

Examining the Future of Relationships – in discussion with Mariella Frostrup and Vanity Fair

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At the end of last month, I was lucky enough to engage in a discussion of how our relationships are shifting and evolving with well-respected broadcaster and journalist Mariella Frostrup and Vanity Fair's travel editor Michelle Jana Chan. Sadly, not a face to face conversation – Zoom was the order of the day yet again – but nonetheless a fascinating exploration of the forces changing our relationships, which will soon be launched as the second of a series of talks in Vanity Fair's The Future Of... series.

The series looks at issues of common importance to us all, and how they are shifting and adapting. Relationships is a great subject for the series, and as a family lawyer I consider myself privileged to stand at the very edge of the change. Few of us expect every family we meet to be a neat nuclear unit anymore, nor are we surprised by couples in civil partnerships, or unmarried couples, or for that matter divorced couples. These have passed into common currency, and the progression of relationship and family models has continued apace in the meantime.

Naturally, our discussion touched on the impact of coronavirus on relationships, acknowledging the heavy toll it has taken on many couples. Nonetheless, I have been heartened by how many of my clients and friends have done their best to make things work during these difficult times. Fundamentally, one hopes that a relationship can be stronger than its immediate circumstances.

What really interests me right now, and made for a good discussion in the video, is how perceptions of separation are changing. It seems to me that people are no longer willing to accept that there is only one way to separate, and that all of the antagonism and opposition involved in the court divorce process must be borne. Clients and others I speak to now are looking for more choices, and are conscious that their relationship is likely to continue in some form after they separate, which usually encourages a more measured and conciliatory approach.

It is incumbent on family lawyers to raise awareness of the wide range of methods for separating, giving couples a full view of the alternatives available to them and encouraging them to choose whatever suits them best.

I hope that you enjoy the discussion, which can be viewed on [Vanity Fair's IGTV channel](#) from 6pm on Wednesday 9th December, and [here](#) on our website. Anyone hungry for more on these issues can find me and my fellow partners in discussion with Mariella in our [Modern Relationship podcast series](#).

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