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Five Things to Consider Before You File for Divorce

Usually, by the time a potential client enters our office, he or she has already made the decision to file for a divorce. However, sometimes people do come in to weigh their options, and find out about the process of divorce, because they have not yet made up their minds. They may be seriously considering divorce as an option but have questions about the process, what they can expect, and what they should do to prepare themselves—and often their children—if they should choose to proceed.

With this in mind, this newsletter is a bit of a departure. Rather than writing for those who are divorced, this newsletter is aimed at those who are struggling with what is often a protracted and painful choice: whether to file for a divorce.

We are not therapists, and we do not provide relationship advice. But what we can offer are a few things you should seriously consider before filing for a divorce—whether you choose to do so on your own, or with the guidance of an attorney.

- **Recognize your biggest concerns.** Every divorce begins with warning signs. Whether you are considering divorce because of infidelity, money woes, or other issues in the relationship that have become untenable, the full scope of your concerns (and possibly challenges) may or may not be readily recognizable. If you are unhappy in your marriage, do your best to identify the root problem and corollary trouble spots. Knowing your concerns will make it that much easier to work through them and address your emotional and psychological needs during the divorce process.
- **Act now.** If you are worried about your marriage, and you think you want to work out your problems, act quickly. Once serious thoughts about divorce begin, negative emotions associated with your marriage—anger, bitterness, distrust—have often taken deep root. The longer you connect these negative feelings to your marriage—and, often, your spouse—the harder it will be to move past them and on to a healthier relationship if staying together is the optimal course.
- **Speak to a counselor.** Before they initiate a divorce, many couples find that speaking with a counselor or therapist, either together or apart, is highly beneficial. In many cases, couples therapy is desirable, but if that is not an option, see one on your own. Talk through your hot button issues with a neutral third party. These are safe spaces to express concerns and uncover some of the underlying issues that may be at work.
- **Be ready for hard work.** As you and every other individual in a long-term relationship knows all too well, no relationship is easy. Marriage can be one of the most important and challenging relationships, given how it is woven through every fiber of your life from finances, parenting, work, extended family relationships, to day-to-day living. If your mind is not made up, be prepared to put some time and work into your relationship to fix any problems you may be having.
- **Make an appointment with a divorce attorney.** If, after making an attempt to resolve the issues in your marriage, you are still unhappy or are still having problems, speak with a divorce attorney. Make sure you are fully informed and understand the process, the timeframe, and what you can expect to happen during your divorce. Divorce law is complicated, and an attorney can give you a better picture of what you may be looking at in terms of time, expense, and most importantly, outcome. There are so many things that happen in a divorce, and decisions made will impact your family's life significantly. An experienced attorney can help you see the road ahead so you can navigate it easier, with fewer surprises, as you move down it.

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Conclusion

For every couple who will divorce, there is one who will not. Divorce is not the right solution for everyone experiencing turmoil or deep difficulties in their relationship. Before you make a decision one way or the other—to work hard and stay together, or to go your separate (but often forever intertwined) ways—give yourself the gift of time to fully consider the options. Talk to experts in family therapy and relationships, and meet with a family law attorney who can help you take proactive steps, regardless of your final decision and its outcome.

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