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divorce guide magazine

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

published by Fresh Starts Registry

Feature:
Karen LeClaire
on resetting under pressure, and why humor helps

Feature:
Isabel Sanchez
on why divorce doesn't mean starting from nothing

Trina Nudson, JD, LBSW
on why co-parenting needs better thinking, not just better wording

Podcast Feature:
The Families First Podcast,
hosted by Ron Platt

Divorce Happens Podcast Spotlight:
Should You Stay or Should You Go?
Author D'Ionna Washington
on her book Break Up Now

Joselyn "Josy" Martinez
on the business that held her together through divorce

Kimberly Lorah
on why autumn brings marriage problems into focus

Stacey Sanderson
on the quiet ways narcissists keep control

The Only Active Divorce Focused Magazine in the United States.

And we're pretty proud of it.

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

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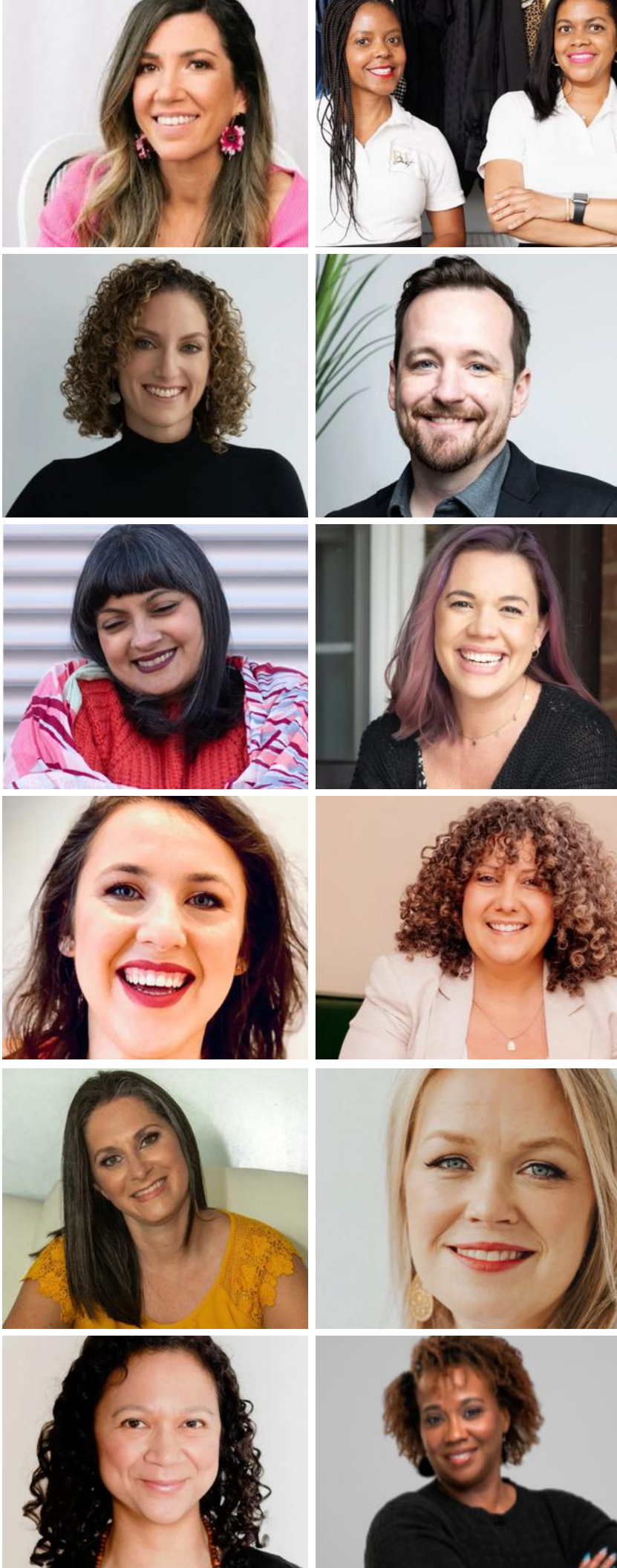
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Welcome to Divorce Guide Magazine

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.















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.

November Events from Fresh Starts



Lorraine Connell, Emerging Leader and Speaker Creator, is joining Fresh Starts to host: Speak Before You're Ready on Monday, November 2 at 12:00 PM EST. Learn more and sign up HERE!



Bridget Borel, CFP®, CDFA® is joining Fresh Starts to host: Ready is a Decision on Monday, November 9 at 12:00 PM EST. Learn more and sign up HERE!



Amy Pierre-Russo, Life Coach is joining Fresh Starts to host: Systems That Support Your Life, Not Just Your Business on Wednesday, November 18 at 12:00 PM EST. Learn more and sign up HERE!



Lisa Lisser, Divorce Coach is joining Fresh Starts to host: Living Together During Divorce: 4 Boundaries That Can Make it Easier on Monday, November 23 at 12:00 PM EST. Learn more and sign up HERE!



Kristina St. Cyr, Divorce Coach and Jennifer Hatch, Family Law and Divorce Attorney are joining Fresh Starts to host: A Separated Co-parent's Guide to the Holidays on Monday, November 30 at 12:00 PM EST. Learn more and sign up HERE!

A LETTER FROM OUR EDITOR:

Thank You, In Practice

November has a way of asking us to feel grateful on cue. If you're in the middle of a divorce, or still finding your footing after one, that can feel like a lot to ask. Gratitude isn't always a feeling that shows up when it's supposed to.

So here's a different way to think about it: gratitude as a practice rather than a mood. You don't have to feel thankful to notice what went okay today. The paperwork you finally filed. The friend who checked in. The evening that was quieter than you expected. Writing down one small thing at the end of the day won't fix a hard season, but it can give you something solid to hold while you get through it. And on the days when nothing comes to mind, that's fine too. A practice is something you come back to, not something you have to get right.

In that spirit, I'd like to practice a little gratitude of my own.

To our experts: thank you for the knowledge, time and care you bring to these pages and to the people you work with every day. You make a complicated process more navigable, and this magazine wouldn't exist without you.

To our supporters, and to everyone who shares an issue, forwards a link or mentions us to someone who needs it: thank you. Word of mouth is how most people find us, and every share reaches someone who might otherwise have felt alone.

To everyone supporting someone through a hard time — the friends, siblings, parents, neighbors and colleagues who show up without being asked: thank you. You may never know how much it mattered, but it did.

And to the people who trust us with their fresh starts: thank you. It's a privilege to be part of your next chapter, and we don't take it lightly.

Whatever this month looks like for you, I hope you find one small thing worth noticing.

With gratitude,
Co-Founder of Fresh Starts Registry
Editor, Divorce Guide Magazine

Jenny



Are you a divorce or family professional looking to plug into the fastest growing divorce support network—and get in front of the people who actually need you?

Join The Fresh Starts Registry Expert Membership and grow your visibility (and your impact) through:

- Expert directory placement + ongoing promotion across Fresh Starts channels
- Exclusive expert networking (real referrals, real relationships, no weird pitching energy)
- Audience access to a community actively navigating divorce and fresh starts
- Featured articles in Divorce Guide Magazine (credibility + SEO + shareable press)
- Podcast opportunities across the Fresh Starts shows (expert interviews + evergreen discovery)
- Media + PR opportunities (get tapped for quotes, roundups, and expert commentary)

If you're ready to be part of the platform that's modernizing divorce support—now is the time to join.

Learn More About Becoming an Expert | **Register to Become an Expert Now**

Fresh Starts — Support You Can Feel.



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.

Download the ePub or PDF for FREE

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Co-Parenting Doesn't Just Need Better Communication. It Needs Better Thinking.



by Trina Nudson, JD, LBSW | Co-Parenting Specialist
Able to work with clients in all 50 states and Internationally

Learn more about BeH2O® and BeAligned™

For years, I hated co-parenting apps. Not because I did not understand why they existed. As a family law attorney, social worker, guardian ad litem, mediator, parenting coordinator, and someone who has spent more than two decades working with families in conflict, I understood exactly why we needed them. Put the communication in one place. Share calendars. Track expenses. Create a record. Reduce unnecessary contact. Give parents a structured way to exchange information when direct communication is difficult.

All of that can be useful.

What troubled me was how often I watched parents use these apps as though they were writing for someone other than their co-parent. Every message became an exhibit. A place to document what happened, establish a record, defend a position, correct the other parent, or make sure no one could later claim they had failed to respond. The app might have organized the communication, but it had not necessarily changed the conflict.

In some cases, it seemed to make participation in the conflict easier. A notification arrived, the app opened, a message triggered a reaction, and a response went back. Then another. And another. The technology was doing exactly what technology is generally designed to do: reducing friction and making communication faster and easier.

But co-parenting conflict does not always need less friction. Sometimes it needs a pause.

A message says, "I'm going to be 20 minutes late."

One parent may read a logistical update. Another may read years of history into the same sentence: Here we go again. My time doesn't matter. You have never respected me. You think you can do whatever you want.

By the time that parent begins typing, the response may no longer be about 20 minutes. It may be responding to years of frustration, hurt, fear, resentment, or assumptions about the other parent's intent.

A better communication tool does not necessarily solve that. Neither does a perfectly worded response.

The more time I spent working with families in conflict, the more apparent this became: we have invested enormous energy in helping parents communicate better. We have spent far less time helping them think better before they communicate.

The Problem May Be Upstream

Much of our work in family conflict happens at the end of the process.

A parent has already received the message, interpreted it, experienced the emotional response, decided what the other parent intended, and begun constructing an answer.

Then we intervene.

Don't say it that way. Take the emotion out. Make it shorter. Don't accuse. Stick to the facts.

