

Special Report

6 Ways to Reduce the Pain & Expense of Divorce

1. Knowledge is power.

The way to approach any situation in a confident, calm way is to prepare. If you were like me when I was a child, many major projects like book reports and final exams caused an almost paralyzing fear. But I never experienced that fear the handful of times I prepared thoroughly, and in advance. Good preparation brings calm, control, & confidence.

Good preparation takes away the fear.

Divorce is a major, scary life-event for everyone. You are beginning a major project in which your experience didn't prepare you for. There are plenty of resources for learning about divorce, including our website. Take advantage of them. Prepare for the divorce like you would prepare for a test. The more you learn – the greater your sense of calm and control. Remember – knowledge is power.

2. Don't cut off your nose to spite your face, you'll find it's hard to replace.

Do many of us want to punish our divorcing spouse? Yes! We are only human. But many times we cut off our own nose in the process. This is the time to have lots of self-interest – for both yourself and your children.

Before you do or say anything during the divorce process, ask yourself the following question: How will this benefit me or my children? That should be the bottom line. You can come out of the divorce better or worse depending on your own actions.

It is hard to undo something done purely for spite.

This is the time for thinking and calculating. At every step of your divorce repeat the question: What is in it for me or my children?

3. One for you, one for me. Two for you, two for me...

Do you remember those words? As kids, that was the way we split up many things. Now, you are getting a divorce. The old chant will come back but with a slight twist:

One for you, one for me, five for your lawyer, five for my lawyer...

The Divorce Center **knowledge is power**

Not an efficient way to split up your property! More of your property will be divided between you and your soon-to-be-ex if you negotiate and come to an early agreement. Most of your property will go to others if you fight to the end.

Educate yourself about divorce and then prepare to haggle like you would at a farmer's market. You will get the best deal because less property will be consumed by hired professionals. If you fight to the end a judge will divide everything up without your input. During the haggling process you are in control. You will end up closer to the ideal: one for you, one for me.

4. When you are up to your ass in alligators, it is difficult to remember that your first objective was to drain the swamp

When I think back to my own divorce, the vision looks something like this:

We are at the table trying to come to a final agreement. The room is like a pressure cooker, two lawyers, one mediator, and two spouses – each hoping to get rid of the other. The pressure was incredible – agree or else! Every 15 minutes the lawyers and mediator had a far-off look as they held up their arms in unison and looked at their watches. But I knew what they were thinking:

“If we can pressure these two to agree, we can catch an early dinner”

I look back on that time and can still feel the pressure. Pressure to agree, pressure to settle, pressure to sign my name and walk out the door. There was so much pressure; I completely forgot my goals, and what I wanted out of the negotiation.

Always write down what the two of you have, and what you want to walk away with. Also, list terms you would like to get and anything else that is important. Take the list with you to lawyer meetings, mediation, and court appearances. And always compare the current proposals with your goals. Because when you are up to your ass in alligators, you can't remember anything!

5. Penny-wise and pound-foolish

A divorce for people with modest income can cost several hundred thousand dollars over a lifetime. I think that is a lot of money and I suspect most of you agree. Go with the best help and education you can afford.

How many of you repair you own cars? Would you like to have a nice, printed manual showing how the car is built along with instructions for repair?

The Divorce Center **knowledge is power**

How many of you would attempt to repair an airplane – one that you fly in? Would a nicely printed repair manual make any difference?

My point is, the greater the stakes, the more you stand to lose & the greater the need for expert help and information. If you can't afford an attorney, get the best self-help information money can buy. Better yet, buy the best information and then pay an attorney for occasional advice. If you can, go ahead and hire a lawyer for the entire divorce.

Look at what is at stake. Is it money? Is it your house? Or is it custody of the children? The outcome of a divorce can be a lot different than what you envisioned. Get the best help you can afford. Don't be pennywise and pound-foolish.

6. It is hard to put the Jeanie back in the bottle

Take the time to do this right – the first time around. Because in divorce, it is awfully tough to undo what is already done. Most of us have heard rumors of ex-spouses taking each other back to court – over and over again for many years. But the rumors do not tell everything. Usually, the ex-spouse taking the other back to court is angry because he or she overlooked something important the first time around.

Unfortunately, child custody judgments are very difficult to change

Similarly, property division changes are rare. Support orders can be changed but many times the change is outweighed by expensive court battles.

You must do things right the first time around. And that will require you to do everything we suggested in this report. Educate yourself; keep good notes, form clear goals in your mind, and never cheap out if you can afford something better. Because in divorce it really is almost impossible to put the Jeanie back in the bottle.

This report is a free service of The Divorce Center, New Port Richey, Florida.

The Divorce Center will represent you for your entire case or any individual part. We also offer a forms preparation service with attorney review and consultation for reasonable prices. Check out our Easysavr Legal Service.