

## ***Baby Out of Wedlock* wins third book award as abortion laws become more restrictive and the unmarried parenting trend accelerates.**

About 40% of all births and 85% of abortions in the USA involve unmarried parents. The tighter abortion controls in Texas are exacerbating the trend.

*Baby Out of Wedlock* is the only guidebook written specifically to help this growing group of parents. Download our **Media Kit**:  
<https://www.babyoutofwedlock.com/media>

Annually:

40% of births = ~1,500,000 babies

85% of abortions = ~600,000 abortions

That's over 4,000,000 parents a year who are confused, divided, and considering abortion or headed into a needless custody battle. By comparison, there are only ~800,000 divorces a year.

"Skillfully outlines how to prepare for and raise a child out of wedlock."

**- Kirkus Reviews (Starred Review)**

*- Winner 2021 Gold Award and 5 Star Review from Readers' Favorite*

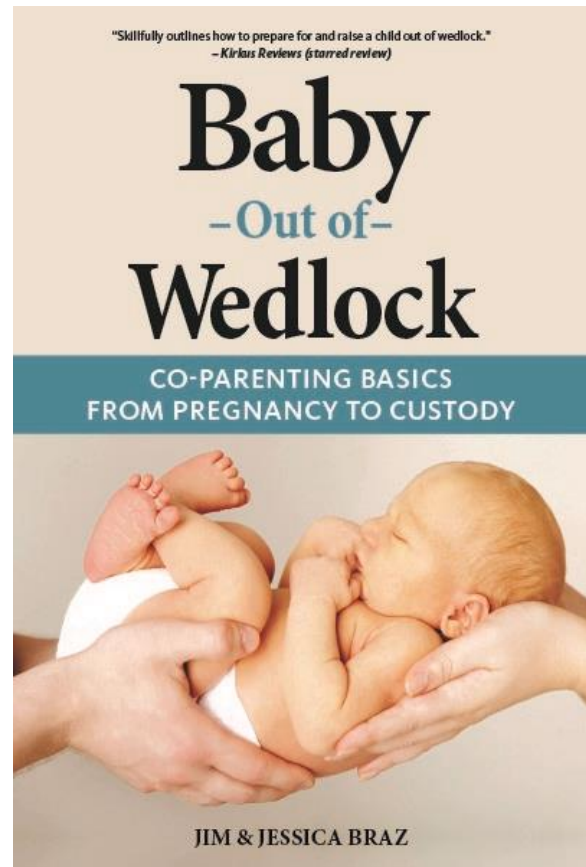
*- Winner 2021 Gold Award and 5 Stars Review from Literary Titan*

*- Winner 2021 1st place Non-Fiction, Parenting & Family CIPA EVVY Award*

"Pregnancy centers are using the book as a tool to help some women considering abortion gain the confidence they need to choose life," the authors say. "Father rights groups report the men they work with use the guidance we provide to step up and be there for their children. Parental alienation experts tell us this book can prevent alienation before it begins."

The book and website, [BabyOutofWedlock.com](http://BabyOutofWedlock.com), cover issues such as:

- Getting your head in the right place
- Better ways to communicate
- Abortion? Adoption? Marriage?
- Paternity tests, child support calculations, visitation rights, decision-making rights
- Custody litigation, legal documents, timelines, evidence gathering, attorney fees
- Avoiding a trial
- Strategies for keeping legal costs down



- How to write a bulletproof parenting plan
- Avoiding repeated trips to court
- Dealing with high-conflict or narcissistic co-parents.
- Life changes - new job, relocation, remarriage, etc.

How many doomed marriages begin with a surprise pregnancy and end with a predictable divorce?" asks Jessica Braz. "How many parental alienation cases start as baby-out-of-wedlock situations? How many abortions are the result of simply not understanding the basics around single parenting? It's all such a shame and so preventable with just a little education."

"This book would have saved me over \$150,000 in legal fees and countless nights of lost sleep if I had read it when my first child was born," says Jim Braz..

Media Kit: <https://www.babyoutofwedlock.com/media>

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## **Q & A with Jim & Jessica Braz**



**1. What inspired the two of you to co-author the book *Baby Out Of Wedlock* and start a website with free consulting services?**

About ten years ago, we were each involved in surprise pregnancies with people we did not want to marry. We both made many mistakes that ended up costing tens of thousands in legal fees and unbearable stress. It wasn't easy to find answers to our basic questions, such as when to get a paternity test or when overnight visits should begin. Seeing the unmet need and remembering how much we struggled, we were inspired to write a guidebook that answered all the questions we had back then. Our primary objective is to help readers reduce their legal fees and achieve better co-parenting relationships. The website lets readers ask follow-up questions or learn more about us before buying the book.

