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divorce guide magazine

Guidance for every step of rebuilding,
emotionally, financially, and practically.

published by Fresh Starts Registry

**10 Questions to Ask
Any Divorce Lawyer**
(The answers that actually matter)

**Trauma Bonds: Why They
Happen — And How to Break Free**

**Should You Stay
or Should You Go?**
How to tell yourself the truth

Reclaiming Desire After Divorce
A sex coach explains how to rebuild
intimacy on your own terms

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Divorce Guide Magazine

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Our Mission

At Divorce Guide Magazine, our mission is simple: to bring clarity, compassion, and community to one of life's most disorienting transitions. We believe that divorce deserves thoughtful guidance, stigma-free conversations, and accessible support. Our goal is to empower readers with knowledge, language, and perspective — so you can move through this season with confidence, dignity, and a sense of possibility. Fresh Starts exists because nobody should have to rebuild their life alone.

Disclaimer

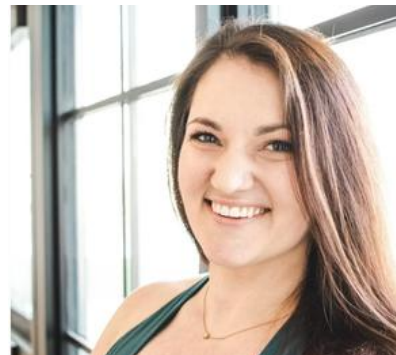
Divorce Guide Magazine is an educational and informational publication designed to support individuals navigating divorce and major life transitions. The content in this magazine is not intended to serve as legal, financial, mental health, or therapeutic advice. Nothing in these pages should be interpreted as a substitute for professional guidance from a licensed attorney, therapist, accountant, or other qualified expert.

Every divorce is unique. Readers are encouraged to seek individualized advice from professionals who understand their specific circumstances.

While we strive for accuracy and up-to-date information, laws, policies, and professional standards change, and Fresh Starts, Inc. makes no guarantees regarding the completeness or reliability of the information provided. The views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of Fresh Starts, Inc.

This magazine is created with compassion, intention, and care — but it is not a replacement for a legal strategy, a mental health plan, or personalized professional support.

For more resources, expert guidance, and community support, visit freshstartsregistry.com.





Divorce Isn't a Solo Sport

When your life is being rebuilt, redesigned, or completely reimagined...you deserve more than advice.



You deserve a team.

The Fresh Starts Expert Guide

Your curated roster of divorce-savvy pros:



Therapists. Coaches. CDFAs. Lawyers. Mediators. Realtors.

Career strategists. Parenting specialists. Healing practitioners. The people who help you stabilize, strategize, and start again. We hand-select every expert for compassion, clarity, and credibility. No guesswork. No overwhelm. No “you’ll figure it out.” Just a vetted crew who actually understands what this season feels like.



Why it matters

Because divorce is *logistical*. Because divorce is *emotional*. Because divorce is a *thousand decisions* you shouldn't have to make alone.

Because the right team turns chaos into a roadmap.



Your next chapter starts with just one click

Build your hype team. Find your people. Start your fresh start.

Browse the Expert Guide



Fresh Starts Registry

This is support. Reimagined.

You Don't Have to Navigate Divorce Alone.

Start With a Divorce Resource Consult.

Feeling overwhelmed, unsure where to begin, or drowning in Google tabs? A Divorce Resource Consult is your first calm, grounded step forward.

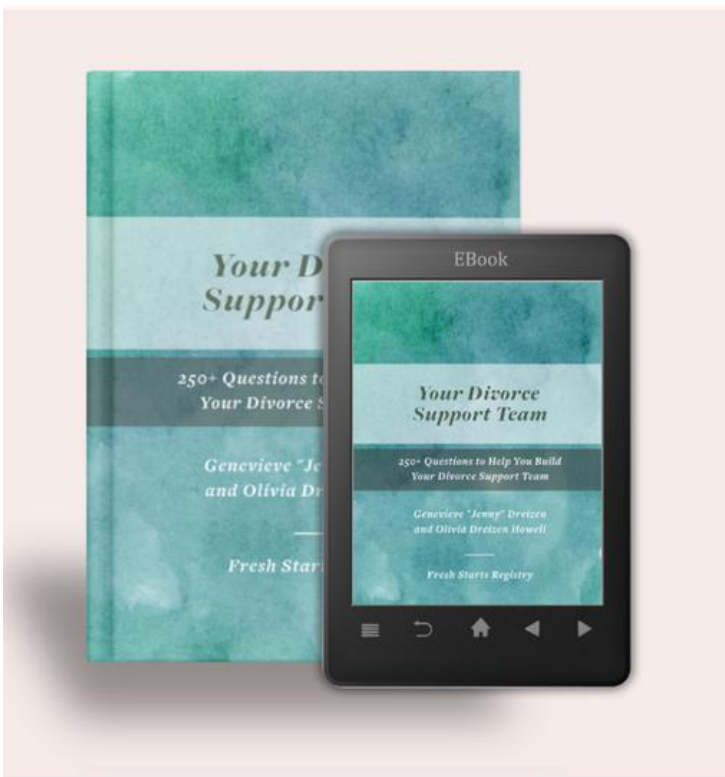
In this 15-minute conversation with Fresh Starts co-founder Olivia Howell, you'll get clarity on what you actually need, which professionals can help, and how to move through your next decisions with confidence — not chaos. No judgment. No pressure. Just clear direction and compassionate support.

We help you:

- Understand your first steps
- Find the right experts for your situation
- Build a personalized “hype team”
- Feel less alone in the process
- Your fresh start begins with one conversation

Book your FREE consult at divorceresourceconsult.com

Fresh Starts — Support You Can Feel.



Your Divorce Support Team: 250+ Questions to Help You Build Your Divorce Support Team

Your Divorce Support Team is your go-to guide for navigating divorce with clarity and confidence. Packed with 250+ essential questions and expert insights, this resource empowers you to build the right support team, protect your finances, and prioritize your emotional well-being during every step of the process.

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A Letter from Our Editors

Olivia Howell & Jenny Dreizen

This magazine is here to hold your hand through all of it. Inside, you'll find expert guidance from therapists, lawyers, coaches, and financial professionals who understand that divorce is not just paperwork—it's people. You'll read real stories from others who've walked this path, and find practical advice to help you rebuild your home, your confidence, and your life.

Whether you're just starting to consider divorce, deep in the process, or finding your way on the other side, we want you to know this: you are not alone. There is no "right" way to start over—only your way. And we are honored to walk alongside you as you do.

Here's to fresh starts, honest conversations, and the courage it takes to begin again.

With love and solidarity,

Olivia and *Jenny*

Co-Founders of Fresh Starts Registry | Editors, Divorce Guide Magazine

Divorce 101 A–Z: The Plain-Language Guide Everyone Deserves



Most divorce resources assume you already speak the language.

They're packed with legal jargon, worst-case scenarios, and advice that feels overwhelming the moment you need clarity the most. Divorce 101 A–Z was created to change that.

Divorce 101 A–Z is a 26-episode mini-series from Divorce Happens, designed to explain divorce one letter at a time—clearly, compassionately, and without fear-based tactics. Each short episode breaks down a common divorce term, concept, or experience using plain language anyone can understand. No law degree required. No panic spiral encouraged.

What makes this series different is its intention. Divorce 101 A–Z isn't trying to tell you what to do or push you toward a specific outcome. It's here to give you a starting point—whether you're in the thick of divorce, just beginning to consider it, or supporting someone you love. The goal is education, not intimidation.

You can find Divorce 101 A–Z in two ways: as part of the Divorce Happens podcast feed or as its own standalone podcast. Simply search Divorce Happens or Divorce 101 in your favorite podcast app and listen in whatever way feels easiest.

Across 26 mini-episodes, the series covers everything from emotional realities to practical terms, breaking down confusing concepts in a way that feels supportive, human, and grounded. Think of it as the “*Sesame Street*” or “*Schoolhouse Rock*” of divorce—short, approachable lessons that meet you exactly where you are.

Because divorce happens. And when it does, you deserve clear information, not more confusion. Divorce 101 A–Z exists to help you start fresh—one letter at a time.



Listen to Divorce 101!

EXPERT FEATURE

Oona Metz

Therapist

At Fresh Starts, we're proud to spotlight the incredible professionals who guide people through one of life's most challenging transitions: divorce. Today, we're featuring Oona Metz, a therapist, whose work helps clients find clarity, strength, and a true fresh start.

Oona, can you tell us a little about yourself, what you do and what led you to this line of work?

Hi! My name is Oona Metz. I'm a therapist who specializes in working with women navigating divorce and I'm the author of *Unhitched: The Essential Divorce Guide for Women*. I began my career 30 years ago, providing individual therapy for women and leading support groups for adolescents and adults. When I went through my own divorce, I realized how few support services there are for people who are navigating one of life's most challenging transitions. A seed was planted and a couple of years later, I started a weekly divorce support group for women. The group filled quickly and the members of the group made powerful and poignant connections with each other. They began the group feeling lost and devastated but over time, grew into happier, more empowered versions of themselves. I loved leading that group so I started two more and they filled quickly as well. All three of those groups are still going today, nearly 15 years later.

What inspired you to work with people going through divorce or big life transitions?

When I went through my own divorce, I wanted

to talk to others who had been through it, too. I wanted to know that I would be OK, and that my daughter would be OK as well. When I started running the divorce support groups, I was inspired by the connections that the members made with each other. Often times they came from very different backgrounds and all of their stories were unique, but what connected them was how they felt. There are so many moments of "I feel that exact same way" that happen in the group that make the members feel less alone.



photo by Sandra Costello

What is your specialty within the divorce space, and how do you typically support your clients?