All of those strategies can be useful. But by then, an enormous amount has already happened.

The parent may have decided what the message means before typing a single word.

What if we moved upstream?

Before asking, How should I respond?, what if we created space for different questions?

What happened? What am I assuming? What is actually important here? What am I feeling? What am I trying to accomplish? What might my child need? What might matter to my co-parent, even if I disagree with them? What response is consistent with the parent I want to be?

And maybe, after working through those questions, the answer is still firm. Maybe the parent still disagrees. Maybe a boundary needs to be set. Maybe the answer is no.

Better thinking does not mean greater agreement. It means the response becomes more intentional.

The Evolution in My Own Work

My professional life started in social work before I became a family law attorney. For more than two decades, I have worked inside family conflict from different seats: representing children, practicing law, mediating, parenting coordinating, developing programs, and working directly with parents.

For much of that time, like many professionals, I focused heavily on communication. What should parents say? What shouldn't they say? How do we reduce hostile exchanges? How do we teach parents to communicate in a way that doesn't make things worse?

That work eventually led to BeH2O®, our intensive co-parenting program. And through that work, something became difficult to ignore. Communication was often downstream. Before the words came the interpretation. Before the interpretation came attention. Before the response came emotion, history, assumptions, values, fears, and competing needs.

If we only worked on the message, we were entering the process too late.

That changed the question I wanted to solve. Not: How do we help parents send better messages? But: How do we create a better moment before the message is sent? That question eventually became part of the foundation for BeAligned™.

A Pause Is Not Just Waiting

When I talk about a pause, I don't mean "count to ten." And I don't mean telling an angry parent to calm down. A pause without something to do inside it is just elapsed time.

A reflective pause is different. It creates enough space between trigger and action for a parent to examine what is happening before deciding what to do next.

Imagine receiving a message from your co-parent that immediately makes you angry. You close the app and wait 30 minutes. But you spend those 30 minutes replaying every other time your co-parent has done something similar, building your case and becoming even more certain of what the message means. You paused the communication, but you did not interrupt the conflict.

A useful pause has structure. It can help separate what happened from the story being built around it. It can reconnect a parent with what matters. It can bring the child's experience back into view. It can create room to consider another perspective without requiring agreement. It can help generate options before selecting one.

The goal isn't to suppress emotion. Emotion contains information. The goal is to prevent the first emotional interpretation from automatically becoming the final decision.

From Communication Tool to Decision-Support Tool

This distinction is central to how we have approached BeAligned™.

BeAligned™ is not another place for co-parents to message each other. The parents do not communicate with one another inside the platform. That is intentional. The work happens before the communication. A parent brings in the situation they are trying to navigate. Instead of immediately generating an answer, the experience guides them through questions intended to help them identify what matters, consider their child's needs, examine the other parent's perspective, explore options, and decide how they want to approach the situation.

Then they can go back to whatever communication tool they already use.

That could be a co-parenting app. It could be email. It could be text. It could be a conversation at the next exchange. The point is not to replace communication technology. It is to create a place for thinking that does not currently exist inside most communication technology.

What If the App Became a Boundary?

This has also changed how I think about co-parenting apps themselves. I don't hate them anymore. In fact, I think they can become something much more useful than a repository for evidence. They can become a boundary.

A notification does not have to mean immediate access to me. Opening the app does not have to be automatic. A message from my co-parent does not have to dictate what receives my attention at that moment. Instead, entering the communication space can become intentional.

Before I open it, I pause. Before I respond, I decide whether I am responding to what was actually said or to everything the message represents to me. Before I press send, I ask whether this response moves me toward or away from what matters. That is a very different relationship with a co-parenting app. The app remains useful for logistics, documentation, calendars, expenses, and communication. But it stops being the place where all of the thinking has to happen.

Better Thinking Doesn't Always Produce a Nicer Message

There is an important distinction here. I am not advocating for technology that makes every co-parenting message pleasant. Sometimes the appropriate response is direct. Sometimes it is a boundary. Sometimes it is disagreement. Sometimes there should be no response at all. And sometimes a parent's anger is telling them something important. The measure of a reflective pause cannot be whether the final message sounds nicer. The question is whether the parent had an opportunity to make an intentional choice rather than simply enact the first response conflict produced.

That is also why I am cautious about AI tools that rewrite co-parenting messages. Turning "You're selfish and you're always late" into "I would appreciate it if you could arrive on time" may improve the communication. But it may leave the thinking completely untouched. I am much more interested in whether technology can help someone practice the process that comes before the words.

Maybe We Have Been Solving the Wrong Problem

For years, we have asked how to help co-parents communicate better.

We should keep asking that.

But communication is visible. Thinking isn't.

We see the hostile message. We don't see the assumptions that preceded it. We see the 14-paragraph response. We don't see the fear underneath it. We see the argument about five minutes at an exchange. We don't see the meaning each parent has attached to those five minutes.

If we only intervene once the words appear, we are working at the very end of the process. The next generation of co-parenting technology has an opportunity to do something different. Not communicate for parents. Not make every message nicer. Not tell parents what to do. Create a place to think before they act. Because sometimes the most useful feature a co-parenting tool can offer isn't a faster way to respond. It's a better place to pause. BeAligned™.

Feeling a little lost navigating the next steps.

Book your free 15-minute Divorce Resource Consult at divorceresourceconsult.com

What Is a Divorce Resource Consult?

- A free, confidential starting point — not therapy, not legal advice
- We listen to where you are right now
- We point you toward the right experts, tools, and next steps from our network
- No guesswork, no 1 a.m. Googling
- Often the first step our community takes before anything else

DIVORCE GUIDE:

Self-Filing for Divorce: How to Navigate DIY Divorce Without a Lawyer

If you're ready to get divorced but can't afford a lawyer—or simply want to handle the process on your own—there's a powerful, low-cost option you might not know enough about: self-filing for divorce, also known as DIY divorce.

With the right tools, resources, and guidance, many people successfully complete their divorce without legal representation—especially when both spouses agree on the major issues like custody, support, and property division.

This guide walks you through what DIY divorce is, why it's a smart choice for many, and how to get started step by step.

What Is Self-Filing for Divorce?

Self-filing means you complete and file your own divorce paperwork without hiring an attorney. This process usually involves downloading forms from your local court, filling them out, submitting them to the clerk, and representing yourself throughout the case.

It's especially effective for:

- Uncontested divorces
- Couples with limited assets
- People who need to minimize costs
- Situations without high-conflict custody battles

Why This Is a Smart Move

- It's the most affordable legal option
- Filing on your own can save thousands in legal fees.
- It empowers you to move at your own pace
- You control the timeline (within court deadlines) and can start when you're ready.
- You don't need to wait for the "perfect" situation
- Even if you're nervous, starting the paperwork is often the first step to freedom.
- It works well when both spouses are on the same page
- If you and your ex agree on major decisions, there's no need to complicate it.

How to Access DIY Divorce Forms & Tools

Step 1: Visit Your Local Family Court Website

Every state (and often each county) provides resources for people representing themselves in family court. Search terms to use:

- "DIY divorce [Your State or County]"
- "Self-help divorce forms [Your State]"
- "Pro se divorce [Your State]"

Many states have a full Self-Help section where you can access:

- Divorce forms
- Filing instructions
- Step-by-step checklists
- Fee waiver applications (if you can't afford the filing fee)

Step 2: Look for Online Divorce Tools

Some states and cities have created free or low-cost online platforms to help you complete your paperwork easily.
Examples include:

- **California**: selfhelp.courts.ca.gov
- **New York**: nycourts.gov
- **Texas**: texaslawhelp.org

These websites often provide guided interviews that fill in forms for you automatically based on your answers.

Step 3: Visit the Courthouse or Call the Clerk's Office

If online access is limited or you need help navigating the paperwork:

- **Visit the clerk's office** at your local family courthouse
- **Call the court clerk** and ask where to find self-help divorce forms

Note: Court staff can't give legal advice—but they can explain procedures, direct you to the right forms, and help with logistics like filing timelines and service of documents.

Tips for a Smooth DIY Divorce Process

- **Start with a checklist.** Most court websites provide a breakdown of steps—print it and follow it closely.
- **File for a fee waiver if needed.** If you can't afford the filing fee, apply for a "fee waiver" or "In Forma Pauperis" status.
- **Make multiple copies of every document.** One for the court, one for your ex, and one for your own records.
- **Track deadlines.** Courts often have strict timelines—don't miss them.
- **Ask about mediation.** Some courts offer free or low-cost mediation to help with agreements.

Real Talk: Is DIY Divorce the Right Fit for You?

Self-filing is a smart, accessible option if:

- You and your ex are in agreement
- Your situation isn't highly complex
- You're organized and can follow detailed steps
- You're willing to advocate for yourself

If you're facing domestic violence, controlling behavior, or a complicated legal situation, it is recommended that you seek outside support (legal aid, a law school clinic, or a women's shelter with legal advocacy services).

