



# DEALING WITH DIVORCE

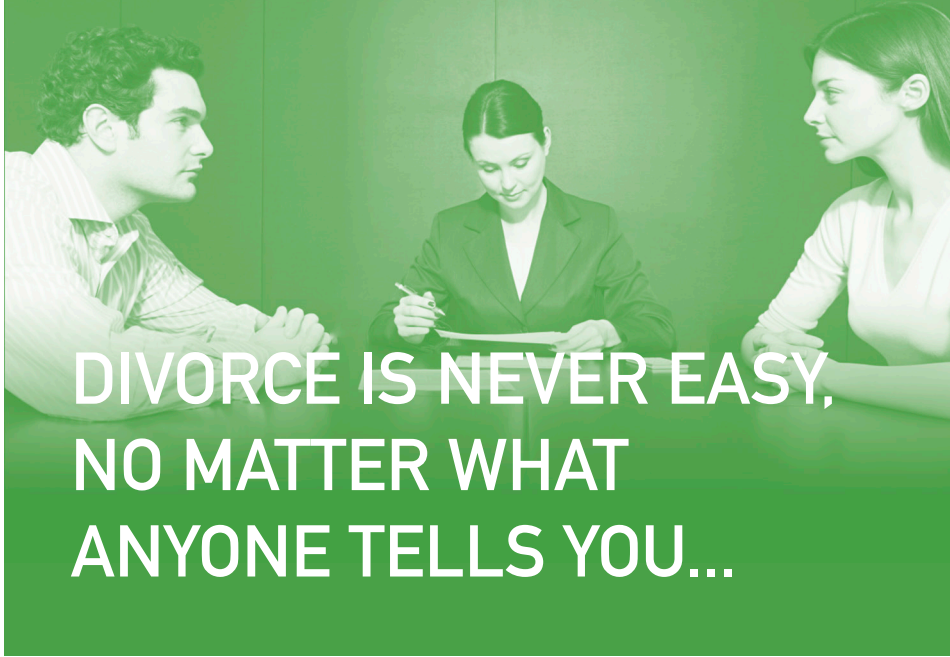
## 10 Survival Strategies



GreeneWilson  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

# CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Dealing with Divorce: 10 Survival Strategies	2
<b>Survival Strategy 1:</b> Build a Solid Support Network	3
<b>Survival Strategy 2:</b> Rediscover Yourself	4
<b>Survival Strategy 3:</b> Help Your Children	5
<b>Survival Strategy 4:</b> Don't Let Your Ex-Spouse Hold the Reins	6
<b>Survival Strategy 5:</b> Do Things That Make You Happy	7
<b>Survival Strategy 6:</b> Evaluate What You Want – and Be Realistic	8
<b>Survival Strategy 7:</b> Let Go of “Little Things”	9
<b>Survival Strategy 8:</b> Find a Way to Get Your Feelings Out	10
<b>Survival Strategy 9:</b> Don't Rush Yourself Through the Process	11
<b>Survival Strategy 10:</b> Steer Clear of Risky Behaviors	13
<b>You'll Survive Your Divorce</b> <b>(And You May Even Surprise Yourself)</b>	14



## DIVORCE IS NEVER EASY, NO MATTER WHAT ANYONE TELLS YOU...

Divorce is never easy, no matter what anyone tells you. However, you can make it a little less painful while working on your coping skills – and come out of it stronger and more resilient than you ever thought you would be.

If you're like most people are going through divorce, you are willing to work hard to make the process smoother for yourself and your children.

With decades of combined experience, we have learned several survival strategies for people in situations similar to yours. We hope that you find our advice helpful, and please remember that we are always here if you have any questions about your case.

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# DEALING WITH DIVORCE

## 10 Survival Strategies



Would you be surprised to learn that most people don't want to fight their way through divorce?

It's true.

The vast majority of people would prefer a peaceful, even amicable, split. However, in many cases, it doesn't work out that way.