I see clients individually in person in my office outside of Boston and I lead three weekly divorce support groups. My groups are confidential safe spaces for women to give and receive support regarding the emotional journey of divorce. I also train other therapists in my group model through the Beacon Group Fellowship, a program I founded in order to encourage more therapists to lead groups.

What makes your approach to working with clients unique?

I think one of the things that makes my approach unique is that I have thirty years of experience providing therapy. I also completed a five year long Certificate Program in Group Therapy. Part of the reason I am able to provide a safe space for people to open up and share their greatest fears and sorrows as well as their dreams and successes is due to my years of experience. In addition, I truly believe each person is doing the very best they can and that every unique road to marriage and divorce should be respected.

What's one thing that people are often surprised to learn about you?

When people I don't know hear that I have written a book they are often surprised that I had not published a single article before I began writing Unhitched. I have learned a tremendous amount about writing, publishing and promoting books through this process. Many women who

are navigating divorce (or any other stressor) find it difficult to read so one of the challenges I faced was writing the book in way that was accessible. I hope I accomplished that by giving readers shorter sections of text interspersed with realistic vignettes and reflective exercises. Readers of Unhitched can start at the beginning and read all the way through or start with the chapter that resonates with them the most in the moment.

Do you have a personal story or experience that helps you connect with clients on a deeper level?

I come from a long line of divorced family members. I know what it is like to be the child of divorce, to spend a childhood moving from one home to another. And, I know what it is like to get divorced, to support a child whose parents are divorcing. All of these experiences have helped me be more attuned and empathic with my clients.

I know what it is like to get divorced, to support a child whose parents are divorcing.

What's your favorite way to reset after a long day?

I take two yoga classes every week to keep me balanced. I work out with weights on the other days to keep my body strong. I love walking outside, especially in the woods. My partner is the cook in our family and I am the vegetable chopper and dish washer. I actually love washing dishes by hand. I love submerging my hands in the warm, soapy water and it gives me a sense of accomplishment when I see the empty sink.

If you could describe your work in three words, what would they be?

Trustworthy, connected, companion.

What does “fresh start” mean to you personally?

I love being part of the Fresh Starts community. Olivia and Jenny have created a group that values learning, growth, empathy, and respect. We can think of divorce as being the end--and it is the end of a marriage--but it is also a fresh start to a new family structure, a new identity and a new opportunity to thrive.

Thank you Oona for sharing your wisdom and experience with the Fresh Starts community! You can learn more about her work by checking out Oona's profile!

Oona Metz, LICSW

Able to work with clients in Massachusetts

Oona Metz, LICSW



Unhitched: The Essential Divorce Guide for Women by Oona Metz

Navigate the emotional side of divorce and emerge stronger, more confident, and ready to thrive with this essential guide for women.



Build your hype team. Find your people. Start your fresh start.

Getting Unstuck



by Lyerly Spongberg of Step Up With Lyerly, Divorce Coach

Learn more about Step Up with Lyerly

When You Know, But You're Stuck

There's a quiet moment—maybe in the middle of the night, maybe while folding laundry or sitting in your car—when you realize something has to change. You've been sitting with it for a while now. That nagging sense that something isn't right. The growing distance. The conversations that never quite land. The ache of disconnection you can't seem to shake—no matter how hard you try.

Maybe you've already said the word divorce out loud. Maybe you haven't. Maybe you're still whispering it in your mind, barely able to believe it might apply to you. You know something has to change. But you feel stuck.

Not because you're indecisive. Not because you're weak. But because it's big. It's emotional. It's complex. And once you take the first step, there's no going back. So you freeze.

You worry about the kids. About the finances. About what people will think. About whether this makes you a failure. About how you'll manage the holidays. (What would I do without my kids at Thanksgiving!) The logistics. The loneliness.

This is where so many people stay—trapped between knowing and acting. And it makes perfect sense. Because the idea of divorce isn't just about leaving a relationship. It's about stepping into the unknown. Reimagining your future. Letting go of who you were so you can make space for who you're becoming.

You may even feel guilt for wanting more—more peace, more clarity, more joy—especially if things aren't “that bad” on paper. But you don't have to justify your unhappiness.

Emotional neglect, chronic disconnection, or living in constant conflict can all quietly erode your sense of self. Wanting to feel alive in your own life again is not selfish. It's human.

And while no one else can make this decision for you, you don't have to figure it all out alone. You deserve support as you untangle your thoughts, your fears, your hopes. You deserve a space to explore what moving forward could look like without judgment or pressure. That's where coaching can be a lifeline—not to tell you what to do, but to walk beside you as you remember your own strength.

But here's what I want you to hear: Feeling stuck doesn't mean you're not ready. It means the decision matters to you. And if it matters, it deserves your attention, your care, and your own timeline.

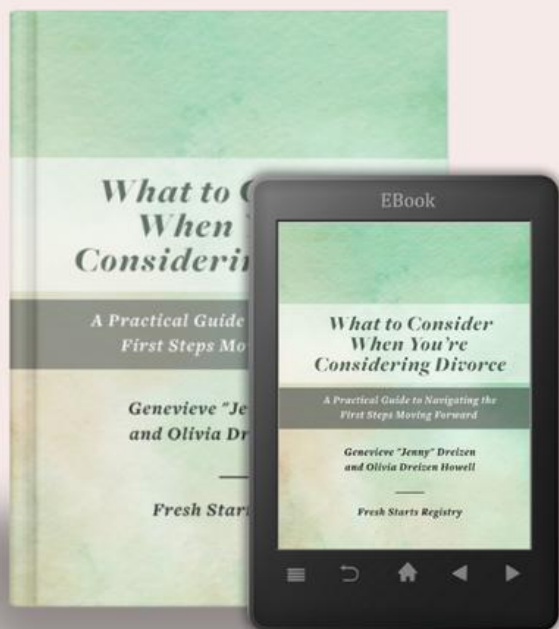
But here's what I want you to hear: Feeling stuck doesn't mean you're not ready. It means the decision matters to you. And if it matters, it deserves your attention, your care, and your own timeline.

You don't have to make a final decision today. You don't have to file paperwork tomorrow. You just have to start with one honest step:

- Tell the truth—to yourself.
- Reach out to someone safe.
- Write down what's no longer sustainable.
- Ask questions, even if you don't have answers yet.
- Give yourself permission to begin before you feel fully “ready.”

Clarity often comes through action, not before it. And every small step you take out of the fog helps you reclaim your voice, your peace, your power. This isn't just an ending. It's the beginning of a different kind of strength—the kind that comes from choosing yourself, even when the road ahead feels uncertain.

If you're feeling stuck and don't know where to begin, I'm here to help. Whether you're simply gathering information or ready to take your next step, divorce coaching can give you the clarity and confidence to move forward—at your own pace, with intention. To learn more about me, ADR Divorce Coaching, Mediation Coaching or to schedule a complimentary consult call, please visit stepupwithlyerly.com today.



What to Consider When You're Considering Divorce

Thinking about divorce? This powerful, practical guide walks you through the first steps—emotionally, legally, and financially. With expert insights on custody, alimony, assets, and more, it's your essential roadmap to clarity, confidence, and support as you consider, plan, and prepare for divorce.

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Get Your Fresh Starts Gear

10 Questions to Ask a Potential Divorce Lawyer

Divorce is a difficult and emotional process, and it is important to have an experienced and knowledgeable lawyer on your side. When interviewing potential divorce lawyers, there are a few key questions you should ask to ensure that you are getting the best possible representation. We've rounded up 10 of the top and best questions to ask a potential divorce attorney before signing any contracts and making any decisions!

What should I ask a potential divorce lawyer before working with them?

1. How long have you been practicing family law?

The length of time a lawyer has been practicing family law is an important factor to consider. You want to ensure that your lawyer has significant experience in handling divorce cases. Ask them how long they've been practicing family law, and what percentage of their cases are related to divorce. You should also ask about their success rate in handling divorce cases.

2. What is your area of expertise?

Some lawyers specialize in certain areas of family law, such as child custody, divorce mediation, or collaborative law. If you have a specific issue that you need help with, it is important to find a lawyer who has experience in that area.

3. Will you be the primary attorney on my case?

Some law firms have multiple attorneys, and it's essential to know who will be handling your case. Ask the lawyer if they will be the primary attorney on your case, or if someone else will be handling it. If someone else will be handling it, ask to meet with that attorney before signing a contract.

4. What is your fee structure?

Lawyers typically charge by the hour or on a retainer basis. It is important to understand how much you will be charged before you hire a lawyer. Ask about their hourly rate, how they bill for their services, and

what their retainer fee is. You should also ask about any additional fees that may arise during the divorce process.

5. How will you communicate with me?

It is important to find a lawyer who is responsive to your calls and emails. You should also ask how often you can expect to meet with your lawyer.

6. What is your availability?

It's crucial to know how available your lawyer will be during the divorce process. Ask about their availability and how they communicate with their clients. Do they respond promptly to emails and phone calls? Will they be available for in-person meetings if needed?

7. What is your approach to divorce?

Some lawyers take a more aggressive approach to divorce, while others prefer to negotiate a settlement. It is important to find a lawyer who is willing to work with you to achieve your goals.

8. Can you provide me with references?

Asking for references is a great way to get feedback from other clients about a lawyer's experience and representation.

9. Do you feel comfortable representing me?

It is important to feel comfortable with your lawyer and to have confidence in their ability to represent you. If you do not feel comfortable with a lawyer, it is okay to find someone else.

