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divorce guide magazine

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

published by Fresh Starts Registry

Expert Feature: Amy Slate
*on trading the sale pitch for
the long game of real estate*

Lisa Lisser
*on the four boundaries that make
living together survivable*

Expert Feature: Donna Cates
*on getting clear on your numbers
before anything else*

Ksenia Muench
*on the conversations no one else will
have with you*

Leah Marie Mazur
*on rebuilding trust in yourself,
one small promise at a time*

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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Welcome to Divorce Guide Magazine

Our Mission

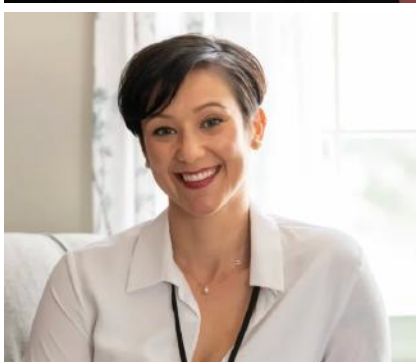
At Divorce Guide Magazine, our mission is simple: to bring clarity, compassion, and community to one of life's most disorienting transitions. We believe that divorce deserves thoughtful guidance, stigma-free conversations, and accessible support. Our goal is to empower readers with knowledge, language, 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.

August Events from Fresh Starts



Kristina St. Cyr, Divorce Coach is joining Fresh Starts to host: Beyond the Schedule: Building a Child-Centered Parenting Plan on Wednesday, August 05 at 12:00 PM EST. Learn more and sign up [HERE!](#)



Rachel Lovitt, Fitness Teacher is joining Fresh Starts to host: Movement and Sound for Ease and Support on Monday, August 10 at 12:00 PM EST. Learn more and sign up [HERE!](#)



Amanda Mason, SOLAGREE® is joining Fresh Starts to host: How a Phased Approach to Divorce Can Save Your Time, Fees, and Spirit on Wednesday, August 19 at 12:45 PM EST. Learn more and sign up [HERE!](#)



Jessica Zadjura, Family Law Attorney is joining Fresh Starts to host: 18 and Legal: The 4 Documents Every Young Adult Needs on Wednesday, August 26 at 1:30 PM EST. Learn more and sign up [HERE!](#)

A LETTER FROM OUR EDITOR:

August is a Doorway

August doesn't get much credit. It's not the relief of June or the reset of September — it's the month where nothing much happens on purpose. Summer's already spent its momentum. Fall hasn't shown up yet to make you buy notebooks and pretend you have a plan. It just sits there, a little too hot, a little too quiet.

But maybe that's the wrong way to see it. August isn't empty — it's a doorway. A liminal month, standing between two seasons, belonging fully to neither. And if you're divorced or divorcing, you already know this kind of threshold. It's the space after the decision and before the new life actually starts — after the papers, after the telling people, after the version of you that had to be brave out loud. And before whatever comes next has any shape at all.

Nobody warns you about the in-between. We talk a lot about the decision to leave, and eventually we talk about who you become after. But the doorway itself — the part where you're technically free and still standing in it, one foot in each season — doesn't get its own chapter. It should.

So consider this your permission slip for August: you don't have to walk through yet. Standing in a doorway isn't the same as being stuck. Sometimes it's just where you are — and portals, by nature, only open when they're ready.

We'll see you in September.

Jenny

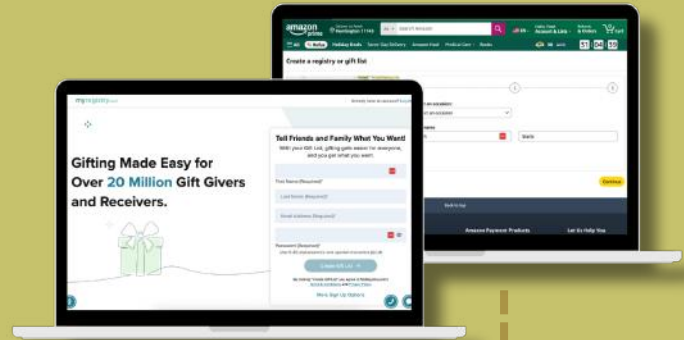
Co-Founder of Fresh Starts Registry
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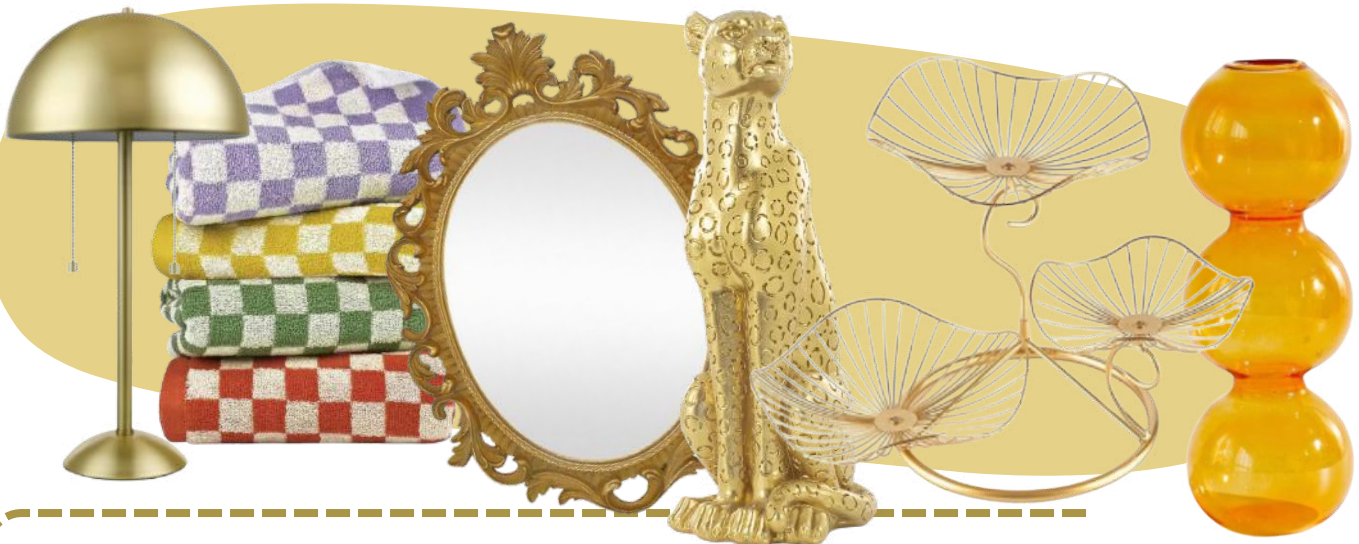
Build Your Divorce Registry with Fresh Starts Registry

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 100 now!

Get supported by your community during your time of rebuild!



Definitely NOT the Registry Fairy

5 Small Ways to Start Trusting Yourself Again After Divorce



by Leah Marie Mazur, Divorce Coach

Learn more about
Mindfully Ready

After divorce, one of the hardest things to rebuild isn't your routine, your finances, or even your confidence. It's trust in yourself.

You may find yourself second-guessing every decision, constantly seeking reassurance from others, replaying the past, or wondering how you didn't see certain things sooner.

You might ask yourself:

- How did I end up here?
- Can I trust my judgment?
- What if I make another mistake?

If you've ever had those thoughts, you're not alone.

The truth is, self-trust isn't rebuilt through one big, life-changing decision. It's rebuilt in the small moments when you begin showing up for yourself again.

Here are five simple ways to start.

1 Keep one small promise to yourself every day.

Self-trust grows when your actions align with your intentions.

