



Simplify Your Divorce



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The simpler you make your divorce, the quicker and less expensive you will find it. Here are some tips for getting through the process:

1 Have a plan. Your post-divorce life should be well considered ahead of time. House, condo or apartment? Remain local, or relocate out-of-state? Which school district is best for your children's needs? Your attorney will be of little help answering these questions for you because they are uniquely personal. Your attorney can, however, advise you as to the economic viability of your plan and the likelihood that a court will permit it. If you try to make these decisions under the pressure of divorce negotiations, your decisions will be slow in coming, you'll be unsure of things, and, as a result, your divorce will take longer and cost more.

2 Choose your attorney wisely. When you select an attorney, you are really making a choice about whom you trust to give you advice on some of the most important aspects of your life. If you think your attorney is weird,

out-of-touch, or too wealthy to understand your needs, then you probably don't trust that person to give you the very advice for which you are paying. There are all kinds of attorneys. There are many, many different styles of lawyering. Not everyone will prosper with the most aggressive attorney, not everyone will feel in touch with the most intellectual attorney, and not everyone will be comfortable with an easily excitable attorney. If you find your attorney to be rude, slovenly, or unorganized, how can you expect to be comfortable listening to their advice? Think not only about experience and credentials when you look for an attorney, but use your instincts and don't ignore signs which will undermine your willingness to accept the attorney's advice in the future.

3 Make effective use of your attorney.

Your divorce attorney, if you've done your homework, will have many years of experience handling divorces before the court and, hopefully, before the judge who has your case. Think about how to make use of their advice. Ask about the likely outcomes for your case. If the issues are financial, your lawyer can be an excellent guide. Ask how much people with similar cases to yours pay or receive in support. Listen to the advice. Lawyers have a very good idea of what is fair and what is attainable regarding support. Don't direct your attorney to try for a support figure which they believe to be unreasonable or unattainable. Doing so will only increase the costs of your divorce. Of course, if you've selected carefully, you will already be in a position to be comfortable accepting the advice of an attorney.

4 Be prepared to compromise.

Really. Victory is for sporting events, political elections, and criminal courtrooms. Divorces are about putting the pieces in place for a successful post-divorce parenting relationship, crafting a workable economic plan, and fostering your personal and emotional wellbeing. Indeed, if you think about it, you are probably not getting divorced for money, and you are definitely not getting divorced so that you can fight with your spouse about raising your children. You are probably getting divorced because your emotional wellbeing requires it. With that in mind, why not put those concerns first? Your happiness will make you a better parent. Your happiness will either make you a better employee, a better entrepreneur, or a better student, and, in the end, it will allow you to earn more than you could have without the emotional well-being. Keep your eye on the reason you are really getting divorced, and you will be better able to reach a compromise.

5 Try to remain self-aware.

Everyone going through a divorce must learn to cope with the adjustment. Your life partner is no longer supporting you, standing behind you or protecting your interest. If you find yourself suffering unusual emotional outbursts, or excessive stress related to being "alone," have your attorney recommend a therapist. Some people, both men and women, go from living with their parents to moving in with their spouse, never having had to rent an apartment, pay bills or establish a residence as a single person.

For those who have not been "on their own" before, the adjustment can be enormous. Know that unless you attack that problem head-on, it will lead to unnecessary delays in your

divorce resulting from your own insecurity and uncertainty.

Accept that divorce means "going it alone" and take action to establish your independent life. This will simplify your divorce.

Jay Turnbach, partner with the firm of Horn, Turnbach & Rybar, LLC, has 15 years experience handling family law matters in Ocean and Monmouth Counties. He is certified by the Supreme Court of New Jersey as a Certified Matrimonial Law Attorney. He is qualified as a divorce mediator pursuant to Rule 1:40 of the New Jersey Rules of Court. He is the vice president of the Jersey Shore Collaborative Law Group, chairman of the Family Law Committee of the Ocean County Bar Association, and an adjunct lecturer at Ocean County College teaching family law.



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