

10 Things You DON'T Want to Happen When Getting Divorced

1. Not Seeking Legal Advice or Understanding All the Options for Divorce

It is crucial that you understand your legal rights and the legal process of divorce. Moreover, you'll want to be sure you understand the full financial picture before agreeing to any terms. Too many people go through a divorce without fully understanding these things and often they and/or their children get "shortchanged" in the process.

Further, don't assume that divorce through litigation is your only option. While there are times when the litigation process is the best choice, mediation may also be something you want to consider as it tends to be less costly and less adversarial. Be sure you understand the advantages and disadvantages of each option before proceeding.

2. "Give In" On Aspects of the Divorce Agreement Because You Want to Get It Over With

It is understandable that you may want to get through the divorce as quickly as possible. And yet, if you agree to things in haste because of your emotions, you may regret it later. When under stress, our rational decision-making process is hampered.

Although your priority during divorce may be to avoid areas of potential conflict, "giving in" for this reason or allowing yourself to be "bullied" may lead to poor decisions.

Think very carefully about things like division of assets, alimony, as well as custody and access issues of your children. Try to stay focused on what is important for you and your children for the long haul. The way you feel now will pass, but the decisions you make now could impact you and your children for your entire life.

3. Attempt to Skip Over or Rush the Grief Process

Regardless of how you feel about your soon-to-be ex-spouse or the break-up of your marriage, when there is a major life change like divorce, there will inevitably be a grieving period.

While there is no one way to grieve, or a specific time frame for grieving, allowing time and space to come to terms with this transition in your life will help you more easily move into your new life. It can also help prevent bringing any "baggage" from the past into your new life. The more you grieve and let go of the past, the happier and more at peace you will be in the future.

Use caution about getting into a new relationship before you have come to terms with your feelings, be gentle with yourself and seek forgiveness for past mistakes. It is also helpful to work through understanding how your marriage fell apart and how you want to be in future relationships.

4. Allow Your Emotional or Physical Health to Deteriorate

Your divorce may be one of the biggest challenges you have to go through in life so you need to ensure you are caring for yourself properly. Face your emotions, but don't let them drag you down. Get support when needed from friends and family and don't hesitate to seek professional help as it can make the process so much easier.

Recognize "triggers" that cause you to feel sadness, anger or resentment and try your best to deal with these emotions as they arise so that you do not "dump" them on the important people in your life.

Make sure you are getting adequate sleep and are eating properly. When we are under stress, it is easy to skip meals and not exercise, but it is these very things that will keep you going, especially if you become overwhelmed or get to the point where you can't imagine how you will continue on. But continue on you must, and it is certainly a lot easier when you are caring for your basic needs.

5. Lose Your Connection to Your Faith

Whether you are a Christian or follow another faith, it's important that you maintain your connection to your spiritual life. Divorce brings many challenges and often-unexpected twists and turns. It is when you lose your faith that the pain, confusion and chaos often gets worse.

There may be days where your faith is tested in ways you could never have imagined. Depending on the nature of your divorce, during some days your faith may be one of the few things that holds you together.

6. Allow Your Children to Be Harmed in the Divorce Process

Divorce under any circumstance is difficult for children. The younger your children are, the more challenging it tends to be. Don't assume your child is "coping" well because there are no obvious symptoms. Sometimes children react in ways that are hard to detect. They may act up, grieve out of your sight, or be afraid to tell you how they are feeling out of a desire to protect you.

Stay closely tuned into your children during this challenging time. Answer any questions they have in an age-appropriate manner, and be sure to give them lots of love, assuring them that the divorce is not their fault.

You must also make sure that your children are not harmed by what you say about, or how you interact with your spouse. Using your children to spy on your spouse can also be damaging to your children, as is using them as confidantes or messengers. Children are very sensitive and the last thing you want is to have them be wounded by what you say, or by putting them in compromising circumstances.

Finally, don't try to restrict your spouse's access to your children. The last thing you want is to do is add to your child's trauma and have them resent you in the future. If you believe it will be harmful for your

children to see your spouse, then it's best to pursue restricting access through the legal process.

7. Lose Your Temper with Your Spouse

Divorce can bring up a myriad of emotions. Some days you may be extremely frustrated, depressed, confused, anxious or angry. During these times, it behooves you to find someone to talk to, pray, meditate, take a warm bath or whatever it is that will keep you from "reacting" to your spouse.

When you lose your cool with your spouse, you will likely regret it later. It not only will likely make you feel guilty and remorseful afterwards, but it can be detrimental to your children, and may hamper the divorce process. Divorce is difficult enough as it is, you don't want to be adding negative fuel to the experience. Further, you probably want to get through the process as soon as you can so that you can start focusing on re-building your life.

8. Follow the Well-Intentioned, but Unhelpful Advice of Others

By all means, listen to the perspectives, opinions and advice that others give to you. BUT, know that your situation is unique and you, and only you, know what is best for your circumstances. Don't ever let others tell you that what you are doing is wrong when you are certain it is the best thing for you. Thank people for their thoughts, but do what you know in your heart is "right".

If you are confused or become confused by listening to others, take your time. It is not worth rushing into a decision that you will regret later. Try to find those who are good listeners who will help you make the best decisions---people who share their opinions based on what seems best for you, not what would be, or was, best for them.

9. Make Too Many Changes in Your Life All At Once

Because you are probably not in your strongest state during this time, try not to add too many changes to your life. If you do, you could end up being overloaded and then your whole life, as well as the life of your children, will be affected.

You don't want to add more stress to one of the most stressful experiences that exist. You will have plenty of time to make any changes to your life after the dust settles.

Allow yourself to think about what you want for your future and dream about what is possible for you, but it's probably best to leave the big decisions until you are on more stable ground.

10. Fail to Plan for Your Life After Divorce

While planning for your future may seem impossible or the last thing you want to think about when going through a divorce, you might be surprised at how much it can help you get through the process. Thinking about what kind of future you want helps take away from the challenges and difficult feelings you may be having.

In addition, planning for your future will help you come to terms with the divorce and help you determine your needs as you settle things with your spouse. When you think about all the possibilities open to you, you will be less likely to dwell on the past and what "might have been."

Regardless of how you feel right now, a better future is always possible.

About the Author

Dr. Carol Erb knows first-hand the challenges divorce can bring, having gone through one and then out the other side to remarry. She now celebrates 8 years of a having a fulfilling marriage. Helping people through divorce via coaching and divorce mediation is a passion that has emerged because of her own experiences. Carol is a wise, compassionate divorce coach and mediator who uses her spiritual beliefs to guide in her work with Christians individuals and couples.

