

Surviving Your Divorce

An amicable divorce - what is that? We can remain friends even though our relationship didn't work out. Yeah, right!

When you are getting a divorce, it may seem impossible to envision a future where you will become friends with your ex-spouse. So many issues which led to your separation and dissolution of marriage are still too fresh. The problems which separated you remain on the table, complete with all the things you fought over and the feelings that go along with all that unresolved anger.

It might not seem possible for you to imagine that at the end of your relationship, there might be something salvageable, let alone a full blown friendship. If there are children involved, that only complicates an already strained connection. Yet, depending on where you are in the divorce process, you can advocate for yourself while maintaining an open door for future friendship. Sound impossible?

Some simple ground rules to see you through.

Keeping the following ground rules in mind when dealing with the situation will either make this possible or impossible. Allowing you to work towards a friendship when it is comfortable for the both of you, rest assured, if handled correctly that time will come to pass.

Maintain your dignity at all times

No matter what is going on you must always maintain a sense of dignity and respect for your partner and yourself during your negotiations. Work through your lawyer whenever possible. They are your impartial conduit to keep things civil and professional. If you do find yourself dealing directly with your spouse, work to keep emotion out of your interactions. That may sound extraordinarily hard when you're in the thick of things, but for a smooth transition and future relationship, it is imperative to stay as cool and collected as possible. It may also mean leaving the negotiations for a later time.

Know when to leave the room.

You have to know when to leave and geographically remove yourself from a situation spiraling out of control. It is very easy to get caught up in finger pointing and accusations. If you find yourself losing your cool or becoming emotional, stop, take a deep breath and say just that - you need to end the conversation. Some parts of a divorce will always be too painful and difficult for you to solve face-to-face. Avoid the pitfall of playing superhero. Recognize that you and your spouse are extremely vulnerable during this period. A good lawyer or mediator can help greatly in these circumstances.

Be willing to compromise where possible.

Take it point-by-point. Remember, how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. A marriage is like an elephant and its dissolution can only be successfully accomplished one point at a time. However you feel the assets should be divided, it is important to understand that for each of you, some things are more important than others. If it's not important to you, don't sweat the small stuff.

You can't keep everything

For example, it may be important to you that any heirloom items passed down from your family remain with you, and it may be equally important to your spouse to keep his or her retirement benefits for intact. Your lawyer will be able help you evaluate the financial implications of decisions and choices in as fair and impartial way as possible. If you fight over everything, nothing will be accomplished and you will both lose. Bitter feelings will remain, and any chance for future camaraderie will be unworkable.

Understanding what is most important to your spouse and being willing to compromise or concede to those things may make your spouse more than willing to do the same for you.

Realize that your lives will now be separate

Any new interests your spouse has with other people or things are no longer part of your life, unless you are invited in. This works both ways. This is where mutual respect comes into play. What this means is that you and your spouse will be moving on, spending time with new people and eventually dating.

Avoid being judgmental

A sure-fire way to kill off the possibility of a friendship is for you to be judgmental of the new people in your spouse's life. Becoming overly friendly or involved with these new people can also have the same effect. Your lives are separate and you must get on with rebuilding a life detached from your spouse's world, just like the two of you built a life together. Know your place, and let your ex-spouse know if your own boundaries are being overstepped.

Know when to say nothing.

One of the most important things to remember is to know when to keep your mouth shut. We were taught that if you don't have something nice to say about somebody, don't say anything. This adage is never so important as during and after a divorce. School yourself from speaking negatively about your ex-spouse especially around your common friends. This can be difficult, as there seems to be a natural curiosity from friends to delve into the reasons for your separation.

How-To Avoid Prying Questions

They may ask prying questions and look for blame. It easy to fall into the trap of it was your ex-spouses fault. Reach for a general response which casts no blame and ends the conversation so that you can move on to what's really happening in your life now. Phrases like, "we just grew apart" or "the divorce was a positive step for both of us" can sometimes help to keep the questions at bay.

Present yourself as confident and happy

Remember you do not have to answer a question just because it is asked, especially if it is personal. Your reasons for your divorce are your own business, and it is your choice as to how much you wish to share.

Keeping your spouse as a friend may seem impossible now, but by following the suggestions above you will have created the possibility of amicability in the years to come.

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About the Author

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