

# suburban life

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**Inna Materese**, the founder of **Materese Family Law**, provides each client with the tools, information, and advocacy they need to make informed decisions for their family.

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by **Melissa D. Sullivan**  
photo by **Jody Robinson**



# Taming the Chaos

**Inna Materese, the founder of Materese Family Law, provides each client with the tools, information, and advocacy they need to make informed decisions for their family.**

**INNA MATERESE HAS SOME ADVICE FOR ANY WOMAN WHO IS ABOUT TO EMBARK ON A SIGNIFICANT ENDEAVOR, WHETHER IT INVOLVES THE CREATION OF A BUSINESS, A FAMILY MATTER, OR A PERSONAL JOURNEY: EVERY DAY, TAKE ONE STEP FORWARD IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.**

"I think women can carry a lot of self-doubt," says Materese. "But what you don't know, you can learn, and what you're not an expert in ... well, you can find those experts who can help you along the way. You can, actually, do it."

Having taken her own advice, Materese is now celebrating her one-year anniversary as partner and founder of Materese Family Law. Her firm provides experienced legal representation in all family law matters, including high-asset divorce and complex custody and support issues, for clients in Montgomery, Bucks, Chester, and Philadelphia counties.

"It's been my sole area of practice for over 10 years," says Materese, who has been recognized as a Super Lawyer in 2023, a four-time Super Lawyer Rising Star, and Best Lawyers One to Watch. "I've never done anything else."

Building a successful legal practice did not happen overnight. Materese and her family emigrated from Ukraine to the Miami area when she was six. She made her way to Philadelphia after being accepted to Temple

University's James E. Beasley School of Law. Materese recalls the change being a culture shock, but a welcome one.

"I never felt like I was a 'Florida' person," says Materese with a laugh. "Then, I came to Philly, and someone gave me the side eye on SEPTA, and I thought to myself: *Now I feel at home*. The Greater Philadelphia area is my adopted forever home."

Materese wasn't immediately drawn to family law. She found the practice of family law quite by accident during law school, but she quickly learned that she had found her calling.

"Family law has to do with the most fundamental part of everyone's life," says Materese. "I found it absolutely compelling and rewarding, and endlessly interesting."

After 10 years in practice, Materese began to consider what ultimate path her career would take. She spent many evenings joking with her husband about what she would do if she ran the world ... or at least a firm of her own. He encouraged her to dream big.

"He was the first one to see that I could do this," she adds. "He had the confidence in me that I perhaps didn't see it myself at the time."

## Navigating Uncharted Waters

Many of Materese's clients have a fear of the unknown, whether it involves a divorce or a support or custody issue. To help manage that fear, Materese encourages her clients to think strategically through each step. "By taking the something overwhelming in small, bite-sized pieces, we can take a little bit of the chaos out of the situation," she says.

In trying to tackle these difficult situations, clients often struggle to balance short-term

goals with long-term needs. Understanding and preserving one's financial health is a prime example of a family law struggle inherent in nearly every divorce. Many clients, Materese finds, are not well versed on issues relating to personal finances and money matters, often to their family law detriment. The resulting knowledge gap can prevent clients from thinking clearly about their long-term financial health. That's where Materese comes in.

"Helping clients navigate pitfalls in this process is particularly important to me," she says. "For example, clients often have very strong, emotional, sentimental attachment to their family home. But that home was usually purchased and maintained on either a two-income household or an income level that's no longer available to them as a divorced couple. Continuing to live in and maintain that home is something that's not always feasible, even if my client wants this asset in their divorce. This is where creative but practical advice comes in. We will, of course, advocate for our clients' wants, but their needs are non-negotiable."

To help clients navigate these decisions, Materese will often connect clients with financial advisors, therapists, and other professionals who can help. This collaborative approach empowers clients to think strategically.

"It's not my job to make choices for my client," she adds. "It's my job to give them all of the tools, information, and advocacy they need to make good, educated choices for their own family."

Going forward, Materese plans to provide high-quality, holistic approaches to her clients' legal issues and to do so on a personal, grounded level. She also intends to continue giving back to the legal community through her service to the Family Law Section of the Montgomery Bar Association, which she currently serves as secretary, and the Pennsylvania Bar Association Family Law Section, which she serves as Membership Committee Co-chair.

"I want each of my clients to feel supported, and that they're not just a buoy out at sea at the hardest time of their lives," she says. "My goal is to build a blueprint for future success by taming the chaos they are feeling, giving my clients the tools to envision a path forward, and providing them more control over their own life. That to me is a win." ■

## Materese Family Law

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