Start small. Go for the walk you said you were going to take. Drink the water. Read the chapter. Put your phone away before bed.

It isn't about perfection. It's about proving to yourself that your needs matter and that you can rely on yourself. Every promise kept becomes evidence. And evidence builds trust.

2 Stop asking everyone else what they think.

Many women become disconnected from their own inner wisdom after years of prioritizing everyone else's needs, opinions, and comfort.

Before seeking advice, pause and ask yourself: "What do I actually want?"

You don't have to make every decision alone, but learning to consult yourself first is a powerful act of self-trust. Your voice deserves a seat at the table.

3 Pay attention to where you're abandoning yourself.

Self-abandonment often looks subtle:

- Saying yes when you mean no.
- Ignoring your own exhaustion.
- Avoiding difficult conversations to keep the peace.
- Settling because it's familiar.

Healing starts when you notice these moments without judgment and gently choose differently. Each time you honor your needs, you strengthen your relationship with yourself.

4 Practice making low-stakes decisions.

When you've lost confidence in yourself, even simple choices can feel overwhelming. Start rebuilding your decision-making muscle in everyday situations:

- Choose the restaurant.
- Pick the paint color.
- Sign up for the class.
- Trust yourself to decide what movie to watch without polling five friends first.

The goal isn't to make the "perfect" choice. The goal is to remind yourself that you can handle the outcome. Confidence isn't built by avoiding decisions, it's built by making them.

5 Look for evidence of your resilience.

You have already survived things you once thought would break you.

You've had hard conversations, you've navigated uncertainty, you've shown up for your children, you've rebuilt pieces of your life that once felt impossible to imagine.

The problem is that many women focus so much on what they got wrong that they overlook everything they've done right.

Start keeping track of the evidence.

Write down your wins, celebrate your progress, and acknowledge your courage. You are far more capable than you give yourself credit for.

Final Thoughts

Trusting yourself again after divorce doesn't happen overnight. It's built one decision, one boundary, one promise, and one act of self respect at a time.

You don't have to have all the answers today, you just have to start. Because the goal isn't to become someone entirely new, the goal is to reconnect with the woman you've always been beneath the fear, self-doubt, and survival mode.

And the beautiful thing about self-trust is that once you begin rebuilding it, it changes everything. The way you make decisions, the relationships you choose, the boundaries you set, and the life you create.

You don't need to be fearless to trust yourself again. You just need to take the next small step. And then another. Leah Marie Mazur is a Divorce Recovery Coach and founder of Mindfully Ready. She helps divorced moms rebuild self-trust, emotional stability, confidence, and identity so they can stop abandoning themselves and create a life they genuinely love after divorce.

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:

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- 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.

Divorce 101 A–Z: A Is for Affidavit (and August)



August is often a month of quiet preparation. Summer slows, fall looms, and many people find themselves organizing paperwork, calendars, and plans for what comes next. In divorce, that same energy shows up in one deceptively simple but powerful document: the affidavit.

An affidavit is a written statement made under oath. When you sign an affidavit, you're swearing that the information you're providing is true to the best of your knowledge—just as if you were testifying in court. That's what makes affidavits so important. They are not informal explanations or rough drafts. They are legal evidence.

In divorce, affidavits show up in many forms. Financial affidavits outline income, expenses, assets, and debts. Parenting affidavits may describe caregiving routines, schedules, or concerns. Affidavits can also support motions related to custody, support, or safety. Judges rely on them to understand what's happening outside the courtroom.

Because affidavits carry legal weight, accuracy matters. Guessing, minimizing, or omitting information can create serious problems later—especially if documents don't align with bank records, tax returns, or testimony. This isn't about being perfect; it's about being honest and thorough.

August is a fitting time to talk about affidavits because they require focus and intention. They ask you to slow

down, gather facts, and tell the truth of your situation clearly and calmly. That can feel daunting, especially when emotions are still raw. But affidavits are also an opportunity: to put your reality on record in your own words.

If you're navigating divorce right now, take affidavits seriously—and give yourself time to complete them carefully. Ask questions. Get support if needed. These documents help shape decisions that affect your finances, your parenting, and your future. Clarity here isn't just legal—it's foundational.



Listen to Divorce 101!

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Photo courtesy of Kayla Teves of Monarch Collaborative

Amy Slate

The Break Up Broker

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 Amy Slate, a Real Estate Consultant, whose work helps clients find clarity, strength, and a true fresh start.

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

After a few decades in education I realized I needed to make a change. Having done some personal real estate investing, I was encouraged by my then husband get my real estate license and become a Realtor®. Over the past 8 years, I've loved my work, but there was always a missing piece, and I didn't feel totally fulfilled. Ironically, a few years ago, that same husband who encouraged me to become a Realtor® decided he wanted a divorce, which is what led me to create The Breakup Broker. And it has been exactly what I need to feel fulfilled in my work. I talk to incredible women every day who just need a kind, caring expert to help them understand their options.

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

Like many of us, my personal story inspired me to do this work. Having to make numerous real estate decisions during the course of my divorce was overwhelming and stressful, and I did real estate for a living! I was in all the divorce Facebook groups and kept seeing women ask questions and get well-intentioned but incorrect advice from strangers. I decided I was going to fix that. The Breakup Broker was born out of my own experience and those of many other women walking the same path. I knew that I had what was needed to be a trusted, caring guide for people navigating real estate decisions during divorce, separation, and breakup. What I didn't know was how absolutely fulfilling it would be and what an honor it is to be trusted by people during some of the most difficult moments in their lives. I will never take that for granted.

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

I am a real estate concierge. Although I am licensed and active in Massachusetts and Florida, I support clients across the globe in understanding their real estate options. I am not the agent who is going to put a sign in your front yard and host an open house. I'm meeting with you long before that happens, if it happens at all. I support my clients by strategizing about their particular situation. We go through all the facts and feelings, and discuss the main categories that influence the decision: logistics, finances, and emotions. And we come up with a game plan. We talk about next steps, decide what other professionals might need to be brought in to support, and I make those connections. I am here for the long haul, as a member of the divorce team to help the process to be as smooth and supported as possible.

What makes your approach to working with clients unique?

Unlike many real estate agents, I am not looking for the sale. I am here to empower and educate the clients I meet with so they can make the best decision for their family and their specific situation. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to someone's housing needs. Every family, couple, and individual has their own set of circumstances, and finding the best options for them is what is really crucial. The answer isn't always "sell the house". In fact, in today's real estate market, that is rarely the answer.

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

That I am fluent in French! Among the real estate properties that I have bought and sold over the years, one was an adorable apartment in Southwest France. I no longer own that apartment, but have dreams of buying another one. I'm actually working with a group of women right now to co-own something in France where we can host retreats, stay for our own personal vacations, or rent out to family and friends.

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

Absolutely. I have been in their shoes. I have had to make decisions about whether I wanted to keep a property, get bought out, or sell it. Each of those options came with its own list of to-dos and tasks that felt never-ending. And I always questioned if I was making the right move. Aside from the real estate piece, there are just the wacky anecdotes that come along with navigating divorce, having to communicate with

someone you can't stand, unscrambling the mess of joint bank accounts, and name changes. I've got stories for all of it, and they usually get a much-needed laugh from the women I talk to.

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

As an introvert, I value my quiet time more than many others, so a reset after a long day is non-negotiable. It likely involves sitting in silence, listening to the birds, the rustle of leaves, or, if I'm lucky, the ocean waves. If it has been especially hectic, I will light some incense and do a meditation, just to get my nervous system back to its happy place.

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

Empowering, empathetic, strategic.