10. What is your experience with alternative dispute resolution options?

Ask about the lawyer's experience with alternative dispute resolution methods like mediation or collaborative divorce. Understanding their willingness to explore these options can be beneficial in achieving a more amicable resolution.

It's important to remember that...

Divorce is a difficult process, but it is important to remember that you are not alone. With the help of an experienced and knowledgeable lawyer, you can get through this difficult time and come out stronger on the other side. Don't forget to reach out to any of our divorce coaches to prepare for your meetings. We've got you!

[Download the Workbook Page](#)



[Get your Divorced AF Merch now!](#)

Trauma Bonds: What, Why, How to Heal



by Lisa Happ of Lisa Happ Coaching, Divorce Coach

Learn more about Lisa Happ Coaching

You didn't fall in love with a narcissist. You fell in love with the version of them they created just for you. At first, it was magic.

You felt seen in a way you hadn't felt in years. Like maybe, finally... someone understood you. The connection was electric. You felt chosen. Safe. Special. But over time...the high faded. The warmth turned cold. The kindness became control. You started walking on eggshells, feeling anxious in your own body. They'd pull away, and you'd spiral — ruminating, blaming yourself, craving their attention.

You knew something was wrong. You saw the red flags. But letting go felt impossible.

**You knew something was wrong.
You saw the red flags. But letting
go felt impossible.**

That's not weakness. That's a trauma bond. It works just like addiction. Because it is one.

Your brain gets flooded with dopamine in the love-bombing phase — the intense attention, the idealization, the feeling of being finally seen. Then, when they withdraw or punish you, cortisol spikes — your stress hormone — and your nervous system shifts into survival mode. You're stuck in a cycle of reward and withdrawal, soothing and shaming, hope and heartbreak. And because those chemicals are powerful, your body becomes wired to chase the high even when the cost is your peace. You go back not because you're foolish or weak... But because your nervous system is addicted to the cycle. The chaos starts to feel like home.

You wait for crumbs of affection like hits of a drug, just to relieve the unbearable tension inside you. You tell yourself, "If I can just be better, do more, stay quiet, fix it...maybe they'll come back." But the person you're trying to get back to? They never really existed. They were a mask a performance, designed to pull you in.

Here's what most people won't tell you:

You can't "just move on" from this. Because trauma bonds aren't broken with logic - they're healed through nervous system regulation, emotional safety, and support. If this feels familiar, you're not crazy. You're not alone. And no...you're not too broken. You're already healing, just by reading this.

How to Begin Healing

Step 1: *Anchor into joy.*

Think of something that lights you up inside—something that brings you peace, hope, or freedom. Maybe it's a vision for your future, a moment with your child, or simply the feeling of sunlight on your skin. Close your eyes and notice where that feeling lives in your body. Breathe into it. Let it grow.

Step 2: *Interrupt the trauma loop.*

When thoughts of your trauma bond arise—whether sadness, longing, or rumination—pause. Tell yourself, "I'm choosing to stop this thought." Then close your eyes and bring yourself back to that joyful feeling. Practice this gently, again and again. Your nervous system will start to relearn safety.

Step 3: *Use breath to regulate.*

Try this grounding breath to calm your nervous system:

- Inhale for a count of 5
- Hold for 2
- Exhale slowly for 8
- Repeat until you feel the tension ease.

You Don't Have to Do This Alone

Healing from trauma bonds takes time and support. I'm Lisa Happ, a trauma-informed divorce and narcissistic abuse recovery coach. I've had the honor of walking alongside hundreds of women as they untangle these bonds, rebuild safety in their bodies, and rediscover themselves.

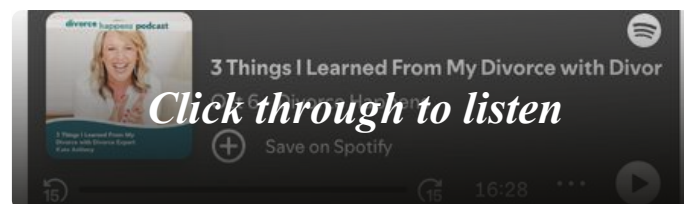
3 Things I Learned From My Divorce with Divorce Expert Kate Anthony



The end of a marriage is never just paperwork—it's an unraveling of identity, home, and history. In this deeply candid episode, we sit down with Kate Anthony, renowned divorce coach and host of The Divorce Survival Guide Podcast, to talk about what it really means to move through divorce with clarity and courage. Kate has spent over a decade guiding thousands of women through one of life's most painful transitions, bridging the gap between therapy and legal strategy. Her wisdom comes not only from professional expertise but also from her lived experience of divorce, making her voice both practical and profoundly empathetic.

Kate reminds us that divorce isn't just about separating finances or signing documents—it's also about emotional separation. She shares hard-won lessons from her own journey and those of her clients: the importance of boundaries, the pitfalls of trying to "stay best friends" with your ex too soon, and the reality that children need clarity more than they need their parents to pretend everything is fine. Through powerful anecdotes, Kate illustrates how parallel parenting can evolve into healthier co-parenting, but only after each person has taken the time to heal and individuate.

At its core, this conversation is about empowerment. Kate's insights challenge the fear of being alone, offering listeners a reframing: what if being alone is not something to dread, but a chance to rediscover who you are? She shows us that divorce can be the ultimate boundary-setting act—the moment you decide you deserve more than survival, you deserve joy. Listeners will leave this episode not just with strategies for navigating divorce, but with a sense of hope that healing, growth, and even laughter are possible on the other side.



What Is a Divorce Resource Consult—and Why It's the Best Place to Start

If you're feeling overwhelmed by divorce—or even just quietly wondering if something in your marriage isn't working—you're not alone. One of the hardest parts of divorce isn't the legal process. It's knowing where to begin.

That's exactly why Divorce Resource Consults exist. A Divorce Resource Consult is a free, 15-minute, confidential Zoom call designed to help you gain clarity and direction without pressure, judgment, or a sales pitch. Every consult is personally held by Olivia Howell, CEO and co-founder of Fresh Starts Registry, a certified life and divorce coach, clinical hypnotherapist, divorced mom, and child of divorce. Olivia speaks with hundreds—often thousands—of people each year who are navigating divorce, separation, or rebuilding afterward.



These consults are intentionally private and discreet. The word “divorce” does not appear on the calendar invite, nothing is recorded, and you don't have to be on camera. You can join from anywhere and share as much or as little as you're comfortable with.

During the call, Olivia listens, asks a few practical, shame-free questions, and helps identify what kind of support would actually be helpful for your specific situation. This might include connecting you to vetted therapists, mediators, financial professionals, divorce coaches, or support groups—many of which offer free consultations.

There is no upsell on these calls. No pressure. No obligation. If something isn't free, pricing is shared transparently. The goal is simply to educate, empower, and help you feel less alone.

Divorce isn't just a legal event—it's emotional, financial, and deeply human. A Divorce Resource Consult offers a steady place to land, a clear starting point, and reassurance that you don't have to navigate this alone.

Divorce happens. And then you start fresh.

Book Your Divorce Resource Consult Now



Here's How Working With a Sex Coach Can Help You

with

MYISHA BATTLE, SEX COACH

If you've ever wondered what role a Sex Coach plays in the divorce process, you're not alone. Today, Myisha Battle's pulling back the curtain on how their expertise can support you every step of the way.

Can you introduce yourself—your name, title, and the work you do?

My name is Myisha and I'm a clinical sexologist and dating coach. I work with clients to help them clarify what they want from intimate partnerships and get it. This includes goal-setting, holding my clients accountable, and supporting them as they explore the often fraught and taboo subject of sex. Sometimes I am the first step in my clients' long process of re-learning themselves as a single person. I help them understand past patterns that no longer serve them and help them dig deep as they envision what future sexual partnerships could look like. My practice is inclusive and I believe that everyone is entitled to the type of sex life they desire.

What drew you to this profession, and why do you specialize in divorce?

I have always been interested in sex and have developed the skill of being able to talk openly and honestly about it without judgement. This is a skill I model for my clients as they unpack shame and sex negativity that can often hold them back in their intimate partnerships. I believe that sexuality is our birthright and love the ability to work with people undergoing major life transitions. Many of my clients need support navigating dating and sex while separated or divorced, which is a particular life transition that can feel isolating. I love being a sounding board for people who are re-entering dating at a time that may look and feel very different from when they were single before.

What exactly does a Sex coach do during the divorce process?

I help my clients understand how and when they want to date while going through or post-divorce. This might include helping them craft dating profiles, using dating apps with more confidence, or building strategies for dating at a later time when their relationship with their ex is more settled. I also support those who are in new sexual relationships and struggling to communicate their needs or who recognize that they want something different from the sexual dynamic they left in their marriage. It's important to me to center my client's needs and meet them wherever they are, whether that's already dating and sex or simply wanting to talk about and explore the idea.

What are the biggest misconceptions people have about your role?

People often think that working with a sex coach will just be about the mechanics of sex. In reality,

we discuss what you think and feel about your sexuality and look at any patterns or behaviors you'd like to change in your romantic dynamics. We do get into the nuts and bolts of sex when needed, but sex coaching is so much more than that—it's a chance to prioritize yourself and your needs as a sexual person.

At what stage in divorce should someone consider working with a Sex Coach?

I'm comfortable supporting clients through any and all stages of divorce. I have worked with separated clients, and those post-divorce. I have also worked with clients who are contemplating divorce because of a sexual misalignment in the relationship. During a consultation call we can discuss this further so I can assess your unique circumstances and determine whether sex coaching is right for you at this time.

What are the top ways you help clients during divorce?