**2. Do the lessons in your book apply more to men or women?**

We made every effort to make our book gender-neutral, meaning we always try to present both sides of the issues. In fact, we have had readers tell us the most valuable thing they learned was to see the situation from the other parent's point of view. That is precisely what we are shooting for. If parents start to understand the other side's concerns, they are well on their way to a peaceful co-parenting solution. Parents will see the most benefit from our book if they can get their co-parent to read it too; that's how the biggest synergies start to accrue.

**3. Did abortion or adoption occur to either of you? Did you consider marriage?**

Everyone considers all the options, even if they don't admit it. It's the woman's choice if she will keep the baby, not the man's. But if she is going to give the child up for adoption, the father will likely have the right of first refusal. Jim's ex and Jessica both decided almost immediately to keep their babies, but everyone's situation is different. Our book reviews the pros and cons of each choice, including the possibility of marrying a person you are not in love with just because a baby is on the way. We hope our book can give women considering abortion the confidence to choose life once they see that the situation is not as overwhelming as they may have thought at first.

**4. Why is having babies out of wedlock – 40% of all babies – so common and on the rise?**

Seventy-plus years ago, many people married out of necessity, even though some of these households felt more like prisons. Since then, the divorce rate has crept up to about 50%. Generations have learned by experience to avoid bad marriages like the plague. Many people feel the disappearance of the traditional family unit is to blame for all societies' problems. Children in single-parent homes indeed score worse than children in conventional families on many metrics. But, the comparison is unfair because it's hard to measure what would have happened to those single-parent homes if they had chosen to begin bad marriages instead of staying single. Said differently, kids do better in two healthy homes rather than one high-conflict home.

**5. What can be done while the woman is still pregnant to ensure a more smooth transition to co-parenting after birth?**

We try to make fathers aware of all the challenges new mothers are going through and encourage them to cut moms some slack. Morning sickness, a changing body, hormones, painful birth, postpartum depression, breastfeeding are examples of challenges that dads may not appreciate, to name a few. Maternity leave and judgmental friends/family are also harder on the women. Dads are smart to stand by and be as supportive and non-confrontational as possible during the pregnancy and as helpful as possible after the birth. Arguing over all the "what-ifs" during the pregnancy is a mistake.

**6. What did each of your custody battles teach you?**

Our battles taught us many to-do and not-to-dos that are easy to learn from. Jessica's custody battle lasted about one year, which is typical, but soon afterward, they buried the hatchet and figured out how to work together. They are the success story in our book, the example of what can go right if you play your cards well. On the other hand, Jim's custody battle is an example of how bad it can get if you let it spiral out of control. It dragged on for about five years, four different litigations, over \$160,000 in legal fees, and still to this day, they only barely function as co-parents.

**7. What types of mistakes do millions of unmarried parents commonly make?**

Each argument takes the parents a step further apart and deepens the custody battle entrenched mentality. We both started friendly with our exes, but by the time the birth rolled around, we were not on speaking terms due to unnecessary arguments over issues like paternity tests, overnight visits, decision-making rights, religion, schooling, etc. These issues are unnecessary to solve during the pregnancy, and many have clear answers and therefore never need to be fought over at all. Other simple mistakes include choosing the wrong attorney, writing a lousy parenting plan, or writing a plan that lacks an effective dispute resolution mechanism. Day-to-day, parents tend to get into text message and email "wars" that are not constructive. There are tools available that can make co-parenting simple if you know what they are.

**8. What issues are the hardest to navigate – paternity, child support, visitation rights?**

Paternity is relatively simple – one side asks the court for a paternity test, and that's all there is to it. Child support can get complicated because it's not just about how much the baby costs and what percentage of time the baby is with each parent. The calculation is primarily based on relative incomes, with the idea that the child should have a somewhat similar standard of living with each parent. Performing the calculation can be difficult if one parent has irregular or fluctuating income or works in a "cash" business where it is easy to hide income. Visitation can be difficult if you have a parent who does not trust the other parent to be alone with the child for various reasons – some are legitimate concerns, some are not.