Quick Action Steps to Get Started

1. Search for "DIY divorce" or "self-help divorce" + your state
2. Locate and download the correct court forms
3. Ask the court clerk any procedural questions you have
4. Fill out forms with care, and follow each filing instruction step-by-step
5. Apply for a fee waiver if needed
6. Keep copies of everything
7. Track your court dates and deadlines

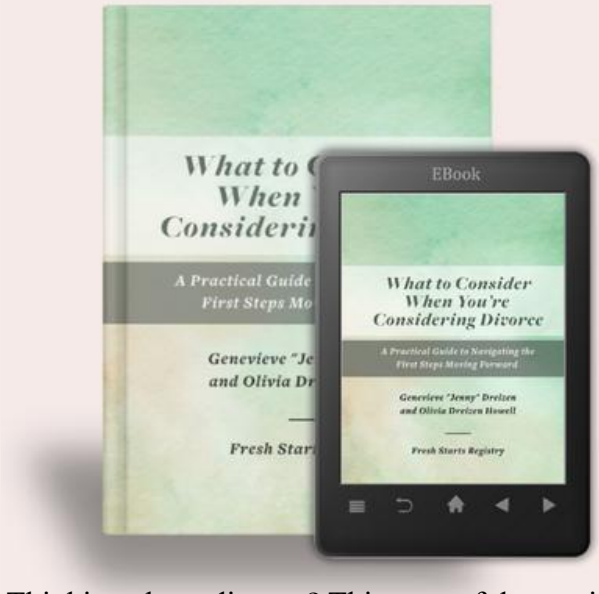
Final Reminder: You Don't Have to Have It All Figured Out

Self-filing doesn't mean you're alone.

It means you're taking control—at your own pace and within your own means.

With the right forms, patience, and support from your local courthouse (or online resources), you can file for divorce yourself. And that first step can be the beginning of everything you've been waiting for.

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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The Divorce Happens Community

A free, year-long space for anyone facing, moving through, or healing from a divorce — with honest stories, real guidance, and people who get it. Before, during, and after.

Come find your people. Borrow some hope. Walk the year with a community that's growing right alongside you.

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EXPERT FEATURE:

Karen LeClaire, Life and Performance Coach

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

I'm a mom of three sons, a business owner, and someone who has personally been through the divorce process and understands how overwhelming a major life transition can feel. I know what it's like when the life you thought you were going to have suddenly looks very different—and you're trying to figure out what comes next while still managing everything else in your life.

Professionally, I've spent more than 20 years working in the mental health field and today own counseling practices in Florida, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, as well as CCE Performance, where I help people recognize how stress and pressure are affecting them, reset in the moment, and move forward with greater focus and confidence.

My own life experiences, combined with years of helping people navigate stress, change, and high-pressure situations, led me to this work. I wanted to create something practical and accessible for people who may not need therapy, but do need tools to help them regain a sense of control and perform at their best during challenging seasons of life.

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

Having gone through divorce myself, I understand how quickly life can change and how overwhelming it can feel when the future you pictured suddenly looks completely different. You can be making major decisions about your family, finances, home, career, and future—all while trying to manage the emotional weight of what you're going through.

What inspired me to work with people during divorce and other major life transitions is that I've seen how easy it is for stress and uncertainty to take over during these times. People can begin to doubt themselves, overthink decisions, or simply feel like they're operating in survival mode.

I want people to know that even when you can't control everything happening around you, you can learn to recognize what pressure is doing to you, reset, and regain some control over how you respond and what you do next. Sometimes the goal isn't to have your whole future figured out. It's simply to feel steady enough to take the next step.
What is your specialty within the divorce space, and how do you typically support your clients?

My specialty within the divorce space is helping people manage the stress, pressure, and mental overload that can come with such a major life transition. Divorce can require you to make important decisions and continue functioning at work and at home at a time when you may feel distracted, overwhelmed, or unsure of yourself.

Through CCE Performance, I provide practical, non-clinical stress and performance support designed to help people recognize how pressure is showing up for them, reset when they feel overwhelmed, and move forward with greater focus and confidence.

I use my CCE Performance Reset Method—Recognize, Reset, Perform, Recover—to give people practical tools they can use in real-life situations. That might mean preparing for a difficult conversation or meeting, staying focused when there are multiple decisions to make, recognizing when stress is beginning to affect their thinking or behavior, or learning how to reset before responding in a high-pressure moment.

My goal isn't to tell someone how they should feel or what decision they should make. It's to help them feel more grounded and equipped so they can navigate the process in a way that feels right for them.

What makes your approach to working with clients unique?

What makes my approach unique is that I combine practical stress and performance tools with a very personal, down-to-earth style. I'm not interested in giving someone a long list of things they "should" be doing when they already feel overwhelmed. I want to understand what is happening for that individual and help them identify what will actually be useful in their real life.

I'm also very intuitive in the way I work with people. Often, I can help someone put words to what they're experiencing or recognize patterns they may not have noticed yet. From there, we can identify practical ways to help them feel more in control of how they respond to pressure.

My CCE Performance Reset Method—Recognize, Reset, Perform, Recover—provides the structure, but the work is

individualized to the person. I meet people where they are, without judgment, and help them find realistic strategies they can actually use.

And sometimes humor is part of that. Divorce and major life transitions are serious, but that doesn't mean every conversation has to feel heavy. Sometimes being able to laugh, feel understood, and realize, "Okay, maybe I'm not the only person who does that when I'm stressed," can be incredibly powerful.

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

People are often surprised by how much I use humor. I work with stress, pressure, and people going through some very difficult periods in their lives, so they sometimes expect me to be very serious all the time. I'm definitely not!

I believe you can take what someone is going through seriously without making every moment feel heavy. I'm pretty down-to-earth, I laugh at myself, and I love those moments when someone realizes, "Wait—I do that too!" Sometimes a little humor helps people feel more comfortable, less judged, and more like themselves again.

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

Yes. I've personally been through divorce and know what it feels like when life suddenly looks very different from what you had planned. I was raising three sons while navigating major changes in my own life, and there were certainly times when I had to figure out what came next one step at a time.

That experience gave me a perspective I carry with me today. I understand that when someone is going through a major transition, they may be trying to make important decisions while also being a parent, going to work, managing a household, and trying to hold everything together.

I also know that difficult chapters don't have to define the rest of your story. Sometimes you can't see very far ahead—you just have to find the next step and keep moving. That's something I understand not only professionally, but personally, and I think that helps me connect with people in a very genuine way.

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

My favorite way to reset after a long day is listening to music and getting outside for a walk in the sunshine. I spend so much of my day thinking and problem-solving that my best reset is usually anything that gets me out of my head and back into the moment.

There's something about fresh air, sunshine, movement, and a good song that helps me step away from everything I've been thinking about and just be present for a while. It's simple, but that's also something I really believe about resetting—it doesn't always have to be complicated.

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

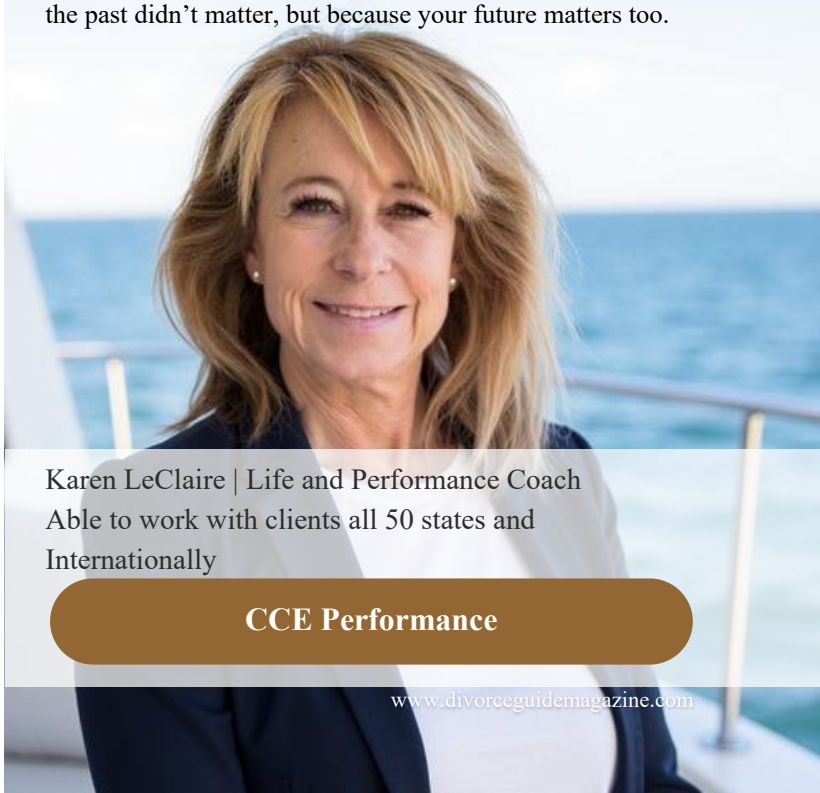
Practical. Personal. Empowering.

What does "fresh start" mean to you personally?

To me, a fresh start doesn't mean forgetting what happened or pretending the difficult parts of your life didn't matter. It means recognizing that what happened is part of your story, but it doesn't have to determine what comes next.

I've had to start over in my own life, and I know that a fresh start doesn't always feel exciting in the beginning. Sometimes it feels scary, uncertain, and nothing like something you would have chosen for yourself. But over time, it can become an opportunity to rediscover who you are, what matters to you, and what you want the next chapter of your life to look like.

For me, a fresh start is about moving forward—not because the past didn't matter, but because your future matters too.



Karen LeClaire | Life and Performance Coach
Able to work with clients all 50 states and Internationally

CCE Performance

Divorce 101 A–Z:
N Is for Negotiation (and November)



November is a month of tension and transition. The year is winding down, emotions often run high, and many people navigating divorce feel the pressure of unresolved decisions. That makes November a fitting time to talk about negotiation—the process where much of divorce is actually decided.

Negotiation is how divorcing couples work through unresolved issues like parenting schedules, financial support, asset division, and debt responsibility. Contrary to popular belief, negotiation doesn't only happen in a courtroom. It takes place through attorneys, in mediation sessions, during settlement conferences, and sometimes in carefully guided conversations between the parties themselves.