Some areas where I can help clients include: dating, understanding your sexuality, learning how to prioritize your sexual needs, navigating non-monogamy, unpacking shame, learning your sexual values, exploring the root causes of low desire, navigating peri/menopausal changes to sex, embracing gender or orientation changes, and balancing dating and co-parenting responsibilities.

How does working with you make the process less overwhelming or stressful?

My practice is very focused. We meet every two weeks for an hour via Zoom for three months, so appointments aren't overwhelming. You'll get homework assignments to do on your own between sessions. Each time we meet we'll recap how things went and discuss any new developments in your sex and/or dating life.

You'll be actively taking steps towards your goal without feeling like it's one more thing on your to-do list.

What outcomes do your clients usually experience after working with you?

The majority of my clients express that they no longer feel sexual shame and that they felt supported in a nonjudgmental way by me. Many of my clients develop valuable dating skills, learn how to navigate things like being ghosted and dating anxiety. My clients also look back on the goals they set for our work together and report that they've either achieved everything or feel like they are on the path to getting there.

What's one example of how your work has made a big difference in someone's divorce journey?

My clients learn how to date again, sometimes after several decades of being married. They learn valuable dating skills and how to be better about communicating their needs and boundaries. I've helped several divorced clients navigate casual dating in ways that align with their values. And I've helped many divorced clients find partners with whom they began long-term relationships.

What's one piece of advice you'd give someone thinking about hiring a Sex coach?

Credentials matter. Anyone can call themselves a coach, regardless of their training. I have a Masters in psychology and a sex coach certification from Sex Coach U. I have more training in the field of sexology than most doctors or therapists receive. I've also done work to understand my own biases, which is so important when working in such a changed field.

How do you collaborate with other divorce professionals to support clients?

I love collaborating with other practitioners who work with my clients. Often, my clients will have a personal therapist and others who are providing their expertise as my clients go through challenging times. The opportunities I've had to work with other professionals has been helpful for me as a practitioner and fruitful for my clients.

Thank you Myisha for sharing your wisdom and experience with the Fresh Starts community! You can learn more about their work by checking out Myisha's profile below!

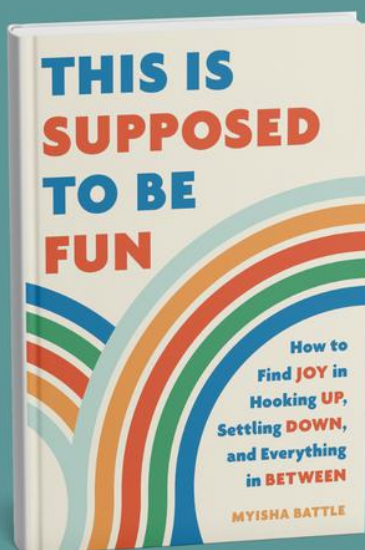


Sex for Life, LLC | Myisha Battle
Able to work with clients globally

Learn more about Sex for Life, LLC

This Is Supposed to Be Fun: How to Find Joy in Hooking Up, Settling Down, and Everything In Between by Myisha Battle

Drawing on an engaging and diverse collection of client stories, *This Is Supposed to Be Fun* is a uniquely inclusive, sex-positive guide to help you skip past the games and get what you really want out of dating and relationships—no matter what that may be. Whether you're trying to create the perfectly imperfect dating profile, stay true to your authentic self on dates, match with people interested in kink, or break up with compassion, Battle's friendly, proven advice is indispensable.



Experts, it's time to put your voice to work.

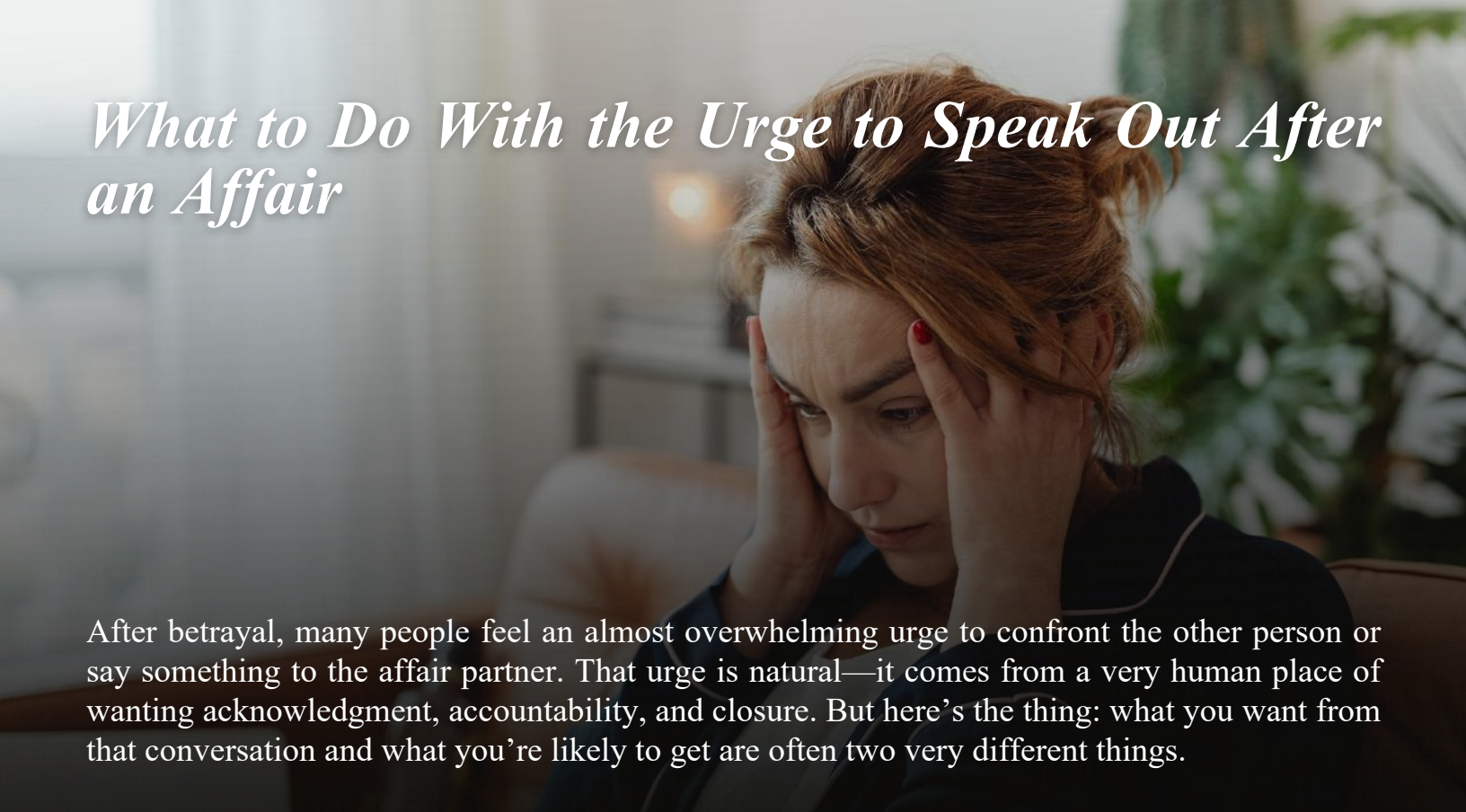
The Fresh Starts Podcast Incubator is the only podcast incubator built for **therapists, coaches, authors, and thought leaders** looking for a clear, simple path to launching a podcast that elevates their authority.

In **six months**, you'll shape your message, design a **strategic show format**, learn the **tech**, and **launch** with **confidence**—without overwhelm.

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Learn More and Grab Your Seat

If 2026 is the year your voice gets louder, this is where it starts.



What to Do With the Urge to Speak Out After an Affair

After betrayal, many people feel an almost overwhelming urge to confront the other person or say something to the affair partner. That urge is natural—it comes from a very human place of wanting acknowledgment, accountability, and closure. But here's the thing: what you want from that conversation and what you're likely to get are often two very different things.

So what do you do with that urge when it shows up? Here are some healthier, more empowering outlets that allow you to reclaim your voice without re-opening the wound.

Write It Out—But Don't Send It

Take a piece of paper or open a notes app and write exactly what you want to say. Be honest, raw, even messy. Then—don't send it. Sometimes the act of putting words down gives you the release you need without putting your healing back in their hands.

Redirect to Your People

Talk it out with a friend who understands, or a therapist who can help you process. Sometimes what you really want isn't to be heard by them—it's to be heard by someone. Giving your pain voice in a safe place is powerful.

Create a Ritual of Release

Rituals help us process grief and anger. Write a letter and burn it. Tear it up and let the pieces float away in water. Light a candle and say the words out loud to yourself, then blow it out. Turning the urge into a ritual can give your body and mind the closure they're craving.

Channel the Energy Into Creation

Anger and grief are energy—they need somewhere to go. Pour it into a run, a painting, a playlist, a long walk. Creation gives you back control, and it transforms something painful into something that belongs to you.

Journal Prompts to Try

- What do I wish they understood about my pain?
- What would closure look like if it didn't come from them?
- Where in my life can I give myself the acknowledgment I've been waiting for?
- What do I want to carry with me into my fresh start—and what do I want to leave behind?

A Gentle Reminder

You don't need their validation to heal. The urge to speak out isn't weakness—it's a sign of how deeply you've been hurt. But giving yourself other outlets honors your pain and protects your peace.

At Fresh Starts, we have therapists, coaches, and divorce experts who can help you process betrayal and rebuild in ways that feel safe and empowering.

If you're navigating the early stages of divorce, download our free ebook, [What to Consider When You're Considering Divorce](#). It's filled with checklists, scripts, and compassionate advice to help you through moments exactly like this.

Your fresh start doesn't come from them. It begins with you.