What does "fresh start" mean to you personally?

I am living my fresh start every day. I get to decide who I spend my time with, where I spend my time, and most importantly, how I spend my time. Many will say that a fresh start is an opportunity to reinvent yourself, but I think it's really just coming home to who you really were all along.

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

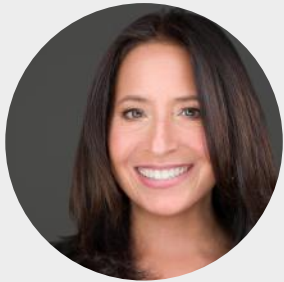
Amy Slate, The Breakup Broker
Real Estate Consultant

Able to work with clients in all 50 states and Internationally

The Breakup Broker

Photo courtesy of Kayla Teves of Monarch Collaborative

Living Together During Divorce: The Strange Space Between What Was and What's Next



Lisa Lisser, Divorce Coach

Learn more about
LZL Coaching

You've said the D word, or your spouse said the D word. It's really happening, and you don't know what's next. Your emotions are exploding. Anger, relief, fear, confusion, denial, grief. Your brain is full of questions. And maybe the biggest, most terrifying question is: What about the house? Where will I live?

The family home is fraught with emotions. You created memories there, babies may have been born there, at one time you imagined you would entertain your grandchildren there. And now, everything has changed.

Every morning, you wake up in the same house. You pass each other in the kitchen. You coordinate schedules. You pay the bills. Take out the garbage, and hear the familiar sounds of a life that is ending. And yet there you are. Living in a space that looks strangely familiar, but unnervingly foreign.

It's hard.

People often assume that once a couple decides to divorce, somebody moves out and each person begins their separate life. Sometimes that's true. A lot of the time, it isn't.

Housing is expensive. Finances are complicated. Children need stability. Lawyers may advise against moving. Sometimes there simply isn't another place to go. So couples find themselves in this strange middle ground: no longer feeling married, but not yet legally separate. And that space can be one of the hardest parts of divorce. Because the challenge isn't just sharing a house.

The challenge is learning how to live with uncertainty.

The goal is not to pretend everything is fine. The goal is to create enough structure, clarity, and compassion to get through this temporary chapter without causing unnecessary harm to yourself or your children.

Needing Certainty while Living in Uncertainty

One of the reasons living together while divorcing feels so disorienting is that you aren't simply sharing a house. You're living in the middle of a huge identity shift. The roles that once felt clear—spouse, partner, teammate—are changing. You want certainty, and yet the new version of your life hasn't fully emerged.

You're standing in the space between what was and what's next. It's narrow. It's tight.
And that's uncomfortable.

The truth is that there isn't a perfect roadmap. Divorce rarely unfolds in a straight line.

What I do know is this. People tend to do better when they create enough structure to help everyone breathe. Not rigid rules, but supports to hold onto.

The Four Boundaries That Help Everyone Breathe

- Physical Boundaries
- Parenting Boundaries
- Financial Boundaries
- Emotional Boundaries

Physical Boundaries: Everyone Needs a Place to Exhale

One of the first things I encourage couples to do is create separate living spaces whenever possible. Sometimes, my clients ask me if they are allowed to ask their partners to move to a different room. Yes, you are allowed to sleep apart. In some cases, that can mean separate bedrooms in a home where that's available. It can also mean converting a family room, office, or basement into temporary private space. What if my spouse won't move? You have the ability to move to another space as well. You have agency here.

The goal isn't punishment. The goal is creating enough room for each person to begin the process of becoming the next version of yourself.

Physical boundaries are often the first step toward accepting that not only is the relationship changing, but also your identity is changing.

Parenting Boundaries: Children Need Predictability More Than Perfection

When you have children, it is essential to help them make sense of a change they didn't choose. They are living through this transition too. Children don't need parents who never make mistakes. They need parents who create predictability. Build a schedule and let the kids know how it works. Give them confidence to know who is handling school drop-offs, soccer practice, homework, lunches. Help them understand what happens on weekends.

The clearer the expectations, the safer children feel.

Understand that this is the beginning of your co-parenting relationship. You are creating a new model for how you interact. At the same time you may be grieving the end of the relationship that was. It's hard. It takes practice. But it's possible.

Every conversation about schedules, routines, and responsibilities is an opportunity to begin building that next chapter. It is a practice. Both how you speak to each other and how you speak about each other will make a difference in your children's sense of safety and security.

Because most importantly, children need permission to love both of their parents.

Financial Boundaries: Clarity Reduces Conflict

Divorce creates uncertainty, and uncertainty often creates anxiety, especially about money. Money has a way of magnifying conflict.

During divorce, information gaps about money increase insecurity. You will need transparency about the assets and liabilities, but that might not be the first step in creating a financial boundary. In the beginning, it may be more critical to create a system for paying day to day expenses, like groceries, clothes, haircuts, and medical expenses.. Think about how you paid for these expenses in the past and build a plan that specifically makes clear how it will work now in the "in between." Remember, you are setting the stage for a new financial relationship.

This isn't the time for surprises.

Some people come to me and share that their spouse controls all financial information. How can you create a system when they don't share information? This may be

just the moment to find your voice, speak with confidence and share that setting up a structure now is part of your effort to reduce conflict later. This is not just important for the two of you, it's important for your kids.

Transparency and communication won't eliminate financial stress, but they can prevent unnecessary conflict. These are the kinds of decisions that can establish how you will live out your values during the divorce.

And while we're talking about household responsibilities, let's not forget the dog.

The dog needs a schedule too.

Emotional Boundaries: The Hardest and Most Important Boundary of All

Even though your spouse may still be living in the same house, they are no longer your primary emotional partner. Sometimes, it might feel like they actually are focused on hurting you.

That's a painful reality. You both are hurting. You both may be angry. That is normal. Give yourself and even your spouse some grace. But work to avoid hurting each other. That takes a lot of control. As with any habit you want to change, you need to build a different habit to replace it. This is often where people get stuck.

Take time to find your new support team. Reach out to them when you feel like lashing out at your partner. It could be friends or family. You might find a therapist or support group. A divorce coach can be the key to walking through your story to separate the emotions of divorce from the business of divorce.

These are people who can help you process what you're experiencing without pulling you back into the same painful patterns. Your goal is to create new habits in this chapter of your life.

Your emotional boundaries may include not sharing details with people who are not your inner circle. You may need to be really choosy about who you let into your support team. That means recognizing that healing requires different sources of support than the ones you've relied upon in the past.

Remember: This Is a Bridge

Living together while divorcing asks a tremendous amount of both people. There will be days when you handle it beautifully and days when you don't. That's normal.

Think about this arrangement as a bridge between the life you built together and the life you are creating apart. Don't expect to cross that bridge perfectly. There is no perfect transition. But you have the power to choose to cross it with clarity, dignity, and compassion. One day, this house will no longer be the place where you are waiting for your next chapter to begin. It will simply be part of the story of how you got there.

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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HEY OLIVIA:

I Thought I'd Feel Relieved. Instead I've Been Crying for Days.

"I just got the draft of our divorce petition to review before we sign and file. I thought I'd feel relieved when we got here. Instead I've been crying for days and I can't even explain why — the marriage is over, he made sure of that. He had an affair with one of my closest friends for over a year before I found out. There's nothing to save. I know that. We were together for 20 years. Half my life. Things weren't perfect, but I genuinely believed he was my person. The one I'd grow old with. And now I'm looking at this document and I don't even recognize the man whose name is on it. I guess I just need to know: when does it get better?" — Still standing, barely

First — of course you're crying. Of course you are.

