

The Great Divide

DIVORCE SERIES | Article 1



Do's and Do Not's for Untying the Knot

By Ryan P. Nowlin

On your wedding day, you probably did not expect that one day your union would end. Whether the divorce papers were a complete shock, or whether they have felt inevitable for some time, you have been served, and it is now clear that your marriage will soon be over. How will you cope with this change? What steps should you take?

The good news is that you are not alone. Over 600,000 couples get divorced each year in the US, and you have plenty of support available in the form of friends, family, and professionals who have helped many other couples through their divorces. While you process and come to terms, there are also a few do's and do not's that will help you going forward. Keep these lessons in mind, and you will be off to a good start in the next chapter of your—and your family's—life.



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Do's

DO be on your best behavior.

When (or if) it comes time for a trial, a variety of things could be fair game as evidence of your judgment, honesty and character. Steer clear of anything that could make you look bad--drinking and driving, drug use, "messy" social media posts, even starting a new relationship. For now, keep it clean and keep it wholesome.

DO be mindful of your spending.

First, evidence of lavish spending may reflect poorly on you; now is not the time to buy a boat or tour Paris. Second, with the cost of divorce itself plus the division of assets, it is impossible to know how your finances will look until the dust settles. Frugality now can only help you, while unnecessary spending may end up harming you.

DO find representation before making any decisions.

As soon as you receive the divorce papers, work on finding an attorney right away. A good divorce attorney is one who has experience with situations similar to yours and who understands your priorities. Once you have found the right person, they can help you through every step of the process.

You may be feeling overwhelmed, but know that help is available, and this entire experience will soon be behind you.



Do Not's

DO NOT say (or post) anything rash.

Avoid reaching out to your spouse before you have had time to fully process. Also be careful about who you confide in early on; your communications could be used against you legally or be circulated as gossip. This applies tenfold to posting online about the situation--even if your account isn't linked with your real name, avoid any post that could come back to bite you. You should always consider that anything you put in writing may be eventually used as an exhibit at a hearing or trial.

DO NOT move out of the marital home unless necessary.

With tensions high and divorce papers in hand, you might not want to be anywhere near your spouse. However, leaving the marital home before proceedings have begun can complicate things for you later on, both financially and when it comes to custody of any children. Right now, the best thing you can do is hold steady in the homestead. The exception happens when there is a concern for your mental and/or physical safety. In that case, do what is in your best interest to be safe and healthy.

DO NOT forget that you are still a family.

If you have children, remember that you and your spouse will probably be in regular contact at least until they turn 18, and likely afterwards. Judges frown on one parent trying to keep the kids away from the other during a divorce, and taking a "scorched-earth" approach in the courtroom will only make coparenting harder later on. The best way you can support your kids is by continuing to be kind and considerate to all members of the family--that includes your spouse.

For more information on choosing the right attorney or to set up an initial consultation interview with a Family Law attorney, please contact Ryan Nowlin.