Feel Calmer and More Confident Through Divorce

A new, guided program to support you through every step

JOIN THE WAITLIST

BetterThanBeforeDivorce.com/Waitlist



How to Get Divorced as a Stay at Home Parent

If you're a stay-at-home parent ready to leave your marriage but don't know how to afford it, this guide is for you. Written with compassion and practicality, this judgment-free book walks you through the legal, emotional, and logistical steps of getting a divorce without income. Inside, you'll find checklists, scripts, budget-friendly strategies, and powerful self-care tools to help you reclaim your future—on your terms. You don't need a paycheck to take back your power. You just need a plan—and this is it.



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Download the ePub or PDF for FREE

Donna Cates

*Certified Divorce Financial Analyst®,
Chartered Retirement Planning
CounselorSM, Wealth Strategist & Founder
of Money Matters Wealth Solutions and
Navigating Divorce*

At Fresh Starts, we're proud to spotlight the incredible professionals who guide people through one of life's most challenging transitions: divorce. Today, we're featuring Donna Cates whose work helps clients find clarity, strength, and a true fresh start.

Donna, can you tell us a little about yourself, what you do and what led you to this line of work?

I'm a financial strategist, wealth builder, and certified divorce financial analyst who empowers women to take ownership of their financial lives and build long-term security. After decades in the financial industry, often being one of the few women in the room, I recognized a critical gap: women were being talked at about money, not truly educated or empowered to make decisions for themselves. I founded Money Matters Wealth Solutions and Navigating Divorce to change that.

My work is about far more than numbers; it's about helping women rewrite their money story. I teach them how to use money as a tool for freedom and confidence, not fear. My clients walk away not only with a financial plan but with a new sense of power at the financial table.



Photo by Captured Moments by Cinda, LLC

Because when women understand money, they don't just change their bank accounts; they change their futures, their families, and their legacies.

What inspired you to work with people going through divorce or big life transitions?

Divorce is one of life's most defining moments, financially, emotionally, and spiritually. I was inspired to work with women in transition because I've seen firsthand how easily financial uncertainty can deepen fear and self-doubt. But I've also seen the other side: the transformation that happens when a woman truly understands her money.

I wanted to be the guide who turns financial confusion into clarity. In the chaos of divorce, I help women pause, take a deep breath, and see their options clearly. Together, we create a roadmap that gives them control over their next chapter; one that reflects their values and vision. My mission is to help women move beyond survival and into stability, confidence, and joy. I believe every ending can become a launchpad, and every woman has the power to rise stronger, wiser, and wealthier than before.

What is your specialty within the divorce space, and how do you typically support your clients?

My specialty is "divorce financial planning" and mediation, helping clients make sound, informed decisions during one of the most complex financial times of their lives. I bridge the gap between legal strategy and economic reality, translating confusing numbers into clear, actionable insight.

Through my Divorce Financial Mastery Blueprint, I walk clients through the financial implications of each settlement option—taxes, cash flow, retirement accounts, property division, and long-term impact—so they can negotiate from a position of knowledge, not fear.

But my real specialty lies in transformation. I don't just help women understand the dollars and cents; I help them reclaim their financial confidence. We turn overwhelm into organization, confusion into empowerment, and fear into forward motion. My clients often tell me, "I finally feel like I'm driving the car again." That's the magic: helping women realize that financial clarity is emotional freedom.

My clients often tell me, "I finally feel like I'm driving the car again." That's the magic: helping women realize that financial clarity is emotional freedom.

What makes your approach to working with clients unique?

My approach is equal parts strategy, compassion, and empowerment. I bring technical expertise from years in the financial industry, paired with a deep understanding of what it feels like to start over. My clients trust me because I speak their language: real talk, no jargon, no intimidation.

I meet every client where they are - whether they're overwhelmed, uncertain, or ready to rebuild - and guide them step by step toward clarity. I use education as the foundation of transformation. When women understand how money works, they stop reacting and start leading.

What makes my work unique is that I don't just build financial plans; I build confidence. I don't just calculate assets; I create alignment between a woman's money and her purpose. Every strategy is designed to help her not only survive change but thrive because of it. That's what financial empowerment really looks like.

What's one thing that people are often surprised to learn about you?

People are often surprised to learn that I was a first-chair flute and piccolo player throughout school. Music taught me discipline, precision, and harmony; skills that show up in my work every day. Just like a musician learns to read subtle cues and create balance in a performance, I help women find harmony in their financial lives.

They're also surprised to find beneath the calm strategist a Southern girl with a heart for people and a fierce belief in second chances. I love seeing that spark in a woman's eyes when she realizes she can take control of her money, her choices, and her future. That same drive and determination I had as a young musician, working tirelessly to earn that first-chair seat, is exactly how I approach helping women achieve their financial independence today.

Do you have a personal story or experience that helps you connect with clients on a deeper level?

Absolutely. I've lived through my own fresh starts, personally, professionally, and financially. My journey includes a divorce, a major career pivot, and building a business from the ground up, even though the safer path would have been to stay put. I know what it feels like to lose your footing, question your worth, and wonder if you'll ever feel secure again.

That lived experience fuels my work. I don't just teach women how to make smart financial decisions; I walk beside them as they rediscover their strength. I know that financial independence isn't just about spreadsheets; it's about reclaiming your peace of mind and believing you are capable of creating a new life. My story allows me to connect from a place of empathy and authenticity, reminding every woman I work with that she's not alone and that she can rebuild something beautiful.

What's your favorite way to reset after a long day?

After a full day of strategy sessions, coaching conversations, and money management, my favorite way to reset is to slow down and reconnect with myself, my thoughts, and gratitude. My husband and I enjoy watching an episode of Wheel of Fortune to lighten our mental load before supper. And then, it sometimes looks like sitting on the back porch with a glass of bourbon as the sun sets, other times it's a long chat with someone I love.

I've learned that stillness is powerful. Just as financial clarity comes from pausing and reflecting before making a decision, personal balance comes from giving yourself space to breathe. Those moments of peace keep me grounded, creative, and ready to show up fully for the women who trust me with their stories and their dreams.

If you could describe your work in three words, what would they be?

Empowering. Transformational. Strategic.

Photo by Captured Moments by Cinda, LLC



What does “fresh start” mean to you personally?

To me, a fresh start is more than a moment. It’s a mindset. It’s the decision to stop letting your past define your possibilities and to start creating your own version of freedom.

A fresh start doesn’t erase what came before; it honors it as part of your story. It’s about turning lessons into leverage. Whether it’s a divorce, career shift, or personal reinvention, a fresh start is the moment you choose courage over comfort.

For the women I serve, it’s the moment when financial fear turns into financial confidence, and that shift changes everything. A fresh start is your permission slip to dream again, rebuild stronger, and take your rightful seat at the financial table.

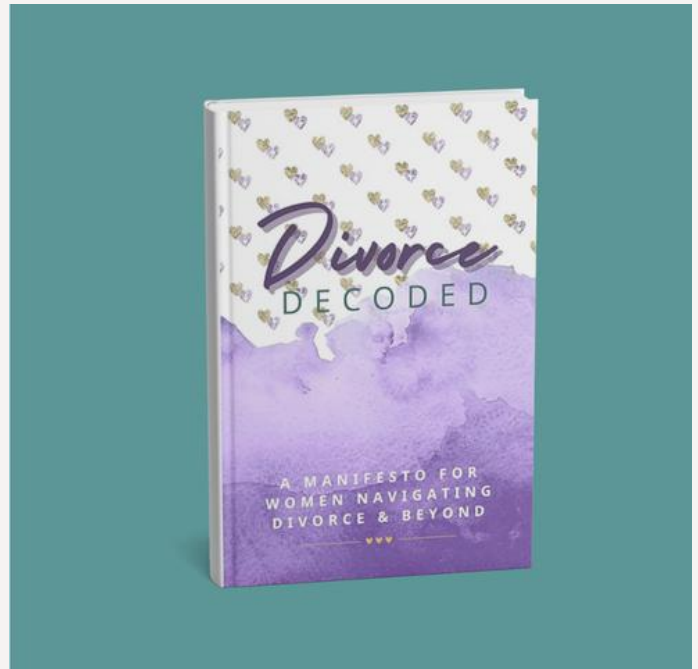
Thank you Donna for sharing your wisdom and experience with the Fresh Starts community! You can learn more about their work by checking out Donna’s profile!

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Able to work with clients globally

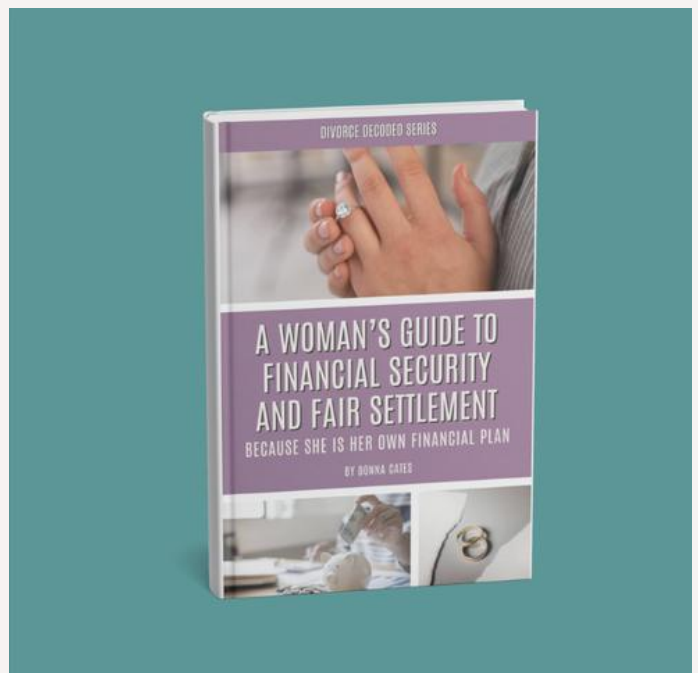
**Learn more about Money Matters
Wealth Solutions**



Get Your Divorcee Hat



***Divorce Decoded: A Manifesto for
Women Navigating Divorce and
Beyond by Donna Cates***



***A Woman's Guide to Financial
Security and Fair Settlement: Because
a Man Is Not a Financial Plan by
Donna Cates***

What Documents Should You Gather Before Filing for Divorce?

