

5 Steps To A Successful Divorce



THE LAW OFFICE OF
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Divorce & Family Law

Most people don't associate the words "divorce" and "success" with one another. The ending of a marriage can be difficult, emotional, and stressful for both parties.

Sometimes people describe the end of a marriage as a failure, but that is far from the truth. Though divorce is difficult, it can actually be the start of a new beginning.

With the right legal team on your side, you can face the challenges of a divorce with confidence, knowing that you aren't going through this difficult process alone. When you call us, you can rest assured that you'll be represented by someone with the knowledge and experience to help you make it through this trying time successfully. With this helpful guide, we believe you will be thriving and ready to welcome the new chapters ahead.

01

Are You Really Ready?

Divorce is often a word that can be thrown out in anger or in the midst of an emotional argument. If you find yourself in this situation, it's important to take a step back and ask if you're truly ready for the process you're about to begin.

Some couples begin divorce assuming they should get it over with as quickly as possible. However, rushing into divorce and attempting to hurry through can cause more stress. To avoid unnecessary worry, it's important to ensure that you're ready – emotionally, financially, and mentally.

EMOTIONALLY

If you're strongly considering divorce, chances are you're already on a rollercoaster of emotions. This is normal. It's important to be certain that you aren't allowing those emotions to control your actions. You owe it to yourself, to your spouse, and to your family to take a thorough emotional inventory to understand how and why you feel the way you do and to determine what's the best path forward.

Take a step back and look at your emotional situation. Is this a decision that you're making out of anger? Would you consider waiting a little bit to see if your feelings change? Doing so will help you have confidence in your choices and greater peace throughout the divorce process, if that is what you choose.

In addition to taking the time to think through your emotions, have you talked through your feelings with a qualified therapist or attempted couples counseling? Marriage counseling, when attended regularly, can be extremely beneficial for both spouses, and for providing much-needed clarity that is often difficult to obtain when you're in the middle of an emotional situation. Every relationship will have its ups and downs, and sometimes a marriage that could be saved and make both partners happy in the long run ends up falling apart simply because of a lack of communication. Having an objective professional marriage counselor to talk to can help you see things differently.

In some cases, divorce is the best path when a marriage is broken beyond repair. Even in these cases, however, a counselor can help you work through your emotions about the divorce process itself, and about how life might look after a divorce. Committing to marriage counseling with sincerity, and putting forth a genuine effort is important – regardless of where your path leads.

If you have thoroughly assessed your emotions and your situation, and you're certain that divorce is the right step for you and your spouse, then perhaps it is exactly the fresh start that you need. Ensuring emotional readiness for whatever path you choose will ultimately help you to prevent and understand power struggles, to rationally assess all of your options, and to make the right choices at the right time.

*Take a step back and
a good look at your
emotional situation.*

*Is this a decision
that you're making
out of anger, but
might later regret?*

FINANCIALLY

Divorce can be costly and not only because of legal fees. Couples beginning the divorce process often do so before thinking through the implications of making the shift from two incomes to one. Most married couples share bills – mortgage and utility payments, home maintenance, car payments, groceries, and all sorts of other expenses. Upon divorce, there will still be a shift in the standard of living for most people as they try to adjust from sharing the bills to paying them from one income.

It's important to assess your financial situation before moving forward. Take the time you need to think about your lifestyle, your expenses, and your financial goals for the future. Thinking these matters through ahead of time can save you a good deal of stress and difficulty in the long run.



MENTALLY

Even if you feel that you're emotionally and financially prepared for the divorce process and all that comes with it, this will do you little good if you've failed to plan ahead mentally for the effects of a divorce and how life will look afterward. If you have children, you'll need to plan for custody issues – what potential arrangements might work best for your family? Where will the children go to school? Will the children be able to remain in the primary residence, or, if you're no longer able to afford that home, have you found a suitable alternative? What about sharing other responsibilities for the children?

Do you and your spouse own a business or are you involved in some other investment venture together? How will those things proceed during and after your divorce? Will you both remain in the same general geographic area, or might one of you move away? All of these factors, and many more, are important to consider.

Planning ahead and being prepared – physically, mentally, and emotionally – will help ensure that your divorce process moves along as smoothly as possible, if it's the right choice for you.

02

Assess Your Financial Situation

Being financially prepared for the divorce process is another vital step. It's not only the process itself that can be costly, but also the significant shift in life circumstances as you move from two incomes to one.

TRACK YOUR BUDGET

As soon as you've decided that divorce is the right decision for you, it's wise to begin tracking your household income and expenses. It will be important to look carefully at income, assets, and debts, and to make careful documentation accordingly. When considering a move of this nature, you'll need to gather all of your important financial information, not only to determine how much you will be able to afford for a second residence, including all related bills and utilities, but also to estimate how much you'll likely be required to pay in alimony, child support, and other life expenses in addition to funding a second residence.

