

GOOD
VS.
BAD
LAWYERS

FAMOUS LAST WORDS OF LOUSY LAWYERS:

"Of course divorce is the only course for you. You've got plenty of grounds, and I suggest we get started right away before s/he beats you to it."

Problem: If a lawyer tries to push you into filing for divorce, or to push you into any other action that you are not ready to take, don't go back.

"Don't worry about a thing; I'll take care of everything."

Problem: With these types of large promises, you may have a hard time getting this type of lawyer to take care of anything, even returning your phone calls.

"Don't even think about my bill. It will come out of the settlement."

Problem: You are ultimately responsible for your own lawyer's bill, and it is important that you know FROM THE BEGINNING how it will be computed.

"I'll make all the decisions. Trust me. That's what lawyers are for."

Problem: Your lawyer should be an advisor and your representative -- not your boss.

"You are not going to understand any of this, so I won't bother explaining it or sending you copies of anything. Why confuse you with the facts?"

Problem: You do not deserve to be patronized on top of all the other things you are going through. You are entitled to know what is happening in your case, and to receive copies of all correspondence and court papers.

"It's all in who you know, and I know all the judges."

Problem: Any lawyer who makes a statement like this is revealing his or her own lack of integrity and competence.

STATEMENTS A COMPETENT LAWYER IS LIKELY TO MAKE:

"Are you certain that the marriage is over? Have you had counseling? Would you consider reconciliation?"

"I can't make any promises, but I will make my best effort to secure a reasonable agreement for you. I'll arrange for us to meet with your spouse and his/her lawyer to negotiate a settlement, as soon as financial statements have been exchanged."

"To make sure that we are both clear about the fee agreement, I'll put it in writing, and we'll each have a signed copy."

"I'm accessible. I can almost always return your call by the end of the day. If you have an emergency, be sure to say so when you call."

"I'll send you copies of all the correspondence and pleadings as I receive them, and I will consult with you before taking any action in your case. I also expect you to keep me posted about significant changes."

"A contested divorce is a last resort, and a very difficult process. You're far better off with an agreement, but an agreement does require flexibility and compromise on both sides."

"I'm here to advise you, to inform you, and to represent you, but not to make your decisions for you."