For many people, negotiation feels intimidating. There's a fear of "giving up too much" or being taken advantage of. But negotiation in divorce is not about winning or losing—it's about reaching workable agreements that allow life to move forward. Unlike trials, where decisions are imposed by a judge, negotiation keeps control in the hands of the people who will actually live with the outcome.

November's reflective nature highlights an important truth: preparation matters more than force. Successful negotiation is grounded in information—financial disclosure, realistic budgets, parenting priorities, and a clear understanding of what truly matters to you. Emotional regulation matters, too. Negotiations tend to break down when fear, urgency, or resentment takes the lead.

It's also important to remember that negotiation is a process, not a single conversation. Offers evolve. Compromises are tested. Progress can feel slow. That doesn't mean it isn't working.

As the year draws to a close, negotiation offers an opportunity to shift from reaction to intention. Knowing when to stand firm and when to be flexible can shape not just the outcome of your divorce, but the tone of the life that follows. Understanding negotiation helps you move forward with clarity, dignity, and purpose.



Listen to Divorce 101!

The Divorce Happens Community

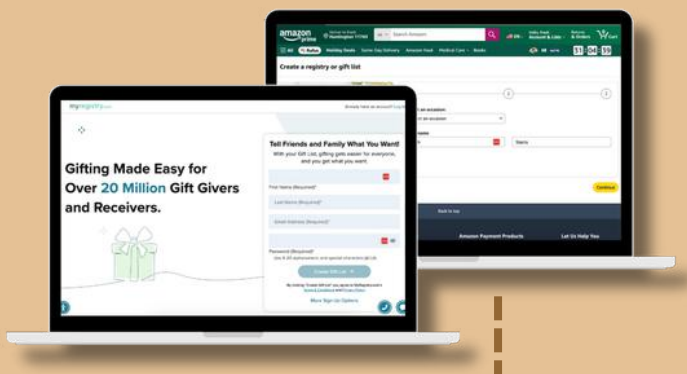
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Build Your Divorce Registry with Fresh Starts Registry



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 Lead Registry Fairy and she might just support you with something from off your registry. If you want, she'll also share with some of the other registry fairies, we have over 150 now!

Get supported by your community during your time of rebuild!



How My Business Became the Foundation of My Next Chapter

Two years before my divorce, I did something that felt equal parts brave and reckless: I left my full-time job to start my own business. I had no idea, at the time, that this young business — still finding its footing — would end up being one of the things that held me together when my marriage didn't. I didn't build it to survive a divorce. But it's part of what let me survive mine.

There were nights during that period when I didn't feel like I was succeeding at either one. The business was young. The divorce was hard. And somewhere underneath both of those things was a quieter, harder question: *could I actually do this on my own?*

I want to share what I learned, because I know I'm not the only one who has started — or restarted — a business in the middle of a divorce. I see it constantly in my work now: women who, in the wreckage of a marriage ending, find themselves building something of their own for the first time. Sometimes it's out of necessity. Sometimes it's an act of rediscovery. Often, it's both. And almost every time, there's a piece nobody prepared them for: *now you're also running the finances of a business, alone, often for the first time.*

You're more capable than you feel on the hard nights

I want to say this first, because it matters more than any spreadsheet: on the nights when everything felt like presumed failure — the marriage, the business, all of it — I was more capable than I believed myself to be. I didn't feel that way at the time. I felt it much later, looking back. If you're in the middle of it right now, you may not be able to see your own capability yet either. That's normal. It doesn't mean it isn't there.

The business became a source of strength, not just a source of stress

Somewhere in the middle of the hardest stretch, something shifted. My business stopped being one more thing I was barely holding together, and it became the thing that held *me*. Being able to support myself — and my three children — through work that was mine gave me a kind of strength I hadn't expected to find in the middle of a divorce. It became part of how I put myself back together, not a distraction from it.



Joselyn Martinez | Accountant
Able to work with clients all 50 states

Learn more about Balance Financial Solutions

Being the only one meant I couldn't afford to ignore the finances

My career has always been in accounting. But running my *own* business, with no one else to catch what I missed, taught me something my career alone hadn't: when you're the only one providing, you don't get to be casual about the money. For me, "being on top of it" meant a handful of very specific things:

Keeping my personal and business finances completely separate — separate accounts, no blurring the lines, even when it would have been easier in the moment not to bother.

- Invoicing promptly, every time — not letting the discomfort of asking for payment delay getting paid for the work I'd already done.
- Following up on collections — because unpaid invoices don't pay bills, and I couldn't afford to let awkwardness cost me income.
- Staying closely aware of my business expenses — knowing where the money was going, not just where it was coming from.
- - Running my business reports regularly — not once a year at tax time, but often enough to actually know where I stood.
- Never ignoring the finances — because they weren't abstract numbers. They were my livelihood, and my children's.

None of this was glamorous. Most of it was just consistency, applied on the days I didn't feel like it. But it's also exactly what made the business something I could rely on, instead of one more source of uncertainty in a season that already had plenty.

The business became part of my foundation, not a footnote to my divorce

If you're building or rebuilding a business right now while you're also rebuilding a life, I want you to know: the risk is

real, and so is what's on the other side of it. My business, with all its risk, became part of the very foundation of my next chapter — not something that happened *despite* the divorce, but something that helped carry me through it and into who I am now.

You don't have to have it all figured out. You don't need to be an accountant to run a financially healthy business — you just need a few honest habits, applied consistently, and the willingness to actually look at your numbers instead of avoiding them. That's where the strength really comes from: not from knowing everything, but from staying on top of what you can control, one report, one invoice, one decision at a time.

*Joselyn "Josy" Martinez is the founder and CEO of Balance Financial Solutions, a fractional CFO and bookkeeping firm serving women business owners. She has more than 20 years of accounting experience and built her own business through — and beyond — her own divorce.**



The Divorce Happens Community

Divorce doesn't just rearrange your life — it rearranges your people. This November, the Divorce Happens Community is digging into "Who Showed Up," a theme about the friendships that surprised us, the ones that quietly disappeared, and everything in between.

Because here's the truth nobody prepares you for: divorce is a filter. Some people you thought would be there for anything vanish without a word. Others — sometimes people you barely knew — show up in ways you never expected. This month, we're naming both sides of that honestly, no sugarcoating.

We're thrilled to welcome two guest voices this month: D'Ionna, author of Finding Love After Divorce, and Jessica Lattif, founder of Not Working in Tech. Both will share their own stories of friendship, loss, and connection during divorce through featured posts and live conversations with our community.

The Holidays, Reimagined: December in the Divorce Happens Community

The holidays have a way of holding up a mirror. Every candle, every recipe, every seat at the table carries a memory of who you used to be, and this year some of those traditions just don't fit anymore. This December, the Divorce Happens Community is exploring "The Holidays, Reimagined," a theme about what we keep, what we let go of, and what we get to create from scratch.

The first holidays after divorce are hard. They're also wide open. The empty chair is real. So is the new tradition that feels forced the first year and feels like yours by the third. We're thrilled to welcome two guest voices this month: Dara Resnik and Mandy King. Both will share their own stories of reinventing the season through featured posts and live conversations with our community.

Throughout December, members can expect journal prompts, a personal essay, our weekly "Hey Olivia" advice column, and a community Zoom hang with others navigating the same season.
If you're dreading the holidays, or quietly hoping they could feel different, this month is for you.

Join the FREE year long Divorce Happens Community at DivorceHappensCommunity.com

HEY OLIVIA:

How to Ask a Loving Sister for Space After Divorce

Hey Olivia, my sister has been showing up nonstop since my divorce, texting daily, showing up unannounced, asking if I'm okay a hundred times a week. I know it comes from love, but it's a lot. How do I ask for space without hurting her?

Needing space from even the most loving support isn't a betrayal of that love. It's about capacity for input, not a referendum on the relationship. The guilt of feeling like a terrible person for wanting quiet makes sense given how much she's shown up. But it's not accurate.

Needing space is a normal, healthy need.

Constant checking, even from real love, isn't automatically calibrated support. Some of it may genuinely be about the sister's own worry and need to feel useful, which is human, but still separate from what actually helps day to day.

Asking for space isn't pushing her away. It's giving real information that helps her love more effectively, replacing guessing with something both people can work with. Try leading with gratitude, then the specific need, then reassurance: "I love that you've been checking on me so much, it means everything. I'm actually doing better with some quiet, unscheduled time. I'll still reach out when I need you."

Unaddressed over-support can build quiet resentment just as easily as under-support. Saying something now, gently, protects the relationship long term. This can be one honest text, not a formal conversation. If the guilt about asking for basic space feels disproportionate, that's worth bringing to a therapist, often connected to a broader pattern of managing everyone else's feelings first.



