



‘Brutally Honest’

Attorney Greg LaMonaca’s distinctive approach to life and law puts clients on the path to a better future

By Bill Donahue
Photography by Rob Hall

Gregory LaMonaca and his associates at The Law Office of Gregory P. LaMonaca P.C. handle a wide area of general practice, including but not limited to family law, personal injury, estate planning, employment law, criminal defense and medical malpractice. Above, LaMonaca reviews a case with paralegal Kristy Panella.

It’s no secret that people who hire divorce attorneys do so to ... well, to get divorced.

But prospective clients meet with Main Line attorney Greg LaMonaca for a wholly different reason: to grow and change for the better—and, in some cases, to unshackle the chains that have been holding them back, to break through the wall that has been separating them from the lives that they want. It’s a subtle but nonetheless important difference, according to LaMonaca.

“When I meet with a client, I want to figure out what their goals are,” he says. “They might tell me they want a divorce, but based on what I learn I might suggest they need marriage counseling or individual counseling or just answers. I’m very big on having a client prepare an entire journal for me because it gives insight in their minds.

“I handle divorces, but I’m not what I would call a divorce attorney. I might be talking people out of my services to figure out what works best for them. Some of the best calls I get are people thanking me for my advice, telling me that it saved their marriage or resolved issues with their children.”

Clearly, he and his associates at The Law Office of Gregory P. LaMonaca

P.C., which is based in Media, are unlike most other law firms that practice family law.

"This area of the law is very stressful, and there's a lot riding on what you say and do," says LaMonaca, a self-described "very family-oriented" father of two who earned his Juris Doctor degree from Widener University School of Law before founding his firm in 1995. "It's not about winning and losing, though winning for the client is important; it's about making a difference in the lives of the people who are going through it and in the lives of the children who are affected by what's going on."

It should be no surprise that LaMonaca's firm has earned a sterling reputation in the greater Philadelphia area and beyond. In addition to being named a 2010 "Awesome Attorney" in the family law category by *Suburban Life*, he has been named multiple times as a "Super Lawyer" and "Top Lawyer," respectively, by *Philadelphia* and *Main Line Today* magazines in the areas of family law and divorce.

LaMonaca has represented individuals throughout Pennsylvania, and has also been admitted to practice in New Jersey, the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Although his primary focus is family law, the firm's many associates and affiliate attorneys handle a wide area of general practice, including but not limited to personal injury, estate planning, employment law, criminal defense and medical malpractice.

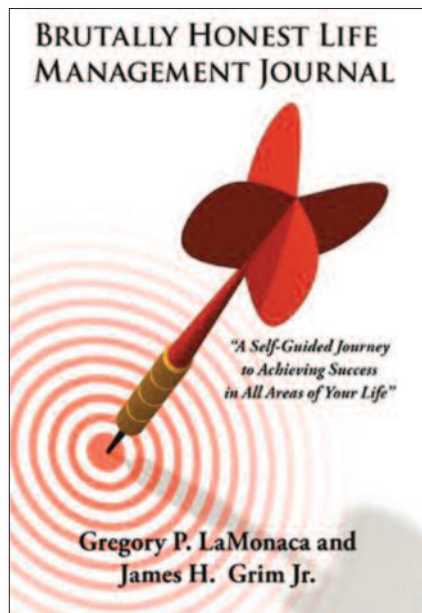
The Right Path

LaMonaca's perspective differs from some of his esteemed colleagues throughout the greater Philadelphia area. The difference is in his approach not only to law but also to life as a whole—an approach he refers to as "Brutally Honest." This is the ideology behind "Brutally Honest," a comprehensive three-phase process designed to assess the client's past, determine current objectives and develop a proactive plan to guide a client onto the right path for the future.

Along with friend and former custody client James H. Grim Jr., LaMonaca has written a compelling book called "Brutally Honest Life Management Journal," which was published in 2010. The book, which takes readers on a self-guided journey toward empowerment in the midst of a life-altering change, such as divorce or separation, has been followed by several other books available online.

The book grew out of LaMonaca's experi-

ence as a family law attorney, as well as his bout with an extremely rare physical condition that he has coped with since the age of 14. The condition has at times left him on the edge of paralysis, but has also taught him the ability to persevere and overcome—to embrace life no matter what stands in the way.



LaMonaca co-authored the 2010 book, "Brutally Honest Life Management Journal," as a way to empower readers who are in the midst of a life-altering change.

"The book chronicles a time from five years ago, where the condition was at its worst," he says. "I went from being a martial artist and lifting weights five days a week to being completely paralyzed from the waist down. I was in the hospital for a month, and there were some nights I had to be carried out of the office."

As LaMonaca puts it, the book is really about "taking stereotypes and destroying the preconceived notions—that some people can't get custody, that mothers or fathers have no rights in a divorce—and completely doing a mind shift as far as what people think." The book works in tandem with LaMonaca's approach to law. From an initial meeting with a client through the overall resolution of a case, LaMonaca and his team work assertively to help clients develop their goals while ensuring their voices are heard.

Step 1 of the system is known as the "Breakdown Phase," which leads clients on an intense journey into the deepest parts of themselves so they can reach their purest personal goals. Step 2 incorporates all areas of a client's life—friends, family, associates, etc.—and provides clarity on which goals to set. The

third step, which is ongoing, teaches a client the critical skills of self-evaluation—how to define, evaluate and re-evaluate ever-changing targets as a way to continually improve his or her life and begins the path toward attaining the goals he or she sets.

"People face extremely difficult situations in their lives, and I tell them to imagine they're sitting in a chair with 100 chains holding them back," he says. "Then over here you have this wall, and on the other end of the wall is the most compelling, optimistic view of the world you want for you and your children. Right now, as you sit there you can't see through that wall. ... Our goal is to break those chains and get over or through that wall to those goals they've developed and then move forward."

One client wrote about how he had been "spiraling quickly out of control" in the wake of his separation and coming divorce from his companion of 25 years, worsened by a lessened role in the lives of his children. The spiraling stopped when the client met with LaMonaca and discovered the "Brutally Honest" system. After reading the book and going through its various exercises, the client became "more positive about life than I have ever been" and learned to focus on "being a great father to my children as well as working every day on how to co-parent my children in concert with my ex-wife." In short, it completely transformed the client's life for the better.

"I am not a psychiatrist or a psychologist, but I can refer clients to these specialists or other professionals such as counselors, CPAs, co-parent counselors, family counselors, forensic accountants, mediators and financial planners, as well as many other resources, to complete the team," says LaMonaca. "And through that we can systematically chop away those chains that are holding you back."

The firm takes a team-oriented approach to representing clients, with its roster of highly skilled attorneys and other professionals who are as energetic and passionate as LaMonaca about helping people through difficult times. Most have been working at the firm for at least five years; paralegal Kristy Panella has been working alongside LaMonaca for more than 10 years.

"When clients call, I'm very selective with the cases I take," he says. "I make sure I can make a difference and that they're ready for the change that's coming. ... My personal goal is to have them move on to the rest of their lives and have the resources that are necessary to do that." ■