

**7 WAYS**  
**TO SURVIVE**  
**DIVORCE**  
**WITH YOUR**  
**SANITY INTACT**



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## ***[Divorce is tough]***

nobody can deny that. Some days will be good, some will be bad...and some days will be both.

If you're like most people who are going through divorce, you're willing to work through it because you're looking at the big picture.

However, the emotional ups and downs can really wear on you. It's exhausting, and you might feel as if you're being pulled in a dozen different directions.

Fortunately, you don't have to go through this alone. With years of combined experience, we know how to help you through this difficult process so you can come out stronger, more resilient and more prepared for the future than you ever thought you could.

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# **THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND DIVORCE EMOTIONS**

When you're going through divorce, there are actually two things happening: one is a legal process, and another one is an emotional process.

In order to survive divorce with your sanity intact, you must first understand what it does to your emotions.

While the legal process will be over as soon as the judge signs your divorce decree, there's no set timeline for the emotional process. In fact, if you're like many people, the emotional process of your divorce began long before either of you filed paperwork.

## **DIFFERENT SPOUSES DIFFERENT STAGES**

Psychologists suggest that most divorces are the result of nonmutual decisions; that means one party wants to get out of the marriage and the other does not, or is not yet ready to divorce. That alone has major implications on the emotional process of divorce – for both parties. Typically, one spouse will be further along in the emotional process than the other will.

## GRIEF AND DIVORCE

Even if you and your spouse mutually agree that divorce is the best solution, it's still a form of loss. Loss inevitably causes grief; while no two people experience grief the same way, it's true that you'll most likely feel it – even if you don't experience it in the same way as others do.

Grief as it relates to divorce can include:

**DENIAL** You may not deny the fact that you're divorcing, but you may be holding on to a sliver of hope or believing that things will change.

**ANGER** You could be angry with your spouse for a number of things, including wanting to leave your marriage.

**BARGAINING** when it comes to grief, doesn't necessarily mean you physically try to convince your ex that you shouldn't divorce. Instead, it could mean that you have "could have/should have" thoughts. "If only..." is a common way people think during divorce.

**DEPRESSION** This part of the grieving process isn't necessarily about clinical depression, although that can be a factor, too. Typically, though, it refers to the sadness surrounding grief.

**ACCEPTANCE** Everyone reaches acceptance on their own time. Many people accept what's happening before, during and after the divorce; there's no schedule that demands you accept the divorce and its aftermath at a certain time.

When you understand that divorce, grief and your emotions are very individualized (and that the way you feel is perfectly natural), you can begin to learn coping strategies that help you stay sane during the process.



## **[ 7 WAYS TO SURVIVE DIVORCE WITH YOUR SANITY INTACT ]**

Divorce isn't easy for anyone. It can put you on an emotional rollercoaster with no end in sight – but if you learn the right coping strategies, you can make the entire process easier on you and everyone else involved.



Isolation during divorce nearly always makes things worse. It's essential that you find your support network as early as possible – and keep in mind that friends and family may make themselves scarce during your difficult time.

It's not that family and friends don't want to be there for you. Instead, psychologists suggest that there are four main reasons you may find your loved ones distancing themselves from you:

- ✦ Friendship custody. Divorce is polarizing, and your friends – particularly those you made as a couple – may feel like they need to take sides. Worse, they may be afraid of doing so because they love you both; rather than appearing biased, they'll distance themselves from both of you.
- ✦ Fear. Subconsciously, some friends and family members feel like divorce is contagious. They may fear that your divorce will “rub off” on them.
- ✦ They don't know what to say. Comforting others can be... well, uncomfortable. Many people don't know what to say or how to act around you; they don't want to seem insensitive by talking about themselves, and they can't find the words to make you feel better about what's happening.



## HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN SUPPORT NETWORK

If your friends and family aren't filling your need for support, it's a good idea to ask your lawyer for a referral to a counselor or therapist (one who specializes in divorce support). Even if your loved ones are there for you, it's always good to talk to an impartial third party who can teach you more coping strategies. Besides, your therapist will be there to focus on your needs only.

*it's always good to talk to  
an impartial third party  
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coping strategies.*



# ***TAKE THINGS ONE DAY AT THE TIME***

Don't worry too much about tomorrow (although you will need to keep the "big picture" in mind). Get through today; you can worry about tomorrow when the time comes.

When you think about the problems that tomorrow might bring, you're wasting your valuable resources – resources you need to make the right decisions today. About 99 percent of the things we worry about will never occur, so it makes sense to conserve our energy for things we do need to handle.

