



## STAYING TOGETHER

### FREE HOUSING:

Andrea Reid, an attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, said many of her clients' homes are in foreclosure, so both spouses stay.

"They're living in the house rent-free, so who would want to leave?" she said.

Elinor Robin, a state-certified divorce mediator in Boca Raton, said some couples are using the bleak housing market to their advantage: One spouse stays in the house that is facing foreclosure rent-free while the other moves into an apartment or a family member's empty condo or shares living expenses with another displaced spouse.

### ATTORNEY COSTS:

Others simply can't afford the \$409 it costs to file, much less hire a divorce attorney.

Reid said she regularly inherits cases when people can't pay their private attorneys.

In the recent past, attorneys would collect their fees when the house sold or their clients would put the bill on a credit card. With houses not selling and credit cards maxed out, those options are no longer available, she said.

The housing market has turned everything upside down, attorneys said.

Even if one of the spouses is willing to take over the house, banks will refuse to take the person's name off the mortgage.

### JOBS:

Divorce is also complicating efforts to find jobs. People who want to move for work are blocked by current or ex-spouses who object

**12 %**

decrease in divorce filings since three years ago

## Broke couples can't break up

By JANE MUSGRAVE  
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

*Forget till death do us part. These days, it's until the economy improves.*

*With no spare change to file for divorce and no hope of selling their home, many couples are staying together even though loathing, not love, has become the keystone of their relationship.*

*"A lot of people are suffering through it," attorney Andrea Reid said. "They're going, 'We want a divorce, but we can't afford it.'"*



## GETTING A DIVORCE

### FINANCIAL CONFIDENCE:

For some, cost - even the high one of divorce - is no object.

"I think that the people in the net worth bracket that our cases involve aren't going to delay an important decision because their portfolio is off by 30 percent," said high-end West Palm Beach divorce attorney Jeff Fisher, whose clients have included golf legend Greg Norman.

For some high-powered people, it may be a good time to divorce. With their investments down, they will have to pay their soon-to-be ex-spouses less than before the stock market tumbled.

"It's a confidence thing," Fisher said. "Some guys say, 'I have enough confidence that I can write that 50 percent check now and I'll get it back in five years.'"

Attorney Matthew Lane, who represents lawyers and other high earners, agreed.

"People in a certain socioeconomic group will do anything to get a divorce," he said. "People would cut off their right arms."

### PEACE:

Allison Kapner, a West Palm Beach divorce lawyer, warns that putting off a divorce can often create more problems than it solves. Some people live in risky situations where fights turn violent.

### CREDIT SECURITY:

But even those who live separately remain financially linked. That, she said, can come back to haunt people who see their credit destroyed or ultimately spend thousands to separate themselves from free-spending partners.

**25 %**

increase in calls to the domestic abuse hot line from 2007-2008