**Research-Based, Child-Centered Parenting Plans:**

**The Interface between the Family and the Law**

*Franklin v. Franklin*

* Children: four year-old twins, Arianna and Avi, and 18 month-old, Rebecca.
* Parents: Francesca Louisa Franklin and Jacob Seth Franklin. Length of marriage: 14 years.

Born at 32 weeks, the twins spent the first six weeks of their lives in a Neonatal ICU. Mom did day shift with the kids at the hospital; Dad did the evening into night shift. Together they decided that Francesca would quit her job as an electrical engineer in order to continue to care for the babies. By the age of two they had recovered all of their developmental delays and were fully on track by all measures. Francesca did the preschool search. She has been active in the leadership of the co-op preschool where the twins have attended for the past two years. Jacob made partner in a large architectural firm during those early years after the twins’ birth, which compensated for the income lost when Francesca didn’t return to work. Francesca had also earned her teacher’s certification in Pilates over the last two years and was teaching many Saturdays at a local studio. Jacob loved his Saturdays alone with the twins. Francesca and Jacob were discussing Francesca’s re-entry into the workforce once the twins entered all-day Kindergarten and Becca enters preschool a year from fall. Francesca was ambivalent about going back to a position that would require an 8 – 5 regular schedule, but is willing to look into more “consulting” type positions.

Jacob is the one initiating the divorce. He describes the marriage as one where they handle the logistics of family life very well, but that the last four years had drained the life out of their *marriage*. He respected her; regularly praised her mothering and volunteering; was supportive of her Pilates passion. He described himself as a bit of a night owl – always willing to do night duty with the kids if they were sick; he loved being Ari, Avi and Becca’s dad.

Francesca couldn’t disagree more with Jacob’s description of the marriage. She feels like they have been an incredible team facing the adversity of the babies’ rough start. She describes that they have made decision after decision to benefit their family life – she caring primarily for the twins and their needs, then for Becca after her birth, and Jacob financially supporting the family and pitching in with the kids when he could. She doesn’t understand what he means by “draining the life out of the marriage.” She feels like she has a marriage and family life that is the envy of many of her friends. Although their extended families are on the east coast, she describes the relationships with them as strong and close. No one will believe Jacob’s asking for a divorce. Perhaps he’s having a mid-life crisis. Maybe he’s having an affair. But this divorce decision is coming out of the blue and doesn’t make any sense. He’s not himself.

In telling Francesca about his decision to want a divorce, he reassured her that she would have the financial launch pad she would need to restart her career, that together they would continue to ensure the kiddos have what they need, and he would be there to share in all the responsibilities of child-rearing across two homes. Now that he’s partner, he has the freedom and flexibility to design a schedule to have the kids 50% of the time.

Francesca looked at him stunned. She simply said, “Over my dead body.”