You didn't just lose a marriage. You lost a best friend, a future you believed in, and a version of yourself that still trusted both of them. That's not one loss arriving at your door. That's a pile of losses, all at once — and a legal document just made it impossible to look away.

There is nothing wrong with you for falling apart right now. This is exactly when falling apart makes sense.

Here's something I want you to understand about this moment: relief and grief are not opposites. They can — and often do — live in the same body at the same time. You can know with absolute clarity that this marriage needs to end and still be devastated that it's ending. The grief isn't confusion. It's not weakness. It's not a sign you're making the wrong choice. It's just what 20 years feels like when it has to be let go.

Twenty years is not a small thing. Even a relationship that ended in betrayal held real moments — real history, real tenderness, real versions of you that mattered. Grieving those things doesn't mean you're grieving him. It might mean you're grieving who you were when you still believed in the life you were building together. That version of you deserves to be mourned. She trusted. She loved. She showed up. The fact that he didn't is about him — not her.

And that feeling of not recognizing him anymore? I hear this so often, and I want you to sit with it — because it's actually important information. The person who did this was always there. What changed is that you can finally see him clearly. That's not nothing. That's your perception catching up to reality, and it's disorienting in a way that almost has no words. You are not losing your mind. Your mind is finally, painfully, recalibrating. That's part of the process.

So when does it get better? I won't give you a timeline, because I'd be lying if I did. But here's what I can tell you: it gets better in layers. First, the crying starts to

have more space between it. Then one day you realize you went a few hours without the weight of it. Then a whole morning. You won't notice it happening — but it happens. What helps is letting yourself feel it instead of fighting it, getting support that meets you where you are, and not being alone with the story in your head.

For right now, just for today — you don't have to be okay. You just have to get through today. If you need to cry over that document, cry. If you need to close your laptop and call someone who loves you, do that. If you need to sit in your car for twenty minutes before you can go inside — that counts as coping.

You are not behind. You are not broken. You are a person going through one of the hardest things a person can go through — and you're still here, still asking questions, still trying to find your way through.

That matters more than you know.



5 TIPS FROM A DIVORCE PROFESSIONAL WITH

Donna Cates

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

Divorce can feel overwhelming, but the right guidance can make all the difference. Donna Cates, a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst®, Chartered Retirement Planning CounselorSM, Wealth Strategist & Founder of Money Matters Wealth Solutions and Navigating Divorce, is sharing five powerful ways to make the divorce journey a little more manageable—and a lot less stressful.



Donna Cates, can you introduce yourself—your name, title, and the work you do?

I'm Donna Cates, a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst®, Wealth Builder, and Financial Strategist. I help women navigate the complex financial decisions surrounding divorce; everything from understanding their assets and income to creating a roadmap for their financial future. Through my firm, Money Matters Wealth Solutions, I empower women to make informed, confident choices so they can move forward with clarity, control, and renewed confidence in their financial independence.

What drew you to this profession, and why do you specialize in divorce? Why are you passionate about helping people navigate divorce?

I was drawn to this profession both professionally and personally. Having walked through my own divorce, I know how overwhelming it feels to untangle emotions from financial realities. During that time, I realized how few women truly understood their financial picture or felt empowered to make decisions that served them. That's what inspired me to specialize in divorce financial planning. It's not just about numbers. It's about helping women rebuild their lives from a position of strength. My passion is giving women the clarity and confidence they need to move from fear to freedom, knowing they can build a secure and meaningful new chapter.

What are your top five tips for someone going through divorce?

Tip 1: Get clear on your numbers early.

If there's one step that can save you time, money, and unnecessary stress during divorce, it's gathering and understanding your financial information yourself, early and thoroughly. Most people underestimate just how valuable this single act of preparation can be. When you know precisely what you own, what you owe, and what comes in and goes out each month, you're not just "getting organized," you're reclaiming control in a process that can otherwise feel overwhelming.

From a practical standpoint, collecting your financial documents yourself can save you thousands in legal fees. Here's why: when your attorney must request records from your spouse's attorney, every back-and-forth email, phone call, or discovery motion costs billable time, often at rates of \$300–\$500 an hour or more. Many of those requests are simply for documents that the couple could have easily exchanged directly or that are available online with a few clicks. You eliminate much of the needless back-and-forth by proactively gathering recent account statements, tax

returns, loan documents, and other financial details. Your attorney and your financial professional can then spend their time analyzing strategy and negotiating the best outcome, rather than chasing paper.

As you gather your records, don't stop with just the basics. Go beyond checking and savings accounts, include retirement accounts, life insurance with cash value, stock options, deferred compensation plans, restricted stock units (RSUs), and any business interests. If your spouse is an executive or high-level employee, pay close attention to employer-sponsored benefits. These can be a goldmine of hidden value: performance bonuses, profit-sharing plans, deferred compensation, stock grants, and company-paid life or disability insurance. Many of these benefits don't appear on a regular pay stub but can significantly impact your settlement and your long-term security.

Finally, make sure you understand not only the assets but also the income streams, including commissions, bonuses, and side-business revenue, as well as any debts or obligations tied to them. The goal is clarity, not perfection. When you walk into your legal and financial meetings already organized, you become the informed decision-maker in the room. That confidence changes everything, saving time, saving money, and setting the stage for smarter, more empowered decisions about your financial future.

Tip 2: Protect your credit and your cash flow.

One of the most overlooked yet critical aspects of divorce is protecting your credit and maintaining steady cash flow. In the middle of legal negotiations and emotional strain, it's easy to assume these details can wait, but they can't. Divorce often disrupts household finances, changes income streams, and reshapes how bills are paid. Taking early action to safeguard your financial stability gives you breathing room and prevents months (or years) of unnecessary stress later.

Start by getting a clear picture of your credit health. Pull a free credit report from all three major bureaus (Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion) and review it line by line. Look for joint accounts, credit cards, or loans that remain open in both names. Until those accounts are closed or refinanced, you are both legally responsible for them. That means if your ex misses a payment, your credit score suffers too. Open new accounts in your name only (checking, savings, and a personal credit card) to begin establishing independent financial credibility. This step signals to lenders (and yourself) that you're taking ownership of your financial future.

Next, create a cash flow plan that reflects your new reality. Your household income and expenses will likely look very different post-divorce. Begin by identifying your non-negotiables: housing, healthcare, food, insurance, transportation, and childcare. Then determine what's discretionary and can be temporarily reduced. Even a simple spreadsheet or budgeting app can help you track what's coming in and going out so there are no surprises.

It's also important to think beyond the basics. If you're expecting alimony or child support, remember that those payments can take time to start and may fluctuate. Build a small emergency fund if possible, even if it's just one month's expenses, to act as a financial cushion during this adjustment period.

Protecting your cash flow isn't just about numbers; it's about peace of mind. It gives you the freedom to make choices based on clarity, not crisis. I tell my clients all the time: your attorney negotiates your settlement, but you manage your life. By taking ownership of your income, expenses, and credit today, you set yourself up for independence, confidence, and calm no matter what tomorrow brings.

Tip 3: Think long-term, not just “right now.”

One of the biggest mistakes I see people make in divorce is focusing only on getting through it, instead of thinking about where they'll be five or ten years down the road. It's completely understandable: when you're in the thick of emotional and financial upheaval, survival mode takes over. But every financial decision you make in divorce has a ripple effect. Those choices determine not only what your balance sheet looks like when the ink dries on your settlement, but also how secure and stable your life will feel in the years that follow.