**9. Doesn't every state have different family laws, rules, guidelines, etc.? How can your advice be useful if every state is different?**

We have real-world custody law experience in several states, but we are not experts on the details, and you don't need to be either. The important thing is that the reader learns the general issues and which ones need to be discussed in detail with their attorney. You don't want to spend hundreds per hour learning the basics from a lawyer. We make sure to point out every issue that varies from state to state and remind the reader to check with their attorney for the nitty-gritty where appropriate.

**10. Legal fees can be astronomical, and the experience leaves both parents feeling like mortal enemies. Is there a better way to approach custody matters?**

Watch a documentary called "Divorce Corp" if you don't believe the family law system is totally broken. I ended up spending over \$160k over five years, but most of that was avoidable if I had been better informed. Still, most people will want/need to use an attorney. The trick is to understand the basics, understand the other parent's point of view, understand what is reasonable to ask for, and then have a discussion with your co-parent about it. Ideally, you can agree on broad issues like visitation and then have the attorneys hammer out the details and formalize the documents at a minimal cost. Our book helps you avoid a long, protracted legal battle involving an expensive discovery (evidence gathering) phase or, worse, a custody trial.

**11. It seems that so many issues arise due to a clash in communications. What practical methods for resolving disputes and high-conflict situations do you teach?**

If you are in high conflict like Jim was, we recommend you seek help from professionals specializing in this world. Just listening to a good podcast series from a professional trained in this arena is a worthwhile first step. All co-parents should use a parenting app like *Our Family Wizard*, but especially those in high-conflict situations. If you funnel all your communication through these apps, there are huge benefits. We also recommend every new co-parent sign up for a parenting coordinator, a sort of binding mediator that you can call on to help resolve disputes constructively. For genuinely high-conflict co-parents that cannot even be in the same room together, we also recommend adopting a "parallel parenting" approach.

**12. Unlike divorce, sometimes parents in paternity cases don't know each other very well; it could have even been a one-night stand. How do co-parent with a virtual stranger?**

Well, that's the million-dollar question. You can do it the hard way, like Jim: four trips back to court with nothing to show for it except big legal bills. Or you can follow some of the practical advice we offer about parenting plans, dispute resolution, and communication tools, which will all lead to better outcomes. The most powerful tool you can employ is to immediately sign up for a parenting coordinator for a length of time, usually 12 or 24 months. Don't wait for the relationship to turn nasty to ask for one. Get it going from the start, and it will make a world of difference during those first few "getting to know you" years of co-parenting and beyond.

**13. What exactly do parenting coordinators do?**

Parenting coordinators are essential for avoiding expensive trips back to the court system. It's usually a voluntary arrangement where both parents agree to let the PC be their binding mediator for the next 12 or 24 months. When a dispute arises, and they always do, rather than a worthless screaming match or worse, an escalation into more litigation, instead the parents meet with their PC, who hears both sides of the story and attempts to help the parties find a way to compromise for the good of the child. If the parties cannot agree on a compromise, the PC will eventually. There is no downside; you won't need to use your parenting coordinator if you never have anything to argue about.

**14. You help people to create a legal parenting plan that functions well. What does that mean?**

Every custody litigation will end with a legal document called a parenting plan. It spells out everything from the visitation schedule to financial concerns to dispute resolution mechanisms. Plans range from very generalized ("we agree to share holidays equally") to very specific ("Mother gets the child on July 4<sup>th</sup> on odd-numbered years from 6pm to 6pm"). The more likely you are to argue with your co-parent, the more detailed a plan you want/need. The LAST thing you want is to end up in a trial where a judge pulls out his "off the shelf" parenting plan and fills your names in. This plan will not be customized to your needs, and it will not be specific enough, leaving you with endless issues to argue over in the future.

**15. Are there organizations interested in this book, or is it more for individuals?**

We wrote it with the individual in mind, thinking back to all the concerns we had when we lived through this. And we have had many individuals tell us how helpful, even life-changing, it has been. But over time, we learned that pregnancy centers are using the book as a tool to help some women considering abortion gain the confidence they need to choose life, so we are starting to market it to larger pro-life organizations also. A coach in Arizona is turning the book into a course for her OB-GYN friend to use at her community clinic. Father rights groups say the men they work with just need the guidance we provide to step up and be there for their children. Even parental alienation experts tell us this book can prevent alienation before it begins.



