

Top Ten Things Everyone Needs to Know about Divorce

- 1. Understanding all of the divorce options before moving forward is critical to achieving the best outcome.**

Divorce is no longer a “one-size fits all” process. Choosing the process that best suits your needs is likely to affect your family for many years. It is critical that clients seek information about *all* of their options *before* they move forward with a divorce.

- 2. Divorce is not just a legal action, but a life event that generally requires financial, communication, and parenting solutions as well.**

Achieving a better future for your family following a divorce often requires addressing emotional, financial, parenting and communication issues, in addition to the legal problems. While attorneys can be helpful in these areas, getting additional counsel from mental health professionals and financial experts may be critical in addressing the most important aspects of your family’s future.

- 3. If you don’t know where you are going, you will end up somewhere else.**

The drama surrounding the initial divorce decisions often draws all attention toward the *urgent* matters and can cause families to lose sight of the things that matter most. Spending time identifying big picture goals and outlining a plan for your future at the beginning of the process is critical in helping you achieve the best possible outcome.

- 4. Children should be at the center and not in the middle.**

All parents going through divorce express a strong desire to protect their children. Yet, the emotions that the parents are experiencing during the divorce often cause parents to act in ways that cause their children unnecessary harm. Parents who make a conscious effort to keep the needs of the children central in their decisions making can create a better future for their children.

- 5. Divorce is a health issue.**

Divorce can have a significant impact on the mental and even physical health of all family members in their home life, as well as at work or in school. It is in everyone’s interest (including the physicians, teachers, therapists, employers, financial planners and friends) that the health issues be addressed in a way that serves the long-term needs of each individual member of the family.

- 6. Focusing on opportunities rather than survival will lead to better outcomes.**

While developing basic coping and survival strategies can be important, it is equally critical to see divorce as an opportunity to focus on the development of skills needed to address the next stage of life. People who use the divorce as an opportunity to develop in areas like communication, financial planning, and parenting are far more likely to build a better life for themselves and their families.

7. Safety first.

Divorce is a very emotional time and the danger of physical or emotional harm to one of the parties or the children must always be at the forefront. Providing safety through the divorce process involves not only the physical safety of the parties and the children but the emotional safety and the power imbalances that exist in many relationships.

8. Civility is not weakness.

Because of the many options, people facing divorce generally do not have to choose between an amicable process that will reduce conflict and a more aggressive approach that will protect their interests. There are now ways in which they can use a civil approach to their divorce and achieve a *better outcome* than they would have achieved through more aggressive negotiation strategies.

9. The beginning of a divorce does not always mean the end of a marriage.

Many people change their minds about the divorce during the divorce process. If saving the marriage is the primary goal of one or both parties, there are ways to preserve the prospect of reconciliation, even if one party has decided to start the divorce process.

10. Finding professionals you can trust is worth the extra effort.

One of the keys to a successful divorce is finding advisors (i.e. attorneys, mediator, mental health professionals and financial experts). Therefore, it is critical that people facing divorce be as thorough as possible in seeking the help that they need.