Here's something I always tell clients: your divorce attorney's job is to divide what you have, while my job is to help you understand how those divisions will affect your long-term financial well-being. Attorneys focus on equitable distribution, property law, and legal positioning. They're excellent at negotiating who gets what. But they are not trained to analyze how a specific asset mix will affect your cash flow, tax situation, or retirement income. That's where the financial perspective becomes critical.

For example, two assets that appear equal on paper may not be equal in reality. A \$500,000 home and a \$500,000 retirement account sound balanced, but one requires

property taxes, insurance, and maintenance, while the other may be subject to income tax when withdrawn. Without a clear understanding of liquidity, taxes, and future growth, a seemingly fair split could create long-term hardship.

Similarly, many people fight to keep the marital home without evaluating whether they can realistically afford it on one income. I often remind clients: keeping an asset that drains your cash flow can feel comforting in the short term, but it can be restrictive later, when you're trying to rebuild or retire. Sometimes it's better to let go of the asset and gain financial flexibility instead.

Thinking long-term means considering sustainability, not sentiment. It's about aligning your settlement with your future goals while maintaining financial stability, supporting your lifestyle, and ensuring your retirement stays on track. A well-structured financial plan helps you see the actual cost and benefit of every decision. When you evaluate choices through that lens, you're not just dividing assets, you're building a future that supports your independence, confidence, and peace of mind.

Tip 4: Build your team wisely.

Divorce can feel like standing at the edge of a cliff: it's emotional, uncertain, and filled with decisions that carry lifelong consequences. The truth is, you don't have to navigate it alone. The best way to protect both your peace of mind and your financial future is to build a strong, supportive team of professionals who each bring their unique expertise to the table.

Your divorce attorney is the legal expert. They know how to structure agreements, file motions, and advocate for your rights in the courtroom. But the attorney is just one piece of the puzzle. You also need professionals who see the whole you — your emotions, your money, your family, and your long-term well-being.

That's where having a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst® (CDFA®) becomes invaluable. While your attorney focuses on what's legally fair, your CDFA helps you determine what's financially wise. We evaluate the long-term impact of each decision, from dividing retirement assets and understanding tax implications to projecting future living expenses and retirement readiness. In other words, we make sure today's settlement doesn't become tomorrow's financial struggle.

Depending on your situation, your team might also include a therapist or divorce coach to support your emotional healing and clarity in decision-making. Divorce can cloud your thinking, and having someone who helps you manage emotions constructively allows you to approach negotiations from a grounded place, not a reactive one.

If you share children, a co-parenting coach or mediator can help establish a plan that minimizes conflict and keeps communication healthy. You might also include a tax advisor, especially if there are business interests, stock options, or multiple real estate properties involved.

A strong divorce team isn't about spending more money. It's about spending smarter. When each professional focuses on their area of expertise, you reduce duplication, eliminate costly mistakes, and reach the finish line more efficiently.

The goal is to surround yourself with advisors who work collaboratively and put your best interests first. When you choose wisely, your team becomes your anchor protecting you legally, emotionally, and financially, while guiding you toward a future that's stable, secure, and authentically yours.

Tip 5: Give yourself permission to heal and grow.

Divorce is one of life's most profound transitions. It's part legal, part emotional, and part spiritual. For many women, it feels like the rug has been pulled out from under them. I often remind my clients that healing after divorce isn't just about closing a chapter; it's about learning how to honor what was, release what no longer serves you, and step into what's next with courage. That's not weakness, ladies. That's growth.

The truth is, you cannot make sound financial decisions if you're emotionally exhausted or overwhelmed. Taking time to heal isn't selfish; it's strategic. You're building the foundation for your next season of life. When you're calm and centered, you make clearer, wiser decisions about your money, career, relationships, and purpose.

Permit yourself to take things one step at a time. Maybe that means scheduling quiet mornings to reflect on what you truly want for your future or setting aside an evening to review your new budget and celebrate progress, rather than focusing on what's gone. Healing happens in these small, intentional acts of self-care; in the moments where you remind yourself that you are capable, deserving, and strong.

Financial recovery, much like emotional healing, happens gradually. You'll start by understanding where you stand

today, then you'll build goals: an emergency fund, retirement savings, maybe a dream trip you've always postponed. With each milestone, your confidence grows. You'll move from surviving to thriving, from uncertainty to control.

And remember, growth doesn't mean rushing into the next thing. It means giving yourself time to rediscover who you are beyond the roles you once played (wife, partner, caregiver) and to reconnect with the woman you're becoming.

...remember, growth doesn't mean rushing into the next thing. It means giving yourself time to rediscover who you are beyond the roles you once played...

When I work with clients, I tell them: "You're not starting over; you're starting smarter." Everything you've endured has prepared you for this next season. Healing and growth aren't just emotional goals; they're the secret to building a financially and personally fulfilling future that's entirely your own.

Out of all your tips, which one feels the most important right now, and why?

Getting clear on your numbers is, without question, the most powerful step you can take. Once you understand your financial reality, fear loses its grip and confidence begins to grow. Most women I meet have played second fiddle when it comes to managing household finances, not because they lacked ability, but because they were taught to let someone else take the lead. I've been there myself. For years, women have carried the emotional and logistical load of family life while being left out of the financial conversations that shape their future.

Divorce can be the wake-up call that changes that story. It forces you to get curious about money, to dig into the details, and to see that you're more than capable of managing your own financial life. Understanding your numbers is about far more than dollars and cents. It's about self-respect, safety, and independence. You stop being a supporting character and start being the author of your own financial chapter. When you know where you stand, you can stand tall and that confidence will guide every decision you make from here forward.

What does “fresh start” mean to you in the context of divorce?

A fresh start after divorce means reclaiming the power to redefine both your life and your relationship with money. It's not just about rebuilding what was lost. It's about redesigning what comes next with intention, confidence, and self-respect. For many women, money has been a source of stress or dependence. Divorce gives you the opportunity, sometimes an unwelcome one, to rewrite that story. It's a moment to shift from fear to freedom, from avoidance to awareness, and from scarcity to sufficiency.

A fresh start is about creating a new partnership with your finances, one built on clarity, purpose, and empowerment. When understanding how money works for you instead of against you, you stop seeing it as a source of anxiety and start seeing it as a tool for possibility. It's the difference between surviving and thriving.

This transformation often extends beyond money. It changes how you make decisions, how you show up for your family, and how you envision your future. When a woman feels financially confident, she creates stability not just for herself, but for her children as well. That's the power of a true fresh start: turning financial awareness into lifelong independence and transforming loss into legacy.

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 below!

Money Matters Wealth Solutions | Donna Cates
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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

Jenny Says So: “The New Partner at Kid Events”

Dear Jenny,

I need etiquette guidance that feels like it was invented specifically to torture me.

My ex has a new partner, and lately they've started showing up at kid events—school concerts, soccer games, even a class birthday party. The first time it happened, I felt my whole body go hot. I tried to smile like a normal person, but I could barely hear what anyone was saying. I spent the entire event doing mental math: Do I say hi? Do I ignore them? If I'm polite, am I endorsing this? If I'm distant, am I hurting my kids?

What makes it worse is that people watch. Other parents glance over. Someone always seems to be within earshot. I don't want to look bitter. I don't want to make a scene. But I also don't want to play happy blended family when I'm still grieving what my family used to look like.

My kids are young enough to pick up on energy, but not old enough to understand why I suddenly look like I'm holding my breath. I want to model maturity and stability for them—but I also want to protect myself.

So... what do I do? What's the right way to act when your ex's new partner is suddenly in your orbit at kid stuff?