Mental health experts say that divorce is similar to coping with the death of a loved one, so it's understandable that the entire process puts tremendous stress on everyone involved. The pain it causes includes grief, anger, sadness and a whole host of other emotions. While there is no way to erase the pain of a divorce, you can draw from your usual coping strategies and learn some new ones to help make it easier on you and your children.

We've developed a list of 10 survival strategies you can employ to help you work through your divorce without giving in to the emotional pressures it puts on you.

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## Survival Strategy No.1 : BUILD THE SOLID SUPPORT NETWORK



We all need a solid support network, but unfortunately, it's common for people going through a divorce to look around and find that all of their friends have disappeared. Whether this is because people just don't know what to say, they're too busy or they have other reasons, it happens often.

As humans, we are incredibly social creatures. It's important for us to share our feelings, particularly when we're down in the dumps, so that we can work through our emotions by feeling validated.

If you don't have a solid support network in place, it's a good idea to create one yourself. This may include joining support groups comprising people in situations similar to yours, reconnecting with old friends, and leaning on your family when things become difficult.

In many cases, it's also very helpful to talk to a professional counselor or therapist. Many people, including those who don't feel their divorces are affecting them negatively, report that attending counseling is a great way to wash away the past and begin moving forward.

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## Survival Strategy No.2 : REDISCOVER YOURSELF



Divorce is a huge upheaval in your personal life. Whereas before you identified yourself as part of a couple, now you're flying solo – and it can be very difficult to redefine yourself as a single person.

Experts suggest taking up new hobbies, exploring interests that you could never explore while you were married, and trying new things. By staying busy in a constructive way, your mind will be better equipped to process the grief divorce brings, and at the same time, you are discovering who you are when you are not attached to your ex-spouse.

Now is also a great time to put away the past; doing so clears the way for you to move forward. That can include putting away old photographs and mementos so you aren't forced to look at them all the time, cleaning out your closets (and the attic, if you're motivated enough) and getting rid of things that remind you of your ex and your marriage.

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in a constructive way,  
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## Survival Strategy No.3 : HELP YOUR CHILDREN



Although you are busy attempting to manage your own emotions, it's important that you recognize that your children are doing the same.

It can be difficult, but by helping your children cope with the divorce, you're also helping yourself. Psychologists suggest letting your children know that you are always available to talk about their feelings, no matter what you're doing, because it shows them that you value the way they feel. In addition to heading off future problems, serving as an emotional caregiver often helps parents keep things in perspective and soothe their own feelings.

Many people find it helpful to schedule a family meeting each day. Even if you don't discuss the divorce or the emotions your children are experiencing, it provides your kids with a sense of connection and reassures them that you care about their well-being. It also adds some structure to the tumult of divorce, which children and adults need.

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## Survival Strategy No.4 : DON'T LET YOUR EX-SPOUSE HOLD THE REINS



Even if you were not the one who filed for divorce, that doesn't mean that you are not allowed to assert control over the process.

In fact, you should stand up for your rights throughout your divorce, because your future may depend on it.

In many couples, one partner is more dominant than the other. During divorce, those roles tend to continue – but they don't have to. While your attorney will ensure that your legal rights are protected, it's a good idea to make your wishes known so that you are able to take what you want and deserve from your divorce.

That doesn't mean that you need to hold the reins. It does mean, however, that you don't have to relinquish control over the outcome of your case or your future.

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## Survival Strategy No.5 : DO THINGS THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY



During divorce, you have a lot on your mind. You're managing your everyday obligations, working, parenting and learning to live on your own again. Too often, there's no time left of the end of the day to simply do things that make you happy.

Whether you enjoy curling up on the couch with a good book, fishing in the early morning hours or hitting the gym to release your frustrations, it's extremely important that you make time to do things that make you happy. Your brain uses that time to recharge, and when you experience psychological pleasure, you are more capable of dealing with the ups and downs of divorce.