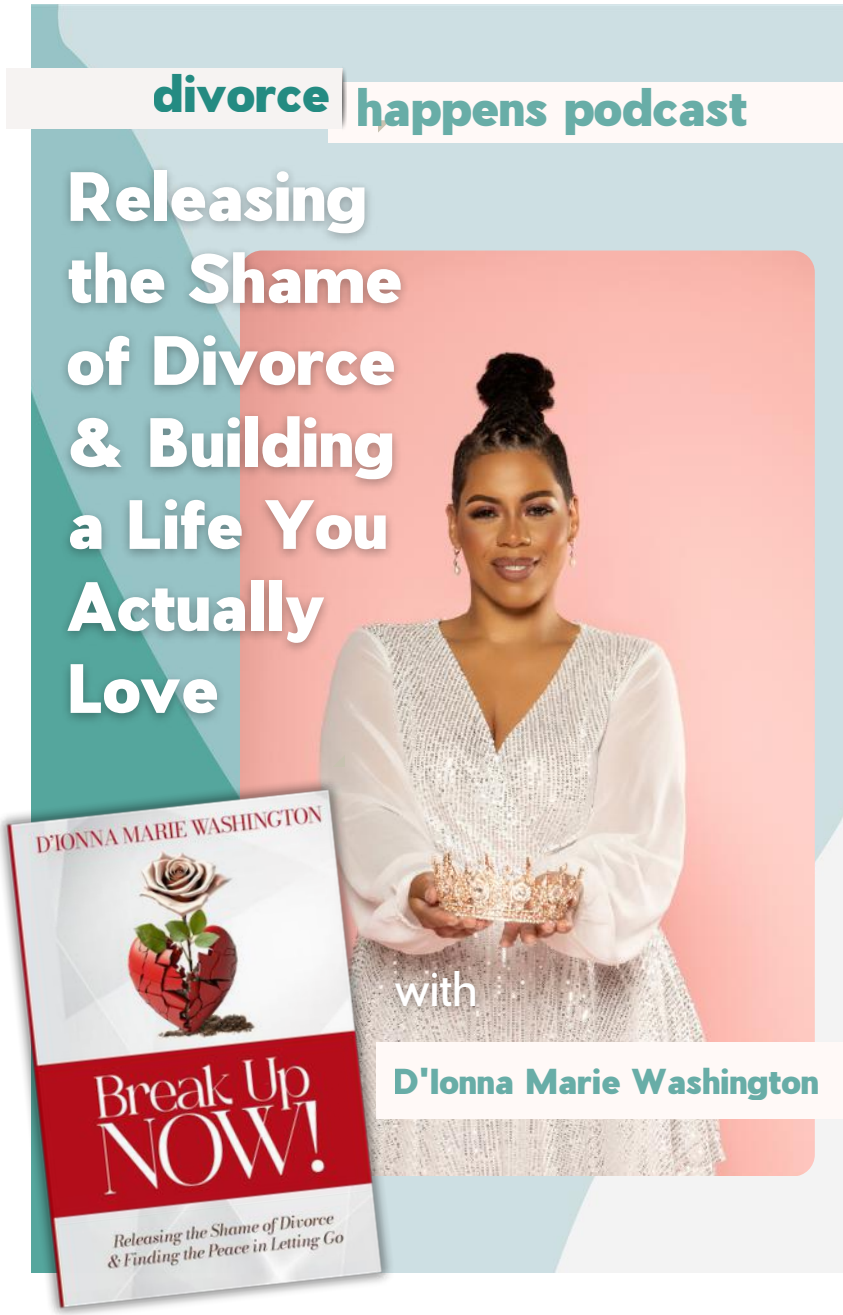
DIVORCE HAPPENS PODCAST:

Should You Stay or Should You Go? Author D'Ionna Washington on Breaking Up Now, Releasing the Shame of Divorce & Building a Life You Actually Love

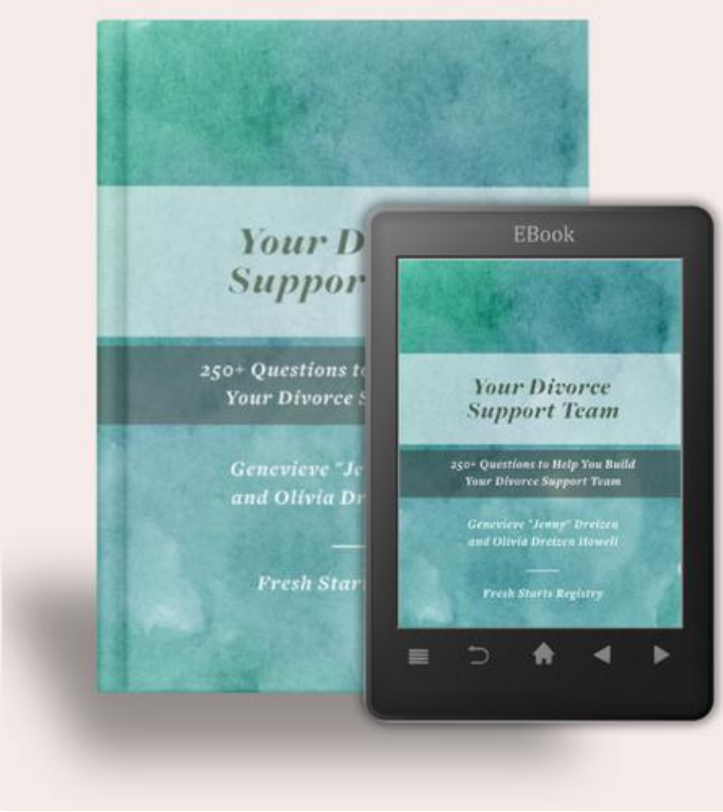
There is a moment — quiet, uncomfortable, impossible to unhear — when you realize the marriage you're in isn't the marriage you thought you were building. For D'Ionna Washington, that moment came just one year into her first marriage. Instead of suppressing it, she eventually did what so few women feel permitted to do: she left. And then she wrote the book about it. In this candid, fire-lit conversation on Divorce Happens, host Olivia Howell sits down with D'Ionna — relationship coach, author, and the woman behind the powerfully named brand The Kept Wife Strategist — to talk about her debut book Break Up Now: Releasing the Shame of Divorce and Finding the Peace in Letting Go. D'Ionna brings over a decade of coaching experience, a faith deconstruction journey, and a deeply personal story of divorce and remarriage to a conversation about one of the most taboo questions in relationships: what if you knew early and stayed anyway?

The emotional core of this episode lives in a story D'Ionna shares about her mother — a woman who stayed married for 23 years after knowing, within the first year, that it wasn't working. That revelation cracked D'Ionna open. Suddenly she saw the pattern everywhere: women who knew, stayed silent, and spent decades managing a life that was slowly wearing them down. Her book is the answer to that pattern — a clear-eyed, shame-free argument that leaving sooner is not a failure but an act of radical self-respect. She and Olivia dig into the real reasons women stay: kids, sunk costs, religious conditioning, the fear of starting over after divorce. And D'Ionna doesn't just validate those reasons — she dismantles them with the kind of direct, loving honesty that can only come from someone who's lived it. Her most powerful reframe? Every year you don't leave, it gets harder. The investment grows. The exit shrinks. If the writing is on the wall, break up now.

But this episode isn't just about leaving — it's about what happens after you do. D'Ionna is four years out from her divorce and three years into a remarriage she describes as full of ease, peace, and genuine elevation. Her path there wasn't through bitterness or blame — it was through radical accountability. Not the kind that absolves the other person of their wrongs, but the kind that asks: how did I get here, what was I ignoring, and what do I need to change about myself before I let someone new into my life? For listeners navigating divorce recovery, healing after a bad marriage, or wondering whether they have what it takes to start over, this episode is both permission and roadmap. D'Ionna's message is clear: you don't leave one hard situation to settle for a little relief. You rebuild yourself so completely that the next person has to add to an already beautiful life — not rescue you from a broken one.



Click through to listen!



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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JENNY SAYS SO

When Family Trashes Your Ex in Front of the Kids

Dear Jenny,

I need help with a problem that makes my stomach twist because it's coming from "my side."

Since my divorce, some of my family members—especially my mom and one of my siblings—keep speaking badly about my ex in front of the kids. Sometimes it's subtle ("Well, we all know your father can't be relied on"), and sometimes it's blatant ("He's selfish," "He doesn't care," "He ruined everything"). They think they're being supportive of me. They think they're saying what I can't. And honestly? A small part of me understands the anger.

But my kids hear it. Even when they're in the other room, they hear it. And then I notice the shift: they get quiet, they get clingy, they ask questions they didn't used to ask. I don't want them carrying adult bitterness in their little bodies. I don't want them feeling like they have to pick a team. I don't want them thinking they're half "bad," because half of them is their dad.

The problem is: if I confront my family, they act like I'm defending him. Or they say, "We're just telling the truth." Or they get offended and make it about how much they've done for me.

How do I ask them to stop—firmly, clearly, and without igniting a whole new war?

Love,
Overprotective in Oyster Bay

Read Jenny's response →

Dear Overprotective,

You're not overprotective. You're protecting the one thing divorce can't mess with if you guard it well: your kids' emotional safety.

Here's the etiquette rule: Adults can have opinions. Children deserve peace. And you can set that boundary without debating the merits of your ex.

Use VASE—Validate, Acknowledge, Support, Express—and keep it non-negotiable.

Try this script:
"I know you love me and you're angry on my behalf. I get it. But we are not speaking negatively about [Ex] in front of the kids—ever. They don't need adult commentary, and it puts them in the middle. If you need to vent, do it with me privately when the kids aren't around. I appreciate you helping me keep their world steady."

If they argue "but it's true":
"Maybe. Still not in front of the kids."

If they say you're defending him:
"I'm not defending him. I'm defending the kids."

And if they keep doing it, the etiquette consequence is simple: reduce access.
"I'm going to take a break from visits if we can't keep this boundary."

That isn't harsh. That's parenting.

Jenny Says So.

Jenny

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

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Ask Jenny a Question



Falling Leaves and Failing Marriages



Kimberly Lorah | Divorce Coach
Able to work with Divorce Coaching clients all 50 states and Internationally
Able to work with Therapy clients in New Jersey

Learn more about
Mediation Preparation Specialist

Why Autumn Can Bring Marital Problems Into Focus

Summer can provide a temporary escape from almost anything. The sun shines brightly, warm breezes blow, and flowers bloom under blue skies. Schedules become more flexible, children are out of school, families travel, and weekends fill with barbecues and beaches.

