



# THE BIG PICTURE

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## **And the point is, to live everything.**

– Rainer Maria Rilke

In Walt Disney's *The Computer Wore Tennis Shoes* (1969), Dexter Riley (Kurt Russell) is a student at Medfield College. He skirts the rules and enjoys bucking authority, often finding trouble along the way. At one point, he is messing around with the school's computer (which fills a room, by the way) and receives an electrical shock. Today, we might say that the computer data is downloaded into Dexter Riley's head, and he becomes a walking encyclopedia.

He is able to complete the toughest exams quickly, to speak in other languages, and to answer the hardest questions from the smartest professors. He is so good that he and three other students from Medfield are put in a televised quiz bowl tournament against other colleges.

Wouldn't it be great to be a walking computer? We all love having the answers. The one true and correct answer to any and every question. Learn it. Memorize it. Move it from your brain to your lips in the blink of an eye. You are in total control and feeling confident.

Now the bad news: You are not Dexter Riley. Accept that now. You will not have all the answers. You will not be in total control. And at times, you will not feel so confident.

This special issue of the Michigan Family Law Journal is for you, the client. We have designed it in the hope that you will not only "survive" your divorce, but that you will start down the road to peace and hope and joy. At this moment, that may sound strange. It always does when we are in the midst of uncertainty, confusion and perhaps chaos.

In the world of divorce, you will be encountering concepts that may seem strange or unfair, a foreign language rich with meanings you do not understand, and people who seem to have power over your life in ways you never imagined. All these obstacles, yet you can move forward

with the assistance of an experienced and caring attorney. You can overcome the present challenges.

Forget about trying to understand the complete truth, or to prove the complete truth or to get total and complete justice. The world doesn't work like that, and neither do the courts. Accept the imperfections inherent in the process, and take some comfort in the fact that you will have a deeper understanding of this time of your life only after you are several years down the road.

So what to do now? Take the high road. Conform your words and actions to the principles you keep in your heart. You will find your days a little easier, your stress a little lighter, and moments of happiness more often.

Don't panic about everything that might happen. Most problems are not new. They have solutions, and many temporary difficulties pass fairly quickly into corrections as the process unfolds.

Be wary of free advice from friends and relatives. Stop and ask yourself: Is this the way for me? If you have any doubts, talk to your attorney before taking action. Avoiding a problem can be much simpler than fixing it.

Communicate with your attorney. Be direct. Share your goals and expectations. Tell your attorney everything—the good, the bad and the ugly. If your situation changes, tell your attorney.

Keep an open mind. There are several possible solutions to every issue. Your attorney may give advice that you don't want to hear, but that advice may be exactly what you need to do at that moment.

Finally, seek professional help to keep your emotional life stable. Your attorney, friends and relatives are not mental health professionals. Divorce is one of the most stressful experiences anyone can face in life. Feelings of loss,



emptiness, panic, confusion, and depression are common. If you cannot cope on a day to day basis, or if you are consumed with anger, depression or shame, or if you just want to help your children better adjust to the divorce, a mental health professional can help you.

I leave you where I started, with the words of Rainer Maria Rilke:

[B]e patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart . . . try to love the questions themselves . . . . Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