**16. How do different parenting styles clash or complement each other?**

Remember, any potential benefits from a particular parenting style you employ will be totally overshadowed if it creates conflict between co-parents. Jim's ex decided early on to dive into "attachment parenting," which requires mother and child to be in constant contact, breastfeeding exclusively, and co-sleeping in the same bed. It preaches that mothers should never let their infant cry for more than a moment and that long periods away from mom will "traumatize" the child. This is controversial advice, to say the least, and it certainly doesn't work well for a co-parenting situation.

**17. Jim, are fathers treated unfairly regarding visitation access to a child out of wedlock? What do you make of The Fathers' Rights Movement ([www.TFRM.org](http://www.TFRM.org))?**

Yes, fathers have been treated unfairly by the outdated laws, and TFRM is fighting for the presumption of 50/50 shared parenting time. There could be reasons for less than 50/50, such as a long-distance or substance abuse problem. But 50/50 should be the default starting position unless there is reason to alter it. The evidence overwhelmingly favors children who have nearly equal access to both parents, even if they are not under the same roof. But there is more at stake than fairness. It's about removing the reasons to spend thousands in family court. Something like 80% of the court cases would disappear, and outcomes would improve drastically. There is empirical evidence in Kentucky where they have changed the law to presume 50/50 and seen great results.

**18. Jessica, what do you think the government can do better to assist the needs of first-time, out-of-wedlock moms, especially as it relates to education, jobs, or healthcare assistance?**

Well, the presumption of 50/50 shared time would benefit mothers too. I don't know how I would have survived those early years with my son if my mother wasn't around to help. If his dad had had him 50% of the time, that would have lessened my burden, allowing more time to work, study, etc. More money and grants for healthcare and education don't hurt, but at the end of the day, single mothers (and their kids) need reduced co-parent conflict and more time with both parents, both outcomes that a change to 50/50 presumption would bring about.

**19. Is there ever a situation where the child is better off being raised by co-parents in different homes rather than by married parents, under one roof?**

Our own experience, as well as the opinions from therapists and researchers we know, are that it's ALWAYS better for a child to be in two conflict-free homes rather than one high-conflict home. And since 50% of all marriages end in divorce, so you have to factor that in. So yes, we think it is often a better outcome for the child to be in different homes.

**20. What do many co-parents clash over when it comes to child-rearing? Is it over schooling, discipline, house rules, the role of stepparents, or something else?**

Our book focuses on the issues that arise in the early years, such as breastfeeding infants. Transitions and holiday schedules always cause problems. Overnight visits are probably the

number one issue that new parents clash over. Moms are often hesitant, and sometimes with good reason, to allow an overnight visit with dad early on. In our experience, the courts are likely to allow overnight visits away from mom by age one year at the latest. But it can take a year for litigation to work through the courts. So our advice is don't fight over this issue, instead, avoid the battle and agree to start overnight visits around age one year or even sooner if mom is comfortable with it.

**21. What is the initial advice or words of encouragement you would give to someone who learns they are having a baby with someone they don't want to marry?**

We would say that 40% of babies born in the USA are unmarried parents, so you are not alone by a long stretch. The most important thing for your child is regular interaction with two parents who are cooperative and respectful to each other. If you start that way from day one, your child will never know anything different, and you may be avoiding a painful divorce or parental alienation situation down the road. You can do this; we can help show you how.



## **Stats & Facts**

### **About 4 in 10 Babies Are Born to Unmarried Parents**

Recent estimates show that about 40 percent of births in the United States occur outside of marriage, up from 28 percent in 1990. Forty percent was about 1.5 million births in 2019. For mothers under the age of 30 years old, the figure is about 50%. (<https://bit.ly/CDCBOOW>).

### **Divorce Rate**

About 50% of all marriages in the USA end in divorce. In 2019 there were about 800,000 divorces in the country. Therefore, almost double the number of babies are born out of wedlock each year (1.5m) compared to divorces, yet no other books are dedicated to these parents.

### **Abortion Rate**

In 2018, 619,591 legal induced abortions were reported to CDC from 49 reporting areas. About 85% of abortions involve unmarried mothers. (<https://bit.ly/BOOWAbortion>).

### **Births Out of Wedlock By Race**

In 2016, 28% of all births to non-Hispanic white women occurred outside of marriage, up from 15% of births in 1990. In 2016, 52% of all births to Hispanic women occurred outside of marriage, up from 34% in 1990. For non-Hispanic black women between 1990 and 2016, from 63 to 69%.

### **Highest, Lowest Rate States For Births Out of Wedlock**

New Mexico, Louisiana, and Mississippi are the only states where more than 50% of all babies born are out-of-wedlock parents. Idaho, Colorado, and Utah are the only states below 30%.

