

# Reconcilable Differences: 7 Keys to Remaining Together from a Top Matrimonial Lawyer

Robert Stephan Cohen

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"Essential reading for couples at all stages of their relationship"—Linda Carter, Ph.D.,  
Director of the Family Studies program at New York University Child Study Center

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**Robert Stephan Cohen : Reconcilable Differences: 7 Keys to Remaining Together from a Top Matrimonial Lawyer** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Reconcilable Differences: 7 Keys to Remaining Together from a Top Matrimonial Lawyer:

3 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Good adviceBy Tin ManI came across this book quite accidentally, but I was struck by the title. What could a matrimonial lawyer say that hasn't been published already?A divorce attorney identifies the seven most common relationship problems--parallel lives, communication, sex, money, infidelity, transitions, and in-laws/family--and explains how to deal with each of them.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. useful information on the cheapBy HomeBuildingWritten by a matrimonial lawyer, the seven customary problem areas given as justification for divorce: parallel lives; communication; sexual compatibility; money; infidelity; transitions; in-laws and family are all addressed as-- reconcilable, and he gives many specific examples of concrete action.It might be useful to remember that when you need a matrimonial attorney or a so-called "therapist," you are at a difficult time of life when your ability to process a give and take discussion (and receive advice completely and accurately) may be far from optimal.So, why not read what he has to say--on your own time ?12 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Puts the "what to do" behind the "I do"By Mark GoulstonThere are few times more miserable in life when the person who once made you feel best about yourself and your life, becomes the one who now makes you feel worst about both. Like it or not, human beings often learn more from what they do wrong than what they do right. What better vantage point to identify what goes wrong in a marriage and what can make it go right and how to prevent the mess in the first place than from a compassionate, plain-talking (vs. psychobabbling) matrimonial lawyer who has seen them all and who is honest enough to talk about his own personal shortcomings from his own marriage. Buy, read and re-read "Reconcilable Differences" so you never have to hire a lawyer like Mr. Cohen.

**THE "ANTI-DIVORCE" BOOK FOR COUPLES WHO ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING "I DO" LAST FOR A LIFETIME** Robert Stephan Cohen believes that no marriage is half as complicated as a divorce -- and with three decades of experience as a high-profile divorce lawyer, he should know! In *Reconcilable Differences*, he gives couples the keys to navigating conflicts before they become roadblocks to marital harmony. Cohen begins by identifying the seven "Universal Differences" that often lead to conflict but don't necessarily signal the end of the union: Parallel Lives \* Communication \* Sex \* Money \* Infidelity \* Transitions \* In-laws/Family With the cool, compassionate voice of a trusted adviser, he then explains that there are three phases of conflict: Warning signs -- the early tip-offs that trouble is brewing; Crimes and misdemeanors -- actions guaranteed to raise tempers; and Reconciliation -- the process of getting back on track. Drawing on countless case histories, Cohen reveals how to put these differences behind you and move forward -- together.

Linda Carter, Ph.D. Director of the Family Studies program at New York University Child Study Center Essential reading for couples at all stages of their relationship.Adam Begley New York Observer Practical advice on how to keep the leaky craft of coupledness afloat....If *Reconcilable Differences* were to end up on every bedside table, Cohen could end up unemployed.Andrew Schepard New York Law Journal Nonjudgmental and upbeat. Mr. Cohen's portraits of couples in crisis are rich and humane. He sees their problems from all perspectives, not just those of his clients or his gender.About the AuthorElina Furman has written and cowritten more than twenty books, including *The Everything After College Book*, *Generation Inc.*, and *The Everything Dating Book*. She lives in New York City. Linda Carter, Ph.D. Director of the Family Studies program at New York University Child Study Center Essential reading for couples at all stages of their relationship.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.IntroductionWhat Divorce Has Taught Me About MarriageDuring my 30 years of practicing matrimonial law, I have come to understand that at the heart of every divorce lies one of seven basic marital differences. One or more of these differences affects almost every marriage. But make no mistake, these differences are not irreconcilable.Part of what contributes to the ever-rising divorce rate are our expectations: More and more people are getting married with the expectation that they will either divorce at some point in their lives or else live happily ever after. Both expectations are formulas for failure, fostered by media images and quick-fix ideas of love and life. Millions of us enter into marriage with self-defeating and unrealistic expectations, and when a marital crisis strikes, as it inevitably does during the course of every marriage, we run to the nearest divorce lawyer for help. That's where I come in.I can't tell you how many people come into my office with problems that can, with time and effort, be easily remedied. Sadly, many of my clients panic at the first sign of trouble.My experience has taught me to distinguish between panic and legitimate complaints. There have been many times when I have cordially escorted a client out of my office with instructions to wait a few months before taking further action. Happily, the majority of these panic-stricken clients do not come back. Contrary to popular belief, I'm no stranger to giving the kind of counsel that keep marriages together. Although this means less business for me, I am comforted by the knowledge that I have guided a couple in the right direction.No matter how many cases I've won or how many settlements I've negotiated, nothing is as satisfying to me as effecting a reconciliation between two people whose union is still fundamentally sound.In this book you will find tales of many married couples I have observed over the years, some rich and famous and others not. The stories and names have been changed to protect the identities of those involved. I can remember every one of my clients' trials and errors to the very last detail. Cases from ten years ago are as fresh in my mind today as if they happened yesterday.The book is broken up into seven chapters,

each of which details seven reconcilable differences. Each chapter is subdivided into three sections: "Warning Signs" (what to look out for), "Marital Crimes and Misdemeanors" (what not to do), and "Reconciliations" (how to fix it). Each section comes with questions and exercises that will help you get a better idea of how the differences affect your marriage and how to troubleshoot when the going gets tough. Do these quizzes and answer these questions in your mind as you read the book or jot them down in a notebook or a computer file. These seven basic differences can all be resolved in a positive manner, provided you follow the formula that I have outlined and do the work, both internally and with your spouse. When reading the "Warning Signs" section, keep in mind that in and of themselves, these signs are not cause for alarm. However, if left unaddressed these behaviors can lead to bigger problems, which can be found in each chapter's "Marital Crimes and Misdemeanors" section. This section outlines some of the more serious pitfalls your marriage can fall into. If you find yourself or your spouse committing any of the crimes and misdemeanors outlined, it is very important, perhaps even crucial, that you follow the suggested guidelines in the "Reconciliations" section.

