneys rely more and more on over time.

Because their relationships are often not in the greatest state, they may also use substances to cope when they get home. On the one hand, they may be stressed out at work, but on the other, they may be stressed out at home. Unfortunately, the substances do very little to help the relationships, and more often than not make them much worse. As the attorney abuses additional substances, the relationship begins to suffer more and
more. The attorney’s work may also suffer over time from the substances, and this creates other problems.

**Do you know of any attorneys that have substance abuse problems? What happened to them?**

See the following articles for more information:
- *Why Do Lawyers Drink So Much?*
- *The Case of the Drunken Attorneys*
- *Alcoholism and Depression Among Practicing Attorneys*
- *One in Three Attorneys Are Alcoholics*
- *Attorneys Have Problems with Drinking*
- *How Much Drinking Is Too Much for an Attorney?*
- *The Billable Hour*

It should largely go without saying, but the billable hour is something that makes marriages very difficult for attorneys. While other professions may reward things other than hours worked, an attorney’s position inside of a large law firm is often evaluated by how many hours the attorney works—the more, the better. Because attorneys are evaluated based on the amount of time they spend away from home, it should come as no surprise that this makes it very difficult for them to have successful marriages. The more successful the attorney is, the more time they are likely to be spending time away from home. The more time the attorney spends away from home, the less likely they are to succeed in a marriage. At some point, the spouse of an attorney may conclude that they would rather be married to someone they will see rather than someone they do not see that often. Also, as discussed above, the attorney is not always the most pleasant when they are at home, making the little time the attorney spends with their spouse not the greatest time in the world.

The billable hour is something that undoubtedly creates a lot of problems in relationships: When an attorney has nothing to give but their time, and the attorney is competitive by nature, they are more likely to spend more time billing and prioritize this over family.

The billable hour is more of a problem in the largest law firms than in smaller ones because of the nature of the large law firm. First, large law firms tend to have large clients who can afford to write checks for endless hours that their attorneys are working. Second, large law firms tend to have large clients that require more work than those of smaller law firms. Third, large law firms put together lots of competitive attorneys that know that they will sink or swim dependent on many hours they bill—and those attorneys will bill as many hours as they possibly can.

**What is the billable hours requirement in your firm? How many hours do you bill a year? How has this affected your personal life?**

See the following articles for more information:
- *Law Firm Economics and Your Career*
- *Can Rethinking the "Billable Hour" Lead to More Law Firm Gender Equality?*
- *Billing 3000 Hours: Is It Possible and How to Do It?*
- *Many Large Law Firm Attorneys Do Not Feel That What They Are Doing Is Making Any Positive Impact and the Relationship May Not Be Held Together by a Sense of a Joint Mission to Some Higher Calling*

Many relationships can be sustained despite couples not having seen each other often when there is a sense that the two are in it together pursuing some higher calling. That could be a politician running for office, a service person fighting a war, an emergency room doctor saving lives, a person involved in some public service helping others—a variety of things. In the case of the large law firm attorney, there is often not much
that can be said about the sort of work that they're doing. An associate may be responding to lots of discovery propounded by a large corporation. A partner may be helping a giant company raise some money. An attorney may be helping a billionaire buy another building. Who knows. For the most part, the work the large law firm attorneys do--while it may be personally satisfying to the attorney who does it--does not create the sense of a shared mission for which the attorney and their spouse are sacrificing time away from each other.

The shared mission is ultimately about children, or the quality of the relationship, or even things they may buy together, in a successful relationship between an attorney in a large law firm and their spouse. Nevertheless, the work the large law firm attorney is doing is not something that often inspires the non-attorney or something that is seen as important enough to society to sacrifice time with their spouse.

Do you feel like what you are doing right now is making a difference in the world? Why or why not?