### **Rate Of Marriage At All-Time Low**

From 1982 to 2009, marriage rates fell steadily and then hovered around 6.8 to 7 per 1,000 through 2017. In 2018, the rate fell to 6.5 – the lowest level recorded since 1867.

### **People are Getting Married At An Older Age**

Women and men are marrying at increasingly older ages, on average (U.S. census Bureau, 2017). Women's median age at marriage was 27.4 years in 2016, up from 23.9 in 1990.

### **Moms Make Up Most Custodial Parents**

The United States Census Bureau child custody statistics from 2018 show that about 4 in every 5 of the 12.9 million custodial parents in the United States were mothers. It's a slight decline compared to the statistics from 2014, where 82.5% (5 of every 6) custodial parents were mothers.

### **Unwed Fathers**

Unlike custodial mothers, only 29.3% of custodial fathers were never married, according to the child-custody facts published by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2020. The percentage of custodial fathers who were divorced was 39.1%, higher than that of the mothers, while the proportions of custodial fathers who were currently married, separated, and widowed were 18.5%, 11.4%, and 1.8%, respectively.

## **Selected Excerpts From** ***Baby Out of Wedlock***

### **What Makes Us Experts?**

Why us? It's true my wife, Jessica, and I are not experts. We don't have PhD's in family or childhood development. We are not lawyers or therapists. If you want that kind of academic advice, there are probably better books out there. However, if you want real-world information that gets results and works, this is the book for you. My wife and I wrote this book because about ten years ago, before we were a couple, we both lived through the same situation you are going through right now. I had a daughter, and Jessica had a son, with other people we did not want to marry. We made a lot of mistakes back then. We learned from those mistakes, and we want to share what we learned with you. We remember all the questions we had back then and how hard it was to get straight answers.

### **It's Harder On The Woman**

It's important to emphasize to the male readers that whatever stress and anxiety they are feeling, the mother is feeling about ten times that amount. Maybe a hundred times. After all, it's the mother who could be experiencing morning sickness, sometimes making it impossible to get through the workday. It's the mother whose body will soon be drastically changing shape and whose hormones might be spiking and crashing like a rollercoaster. It's the mother who must navigate judgmental friends, family, and employers, more so than the fathers. It's the mother who will be going on maternity leave, putting her career on hold for at least three months, whether she likes it or not.

### **Parenting Styles**

If you have to choose between your preferred parenting style and a healthy co-parenting relationship, the co-parenting relationship should take priority. In other words, having a dysfunctional co-parenting relationship is likely to negatively impact your child more than a perfect parenting style will help them.

### **High Conflict Situations**

By some estimates, around 30% of all divorce cases fit into the "high-conflict" label, and we imagine the number is similar for baby-out-of-wedlock situations like yours. Endless lawsuits, badmouthing each other to the child, and withholding visitation or money are typical in these situations. Sooner or later, the child realizes what's going on. They tend to side with the healthier parent in the end, but years can go by in this horrible state if it's not dealt with effectively. If you think your relationship might fall into this high-conflict bucket, we are sorry to say you have a hard road ahead. Most of this book will still apply to you, but some of our advice will need to be tweaked for the high-conflict situation you are in.

### **You Need a Family Law Attorney**

Paying an attorney sucks, but it's usually smarter than not paying one. You need their expertise, but if you want to keep your bills down, you have to keep your questions concise, which you are learning to do by reading this book.

### **Overnight Visitation Norms**

Again, correctly managing your expectations will be the difference between an expensive court battle and a seamless transition. The first component to consider is simply the child's age. A newborn baby will not have unsupervised or overnight visits with their father in the first few months unless the mother wants it to happen. After all, it will take several months after the birth to get the first court hearing, so the earliest a father could even think about forcing overnight visits is somewhere around six months but probably closer to twelve months old. At six months, infants can begin to sample solid foods. Although they will still rely heavily on breast milk or formula for nourishment, the argument that they must remain with their mother to nurse doesn't hold much water after six months of age.

### **Why Use a Parenting Coordinator**

With a parenting coordinator arrangement, you agree to participate in regular meditation sessions, perhaps weekly or monthly, or maybe only "as needed." In these meditation sessions, you and your co-parent hash out your disagreements in a constructive way. The parenting coordinator (I'll call him/her the P.C. from now on) has the ultimate legal authority to settle any disputes, but this is the last thing she wants to do. She aims to help the two of you compromise on your differences. She will intervene with a "must follow" proclamation that has the weight of the law behind it only if there is a situation that endangers the child or if the discussion hits a wall and the two parties are at an impasse over a particular topic, such as where to meet for transitions or how to share holiday time.