How I've Learned What I've Learned If someone had told me twenty years ago that I would someday write a book about relationships, I would have laughed. After all, what could a divorce lawyer possibly know about keeping couples together? But over the past thirty years, I have managed to learn a great deal about what draws people together and what pulls them apart. I have seen people at their absolute worst. When they come through my doors, they can't eat, they can't sleep...or they can't do anything but. Life as they know it has come to an end. They will have to acquire a new set of habits and get used to coming home to an empty house. After years of watching my clients pass in and out of my office, their tales of woe ringing in my ears, I did the unthinkable. I, a lawyer, began to feel responsible for their welfare. My role began to change. No longer was I merely obliged to get my clients the best possible conclusion to their failed marriage, I became a one-stop emotional support system: confidante, psychiatrist, and clergyman all wrapped up into one. The way my clients see it, if they can trust me with their finances and their marital problems, why not with the most intimate details of their private lives? You see, no one wants to admit defeat. People have a way of putting up a brave front to the world, only revealing their greatest fears, grievances, and disappointments to their best friends or psychoanalysts. But even then, they hold something back. In my line of work, that one crucial detail can mean a great deal of money down the drain. You'd be surprised how quickly people reveal their most secret thoughts and experiences when half their net worth is at stake. I have litigated thousands of cases and represented everyone from teachers to supermodels to real estate moguls. Over the years, one thing has become abundantly clear: Knowing the don'ts is sometimes even more important than knowing the do's. I can't tell you how many times I've sat and listened to clients go on and on about what they could do to make a relationship work. There are times, however, when it's not what you do, but what you don't do that can make the difference. In all honesty, I, too, have made my share of mistakes. I, too, have committed most of the "don'ts" that I will describe in this book. I, too, have been divorced. It was the most harrowing and painful event of my life. Yet, I credit my divorce with giving me the compassion and insight that I need to help my clients. Who better to help them stand up, brush themselves off, and go on with their lives than someone who's been there and learned from that? Through my clients' experiences, I have discovered the art of damage control. Whenever I am confronted by a new client with a new set of problems, I ask myself what contributed to their divorce and how other couples can avoid ending up in a similar situation. And that's exactly what you have to ask yourself: What do you have to do, or rather not do, to keep me out of your personal life? How do you avert the relationship detours that lead directly to my doorstep? Well, that's precisely what I am about to tell you. And if that means fewer new clients for me and my colleagues, then that is a chance I'll gladly take. If I learned anything in my many years in matrimonial law, it's that divorce is rarely a solution: Divorce is a life-altering and devastating process that should be avoided at all costs. Take my word for it, because I know what I know.

The State of Our Unions As a young kid living in blue-collar Brooklyn, New York, the concept of divorce was completely foreign to me. Couples took their vows and never looked back. For better or worse actually meant just that. Only one family in my neighborhood was rumored to be separated, and talking about them was strictly off limits. It was in the most hushed of tones that anybody talked about "divorce." Of course, marriage was no easier then than it is today. But the trying times of the Depression and World War II made the perils of matrimony seem like heaven on earth. In the war against penury, families worked as tight-knit teams. For instance, I remember how difficult it was to make a decent living back in the day. Instead of breaking up homes, financial problems brought us closer together. Sharing a room or a small meal gave people a sense of community. All was for one, and one was for all, indeed. But just as people banded together in times of trouble, it seems that the reverse came to be true in times of plenty. In today's consumer culture, everything and everyone has become disposable, from diapers and milk bottles to friends and spouses. Even instant gratification is outmoded in an age when we want everything yesterday. When I first began litigating, matrimonial law was in its infancy. Not only was divorce still a taboo subject, it also carried none of the financial incentives that it does today. But "breakup benefits" are nothing compared to the overwhelming pain of dissolving a marriage. The stress can result in depression, loneliness, and despair, not to mention physical problems such as high blood pressure and a compromised immune system. All told, divorce is hazardous to your health and well-being, and no amount of property that may be divided is worth the side effects. I don't have to tell you that the divorce rate is higher than it's ever been. With so many breakups and failed marriages, why are so many people still remarrying, attending relationship

seminars, and reading self-help books? In my opinion, it's because more and more people are returning to the basic formula for happiness: committed relationships. No one wants to live alone for the rest of their lives, and those who say they do are lying. You may balk at the thought of a divorce lawyer preaching the virtues of marriage, but you'd be surprised at just how many of my peers are right now enjoying the fruits of their labor with a partner they love. Just like the general population's search for the perfect mate is undeterred by a high divorce rate, divorce lawyers, too, maintain an optimism that some may say goes against everything we do and see each day. Therein lies the paradox of this book. In spite, or maybe because of, all the lives I've seen torn apart by divorce, I continue to search for answers that will make me a better lawyer, a better person, and, most important, a better husband. Whether it's incompatible communication styles, money matters, or the seven-year itch, you will undoubtedly recognize yourself in the stories that follow. Just by reading this book,...