



When Celebrities Divorce



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Americans Fascinated By Public Failure of Marriages of the Rich and Famous

By MICHELE KIMBALL

CONNECTING WITH CELEBRITIES

Public fascination with all of the details that come out of celebrity divorces provides not only a voyeuristic thrill, but a way for fans to feel closer to their favorite celebrities, according to Stacy Phillips, a certified family law specialist who handles mostly celebrities and high-net-worth clients. Phillips has handled celebrity clients such as singer Bobby Brown, the former husband of singer Whitney Houston; Corina Villaraigosa, the estranged wife of Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa; Darcy LaPier, the ex-wife of actor Jean-Claude Van Damme; Erin Everly, former wife of Axl Rose of Guns 'n Roses; and Charlie Shalhoub, actress Tori Spelling's ex-husband.

"Some like to feel sorry for their favorite celebrities, others are reassured that those who are adored and celebrated have problems just like them, and still others enjoy watching an icon fall," said Phillips, who is also the author of *"Divorce: It's All About Control - How to Win the Emotional, Psychological and Legal Wars,"* and a managing partner of Phillips, Lerner, Lauzon & Jamra, LLP in Century City, Calif.

Phillips said she doesn't think celebrity divorces are on the rise, though it may be perceived that way. Instead, she said, celebrity divorce is on a trend much like everyone else.

"Celebrity divorce goes along with the same statistics as the general populace divorce rate, but our perception is that more celebrities get divorced," Phillips said. "That is because we see the divorce played out in public."

Watching the divorces play out can be a benefit to those in the general populace who are facing divorce themselves. Watching how celebrities handle themselves can be a lesson in itself.

"Since they have emotions just like everyone else going through a divorce, it is sometimes difficult to keep their emotions in check. They also have to go to great lengths to keep certain information, such as custody issues and money matters out of the public eye," Phillips said.

She said that celebrities have to conduct themselves with the knowledge that there are members of the media on the hunt for as many details as possible about their private lives, and sensitive details sometimes emerge from court documents.

"This is highly embarrassing to many celebrities, who like regular folk, just wish to keep their private affairs private," Phillips said. "Although, as we know, it appears as if some celebrities love the publicity even if it is bad and embarrassing."

Regular folk watching celebrity divorces play out can pretend they are in the same situation – and it might improve the divorce process. Phillips said she wishes more people would behave as reporters and producers were watching their every move.

"If that were so, people might behave a little more rationally and appropriately, especially in front of their ex and the children," Phillips said. "Also, study what it is that breaks up these marriages – money, infidelity, control issues—and try not to get caught up in some of the same traps."