One of the most common questions we hear in our Divorce Resource Consults is some version of: “What paperwork or documents should I make sure I have on hand before the divorce process begins?”

First of all: you’re not alone. So many people wonder this exact thing, and the fact that you’re asking now means you’re being thoughtful and proactive about your fresh start. Whether your divorce is amicable or complicated, having your paperwork in order can save you stress later on.

Start With the Basics

Even if you don’t own a home, share bank accounts, or have children together, there are still some foundational documents worth gathering. Think of this as creating a little “divorce file” you can tuck away safely. At minimum, try to collect:

- A copy of your marriage certificate
- Your most recent tax returns (ideally the last 2–3 years, even if filed separately)
- Pay stubs or income verification for both you and your spouse
- Any documentation of retirement accounts, investments, or other assets in either of your names
- Copies of leases, rental agreements, or utility bills showing your current living situation

Why This Matters

Even in what feels like a simple divorce—no kids, no house, separate accounts—there can still be questions that come up down the road. Maybe you’ll need proof of marriage for the court filing. Maybe an attorney or mediator will ask for past income records. Maybe you’ll need to show the timeline of where you lived during the marriage. Having these items on hand saves you from scrambling later (or worse, finding out you no longer have access to them).

Go One Step Further

If your divorce process involves any legal filings, financial disclosures, or mediation, you’ll want to have:

- Account numbers and balances for checking, savings, or credit cards (even if separate—transparency helps)
- Retirement and pension statements
- Loan or debt documents (student loans, car loans, credit cards)
- Health and life insurance policy information

Even if you never end up needing all of this, it’s better to have it. Think of it like packing an umbrella—you may not use it, but you’ll be glad it’s there if it rains.

A Gentle Reminder

Gathering documents isn’t about preparing for a fight. It’s about giving yourself peace of mind and creating a smooth path forward. Divorce is already a season of change, and the more clarity and organization you can offer yourself now, the more space you’ll have for the emotional work of healing and rebuilding.

And remember: you don’t have to do this alone. If you’re ready to take the next step and want a clear, compassionate guide, download our free ebook, [What to Consider When You’re Considering Divorce](#). It’s packed with everything you need to know as you begin this journey—from checklists to scripts to emotional support—all completely free, no email required.

Your fresh start begins here—with a folder of paperwork, yes, but also with the knowledge that you are already taking care of yourself in powerful ways.

Interior Design Vibes Quiz

Not sure what your new space should feel like? Whether you're rebuilding after a big life change or just craving a refresh, our 2-minute quiz helps you discover your design style —no HGTV degree required. From Cozy Minimalist to Bold & Grounded, we'll match you with a vibe that reflects who you are now.



Question 1: Imagine you swing open the door to your dream home. What vibe hits you first?

- A** Sun-bleached seashells, driftwood, and a white couch that somehow stays white.
- B** A riot of colors and textures, like a party for your senses.
- C** Soft throws, cozy nooks, and plants, plants, plants.
- D** Clean lines, pops of chrome, and a vintage record player in the corner.
- E** Chintz florals, wicker furniture, and a Pyrex collection Etsy would kill for.
- F** Velvet sofas, dramatic lighting, and a crystal chandelier that screams "Hollywood regency!"
- G** Clean lines, neutral tones, and natural materials create an effortlessly stylish and inviting atmosphere.

Question 2: Let's talk textures! You love the feel of...

- A** Natural with a mixture of rough and worn to being incredibly soft. Canvas and linen, cotton and cashmere.
- B** A mix of everything! Velvet, fur, feathers — the more texture, the better.
- C** Soft, cozy throws and the natural beauty of woven baskets.
- D** Sleek leather, polished chrome, and the occasional plush rug.
- E** Worn and softened linens and cottons, floral patterns, and the warmth of antique furniture.
- F** Silk, fur, and chenille, anything that feels luxe.
- G** Mixed, natural textures like linen, wool, wood, and even a lovely matte metal thrown in!

Question 3: Next, picture your ideal relaxation station. Are you...

- A** Dockside, baby. Feet in the water and eyes on the horizon.
- B** Curled up in a giant beanbag chair surrounded by your favorite trinkets.
- C** Snuggled in a fluffy armchair with a well-worn book and a steaming cup of tea.
- D** Lounging on a sleek chaise lounge, flipping through a vintage design magazine.
- E** Feet up on the overstuffed couch, quilt on your lap, and a handcraft by your side.
- F** The most luxurious bed, like a hotel but filled with your favorite stuff.
- G** Posted up on a cozy, but not overstuffed, couch with a soft blanket, a good book, and the gentle glow of a sleekly carved and sanded floor lamp.

Question 4: What fictional interior do you covet?

- A** Dockside, baby. Feet in the water and eyes on the horizon.
- B** Curled up in a giant beanbag chair surrounded by your favorite trinkets.
- C** Snuggled in a fluffy armchair with a well-worn book and a steaming cup of tea.
- D** Lounging on a sleek chaise lounge, flipping through a vintage design magazine.
- E** Feet up on the overstuffed couch, quilt on your lap, and a handcraft by your side.
- F** The most luxurious bed, like a hotel but filled with your favorite stuff.
- G** Posted up on a cozy, but not overstuffed, couch with a soft blanket, a good book, and the gentle glow of a sleekly carved and sanded floor lamp.

Question 5: Let's talk about your favorite things to collect. Do you gravitate towards...

- A** Seashells, driftwood, and anything with a touch of the seashore.
- B** Everything and anything! The more unique, the better.
- C** Macrame plant hangers, dream catchers, and anything that whispers "free spirit."
- D** Space-age lamps, atomic clocks, and anything with a retro flair.
- E** Vintage teacups, floral cushions, and trinkets that tell a story.
- F** Glamorous art deco pieces, statement mirrors, and anything that oozes luxury.
- G** No collections, maybe some calming art. But I like clean shelves.

Question 6: Tell us about your dream dinner party

- A** A sandy deck and a weathered table are your stage, candles flicker while you sip white wine from balloon glasses, which pairs perfectly with fresh seafood and bare feet.
- B** Mismatched BUT coordinating from the plates to the grub. Lots of colors, patterns, and textures greet your guests.
- C** Intimate and cozy, with lots of chunky, funky candles, bread, olives, and oils, and good conversation flowing like the wine.
- D** A sophisticated gathering with martinis, jazz music, and everyone looking their best.
- E** Mismatched floral china overflows with homemade jams and fresh-baked bread, all nestled under a canopy of fairy lights shimmering against vintage tablecloths.
- F** Lush, lush, lush. Velvet table runners, bronzed napkin holders, and gold-rimmed coup glasses set the scene alongside caviar and champagne.

- G** Simple, delicious food, accompanied by good conversation and soft, natural light. The focus would be on connection and enjoying the moment.

Question 7: Your boat & tote would say...

- A** Lobster & Wine
- B** Funky & Free
- C** Plant Mom
- D** Sterling Cooper
- E** Flower Tote
- F** Champagne
- G** Nothing, the bag stands for itself.

Okay...on to scoring!

Mostly As: Coastal Chic, Coastal Grandkid, Nancy Meyers Vibes | You crave a clean, calming space with a touch of coastal charm. Think light, airy colors, natural materials like linen and wicker, and touches of blue and green. Imagine every single Nancy Meyers movie, you sweet coastal grandkid.



[Click for Pinterest Board ideas, Playlist & More!](#)

Mostly Bs: Maximalist, Cluttercore, Colorfilled Vibes | You love a space that reflects your personality with bold colors, patterns, and a mix of textures. More is more! Less is a bore! Maximalist decor is all about embracing bold colors, wild patterns, and treasured finds. It's like waking up in a Wes Anderson movie but without the text laid over your life.



[Click for Pinterest Board ideas, Playlist & More!](#)

Mostly Cs: Boho Chic, Plant Parent, Macrame Queen Vibes | Comfort is key for you, with a focus on creating a warm and inviting space. Think natural fibers, earthy tones, and an eclectic mix of furniture and art. Think plants everywhere, think chunky-funky candles, and lots of worn and cozy throw blankets.



[Click for Pinterest Board ideas, Playlist & More!](#)

Mostly Ds: Midcentury Modern, California Modern Chic Vibes | Clean lines, functionality, and natural materials are your jam. You appreciate classic midcentury modern pieces with simple silhouettes and a timeless aesthetic. Think sleek lines that would make Don Draper swoon, pops of bold color that scream "groovy," and atomic-inspired furniture that'll have you feeling like you're living on the set of *The Jetsons*!



[Click for Pinterest Board ideas, Playlist & More!](#)

Mostly Fs: Art Deco, Glam, Old Hollywood Vibes | Luxury defines your style. You love glamorous finishes, statement furniture, and sparkling accents. Don't be afraid to go bold and create a space that feels opulent. Think mirrored furniture that would make Katherine Hepburn proud, sleek chrome accents that add a touch of Hollywood glamour, and rich jewel tones that scream luxury and sophistication.



