

## Tips to Consider Before Starting a Divorce



If your relationship has been spiraling downward for some time and you feel you may be headed towards a divorce, please take some time to consider these thoughts.

- Have you exhausted all options to stay married such as honest discussions, a vacation and/or counseling? Make sure this is what you really want. Even under the best of circumstances, divorce is challenging, to say the least.
- If you have considered all of your possibilities and decide to go forward with a marital dissolution don't go it alone. Make sure your support base is there for you and that they are prepared to be good listeners. Lawyers are expensive and using them as therapists can be costly.
- Communicating with your spouse can be challenging at times. Hopefully you will be able to talk about the process amicably, but even if the situation is cantankerous, strive to address as many issues as possible as this will minimize stress and save you money and time with lawyers.
- Children should always come first. Regardless of your personal feelings towards each other, spouses should avoid placing children into difficult situations such as having them choose sides or feel responsible for problems. Although discussing the details of issues involving children can be challenging, this is the time to try and set aside emotions as much as possible. Your children need to feel safe and know they are still loved. It is important to communicate to them that they have nothing to do with the adult issues and that both parents love them and will always be there for them.
- Realize that you are not going to get everything you ask for and strive to avoid getting bogged down in minutia. Focus on what matters most and understand that the "system" is not set up to be your interpretation of what is fair or for you to get "justice". Fighting can impact your health, your job, and most importantly, negatively impact your children.
- Educate yourself about the divorce process. Be careful to whom you listen. There are many complexities in marital dissolutions or separations. Getting advice from your friends and family is typically not a good strategy. While they can be a great support system for listening and caring they are typically not objective nor do they know the law.
- Take time to research what the process entails and devise a course of action. This should include developing a clear understanding of your financial picture. Gather bank statements, mortgage information, retirement documents and any other holdings. Knowing the complete story of your assets is an important aspect of educating yourself.
- If after careful reflection and if you feel you've tried to sort out your relationship to no avail, find a lawyer or law firm that aligns with your values. Selecting an attorney is a very personal situation. And while you may have a friend who was pleased with their attorney, that same lawyer might not work for you. Look for someone who is a good negotiator who will help you put a plan together that works for your goals and budget.

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