Love,
Holding It Together in Huntington

Read Jenny's response →

Dear Holding It Together,

First: you are not failing because this feels hard. This is one of the most emotionally loaded “public-facing” moments divorce can create—because it’s not just about you. It’s about your kids, your dignity, and the fact that you didn’t consent to sharing your front row seat. Here’s the etiquette principle: be civil, be brief, be kid-centered, and give yourself an exit. You don’t have to be warm. You don’t have to be icy. Aim for neutral grace.

Use VASE: Validate, Acknowledge, Support, Express—in one sentence.

If you need a script, try: “Hi, I’m [Name]. Thanks for supporting the kids today.” (smile, then turn back to the event)

That’s it. You’re not inviting closeness—you’re setting a tone: respectful, contained, done.

If they try to chat: “I’m going to focus on the game/concert, but I hope you have a nice day.”

If your ex is pushing “we should all sit together”: “I’m going to sit separately today. Let’s keep it simple for the kids.”

And afterward, do the kindest thing: debrief with your nervous system. Walk, breathe, text a friend, cry in the car if you need to. Composure in public doesn’t mean you don’t get to feel.

You’re allowed to be polite and still be protecting your heart.

Jenny

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

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Ask Jenny a Question



What to consider when you're considering divorce: everything to do with custody and children

Deciding to end a marriage is never easy, and when children are involved, the stakes feel even higher. Beyond the emotional weight of the decision, there are practical considerations that can significantly impact your children's lives and your role as a parent moving forward. From custody arrangements to co-parenting strategies, understanding the options and planning thoughtfully can help set the foundation for a smoother transition for everyone involved.

In this guide, we'll explore key factors to consider when navigating divorce with children—legal custody, physical custody, visitation schedules, and how to prioritize your child's emotional well-being throughout the process. Whether you're just beginning to weigh your options or are ready to take the next steps, this article offers insights and advice to help you make informed decisions with your children's best interests at heart.

4 Essential Considerations for Your Children and Custody Situation When Considering Divorce

1. Understanding Legal and Physical Custody

- **What It Is:** Legal custody refers to the authority to make major decisions about your child's life (education, healthcare, religion), while physical custody determines where the child lives.
- **Why It's Important:** Knowing the difference between these types of custody helps you plan for your children's future and ensure their needs are met. This clarity can also guide discussions with your spouse and legal team.
- **Experts Who Can Help:** Family law attorneys or mediators specializing in custody issues.
- **How to Ask for Help:** Schedule a consultation with a family law attorney. Ask:
 - "Can you explain the differences between legal and physical custody and how they might apply in my situation?"
 - "What custody arrangements are common for families with children of [specific ages]?"

2. Creating a Child-Centered Custody Plan

- **What It Is:** A custody plan outlines how time with the child will be divided, including schedules for weekdays, weekends, holidays, and vacations.
- **Why It's Important:** A well-thought-out plan minimizes disruptions to your child's routine and prioritizes their stability and emotional well-being.
- **Experts Who Can Help:** Parenting coordinators or family therapists experienced in divorce.
- **How to Ask for Help:** Meet with a parenting coordinator or therapist. Ask:
 - "What factors should I consider when creating a custody plan that supports my child's well-being?"

- "Can you guide me on structuring a fair and flexible plan before discussing it with my spouse?"

3. Addressing Emotional Well-Being

- **What It Is:** Ensuring that your children have the support they need to process their emotions about the divorce.
- **Why It's Important:** Divorce can be a major emotional upheaval for children. Supporting their mental health helps them adjust and thrive during the transition.
- **Experts Who Can Help:** Child psychologists or counselors specializing in divorce and family dynamics.
- **How to Ask for Help:** Reach out to a counselor or therapist for an initial consultation. Ask:
 - "How can I prepare my child emotionally before discussing the divorce?"
 - "What signs should I look for to ensure they're coping well?"

4. Financial Planning for Custody and Child Support

- **What It Is:** Understanding the financial aspects of custody, including child support obligations and the costs associated with raising your child in two households.
- **Why It's Important:** Financial planning ensures that your child's needs are met without undue financial stress on either parent.
- **Experts Who Can Help:** Financial planners or divorce financial analysts (CDFA).
- **How to Ask for Help:** Meet with a financial expert. Ask:
 - "What financial considerations should I plan for regarding custody and child support?"
 - "Can you help me estimate child-related expenses post-divorce to prepare for negotiations?"

Podcast Spotlight: Uncoupled & Unfiltered | Hosted by Ksenia Muench

Divorce has a way of making everything feel urgent and impossible at the same time. You need answers about mediation, custody, money, and safety — and you need them from people who will actually tell you the truth. That's the space Uncoupled & Unfiltered was built for.

Hosted by divorce coach Ksenia Muench of Thrive Again Divorce Coaching, the podcast brings candid, no-fluff conversations with therapists, mediators, and financial and legal professionals to adults navigating divorce. The goal isn't just getting through it — it's managing your breakup fairly, protecting yourself and your recovery, and genuinely thriving on the other side. True to its name, the show doesn't shy away from the hard stuff: the highly specific, sometimes difficult realities of modern relationships and life after separation.

Where to Start

If you're in the thick of it right now and scrolling for something to press play on, Ksenia recommends starting here:

- Divorce Mediation 101 — the foundation for anyone weighing their options before (or instead of) court.
- Narcissistic Abuse: The Signs, The Damage and What You Must Know To Protect Yourself — essential listening on recognizing intimate partner abuse and taking steps to stay safe.
- The Love You Deserve — a reminder that the end of a marriage isn't the end of love.
- Indifference Beats Hate in High-Conflict Co-parenting and Blended Families — a counterintuitive, sanity-saving approach for anyone stuck in ongoing conflict.
- From Mom to Multi-Million Dollar CEO — proof of what's possible after everything falls apart.

Why It Matters

What sets Uncoupled & Unfiltered apart is its willingness to name things clearly — especially when it comes to domestic abuse by an intimate partner: what it looks like, how to recognize it, and how to protect yourself. But it's equally a show about hope. Many of Ksenia's guests have lived through divorce themselves, and their stories offer something rare in



the middle of a separation: evidence that people come out the other side, and come out well. Listeners walk away prepared rather than reactive, with the knowledge and support to move through this transition on their own terms.

Listen to Uncoupled & Unfiltered on [Spotify](#) or [Apple](#) and connect with Ksenia at [ThriveAgainDivorceCoaching.com](https://thriveagaindivorcecoaching.com).



Feeling a little lost
navigating the next steps?

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Divorce Resource Consult at
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How to Talk to Your Kids About Your New Relationship After Divorce

Talking to your kids about a new relationship after divorce can feel daunting, but it's a conversation that lays the foundation for trust and emotional security. Kids thrive on honesty and stability, especially during times of change, making it crucial to approach this discussion with transparency and care. Being open helps them feel included in your life while age-appropriate communication ensures they can process the information without feeling overwhelmed. By handling this conversation thoughtfully, you can ease their worries, answer their questions, and create a safe space for everyone to navigate this new chapter together.

3 Tips for Talking to Young Kids (Ages 3–7) About Your New Relationship Post-Divorce

1. Keep the Explanation Simple and Reassuring

- Young children don't need all the details, but they do need to know they're loved and secure. Focus on simple, reassuring language that introduces the new person without overwhelming them.
- How to Start the Conversation: "Mom/Dad has a friend named [Name] who I really enjoy spending time with. You might meet them soon, and I think you'll like them too. No matter what, you're my most important person, and nothing will ever change that."