Even when a marriage is struggling, the change in routine can make it easier to postpone difficult conversations until after vacation or the start of the school year.

There may also be hope that summer will help. More time together or a family trip might restore the connection. But a change of scenery cannot resolve what has not been addressed. Sometimes arguments follow a couple on vacation, important conversations remain impossible, and the distance between them becomes even more visible.

The Return of the Invisible Load

When fall begins, everyday responsibilities return quickly. School forms, activities, carpools, meals, appointments, bills, and work can expose patterns that were easier to overlook during the summer. If you already carry most of the practical and emotional load, you may realize that you are managing the household, anticipating everyone's needs, and taking care of the children without feeling supported by a partner.

At the same time, the holidays are approaching. The thought of more gatherings, financial pressure, family expectations, and pretending everything is fine can feel exhausting. Autumn becomes a turning point because the year is moving forward and the problems that were postponed are now harder to avoid.

There Is No Perfect Time

There will always be another holiday, birthday, school event, or family commitment that makes the timing feel complicated. Waiting may provide temporary relief, but it does not resolve what has been left unaddressed. At the same time, recognizing that something needs to change does not mean you must make an immediate or irreversible decision.

If fall has brought the truth about your marriage into focus, you do not have to carry the uncertainty, fear, and weight of responsibility alone. The first step may simply be gathering information, identifying your priorities, and understanding your options.

If you are unsure what comes next, I am here to help you slow things down, separate facts from fears, and make thoughtful decisions with greater clarity and confidence. You do not need all the answers today. You only need a safe place to begin.

Ready for your next step? Schedule a complimentary consultation with Kimberly Lorah of Blossom Coaching.

DIVORCE GUIDE:

10 essential questions to ask a children's therapist while navigating your divorce

Divorce is not only challenging for you but also for your children. Kids often struggle to understand the changes in their family dynamics, and they may experience feelings of confusion, sadness, anger, or anxiety. A children's therapist can provide the support they need to process these emotions in a healthy way. Finding the right therapist is crucial to ensuring your child feels safe, heard, and understood. Here are 10 essential questions to ask a potential children's therapist to determine if they are the right fit for your family during this transition.

Choosing the right children's therapist for divorce recovery

1. **What is your experience working with children navigating divorce?** Divorce-specific therapy requires an understanding of how children process grief, conflict, and big changes. A therapist experienced with divorce-related family dynamics can address concerns like loyalty conflicts, communication with both parents, and changes in routine.
   Follow-up questions:
   - How many children have you worked with who were experiencing parental divorce?
   - Are you familiar with addressing custody-related anxiety?
   - Have you supported children through high-conflict divorces?
2. **What therapeutic approaches do you use with children?** Different therapists use different approaches, such as play therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), or family therapy. Understanding their methodology helps you decide if it aligns with your child's personality and needs.
   Follow-up questions:
   - Do you use play therapy, CBT, or art therapy?
   - How do you decide which method is best for each child?
   - Are parents involved in some sessions to support the child's healing?
3. **How do you help children express their feelings about divorce?** Children often struggle to articulate their feelings, especially when navigating big life changes. A therapist skilled in gentle communication techniques can help them express their emotions safely and effectively.
   Follow-up questions:
   - Do you use creative methods like drawing or storytelling?
   - How do you encourage children to talk about their worries or fears?
   - Are there specific activities designed to help with emotional expression?
4. **How do you handle situations where a child is resistant to therapy?** Not all children are open to therapy right away. Understanding how the therapist manages resistance can help you gauge their patience and skill in building trust.
   Follow-up questions:
   - What strategies do you use to make children feel comfortable?
   - How long does it typically take for children to open up?
   - Do you involve parents if a child is resistant?
5. **How do you communicate with parents about their child's progress?** It's crucial to stay informed about your child's emotional well-being during therapy. Knowing how the therapist updates parents helps you feel connected to your child's progress.
   Follow-up questions:
   - Do you provide regular updates or progress reports?
   - Are parents included in sessions occasionally?
   - How do you handle privacy and confidentiality?
6. **Are you experienced with co-parenting situations and blended families?** Divorce often includes co-parenting challenges or the introduction of blended families. A therapist familiar with these dynamics can help your child adjust and express their feelings constructively.
   Follow-up questions:
   - Have you worked with children who split time between two households?
   - Do you provide support for children adjusting to blended families?
   - How do you manage situations where parents have conflicting parenting styles?
7. **Are your sessions in-person, virtual, or both?** Flexibility matters, especially if you're managing shared custody or living in different locations. Knowing the therapist's availability can help you plan for consistent care.
   Follow-up questions:
   - Do you offer virtual sessions if in-person is not possible?
   - Are weekend or after-school appointments available?
   - Can you accommodate fluctuating schedules due to custody arrangements?

8. **What are your fees, and how are they structured?** Therapy can be a long-term commitment, and understanding the costs upfront helps you plan accordingly. Ask about insurance, session costs, and payment plans.
   Follow-up questions:
   - Do you accept insurance, or is it private pay only?
   - Are there package deals for multiple sessions?
   - What is your cancellation or rescheduling policy?
9. **How do you help children navigate loyalty conflicts and communication issues between parents?** Divorce sometimes places children in the middle of conflict, leading to loyalty struggles and communication challenges. A skilled therapist can help them navigate these feelings without guilt or anxiety.
   Follow-up questions:
   - Do you address loyalty conflicts directly with the child?
   - How do you handle situations where children feel stuck between parents?
   - Can you mediate discussions to help children express their feelings safely?
10. **Can you provide references or testimonials from parents of children you've worked with?** Hearing from other parents about their child's progress and the therapist's approach can help you feel confident in your decision. Testimonials provide real-world insights into the therapist's impact.
    Follow-up questions:
    - Can you share testimonials from families you've worked with?
    - Are there references I can contact?
    - Do you have success stories of helping children transition through divorce?

It's important to remember that…

Finding the right therapist for your child during a divorce is one of the most supportive things you can do for their emotional health. The right professional will help them express their feelings, navigate family changes, and build resilience in a safe environment. By asking these ten essential questions, you can be confident that the therapist you choose is skilled, compassionate, and equipped to handle the unique challenges your child may face.



Get Your Fresh Starts Gear

Podcast Spotlight: The Families First Podcast, Hosted by Ron Platt

When you're in the middle of a divorce, the questions don't arrive one at a time. Do you call an attorney first, or is mediation an option? Who helps you divide what you built together? And how do you support your kids through it while you're still finding your own footing? The Families First Podcast is built around those questions. It's a library of conversations for people looking for answers about divorce, with new episodes at least once a week. Guests include divorce coaches and relationship experts, alongside men and women sharing their own divorce stories. There are episodes from parents on helping children through the emotional side of divorce, conversations about whether to hire an attorney, a mediator, or someone else, and even information on free help with child custody issues.

Where to start: Lamon Wade's story

If you're looking for something to listen to right now, start here. Lamon Wade talks about his search for help and finding a therapist who helped him understand that there aren't always answers, and how learning to cope with that made room for a healthier recovery and future.

The show's team chose this one with men in mind. Many men find it hard to ask for help, and when old issues go unresolved, the same patterns tend to repeat. Lamon's perspective might be the nudge someone needs to find a therapist of their own.

Why more than one resource matters

A theme that runs through the show: divorce rarely calls for just one kind of help. A few of the questions it explores:

- Once you've decided to file, is an attorney the right first call, or are there other options?
- If you and your spouse are amicable, could a divorce coach be the answer?
- How does the division of assets begin, and who do you hire to help with it?
- Could an online divorce be a good fit, or would a concierge divorce service help you find the resources you need?

About NASDF

The team behind the show hopes listeners come away knowing about NASDF, which offers membership to support people both before and after divorce. Their aim is to be a resource from the start of the process through to welcoming your new single life, helping families make informed decisions and build a stronger foundation.



Listen Now



The Biggest Misconceptions About Divorce, According to a Divorce Professional

with Isabel Sanchez, Financial Coach

Can you introduce yourself—your name, role, and how you support people during divorce?

I'm Isabel Sanchez, a financial coach and founder of MES Financial Coaching. I work with women and couples going through major life changes, including divorce. A lot can shift financially during that time, and even things that used to feel simple can suddenly feel confusing. We slow things down, look at what is happening with their money, organize what feels overwhelming, and figure out what needs attention first. From there, they can make financial decisions with more confidence and have a clearer picture of what comes next.

Why did you choose to specialize in divorce work?

Divorce can change so many parts of a person's financial life at once. Income may change, expenses can shift, and decisions that used to be shared may suddenly fall on one person. I was drawn to this work because I saw how overwhelming that can feel when someone is already dealing with so many other changes. Having a place to sort through the financial side, understand what has changed, and focus on what needs attention can make the transition feel much more manageable.

In your experience, what's the #1 thing people don't understand about divorce?

I think one of the biggest things people do not realize is that the financial adjustment often continues long after the divorce is final. The paperwork may be done, but your day-to-day life is still changing. You may be adjusting to a different income, new expenses, added responsibilities, or financial tasks your former spouse used to handle. It can take time for those changes to feel normal, and people are often surprised by how long that adjustment can last.

What are some common myths you see (from TV, movies, or general assumptions) that just aren't true?
One of the biggest myths is that divorce means starting over from nothing. Your financial life may look very different afterward, but different does not mean hopeless. You are not starting with nothing. You are starting from where you are now, with the information and resources you have. TV and movies also tend to make every money conversation look like a fight.

In real life, things can be complicated, but not every financial decision has to turn into a battle.

