



5 Divorce Mistakes

GOING THROUGH A DIVORCE IS SOMEWHAT LIKE A STEEPLECHASE event. You start out on a flat section of track running at what seems like 100 mph, and then up ahead you see a low cross-jump in the middle of the track. “No problem,” you say, and you glide over it. However, around the bend, a tall hedge four feet high is off to the left; and you brace yourself as you hurtle towards it at full speed. And so it continues until you cross that finish line and the clerk at the courthouse hands you your signed and sealed divorce decree.

As you are racing down the track, there is quite a bit you are dealing with: kids, family, work, attorneys, all the unexpected hurdles around every turn. And let’s not forget your emotions, which, at times, seem to be the hardest thing to control. During all this maneuvering, you will forget things and make mistakes; but here are five mistakes that will be costly both emotionally and financially.

Mistake #1: Rushing into a divorce without being prepared. Are you aware of all the divorce options? Do you have the passcodes, usernames, account numbers and other necessary information before you tell your spouse you want out? Have you gotten some idea of a game plan (this is where a divorce coach is invaluable)? Being prepared and organized is key to feeling in control.

Mistake #2: Letting your emotions and fear drive your bus. Anytime you make decisions out of fear, anger or revenge, you are making a huge mistake that will cost you down the road. I have seen spouses want to make financial decisions based out of spite that were clearly not going to help them in the future, financially or emotionally. Every time you are about to make a decision, ask yourself this question: “Is this decision taking me further from or bringing me nearer to my goal?” A divorce coach can help you clarify your goals and stick to them. This reverts to Mistake #1 of not being prepared and having a game plan.

Mistake #3: Not having a detailed, well-thought-out parenting plan. This document can make your life easier or a nightmare, so be very diligent in the details. For example: Parent will drop off their child on Wednesdays after dinner. There is no time and no place. In this case, I have seen the dropping-off parent just randomly pick different times and drop-off places each week just to be passive-aggressive to the receiving parent. Once you have a parenting plan that you have signed off on, it is nearly impossible to get something changed. And please, please, don’t think because you two are getting along today that you will get along next year — and so “we don’t really need to have that much detail.” Yes, you do!

Mistake #4: Not knowing what is more important to you: having peace or feeling that you won. I’m not saying that you are to be a doormat or give in to every whim of your ex. What I *am* saying is to look at each situation through the eyes of discernment. Is it really worth replying to that snide text your ex just sent you and feeling like a bomb has gone off in your head because “By God, he/she isn’t going to say that to me” — and so reply and then shut off your phone with a smirk because you got the last word in that “I won”? But did you really? Your ex got what he/she wanted by knowing you are upset. So, not only was your peace stolen, but he/she really had the last word. Think about it.

Mistake #5: Running from solitude. People are afraid of solitude. Questions might arise they don’t want to answer or being by themselves is worse than having a tooth pulled. But intentional solitude is what everyone going through a divorce needs: time to pause, reflect and course correct. Assess where you are, where you came from and, more importantly, where you want to be down the road.

DEBBIE MARTINEZ, MA, is a certified life coach specializing in divorce. As a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator trained in collaborative divorce, Debbie gives clients the tools they need to successfully untie the knot and stand strong in the wake of adversity. You can reach Debbie at 305.984.6121, transformationthrudivorce.com or debbie@transformationthrudivorce.com.

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