2. Describe Who the New Person Is in a Relatable Way

- Frame your new partner as someone who is kind and enjoys spending time with you. Relating the person to a concept they understand—like a friend—makes it easier for them to process.
- How to Start the Conversation: "[Name] is a special friend of mine, kind of like how you have best friends at school. They like to do fun things too, like [activity your partner enjoys]. Maybe one day, we can all do something fun together!"

3. Invite Questions and Validate Their Feelings

- Young children may have questions or feelings they can't fully articulate. Encourage them to share and validate their emotions to make them feel safe and heard.
- How to Start the Conversation: "Do you have any questions about my friend [Name]? It's okay if you're feeling unsure or even a little confused. I'm here to listen, and we'll figure everything out together."

3 Tips for Talking to Tweens (Ages 8–13) About Your New Relationship Post-Divorce

1. Be Honest While Keeping It Age-Appropriate

- Tweens are old enough to notice changes and appreciate honesty. Explain your relationship in a way that acknowledges their growing awareness while keeping it straightforward.

- How to Start the Conversation: "I wanted to share something important with you. I've been spending time with someone named [Name] who makes me happy, and I'd like for you to know about them because you're such an important part of my life."

2. Frame the New Person as an Addition, Not a Replacement

- Tweens may worry that your new relationship could change your dynamic or take attention away from them. Reassure them that this person isn't replacing the other parent or their place in your life.
- How to Start the Conversation: "[Name] is someone who brings a lot of positivity to my life, but they're not here to replace anyone. You and I have something special that will never change, no matter what."

3. Encourage Open Dialogue and Respect Their Feelings

- Tweens are developing independence and opinions, so it's essential to give them space to express their thoughts and emotions about the relationship.
- How to Start the Conversation: "I know this might be a lot to take in, and it's okay if you have questions or even mixed feelings. I want to hear how you're feeling about this, and we'll go at a pace that feels comfortable for everyone."

3 Tips for Talking to Teens (Ages 13–18) About Your New Relationship Post-Divorce

1. Treat Them as Mature Individuals

- Teens value honesty and respect. Approach the conversation in a way that acknowledges their maturity while being sensitive to their feelings.
- How to Start the Conversation: "I want to talk to you about something important. I've started seeing someone named [Name], and it's been a really positive experience for me. Since you're a big part of my life, I wanted to share this with you directly and hear your thoughts."

2. Be Open to Questions and Concerns

- Teens may have strong opinions or emotional reactions to your new relationship. Create a safe space for them to express themselves, even if their feelings are complicated.
- How to Start the Conversation: “I know this might bring up some questions or mixed emotions, and that’s completely okay. How are you feeling about this? I want to be open and honest with you, and I hope you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts with me too.”

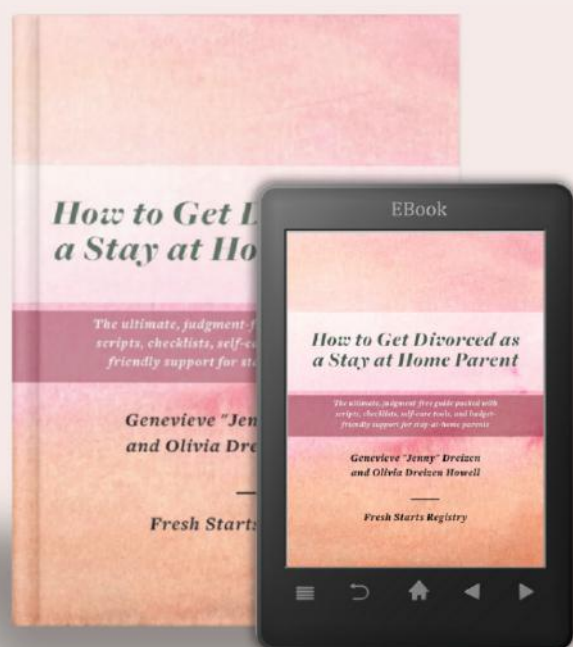
3. Emphasize Their Role in Your Life

- Teens may feel conflicted or concerned about how this new relationship will affect your bond. Reassure them that they are your priority and that your relationship with them remains unchanged.
- How to Start the Conversation: “You’re such a huge part of my life, and nothing about our relationship will ever change. [Name] is someone I care about, but they’re not here to take away from the time and connection we have.”

What Is a Divorce Resource Consult?

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- We point you toward the right experts, tools, and next steps from our network
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How to Get Divorced as a Stay at Home Parent

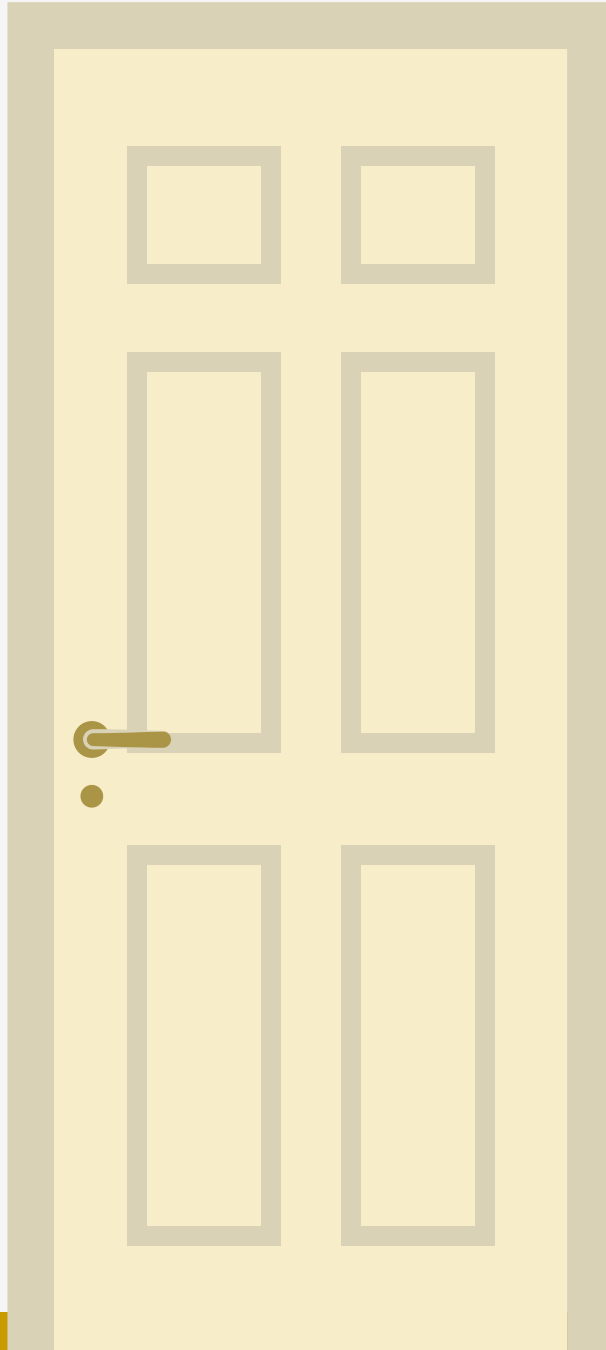
If you’re a stay-at-home parent ready to leave your marriage but don’t know how to afford it, this guide is for you. Written with compassion and practicality, this judgment-free book walks you through the legal, emotional, and logistical steps of getting a divorce without income. Inside, you’ll find 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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Decorate Your Door

Every door is a kind of portal — the threshold between who you were and who you're becoming. Yours used to be covered in stickers, back before you knew what was waiting on the other side. Reconnect with her for a minute. Pick a room, add a few stickers, and save your door when it feels like you.