What do friends and family often misunderstand about supporting someone going through divorce?

Friends and family usually want to help, but sometimes that turns into giving advice or telling someone what they think they should do. When someone is already trying to process so much, more opinions can actually make things feel harder. Sometimes the best support is simply listening without judgment or pressure. Practical help can matter too, whether that means encouraging them to get organized, write down their questions, or connect with the right professional when they need more support.



How do emotions, finances, and legal realities often clash in ways people don't expect?

They do not always move at the same pace. You may be dealing with legal deadlines or financial decisions while you are still trying to adjust emotionally to what is happening. At the same time, your household, routines, and responsibilities may be changing too. That can make even everyday money decisions feel harder than usual. Sometimes the pressure to make decisions comes before someone feels ready, and that can be one of the hardest parts of the process.

From your perspective, what makes divorce harder than people imagine?

I think people often expect to feel settled once the biggest pieces are behind them. But even after the legal process is over, there can still be a lot to adjust to. Your routines may be different, your financial responsibilities may have changed, and you may be making decisions on your own that used to be shared. It can take time before your new normal actually feels normal. That in-between stage is something people do not always expect, and the adjustment can last longer than they imagined.

What makes it easier, once people understand it better?

It gets easier when you stop feeling like you have to figure out everything at once. You do not need to solve your entire financial future today. You just need to understand what is happening now, what needs your attention first, and what can wait. Breaking things into smaller pieces makes it feel much more manageable. Once you have a clearer picture of your money, decisions usually feel less intimidating because you are working from actual information instead of fear or uncertainty.

How do you guide clients through these hidden truths?

Through the Intentional Money Journey, I help clients work through their finances in a way that feels manageable instead of overwhelming. We look at what is coming in, what is going out, what responsibilities have changed, and what needs attention first. We also build a spending plan that reflects the life they are living now. I do not expect clients to have all the answers when they come in. We work through it together, one step at a time, so they can feel more organized and confident about what they are doing next.

What's one message you wish every person could hear about divorce?

Divorce may change your financial life, but it does not define what comes next. You can still make thoughtful decisions, build new routines, and create a financial life that reflects where you are now. Things may look different than you expected, but different does not mean less stable, less secure, or less intentional. You can move forward with a clearer understanding of your money and more confidence in the choices you make for yourself.



Isabel Sanchez | Financial Coach
Able to work with clients all 50 states and Internationally

MES Financial Coaching, LLC.

What to consider when you're considering divorce: everything you need to know about parenting plans

Divorce is never an easy decision, especially when children are involved. One of the most important aspects of navigating this transition is creating a parenting plan that works for everyone—especially your kids. A well-thought-out parenting plan can provide stability, set expectations, and reduce conflict, helping your family adjust to this new chapter with as much ease as possible.

We'll explore what a parenting plan is, why it's essential, and the key factors to consider when crafting one. From understanding legal requirements to addressing practical concerns like schedules, communication, and holidays, we'll guide you through the process step by step. Whether you're just beginning to explore the possibility of divorce or already in the thick of it, this guide will help you prioritize what matters most: the well-being of your children.

What is a Parenting Plan?

A parenting plan is a written agreement that outlines how parents will share responsibilities and care for their children after a divorce or separation. It covers important details like where the children will live, how decisions about their education, health, and activities will be made, and when each parent will spend time with them. Essentially, it helps create a clear and consistent framework to ensure that your kids feel supported and cared for, even when their parents live in separate homes.

Who Needs a Parenting Plan?

Any parents who are separating or divorcing and have children under 18 typically need a parenting plan. It's especially important if you want to avoid misunderstandings or disagreements about parenting responsibilities. Many courts require a parenting plan as part of the divorce process to ensure both parents are on the same page when it comes to raising their kids.

Who Can Help You Write a Parenting Plan?

You don't have to create a parenting plan alone. Professionals who can help include:

- **Family law attorneys**: They can ensure your plan meets legal requirements and protects everyone's rights.
- **Mediators**: Neutral third parties who can guide you and your co-parent to reach agreements in a cooperative way.
- **Parenting coordinators or counselors**: They can help address emotional aspects and create a plan that works for your family.
- **Court resources**: Many courts offer templates or require specific details in your plan.

1. Living Arrangements

- What it entails: Specifies where the child will live and how their time will be divided between parents. This includes regular schedules, holidays, vacations, and special occasions.
- How to Discuss: Approach the conversation by emphasizing consistency for the child. Say, "It's important for [child's name] to feel secure and know when they'll see each of us. Let's create a schedule that works for everyone."
- Tips: Use a calendar to outline daily, weekly, and holiday schedules. Be flexible but prioritize the child's routine.

2. Decision-Making Authority

- What it entails: Clarifies who makes major decisions about education, health, religion, and extracurricular activities.
- How to Discuss: Frame the discussion around collaboration. Say, "We both care deeply about [child's name]'s future. Let's decide how to share decision-making in a way that respects both of our roles."
- Tips: Consider joint decision-making for big issues and designate clear responsibilities for day-to-day choices.

3. Communication Guidelines

- What it entails: Establishes how parents and children will communicate, including methods, frequency, and rules for respectful interactions.
- How to Discuss: Highlight the importance of open communication for the child's well-being. Say, "Staying connected with [child's name] and each other will help things go smoothly. Let's agree on ways to communicate respectfully."
- Tips: Agree on using tools like co-parenting apps and set boundaries for calls or messages to avoid conflict.

4. Child Support and Expenses

- What it entails: Details financial responsibilities, including child support, medical costs, educational expenses, and extracurricular activities.
- How to Discuss: Focus on fairness and the child's needs. Say, "Let's make sure [child's name] has everything they need, and we'll split the costs fairly."
- Tips: Use state guidelines to calculate child support and outline how to handle unexpected expenses.

5. Health and Medical Care

- What it entails: Specifies how medical decisions will be made, including insurance, regular checkups, and emergencies.
- How to Discuss: Emphasize the importance of preparedness. Say, "It's vital that [child's name] gets the care they need without confusion. Let's create a clear plan for their medical needs."
- Tips: Decide who holds the insurance and how medical appointments and emergencies will be communicated.

6. Education

- What it entails: Covers school choice, parent-teacher communication, and involvement in the child's education.
- How to Discuss: Center on supporting the child's learning. Say, "Education is key for [child's name]. Let's make decisions that help them thrive in school."
- Tips: Agree on how to handle school changes, share progress reports, and attend school events.

7. Holidays and Special Occasions

- What it entails: Outlines how holidays, birthdays, and other special events will be shared.
- How to Discuss: Acknowledge the importance of traditions. Say, "Holidays are special for [child's name]. Let's create a schedule that allows them to celebrate with both of us."
- Tips: Alternate holidays yearly or split the day, based on what's best for the child.

8. Extracurricular Activities

- What it entails: Decides how to support the child's activities, including transportation, scheduling, and costs.
- How to Discuss: Highlight the value of their interests. Say, "[Child's name] loves [activity]. Let's work together to make sure they can keep enjoying it."
- Tips: Agree on sharing costs and coordinating schedules.

9. Conflict Resolution

- What it entails: Establishes how disagreements will be handled to avoid ongoing tension.
- How to Discuss: Focus on reducing stress. Say, "Disagreements might happen, but let's agree on a healthy way to resolve them for [child's name]'s sake."
- Tips: Include mediation or a neutral third party if conflicts arise.

10. Flexibility and Modifications

- What it entails: Provides a process for adjusting the plan as the child grows or circumstances change.
- How to Discuss: Stress the need for adaptability. Say, "Life changes, and so do kids' needs. Let's include a way to revisit this plan as necessary."
- Tips: Schedule periodic reviews and allow for open communication about adjustments.

Divorce comes with a lot of questions.

Here's a place to ask them.

Divorce Ask Anything is a Facebook group for your divorce questions, big and small with answers from real, vetted Divorce Professionals.

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Not a substitute for professional legal, financial, or mental health guidance.

DIVORCE HAPPENS COMMUNITY TOOL KIT:

When a Longtime Friend Goes Silent After You Announce a Divorce

Quick Answer: A close friend withdrawing right after learning about a divorce often reflects that friend's own discomfort, fear, or uncertainty about how to respond, rather than something the person going through the divorce did wrong. Reaching out one final time and eventually letting go aren't mutually exclusive; a single, honest, low-pressure message can provide clarity without requiring ongoing pursuit. Extended silence following genuine attempts to reconnect can itself be treated as meaningful information. This kind of friendship loss represents its own distinct grief, separate from the grief of the marriage ending, and deserves to be recognized on its own terms.

Experiencing a close, long-term friend withdrawing or going silent immediately after learning about a divorce, without explanation or conflict, is a disorienting and often under-discussed form of loss during an already difficult time.

A Friend's Withdrawal Often Reflects Their Own Discomfort

When a friend goes silent immediately after learning about someone's divorce, this often reflects that friend's own fear, discomfort, or uncertainty, rather than indicating something the other person did wrong. Witnessing a close friend's marriage end can prompt uncomfortable reflection on one's own relationship, which some people are unprepared to face directly.

Common Reasons Behind This Kind of Withdrawal

People sometimes withdraw from a friend going through divorce because they don't know what to say and fear saying the wrong thing, feel pressure to take sides even when not asked to, or are unsettled by confronting questions about their own relationship. These reasons don't reduce the pain of the silence, but they clarify that it's unlikely to reflect a mistake by the person experiencing it.

One More Attempt and Accepting Distance Aren't Mutually Exclusive

Reaching out one final time and eventually accepting distance from a friendship aren't opposing choices. A single, honest, low-pressure message can provide genuine clarity and closure, regardless of the response received, without requiring continued pursuit of the relationship.