As you begin thinking through your budget, you should consider all regular expenses – routine bills, utility payments, medical and insurance bills, tuition payments, child care fees, home maintenance expenses, activity fees, and anything else you regularly spend money on. It can also be helpful to track non-routine expenses, such as vacations, home repairs, gift-giving, charitable contributions. These expenses can be significant

throughout the year, even though they might not recur on a monthly basis.

This will help you envision and plan for a post-divorce budget, and can be helpful for your attorney and the judge assigned to your case to determine the most appropriate way to split assets and debts, and to determine support amounts.

GATHER IMPORTANT FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

This can definitely be a tedious process, but it's necessary. As you prepare for divorce proceedings, you'll need to gather important information. Such documentation may include, but certainly isn't limited to:

- All information pertaining to investment accounts, stocks, and bonds
- Information pertaining to pension and retirement accounts
- Credit card account statements
- Information pertaining to any outstanding vehicle loans
- Information pertaining to vehicle titles, registration, and insurance
- Information concerning any outstanding mortgages
- All land and property titles, deeds of trust or land contracts
- Information pertaining to any insurance policies including beneficiaries
- Pay stubs for both spouses
- Tax returns for at least the prior two years
- Information pertaining to any outstanding debts
- Social security statements
- Any and all pertinent business records including inventory records, account balances, balance sheets and other pertinent information

Having all of these documents organized and ready will help make the financial determinations and decisions in a legal proceeding less complicated and time-consuming.



REFRAIN FROM SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL SPENDING

When you're preparing for a divorce, it's not the time to buy a new boat or motorcycle or make other huge financial purchases or decisions. Dividing joint finances can be complicated, and you don't want to make it even more so. Play it safe during this time and wait before you decide to make any big purchases.

HAVE A PLAN

It's always a smart decision to come up with a financial plan for the future. This includes not only creating a budget, but also thinking about life adjustments. If you're a stay-at-home parent, for example, have you considered what options you might have for earning income post-divorce? If you have children, have you considered how you might divide or share expenses with your spouse? Consulting with a financial planner might even be a wise choice. Planning ahead is planning for success.

03

Consult an Experienced Attorney

If you've thought through your situation and assessed your financial situation in detail, and you have determined that you're ready to move forward with divorce, then your next step should be consulting an attorney with the knowledge and experience necessary to help you throughout the proceedings.

Divorce and family law can be complex and complicated, and the way certain laws apply may vary depending upon your particular life circumstances. Every person, every couple, every life situation – these are all different and unique. As a result, your divorce process will be too. Seeking counsel from an attorney who knows and understands family law in North Carolina can make understanding a complicated legal process far more manageable.

To find an attorney who is a good fit for your family, schedule a consultation. Be prepared and feel free to ask any questions that you might have about the divorce process and what you can expect. Ask about the attorney's experience and philosophy about the practice of family law. Take as much time as you need to make sure you find the attorney that's right for you.

04

Stay Civil

If you're contemplating divorce proceedings, then it goes without saying that there have been some difficulties in your relationship. You may not feel particularly warm and friendly toward your spouse. While this is understandable, it's still the best decision to attempt to be as civil as possible toward one another. As you're in the midst of the divorce process, there will be many things that need to be negotiated and decided upon, and it's best for everyone if that can be accomplished in the most civil, non-confrontational manner possible.

Though the legal system can be complex and confusing, it's ultimately structured to ensure the most fair and just outcome for all parties involved. The best way to achieve that goal and to help the proceedings move along as smoothly as possible is to treat each other as civilly as possible. Getting off-track and arguing about things that don't matter will only create additional stress for everyone, not to mention adding additional time and expense to an already expensive and time-consuming process.

Most importantly, remember that if you have children, this process is already difficult for them. Try not to add to their stress by using them against one another in the divorce process. By acting civilly and treating all parties with respect, the legal system can work as its intended to, and everyone can move forward.

05

Take Care of Yourself

Life itself is stressful. Divorce, significantly more so. During this time, it's understandable that you'll feel stressed, frustrated, and at times, overwhelmed. This is normal, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't take steps to counterbalance those feelings. Take time for you and your children to decompress, to have fun, to relax, and to focus on things you enjoy and that are important to you as a family. Staying stagnant too long in a pressure cooker of emotions is draining and harmful to everyone. Get out, have fun and make new memories. For even just a little while, take your mind off of the divorce. Everyone will feel better for it!

It's also important, if you have access to a support system of family and friends, that you lean on this trustworthy people during this time. People who care about you want to help, and you should let them. If you don't have a support network, talking to a qualified therapist – either for yourself, or your children – can be helpful.

In addition, take the necessary steps to exercise, eat healthy meals, get adequate sleep, and spend time focusing on your hobbies or other leisure activities. Be kind to yourself. You may feel that the pain and uncomfortable emotional struggles you are having will last forever, but in time, they'll subside.

CONTACT US TODAY

We are here to offer effective, compassionate, knowledgeable representation, built on a solid foundation of experience and success. Call us today and we will help you start your new beginning. We look forward to speaking with you soon.

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