

JUSTICE PAM JACKMAN BROWN

When matrimonial cases come before Justice Pam Jackman Brown at Queens County Supreme Court, you can bet they will be emotionally charged. It doesn't matter how old a person is, what economic status or cultural background they may have. The emotions and issues are the same when spouses disagree and children are involved.

“How people feel, their hatred, their distrust, their disagreement, their fighting doesn't change,” says Justice Jackman Brown.

They may seek rulings on custody, child support or domestic violence cases. Whatever it may be, different parties want to vent to the court.

“They want to put everything out there. They're looking to put the larger dagger of emotional destruction into the other person,” says the justice, who graduated from CUNY Law's inaugural class.

After hearing all the sensitive details, she must consider the entire situation, defuse the emotions and figure out how to provide relief.

“It's both eye-opening and humbling to be put in that position,” says the justice.

When parents are so deep in battle, they often cannot see how they devastate their children. Some internalize the fighting and cut themselves or become suicidal; others turn to the Internet and end up getting hurt by strangers. To help avoid such damage to children, the justice often needs to remind parents of their obligation to their own kids.

“Even though they may hate and distrust each other or probably want to see the other person be off the planet, they still cannot change the relationship they have with children they brought into the world,” she says. “That never changes even if you get divorced and hate each other.”

Justice Jackman Brown started her legal career as a criminal defense attorney for the Legal Aid Society. She also served as a judge in Housing Court before being elected as acting Family Court judge in 2010. A year later she was elected to Supreme Court.

While she views her current position as a big professional accomplishment, she believes it's even more important that she is able to use her position to help people in turmoil, reach others through public speaking engagements and counsel student interns.

“I try every day to make sure that I am a good and positive influence in people's lives, so that when they leave my courtroom, they leave in a position better than when they came in,” she says.