Extended Silence Can Itself Be Meaningful Information

When repeated attempts to reconnect over an extended period receive no response, this pattern can reasonably be treated as meaningful information on its own, without requiring further attempts to interpret or resolve the situation.

Friendship Loss During Divorce Is Its Own Distinct Grief

Losing a significant, long-term friendship during a divorce represents a separate form of grief from the loss of the marriage itself, and deserves to be recognized and processed on its own terms rather than folded entirely into grief over the marriage.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did my close friend stop responding to me after I told her I was getting divorced? This often reflects the friend's own discomfort, fear, or uncertainty about how to respond, rather than something done wrong, and can sometimes stem from uncomfortable reflection the situation prompts about her own relationship.

Should I reach out to a friend who's gone silent one more time, or just let it go? These aren't mutually exclusive. A single, honest, low-pressure message can provide clarity and closure regardless of the response, without requiring ongoing pursuit of the friendship.

How long should I keep trying to reconnect with a friend who isn't responding? Extended silence following genuine attempts to reconnect can reasonably be treated as meaningful information on its own, and continued attempts aren't required to reach a resolution.

Is losing a friendship during divorce a real loss worth grieving? Yes. This represents its own distinct grief, separate from the loss of the marriage, and deserves to be recognized and processed on its own terms.

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Thankful-ish: A Gratitude Mad Lib

Gratitude doesn't have to be profound to count. Fill in your words first, without reading the story (we're trusting you). Then copy them into the blanks and see what you've made.

Step 1: Your words

No peeking at Step 2.

_____ **1.** plural noun	_____ **2.** someone who showed up	_____ **3.** adjective	_____ **4.** food
_____ **5.** something mildly annoying	_____ **6.** verb ending in -ed	_____ **7.** place	_____ **8.** unsolicited advice
_____ **9.** verb ending in -ed	_____ **10.** activity ending in -ing	_____ **11.** number	_____ **12.** plural noun
_____ **13.** adjective	_____ **14.** everyday object	_____ **15.** small treat	_____ **16.** your name

Step 2: Your story

Copy each word into its matching number.

This November, I'm grateful for _____1_____, _____2_____, and the surprisingly _____3_____ _____4_____.

Even though _____5_____ is still a thing, I _____6_____ without crying in _____7_____. Small win. I'll take it.

Someone told me to "_____8_____." I nodded politely, then _____9_____ instead.

My new favorite way to reset is _____10_____ with _____11_____ _____12_____ nearby. Highly recommend.

This year taught me I'm more _____13_____ than I thought, and that _____14_____ is, in fact, essential.

In December, I'm treating myself to _____15_____. I've earned it.

Thankful-ish,

_____*16*_____

Brief Lifeclass: Narcissistic Maneuvering 101



Stacey Sanderson | Therapist
Able to work with Therapy clients in Ontario, Canada
Able to work with Coaching/Consulting clients in all 50 states and Internationally

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Every so often a theme emerges as I am working with clients. Last week was no exception! One of the most painful things I hear is how those people in our lives who are highly narcissistic find a way to passively avoid, dismiss or ghost us during the times and events that are important to us. For example, you invite a friend or loved one to your home for an occasion, they say they can't make it, they are busy, but then you learn (perhaps by their social media activity) that they are spending time with someone else. They can use silence to completely bypass your attempt to reach out, invite or include, as well. In group chats, they may hang out, waiting to see how someone else answers to determine if they will attend or participate.

As a general rule, narcissists prefer to spend time with people on their own terms. This is generally so they can control the environment and allow for their continued access to narcissistic supply. Narcissists regulate their emotions by being in situations that feed their ego - it creates a sense of equanimity for them. I also think they like to look at full schedules, or fill time with appointments, events, social commitments, again it helps them to feel important, it feeds their grandiosity. They feel entitled to your time, but also equally entitled to disrespect it. You may notice they are often late, or cancel at the last minute, as examples of that. On the topic of passive avoidance, if it doesn't serve their agenda, or if it is an event where someone else is the centre of attention, they may skip it altogether. They do so with some fairly creative excuses, I may add.

What does the term maneuver refer to in this scenario? It is generally planned actions to allow for a particular outcome. When a narcissist goes silent or avoids something, they are most definitely holding out for something that benefits them - including not participating in something where they may feel vulnerable. I also believe it helps them to feel powerful. This allows for them to fulfill their own agenda.

For example, if you really enjoy Japanese food, they may not get back to you for that sushi invite, but will change their mind if you offer to go to their favourite Mexican place. This is all about withholding until they get their way. This is typically a behaviour that you can track as a pattern. Withholding and passive avoidance will most definitely be ways that narcissists try to control the pace and outcomes of family court proceedings. They will, for example, take months to submit their required documentation. They will silently refuse to respond to any requests from your legal team, but will instantly demand things from you. In my experience narcissists will file motions, make demands, challenge your requests, JUST before you have the kids - if there is custody sharing. This is an example of maneuvering, controlling what they can control to influence what is happening for you. It is also a way to keep you thinking about them and in the old role you had that served them.

Entitlement, grandiosity, lack of empathy and perspective-taking are all reasons this happens. The maneuvering takes place to keep them from feeling like they are not in control and to continue to be in your orbit even if in this sick way.

Related resources

- If this resonates and you're already working with a therapist, you might find When You Already Have a Therapist helpful. It speaks directly to that question.
- For deeper support with narcissistic recovery, Heart Wide Open is the subscription coaching program that guides you through the reclamation work.
- For the full framework in book form: Heart Wide Open: A Holistic Guide to Self Recovery from Narcissistic Wounding.
- For therapists, counselors, coaches, and clinicians working with narcissistic abuse clients: the Working Wisely with Narcissism Masterclass is a clinical training built for practitioners across modalities.



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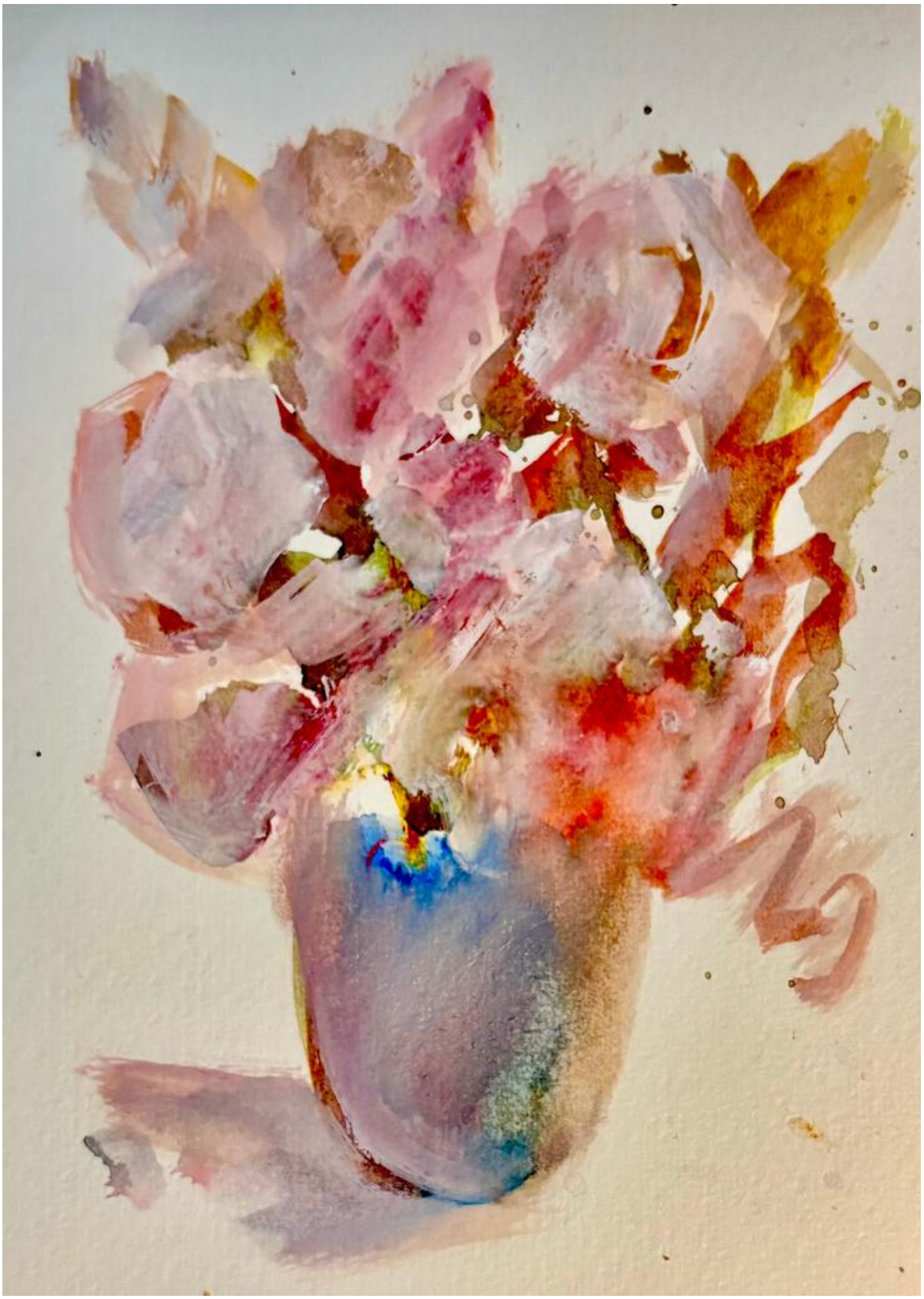
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