Push the past back into the past where it belongs, too; it's not usually helpful to analyze what brought you to this point while you're stressed. Save that for the healing process.

*it makes sense  
to conserve our energy  
for things we do need  
to handle.* }

# HOLD ON TO YOUR DIGNITY

High-conflict divorces can bring out the worst in you and your ex. In fact, even low- to moderate-conflict divorces can do that.

## Don't let it.

There are two main reasons for preserving your dignity during divorce:

- + You may later regret the things you say and do now, or they may come back to haunt you while you're still in the process of divorcing. It's not uncommon for one spouse to bring up the other's "bad behavior" in court.
- + During your divorce, you're setting the stage for the rest of your relationship. If you and your ex share children, you'll deal with each other long into the future – and by keeping your cool, you can keep the doors open for positive communication down the road.

**{** *by keeping your cool,  
you can keep the doors open  
for positive communication  
down the road.*

# PLAN AND IMPLEMENT YOUR ESCAPE



You don't have to run off to Costa Rica to give yourself a break from the stresses of divorce, but you do deserve to give your weary mind a rest. Rather than buying a plane ticket, set aside time for yourself each day; during that time, do whatever relaxes you. Escape into a good book, throw yourself into a pulse-pounding workout or indulge in your favorite hobby.

The point is getting your mind off the problems and putting it to work on things you enjoy. It can break a cycle of negative thinking and help you refocus on something more positive.

*set aside time for yourself  
each day;  
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do whatever relaxes you.* }

# **GET BACK IN TOUCH WITH WHO YOU ARE**

When you're married, it's easy to lose track of yourself. You're committed to taking care of others – your spouse, the kids – so what defines you as a person may get lost in the shuffle.

During your divorce, you have the opportunity to get to know yourself again. What are your interests? Spend some time thinking about who you were before your marriage and whether deep-down, you're still that person. Cultivate your interests, try things you've been waiting to do, and evaluate where you are in your personal growth.

Any divorce, whether or not it's high-conflict, will affect your sense of self. Knowing who you are, including your core values (the moral codes and principles you hold), all of these can help you remain secure and try to prevent you from second-guessing yourself.

**{** *Spend some time  
thinking about who you were  
before your marriage*

# EXERCISE AND DIET COUNT ...A LOT

If you are like many people, you do not particularly relish the idea of working out every day. However, even a 30-minute walk around the neighborhood 5 days a week can work wonders for your body and mind.

Divorce is one of the most traumatic events you'll ever go through, so your body needs a way to decompress. Physical activity releases endorphins, and it can distract you from your worries long enough to count as a form of meditation – and that can lower your blood pressure, relieve stress and, as a side benefit, keep you healthy.

*Physical activity can distract  
you from your worries  
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as a form of meditation* }



## **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

Stolen moments really add up. That, coupled with the fact that you don't have to work out until you're exhausted to see a benefit from exercise, means that a handful of 5- to 10-minute bursts can have the same effect as an hour at the gym can.

Need ideas? Experts suggest that you :

- + Power-walk down the street and back when you go to get the paper or check the mail.
- + Do jumping jacks for 5 minutes while you're waiting for your morning coffee to brew.
- + Park as far as possible when you shop.
- + Take the stairs rather than an escalator or elevator.
- + Jog in place when commercials come on TV.

When it comes to exercise, it's not all-or-nothing. Even the slightest amount of exercise outside the norm of what you usually do can have monumental benefits.

A study at the University of Virginia showed that men and women who complete 15 10-minute exercise routines each week can improve your aerobic fitness, strength, muscular endurance and flexibility; in turn, that all helps to combat stress and keep you thinking clearly.

# MAKE TIME FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS



We've already talked about making time for yourself, but you'll also need to make time for your family and friends.

Spending time with people who care about you has two benefits: you're strengthening your support network and you're able to remember (even if it's unconsciously) that life is bigger than what you're going through now.

Your kids need you, too. Spending as much time as possible with them can help you focus on the big picture – and it can get you through today, which is one day closer to the end of your divorce.

***You're able to remember  
that life is bigger than  
what you're going through now***



# [ YOU WILL MAKE IT THROUGH THIS ]

No matter what stage of divorce you're going through, whether you're still thinking about filing or you are days away from receiving your signed divorce decree, know that divorce doesn't have to drive you crazy.

Sure, you'll have ups and downs – everyone does. But you don't have to let the ups and downs take away anything from who you are as a person. You'll pull through this, and you'll come out stronger, wiser and more resilient than you ever thought you could be.

## How do we know?

We've seen it happen to each of our clients... and it's going to happen for you, too. Do what you need to do to stay sane during your divorce; we'll handle the rest.

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