[Click for Pinterest Board ideas, Playlist & More!](#)

Mostly Es: Cottagecore, Whimsical, Whimsigoth Vibes | You crave a cozy and inviting space with a touch of nostalgia. Think floral patterns, pastel colors, and furniture with a vintage charm. Unleash your inner fairy with whimsical cottagecore decor! Imagine a space straight out of *The Hobbit*. Think mismatched floral prints, textiles used and worn and loved to be so soft, vintage teacups overflowing with wildflowers, and fairy lights twinkling like fireflies in a jar. It's a charming escape for the dreamer in you!



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Mostly Gs: Scandi-Neutral-Minimalist-ish Vibe | Scandinavian-inspired neutral minimalist design is like breathing in fresh air for your soul. It's a gentle hug of calm, where clean lines meet cozy textures and natural light dances on neutral tones. It's practical yet beautiful, simple yet sophisticated, and always inviting – the perfect recipe for a home that feels like a peaceful sanctuary.



[Click for Pinterest Board ideas, Playlist & More!](#)

SURVIVAL SCENARIOS

“Help! My ex is threatening to move the kids out of state!”

Survival Scenarios are all about the real-life “oh no, now what?!” moments people face during divorce—like empty bank accounts, custody curveballs, or surprise legal papers—and pairing them with clear, compassionate guidance from trusted experts. Each post in the series offers support, strategies, and a reminder that you don’t have to face these challenges alone.

Help! I don’t even know what to do right now. My ex just told me he’s going to take the kids and move them out of state. Can he even do that without my permission? I feel sick—what if I wake up one day and they’re just gone? Do I call my lawyer? The police? I’m terrified he’s serious and I’ll lose them.



Guidance from Jolee Vacchi, Family Law & Divorce Attorney, founder of Foundations Family Law & Mediation Center

Learn more about Foundations Family Law & Mediation Center

**this is not legal advice, please reach out to one of our trusted divorce lawyers for further assistance.*

What legal protections can stop relocation? A parent is not allowed to permanently move a child out of state without the consent of the other parent or a court order allowing the relocation. If your ex is threatening to move the kids out of state, tell him/her in writing that you object to the relocation and will take legal action if necessary to prevent a relocation or to have the children return to the state if he/she does move them. Follow this with contacting a licensed attorney in your area (if you don't already have one) to consider potentially filing an emergency motion in court. If your kids are physically with your ex, you could also try reaching out to your local police department for assistance, but their response varies widely and they may point you in the direction of your local family court. If the kids are physically with you, you may consider withholding them from spending parenting time with the other parent until the issue is resolved.

How do I file an emergency motion if needed? In most jurisdictions, you will need to file an emergency motion in-person at the family court. In the motion itself, you will be requesting that the court issue an order preventing your ex from relocating the children out of state or to return the children to your home state immediately if the move has already occurred. The motion is typically accompanied by an Affidavit which is your sworn testimony under the pains and penalties of perjury. In this document, you will include the details of what threats your ex has made and why this order is necessary. You will want to consult with a licensed attorney in your jurisdiction as divorce procedure varies from state to state.

How do I explain this situation to my kids calmly? This will depend on the age of your kids and how serious you believe your ex's threats to be. If the children are young and/or you think there is a low probability that your ex will actually move them, it may not be worth mentioning to your kids and potentially scaring them or stressing them out. If the children are older and/or you think that the threats are credible, you can talk to your kids about how you and the other parent are disagreeing over a few things right now and are having trouble communicating. Explain that you would like them to contact you if the other parent takes them on any kind of "trip" so that you know where they are.



I'm Divorced and a Divorce Professional— Here's What I Learned

Photo by Rachel Hand Photography

with

KELSEY BOUCHER, DIVORCE
COACH

At Fresh Starts, we're proud to spotlight the incredible professionals who guide people through one of life's most challenging transitions: divorce. Today, we're featuring Kelsey Boucher, a Divorce Coach, whose work helps clients find clarity, strength, and a true fresh start.

Kelsey, what was your divorce journey like—what season of life you were in, the biggest challenge, and what supported you most?

After I got married, I was excited to have a partner, a

home, and the chance to start a family. But at 34, through therapy and deep self-reflection, I discovered more about myself (turns out I'm queer!)—a truth that both liberated and terrified me. That awareness brought clarity about the life I wanted, but also grief for the one I was leaving behind.

With the help of my village—my therapist, my parents, and my friends—I made it through the process of selling our home and starting over. Looking back, I often wish I'd had a coach to help guide me through it. I also had to figure out how to be a single working mom while also maintaining my friends and social life. I'm happy to say that this is all possible and that the choice to divorce has led me to a new chapter in my life that feels completely my own. It's also important to note that this also freed my ex-husband to re-marry and live a life that brings him joy. We are now friends and better co-parents as a result.

What's one thing your own divorce taught you that you couldn't have learned otherwise? Looking back, what would you do differently in your divorce? What surprised you most about the divorce process?

I learned that I was far stronger than I ever imagined—and that no one else could advocate for my peace and happiness but me. Ultimately, you are the one who carries yourself through the hardest days. And also, your support systems are vital. There are therapists, coaches, lawyers and other supportive people who have seen it all and can answer your questions.

Ultimately, you are the one who carries yourself through the hardest days.

How does your personal divorce experience shape the way you work with clients now? Do you feel your divorce gave you a different kind of empathy for clients? How so?

My experience showed me that all divorces are different. I knew what I wanted (and what I absolutely didn't want) and I did not appreciate when people gave me "well-meaning" advice that didn't fit my life. As a coach, I make space for each client's unique path—whether they're grieving, rebuilding, or rediscovering joy—and I help them find the tools and confidence to move forward on their own terms.

What's one piece of advice you'd give someone going through divorce right now?

Divorce comes with endless logistics and decisions and it's easy to put yourself last.

Especially as a parent. But your wellbeing is not optional. Developing, creating or re-discovering a self-care practice that grounds you—whatever that

looks like for you—will help you to stay focused and make decisions aligned with your values.

How do you encourage clients to see divorce not just as an ending, but as a fresh start?

I encourage clients to remember their values and dreams and to think about the opportunity that divorce can provide. You are building a new future with newly negotiated relationships, boundaries and expectations. It's a chance to look at what is no longer working and imagine what you truly want in life.

What's one misconception you had about divorce before experiencing it yourself?

Before my own experience, I believed divorce had to be destructive and that children would inevitably be harmed. I now know that peace and cooperation are possible—and that children thrive when their parents do. You also don't have to have a long, drawn out legal battle that leaves both parties broke and exhausted. Divorce is always hard, but it is possible to have an amicable split and become great co-parents.

What's one thing that people are often surprised to learn about you?

I'm a Social Worker who chose to become a coach, not a therapist. I have benefited from therapy for many years, but I wanted to choose a different role while still upholding Social Work values. My skills are in co-creating a vision for the future with activities and tangible action steps for my clients. I love helping folks to set goals and meet them so they can move forward and take the next steps in the process and build a future they can feel proud of.

What does life look like for you now, after divorce?

My post-divorce life looks like peace. I love my job, own my home, make time for friends, spend quality

time with my daughter, and maintain a positive relationship with her dad and stepmom. We've built a modern, joyful family, and I finally feel like I'm living a life that reflects who I truly am.

What does "fresh start" mean to you personally?

Getting a "fresh start" means you have the chance to create a new path for yourself. Divorce is an opportunity to fully live your values and build a life that feels peaceful and free. It's not an ending—it's a creative act of rebuilding, where you get to decide what joy and fulfillment look like for you.

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Jenny Says So

The Dreaded "Where's Dad?" Question

Hey Jenny,

I'd love your advice on something that keeps catching me off guard. I'm going through a divorce, and people regularly ask me, "Where's dad?" — at school events, parties, even in passing. It's usually well-intended, but it instantly turns a normal moment into something personal and awkward, often right in front of my kids.

I never know what to say. I don't want to overshare, lie, or invite follow-up questions — but I also don't want to freeze or feel exposed every time it comes up. Is there a polite, clear way to respond that protects my kids and myself, without making the situation uncomfortable?

Thank you!

Feeling Tongue Tied in Topanga

Read Jenny's response →

Hi There Tongue Tied,

First, I want to say this plainly: you're not doing anything wrong. That question lands heavily because it is heavy — even when it's asked casually.

From an etiquette perspective, you are not obligated to explain your family structure to anyone. Politeness does not require disclosure, context, or emotional labor — especially in front of your children.

The goal here is a response that is:

- brief
- neutral
- non-inviting (get out of this interaction as quickly as possible)

Think of it as closing the conversational door gently, not slamming it.

A few options, depending on the moment:

- “He’s not here today.”
- “It’s just us right now.”
- “We’ve got it covered, thanks.”

If the question comes from someone you'll see again and you want to set a slightly clearer tone, you can add:

- “We’re navigating some changes.”

Then smile and here is the most important part: change the subject. Ask about their child. Comment on the event. Redirect without apology.

This conversation will be lead by how necessary it is for the person asking to have all the information, sometimes you might need to go into more detail — we have scripts for this in our [FREE PDF/eBook How to Get Divorced as a Stay at Home Parent](#).

You don't owe warmth and explanation. Calm neutrality is often the most elegant boundary, and it models for your kids that their family doesn't require justification.

You're allowed to protect your peace in small, ordinary moments.

Here for you always,
Jenny

Find Jenny Says So in all places you listen to podcasts!