See the following articles for more information:
The Greater Your Purpose, the Greater the Obstacles You Will Face
Find Joy in Your Life’s Work—and Never Be without Work
The Inability of Money to Substitute for Time and Love

The attorney in a large law firm will often work very hard and provide very well for their family, but this is often no substitute for time with the attorney spouse and love. Without getting too much into the sad ways that attorneys who work all the time compensate their families for being missing all the time, money is no substitute for a positive relationship and time. For a time, this may work in some relationships, but in most, it does not. If a relationship is built just on access to money and not love, it tends to be one dimensional and very vulnerable to attacks from the outside—such as the threat of affairs, or others who will influence a spouse to feel bad about the marriage. Unless there is something much deeper to the relationship, money and things will only emphasize how much is truly missing in the marriage.

How do you make sure to let your spouse and family know that you love them even when you are working long hours?

See the following articles for more information:
Never Focus on the Money: Focus on Your Higher Purpose and Contribution
Lawyers and Money
Couples, Sex, and Money
Large Law Firm Attorneys Often Change Over Time (For the Worse)

The longer an attorney is an attorney in a large law firm, the more they are likely to change. The pressures of the law firm—paranoia, inability to relax, fear of losing a job and clients, desire to bill more and more hours, and other potential issues with the large law firm attorney (such as substance abuse), tend to get worse with time and not better. As these problems get worse and worse, the attorney’s problems with their spouse end up getting worse. As these problems get worse, the two sides drift farther and farther apart.

It is not unusual to see attorneys go through several marriages—I’ve seen over five many times. These multiple marriages occur because many of the problems associated with being married to an attorney become more and more evident the more one lives with them and the closer the two are together.

How have you changed throughout your legal career?

See the following articles for more information:
Change Your Identity and Change Your Life
Why You Need to Love Yourself and When You Need to Change Your Friends, Job and Life
How to Make Any Change You Want
Why You Must Change and How to Overcome Resistance to Change

Conclusions

Not every attorney from a large law firm gets divorced, of course. In fact, there are attorneys and couples who manage to handle these relationships very well.

One class of marriages in which this is handled very well is those who had a parent who was also a large law firm attorney growing up. If one member of a couple has come out of this sort of background, they tend to understand what it is like being married to an attorney going into it and how to avoid many of the pitfalls. I've seen this class of marriage work many times as well.

The second class of marriages that also do well are those where the non-attorney spouse does not work. While these do not always work, I have seen many of these sorts of marriages succeed where either the man or woman is the stay-at-home parent. In fact, it is increasingly common for men to stay home when women are working, and I see this more and more on an ongoing basis. I believe that it's difficult when two spouses are working because then it is even less likely that they see eachother, and they are both stressed out from work all the time. If one spouse is at home, then they are more likely to be a nurturing force--but not always.

The third class of marriages that do well are those where both spouses are attorneys. I'm not sure why this is, and it seems completely counterintuitive, but I've seen this work quite often. I believe this has something to do with the fact that both spouses can understand each other quite well.

The fourth class of marriages that seem to do very well are when the attorney spouse is extremely well developed socially. Many attorneys know exactly what they've gotten into and how to cope with the pressures of being a large law firm attorney. In most cases, the attorneys that I have seen with this ability have come out of environments where one of their parents was an attorney (as discussed above), but not always. The ability of the large law firm attorney to have perspective and not to allow the large law firm to affect them negatively often makes their marriages succeed.

While a large law firm attorney can make their marriage work, it is difficult. Many attorneys, though, conclude that it is not possible for them--that they do not like the life being a large law firm attorney is creating for them, or they do not like the person they are becoming--and they often do something else, whether it is going in-house or practicing in a smaller environment. This is a very mature decision for many attorneys to make, but not one that many competitive-by-nature attorneys voluntarily make.

See the following articles for more information:
The Two Most Important Ingredients of Success
How You Handle Chaos Will Determine Your Success or Failure
Top 8 Things You Must Remember When Everything Goes Wrong
Should I Marry a Lawyer?
Top 11 Tips for Those Who Date Lawyers and Their Significant Others
10 Misguided Rationales of Dating a Lawyer

Share Your Thoughts

What are some ways you keep your relationship with your spouse and family alive as a large firm attorney?

Why do small law firm, in-house and government attorneys often not have as many marital and family issues as large firm attorneys?

How has being a large law firm attorney affected your family and personal life?
What do you think? Share your answers to the above questions and any other thoughts you have on this topic in the comments below.