



The Mediated Online Solutions Guide for Those Considering Divorce

When you get married, full of optimism and excitement, you feel like you are at the beginning of your happily ever after. For some this may be the case, but for many, unfortunately, marriage does not always go as planned.

Thousands of different scenarios can lead you to consider divorce. Maybe you fell out of love slowly over the course of many years. Maybe your partner was unfaithful to you. Maybe the strain of parenthood caused you to realize your incompatibility. Maybe you feel you rushed into your marriage and as you've gotten to know your spouse better, you've realized you aren't right for one another. Maybe you've been the victim of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

Whatever the circumstances that have led you to consider divorce, you are now in a difficult and stressful position. The team at Mediated Online Solutions has met many people who are standing at this crossroads, unsure of how to proceed. If you're not fully certain you even *want* a divorce, ask yourself these questions:

- Is my marriage making me happy? Is it making me unhappy? Do I foresee this changing?
- Do I want to spend the rest of my life by my spouse's side?
- Does my spouse treat me with the love and respect I deserve?

If you're still not sure, sometimes learning a little more about what proceeding with a divorce would entail can help you make up your mind. Whether you're positive it's time for a divorce or not, read on to find our tips for moving forward in the most positive and effective way possible.

1. Safety is the TOP PRIORITY.

Throughout this guide, we sometimes mention developing a plan and making certain arrangements in advance of proceeding with a divorce. However, if you are in an unsafe relationship, it might not be right for you to take the time to make a plan. If protecting yourself from harm requires leaving without a plan, *do it*. Once you're somewhere safe, you should immediately make contact with a domestic violence program for support and help planning for your continued safety.

2. Prepare financially.

If you have time to prepare, there are certain financial arrangements that can be helpful to make. First, gather your important financial records. This includes a few years of tax returns, business bookkeeping records, and bank and investment account records. Gathering this documentation is especially important for accounts kept in the home in the name of your spouse only. Next, run your own credit history to gather information. Then, if you don't have a credit card in your name only, you should immediately apply online and use your current total household income on the application. Keep this card for emergency use only. If possible, set aside some savings in a separate account to provide a safety net for the inevitable financial pinch once your family income is supporting two households versus one household. It can also be helpful to project two realistic household budgets for yourself (and kids, if applicable) and for your likely living arrangement after you physically separate from your spouse. One budget should be created assuming you stay living where you are and your spouse moves out and one should be created assuming you will move out of your current home and set up a new residence elsewhere.

3. Practical planning.

The personal planning that goes into preparing for a divorce will be different for every person, but we can offer some general advice. For example, it may be wise to safeguard keepsakes or unique personal property that is irreplaceable (or hard to replace). Things like baby books and children's artwork often end up destroyed or held hostage by angry partners. It is also wise to put important documents like birth certificates, passports, and immigration papers offsite in a safe place.

4. Find your support system.

During your divorce, your support system will be extremely valuable to you. They will be by your side to remind you of your strength and value and help you remember that you have beautiful, loving relationships beyond your marriage. Now is a good time to identify emotional supports (close friends, family members, spiritual community, etc.) that can be supportive listeners through the process.

5. Assess your social media accounts.

It may be necessary to do a deep cleaning of your Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media accounts, especially if you post about personal matters. You will need to delete anything that would be embarrassing or unflattering if it showed up as evidence in court.

6. Pace yourself.

It can be tempting to purge yourself completely of your old life and start building something new right away. You might think, "I'm getting a divorce, so I might as well get rid of everything in my life that's making me unhappy and quit my job, too." However, we recommend that you avoid making multiple life changes all at once. A divorce is enough to juggle! Avoid changing jobs or jumping into new romantic relationships at the same time as going through a separation or divorce.

7. Take care of your emotional health.

Whether you've had a long-time struggle with depression and anxiety, or your mental health has always been fine, divorce can be a huge emotional challenge. You need resources and support to help you through. Sometimes, your support system of family and friends is not enough and you need to talk to a mental health professional. We recommend regular therapy appointments when you're in the divorce process.

Even when you have managed other major life crises during your life's journey, going through a divorce can be a huge emotional challenge. It is not a time to go it alone. Recognizing that it would be helpful to reach out for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Friends and family can often offer some of that support, but it may not be enough. You may also benefit from a more neutral, compassionate, mental health professional.

Choosing mediation can also help you take care of your emotional health during a divorce. When you work with the Mediated Online Solutions team, you are supported both practically and emotionally by those with experience in both the legal world and the world of family therapy. We combine these strengths to give you the full range of support and guidance you need to face this difficult change in your life.

If you are interested in learning more about what we do at Mediated Online Solutions, we would love to connect with you. While this guide offers general information and advice, we understand that every person's circumstances are different and would love to talk to you about your unique situation. Contact us today to learn more about how we can guide and support you as you navigate the, often unclear, path that lies ahead.