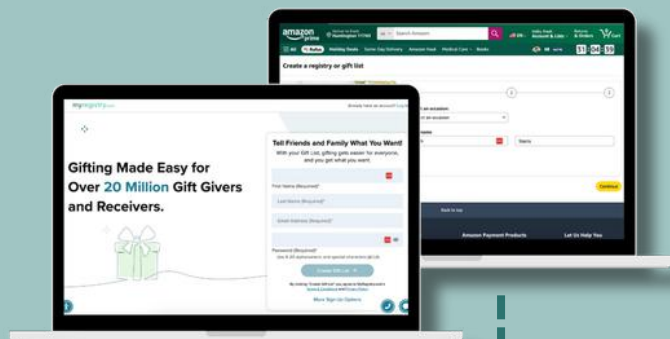
Listen to Jenny Says So

Ask Jenny a Question

Build Your Divorce Registry with Fresh Starts Registry

Start here

Start a registry with Amazon (you can hide your address!) or MyRegistry



Add the items you need to rebuild and start fresh.



Use our scripts to share your registry with friends and family.

Grab the scripts

Share your registry with the Registry Fairy and she might just support you with something from off your registry.

Get supported by your community during your time of rebuild!



How to File for Divorce When You Can't Afford the Fees: Understanding Court Fee Waivers (In Forma Pauperis)

Filing for divorce—or any family court action—can be overwhelming enough without the added stress of high court filing fees. The good news? You might not have to pay them at all.

If you're struggling financially, your local courthouse may allow you to file "In Forma Pauperis"—a legal term that simply means "in the form of a pauper" or, more plainly, you can't afford the costs and need them waived. Here's everything you need to know, including exact scripts for calling your courthouse, and step-by-step instructions to get started.

Here's How to Apply for an In Forma Pauperis Waiver

What is an "In Forma Pauperis" Fee Waiver?

When you file a petition for divorce, custody, or other legal action, courts often charge filing fees that can range from \$100 to \$500 or more. If you're unable to pay, you can apply for a fee waiver so you're not blocked from accessing the legal system.

These waivers can cover:

- Divorce petitions
- Custody filings
- Motions and modifications
- Service fees in some cases

Why Filing for an In Forma Pauperis Waiver Is a Smart Move:

You deserve access to the court system, no matter your financial situation.

- **Saves you hundreds of dollars** in up-front court costs
- **Allows you to move forward** with your legal process without delay
- **Protects your legal rights**, even during financial hardship

How to Apply for a Fee Waiver:

Step 1: Call or Visit Your Local Courthouse

You can usually find the number for your county courthouse by searching "[Your County] family court clerk." Once you call, here's what to say:

Phone Script: Asking for a Fee Waiver

"In Forma Pauperis" is pronounced:
in FOR-muh PAW-puh-riss

(You might also hear it pronounced as PAW-per-iss depending on region.)

Phone script:

Hi, my name is [Your Name], and I'm hoping to file for [divorce / custody / a family court matter], but I can't afford the court fees. Can you tell me how to apply for a fee waiver or In Forma Pauperis status?

If redirected or given more info:

Thank you so much—I just want to make sure I do everything correctly. Is there a form I can pick up in person, or can I download it online? And what documents do I need to bring when I submit it?

Step 2: Ask for the “In Forma Pauperis” Form

Most court clerks will know what this is. You can say:

"Can you please provide the In Forma Pauperis application or fee waiver form for family court filings?"

You can often find and download the form from your court's website under "Self-Help" or "Family Law Forms."

Step 4: Submit the Application

Return the form along with your documentation to the courthouse. In some states, a judge may need to review and sign off on your request. You may be notified by mail, or you might be asked to come in for a short hearing.

What If I’m Nervous to Ask?

You’re not alone. This process can feel intimidating—but remember: the courts are there to serve the public.

You have the right to access justice, and fee waivers exist for a reason.

Here’s a reminder script if you're feeling unsure:

“Hi, I’m trying to navigate this as best I can, and I’m just hoping to get some guidance. I want to file but truly can’t afford the fees right now. Can you help me understand the next steps?”

Helpful Tips for filing an In Forma Pauperis application

- Keep copies of everything you submit
- If you’re denied, ask the clerk what other options are available
- Some states offer legal aid volunteers or clinics to help with the form
- Don’t be afraid to follow up if you don’t hear back within a week or two

If you're feeling lost or overwhelmed, start with a single call. Ask the question. Take the next small step. You’ve got this. Divorce happens, but you are not alone.



Legal Aid and Sliding Scale Legal Services: Your Guide to Affordable Legal Help

When you're navigating divorce, custody, domestic violence, or property division — or any life-changing legal situation — having professional legal guidance can be the difference between confusion and confidence.

But what if hiring a lawyer at full price just isn't possible right now?

You're not stuck. You have options. Let's walk through one of the smartest ways to get professional help without breaking the bank: Legal Aid and Sliding Scale Legal Services.

What is Legal Aid?

Legal Aid is free or low-cost legal assistance provided by nonprofit organizations. These services are typically reserved for people who meet certain income eligibility guidelines, and they often focus on critical issues like family law (divorce, custody, child support), housing, domestic violence, public benefits, and immigration.

Legal Aid organizations are funded through federal, state, local, and private grants, and their goal is simple: to ensure everyone has access to legal representation, regardless of income.

Where to Find It: Visit [LSC.gov](https://www.lsc.gov) (Legal Services Corporation) to find free legal aid programs near you.

What Are Sliding Scale Legal Services?

Sliding Scale Legal Services (sometimes called "low bono" services) are provided by private attorneys or law firms who adjust their fees based on your income and financial situation.

Instead of charging standard hourly rates, they offer a flexible pricing structure, so the cost fits your budget.

Where to Find It: Search local law firms, bar association directories, or ask directly if an attorney offers "sliding scale" or "low bono" options.

Why This Is a Smart Move

- **Professional Representation Matters:** Even if you're resourceful and independent, divorce, custody battles, or property division are high-stakes legal matters. Proper advice and representation can prevent long-term financial and emotional fallout.

- **Affordability:** Instead of draining savings or going into debt, you can access the legal expertise you need — either for free or for a manageable cost.
- **Critical for High-Conflict Situations:** If your divorce or legal matter involves children, allegations of abuse, or significant assets, having a lawyer isn't just helpful — it's essential to protect your rights and future.

How to Access Legal Aid or Sliding Scale Services

Here's a clear, simple action plan you can follow:

Step 1: Find Legal Aid Near You

- Go to [LSC.gov](https://www.lsc.gov).
- Click "Find Legal Aid."
- Enter your state or zip code to see local legal aid organizations.
- Check eligibility requirements (each organization may vary slightly).

Step 2: Contact Your Local Courthouse

- Many courthouses keep a list of trusted legal aid programs and sliding scale attorneys.
- They can often refer you to nonprofit groups, self-help centers, or bar association programs.
- Phone Script for Calling Your Local Courthouse:
 - "Hi, my name is [Your Name]. I'm looking for free or low-cost legal help for [brief description of your issue, e.g., a divorce or custody matter]. Could you please direct me to any legal aid organizations or sliding scale attorneys in our area?"
 - If they say they have referrals: "Thank you so much! Is there an email address or website where I can also find more information?"

Step 3: Search for Sliding Scale or "Low Bono" Attorneys

- Use Google or your local bar association directory.
- Review their websites for mentions of flexible pricing or call their office directly.
- Search terms like:
 - "Sliding scale divorce attorney [Your City/State]"
 - "Low bono lawyer [Your City/State]"
 - "Affordable family law attorney [Your City/State]"

Phone Script for Contacting a Law Office:

"Hi, my name is [Your Name]. I'm seeking legal help for [brief description: divorce, custody, domestic violence, etc.]. Do you offer sliding scale or low bono services? If not, could you recommend someone who does?"

[If they offer it:] "That's wonderful! Could you please share what the intake process looks like and any paperwork I should bring to a consultation?"

Step 4: Prepare Your Documents

- Whether you're working with legal aid or a sliding scale attorney, you'll likely need to provide:
 - Proof of income (pay stubs, tax returns, benefits statements)
 - Identification (driver's license, passport, etc.)
 - Documentation related to your legal issue (marriage certificate, lease agreement, protective orders, custody papers, etc.)
 - Organizing these ahead of time will make the intake process smoother and faster.

Email Script for Reaching Out to Legal Aid

Subject: Request for Legal Aid Services

Hi [Organization Name],

My name is [Your Name], and I'm reaching out to inquire about free or low-cost legal assistance. I am currently seeking help with [briefly state issue: e.g., a divorce, custody arrangement, domestic violence matter].

I would appreciate any information you could share about eligibility requirements and the next steps to apply for your services.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,
[Your Name], [Phone Number]

Extra Tips for Success

- **Act Quickly:** Legal aid organizations can have waitlists — call or apply as soon as you can.
- **Be Honest About Your Situation:** They're here to help, not judge.
- **Ask About Other Resources:** Many legal aid offices offer classes, workshops, and self-help materials even if they can't take your case directly.
- **Stay Organized:** Keep a folder (physical or digital) with all correspondence, forms, and legal documents.
- **Follow Up:** If you haven't heard back within a few days, it's okay to politely follow up with a call or email.

**Feeling a little lost navigating the next steps?
Book your free 15-minute Divorce Resource
Consult at divorceresourceconsult.com**

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You Don't Have to do this Alone

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The Fresh Starts Expert Guide connects you with vetted professionals who specialize in divorce and life transitions — people who understand both the paperwork and the emotional weight behind it.

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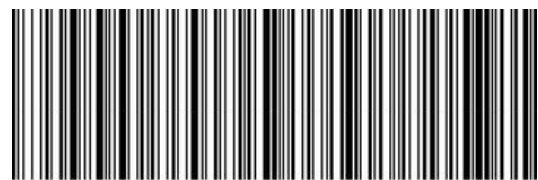
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