

If You're Thinking About Divorcing

If you're thinking about divorcing, you already know how intense your emotions can be. You also know that these feelings sometimes can lead to decisions or actions that are not in your best interest or in the best interests of your children. Divorce is a process that has a beginning, middle and end. It can be planned and carried out effectively and efficiently. You and your spouse can dissolve your marriage without destroying your own lives or the lives of your children.

Here are 10 important guidelines to help:

1. Talk to your spouse about your intention to dissolve your marriage. It is usually not productive to surprise your spouse with court papers. Despite how upset and angry your partner may be, you will both save time, money and aggravation by collaborating. If this discussion does not seem feasible to do on your own, call our Center or consult your own professional about how best to have this talk.
2. Have a concrete plan of action before informing the children of your decision to separate or divorce. Be prepared with the basic details, such as where you both will be living, where the kids will live, and what your schedule for each seeing the children will be. Children cope most effectively when they are given clear, practical information about what they can expect in the immediate future.
3. Give your kids clear information about what is going on. Children try to make sense of what is happening to them. Without the correct information, they will make things up--and usually what kids imagine is far worse, and much scarier than reality.
4. Reassure your children that your divorce is not their fault and that you both love them. They need to know that you will both always be their parents, even though you will not be married to each other. It is important to know that even in the most reassuring families, it is normal for children to initially react with anger and blame toward one or both parents.
5. Control your anger. Acting vengefully or using your children, assets, or marital property to get back at your spouse will only injure your children and make your divorce process lengthier and more expensive.
6. Preserve goodwill that may remain between you and your spouse. Remember, if you have children, you will need to work together as parents for years to come.
7. Learn about the short and long term effects of divorce on adults and children. Click the tab "Suggested Readings" on The Center's website for a list of recommendations.

8. Organize your financial information and records.
9. Know your legal rights. In addition to many useful books, there are community resources available for you to consult for information. Among these are: Legal Aid Society; the County Court Clerk's office; your local Bar Association; and the local Divorce Mediation Association.
10. Stay focused on your goals. A successful divorce is one that succeeds in minimizing the hardship and disruption to your own life and the lives of your children.

The Center for Divorce Mediation
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