What you'll need: scissors, tape or a glue stick, the door template and sticker sheet on the facing page, and — if you want to go further — a stack of old magazines you don't mind cutting up.

Cut your stickers out. Don't worry about being tidy — teenagers never were.

Lay them out on the door before you commit to anything. Move them around. There's no wrong arrangement, only the one that's true right now.

Tape or glue them down once it feels like your door, not someone else's idea of what it should look like.

Tear this page out, pin it up, or tuck it in a drawer for later. Either way, you made it through to the other side of something.

Go raid a magazine. The stickers here are a starting point, not the whole story — the best teenage doors were half brand, half chaos. Flip through anything you've got lying around and pull out:

- A word or headline that says something true about where you're headed ("bold," "unbothered," whatever it is)
- A photo of somewhere you'd like to be — a coastline, a city, a kitchen that isn't yours yet
- A color or pattern that just feels like the next chapter, no explanation needed
- Something that makes you laugh — a horoscope, a quiz result, an ad from 2004
- A face, if you want one. It doesn't have to be a celebrity. It can be anyone who looks like she's got it figured out.



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Divorce as a Portal to Joy: Rebuilding Life, Sisterhood & Home After Divorce with author Betsy Cornwell

If you're standing at the edge of a divorce right now, convinced the life waiting on the other side looks bleak and empty — this is the episode that turns the lights back on. Olivia Howell welcomes back author , a New York Times bestselling novelist, memoirist, and divorced single mom who left an abusive marriage and rebuilt her entire life on the wild western coast of Ireland. Betsy has written six novels and the luminous new memoir which traces her journey from fleeing home with her infant son to crowdfunding and restoring a derelict knitting factory in Connemara into a sanctuary for herself and other single parents. But the line that stops you cold comes early in the conversation: "Divorce can be a portal to joy." For a woman raised to believe divorce was a mortal sin, that sentence took years of unlearning — and now she offers it to anyone in the thick of the decision as both a lifeline and a promise that there is magic on the other side you simply cannot imagine from where you're standing.

The heart of this episode is a story of radical reinvention. After leaving her marriage, Betsy was briefly homeless, navigating a housing crisis as a low-income, self-employed immigrant single mother who had all but given up the dream of owning a home. It was a survivors' support group that lit the way — and out of that fragile hope, she crowdfunded a historic knitting factory and turned it into both a home for her and her son and a fully funded arts-and-rest residency for fellow single parents. Her advice for anyone navigating divorce is refreshingly concrete: find your people. Seek out others walking the same road, and reach out to a domestic abuse center even — especially —

if you've never been physically hurt but sense that something in your relationship is off. You will be listened to, believed, and supported. Whether you're newly separated, deep in the loneliness of starting over, or quietly wondering if you're allowed to want more, this conversation is living proof that life after divorce can hold more joy than the life you're leaving behind. Find your coven. Face the sun together.



Click through to listen!

Feeling a little lost navigating the next steps?

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10 Essential Questions to Ask a Potential Divorce Mediator

Divorce is challenging, but mediation can make the process more manageable, less adversarial, and often more cost-effective than litigation. A skilled mediator acts as a neutral party to help you and your spouse reach agreements on critical issues like property division, child custody, and financial support. However, not all mediators are the same, and finding the right fit is crucial. Here are 10 essential questions to ask a potential divorce mediator to ensure they're the right choice for your situation.

How to Choose a Divorce Mediator: 10 Questions That Make the Difference

1. What is Your Experience with Divorce Mediation?

Divorce mediation requires a deep understanding of family law, conflict resolution, and the emotional intricacies of divorce. A mediator with extensive experience will be better equipped to handle complex issues and navigate conflicts smoothly.

Follow-Up Questions:

- How many divorce mediations have you handled?
- Are you familiar with high-conflict divorces?
- Have you mediated cases with child custody disputes or complex asset division?

2. Are You a Certified Mediator? Certification ensures that the mediator has completed formal training and adheres to professional standards. Different states have varying requirements, so it's crucial to confirm their credentials.

Follow-Up Questions:

- What certifications do you hold?
- Are you affiliated with any professional mediation organizations?
- Do you participate in continuing education?

3. What is Your Mediation Style? (Facilitative, Evaluative, or Transformative) Mediators typically use one of three styles:

- **Facilitative:** Focuses on guiding both parties to mutual agreement without offering personal opinions.
- **Evaluative:** More directive, sometimes offering opinions on legal matters.
- **Transformative:** Focuses on empowering the parties to resolve their own conflicts.

Understanding their approach helps you determine if it matches your needs and communication style.

Follow-Up Questions:

- How do you handle high-conflict discussions?
- Do you offer guidance or only facilitate dialogue?

4. How Do You Handle Impasses During Mediation?

Mediation sometimes hits a roadblock where neither party can agree. Knowing how a mediator handles these situations is crucial for keeping the process moving forward.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Do you bring in additional experts if needed?
- What techniques do you use to break through deadlocks?

5. Do You Mediate All Issues, Including Child Custody and Financial Agreements? Some mediators only handle financial matters or property division, while others are equipped to address sensitive topics like child custody and support. Ensure they are capable of handling **all aspects** of your divorce.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Are you comfortable mediating high-conflict custody disputes?
- How do you address child support and spousal support negotiations?

6. How Long Does the Mediation Process Typically Take?

Understanding the timeline helps you set expectations. A well-organized mediator can often complete the process in weeks or months, depending on the complexity of the case.

Follow-Up Questions:

- What is the average number of sessions required?
- Do you set timelines for agreement on specific issues?

7. What Are Your Fees, and How Are They Structured?

Mediation is typically more cost-effective than litigation, but fees can still vary widely. Understanding the cost structure upfront helps prevent surprises.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Do you charge per session or a flat fee?
- Are there additional costs for document preparation or filing?
- What is your cancellation policy?

8. Do You Draft the Final Divorce Agreement? Some mediators draft the final agreement, while others only provide a memorandum of understanding that you must take to a lawyer. Knowing this upfront clarifies the next steps after mediation concludes.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Is your draft legally binding, or does it require review by an attorney?
- Do you file the documents with the court?

9. How Do You Ensure Confidentiality During Mediation? Mediation is confidential, but understanding the specific measures taken to protect your privacy is important, especially if sensitive financial or custody issues are discussed.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Do you keep written records of our sessions?
- What steps do you take to protect my personal information?
- Are the discussions admissible in court if mediation fails?

10. How Do You Handle Communication with Both Parties? Transparency and balanced communication are key in mediation. A good mediator remains neutral, ensures both voices are heard, and facilitates productive dialogue.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Do you communicate separately with each party if needed?
- How do you manage power imbalances in conversations?
- Are there follow-up sessions after agreements are made?

It's important to remember that...

Selecting the right mediator can be the difference between a smooth, collaborative divorce process and one fraught with conflict. By asking these ten essential questions, you equip yourself with the knowledge to make an informed decision. Remember, the right mediator isn't just experienced—they are a skilled communicator, neutral facilitator, and a strong advocate for resolution and fairness.

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Divorce Happens: A Compassionate Guide to Starting Fresh

AUGUST 2027 | SHELDON PRESS

Three years ago, we started talking about writing a book. We finally have the right one.

Divorce Happens: A Compassionate Guide to Starting Fresh, by Fresh Starts co-founders Olivia March Howell and Genevieve Dreizen, is under contract with Sheldon Press. Built on our six-part Fresh Starts Framework. Out August 2027.

Want to follow along? Sign up for updates at freshstartsregistry.com/book and we'll keep you in the loop as the book takes shape.

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