### **Holiday Schedules**

Holidays are described next in our custody provisions document. We didn't do a great job designing a holiday schedule, as you will see at the end of this chapter. It can be trickier than you think because some holidays are fixed—Martin Luther King Day is always the third Monday in January, while others float, like July 4th and Christmas. Typically, you alternate holidays from year to year. But what if Dad's MLK Monday holiday falls adjacent to Mom's weekend? You don't want your child to spend all weekend with Mom and then Monday with Dad; you want to keep the long holiday weekend intact. Otherwise, the holiday loses its value.

### **Child Support Calculations**

You might be asking, like I was, "Surely babies don't cost two thousand dollars a month?" True. But the calculation is not based on what they cost. Child support calculations are primarily based on one parent's income relative to the other parent's income. Let us say that again, so it sinks in: what counts the most is your income, not the child's expenses. Before we go further, we must explain that every state has a different formula for child support calculation.

### **Transitioning The Child From Parent To Parent**

If you live near your co-parent, transitioning your child from one home to another should not be too much of an issue, but here are a few tips. First, find a routine that is your default routine so you don't need to discuss it each visit. Maybe Dad picks the child up every Friday night from Mom's house, and Mom picks up from Dad's place on Sundays. We recommend having the parent who is receiving the child do the picking up because this will encourage punctuality.

## Testimonials

"I highly recommend Baby Out of Wedlock to anyone who wants to learn the complicated dynamics of co-parenting while emphasizing the child's needs first." - **Kevin Falkenstein, Esquire, Partner of the Family Law Practice at Moustakas Nelson, LLC**

"My work focuses on what can eventually happen in a worse case situation. Unmarried parents who read *Baby Out of Wedlock* are taking a first step in the right direction." - **Ginger Gentile, Director & Producer of the documentary Erasing family and one of Maria Shriver's Architects of Change**

"In my behavioral health practice, I often see the emotional toll that custody battles have on unmarried parents and their children. *Baby Out of Wedlock* can make a difference in both parents' and their children's long-term mental health." - **Francesca Santacroce, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Owner, Serenity Behavioral Health**

"When a client is knowledgeable about the basics of family law, it makes my job easier, and everyone benefits. *Baby Out of Wedlock* is a great primer for anyone navigating the pregnancy-to-custody continuum." - **Jessica E. Smith, Family Law Attorney and Partner at JSDC Law Offices**

"Pregnancy out of wedlock can be an incredibly scary experience. This book, with its emphasis on the importance of mental health, is a great guide. It helps readers know they are not alone." - **Rachel Cohen, Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Clinical Supervisor at The Soho Center in New York City**

"*Baby Out Of Wedlock* provides answers to all the basic questions that inevitably challenge a co-parenting relationship. If both parents read this book, they can work together with less stress and anxiety while limiting the cost of lawyers." – **Andrew Keegan, Actor and Co-Parent**

"My work is all about how people get through adversity, and Baby Out Of wedlock has nailed its topic. Jim & Jessica Braz have written stories of who people need to be in order to navigate this experience. With their guidance, both parents and kids can live free of hostility, pain, and anguish." – **Bob Litwin, Performance Coach and Author of *Live the Best Story of Your Life***

"Custody battles can spiral out of control if you let them. Baby Out Of wedlock helps both parents realize that compromise is always the best way forward." – **Michael Schwartz, CFP, AEP, CEO of Magnus Financial group LLC and a Divorced Dad**

"I have been a licensed psychologist for over 25 years, specializing in relationship and parenting issues, and I have known Jim and Jessica for over a decade. Their experience is real and their advice is practical. I highly recommend *Baby Out of Wedlock* to anyone who finds themselves in this situation." – **Lenore Perrott, MS, Psychologist**

"I highly recommend *Baby Out of Wedlock* for anyone looking for honest, fair, and real-life experience during the stressful time from pregnancy to custody and beyond. It is an excellent resource as it places the child's best interest paramount while working toward the all-important co-parenting relationship." – **Patricia A. Cummings, LCSWC, Maryland Court Certified Parenting Coordinator**

"A great book that will clearly help anyone in a similar situation." – **Patrick Donohue, US Army Pilot and Father**