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## Survival Strategy No.6 : EVALUATE WHAT YOU WANT - AND BE REALISTIC



Because divorce involves many emotions, including hurt, bitterness and anger, it's difficult to look ahead and see the "big picture." However, it's incredibly important that you strive to do just that.

While it may feel good to think about getting an apology from your ex or being vindicated in some way, it often isn't helpful to do so.

It's far more productive to think about the future without your ex in it. Where do you see yourself once the divorce is over? In five years? 10?

While it may not be believable right now, you will come out of this stronger and more resilient than you thought you could. With the passage of time, you'll no longer care about that apology or being vindicated; you will be too focused on your own life and the successes you've found since your divorce.

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## Survival Strategy No.7 : LET GO OF “LITTLE THINGS”

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Psychologists and mental health experts say that stress is cumulative. The same is true for small aggravations and minor annoyances. It can be simple to deal with one or two “little things” each day, but a series of annoyances and difficulties can begin to pile up on each other.

That fact is that some days during divorce are more difficult than others are. If you’re like most people, you’ll have good days and bad days. The key is recognizing what really matters and what doesn’t – and if you’re focusing on the big picture, you may find that very few “little things” really make a difference in the grand scheme of things.

For example, when your spouse does something that bothers you, ask yourself whether it’s important to let his or her actions affect your survival strategy. If he or she is late picking up the children, sends you an emotional email, or says something that rubs you the wrong way, is it worth stalling the progress you’ve made so far?

Chances are, it isn’t.

Naturally, if your ex does something that affects your divorce case, it’s always a good idea to call your lawyer. You never need to tolerate verbal or physical abuse, stalking or other illegal activities, and if your ex does any of these things, it’s important that you let your attorney know immediately.

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## Survival Strategy No.8 : FIND A WAY TO GET YOUR FEELINGS OUT



Many people in situations similar to yours find that it's helpful to talk to a counselor or psychologist who understands divorce. Additionally, many people with kids find that some type of therapy is beneficial.

Even if you're not comfortable seeking therapy, it's a good idea to start a personal journal. Your journal can serve as an outlet for your feelings, but it has another purpose as well: it provides a written record of everything that happens to you and your children during divorce. If your ex is continually canceling on plans with the kids or harassing you in some way, you'll be able to pinpoint the dates and times that those events occurred, which can help your attorney in several ways.

If your children are old enough, give them each a notebook so they can do the same thing. Assure them that the things they put in the journal will remain private so they are comfortable writing about their feelings in a safe, personal way. Even if your kids aren't interested in keeping a personal journal, provide them with a notebook anyway; they may change their minds over time.

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## Survival Strategy No.9 : **DON'T RUSH YOURSELF THROUGH THE PROCESS**



Everyone grieves in his or her own way. It's natural to want to get through the rough patches quickly – but in most cases, that just isn't how it works.

You need to go at your own pace. Don't fight your feelings; ups and downs are normal, and so are conflicting emotions. In just one day, you may feel anger, resentment and relief; on another day, you may feel extremely sad and confused. Psychologists suggest identifying and acknowledging all of your feelings, even if it is painful. If you try to suppress them or ignore them, you'll actually prolong the grieving process.

It's also important that you recognize the difference between the normal emotions of divorce and depression. If you experience a constant sense of hopelessness and despair, you could actually be suffering from depression. Depression can make it difficult to work, sleep and enjoy everyday activities.

That National Institute of Mental Health says that about 6.7 percent of adults in the U.S. will experience major depression, and that overall, between 20 and 25 percent of adults are likely to suffer at least one episode of it at some point during their lives. In some cases, extremely stressful situations such as divorce can trigger depression.



Some people are more prone to depression than others are, but even if you don't think you are depressed, watch out for these symptoms:

- Fatigue or loss of energy on more days than not
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt on more days than not
- Difficulty concentrating and indecisiveness
- Altered sleep patterns
- Loss of interest in almost all activities
- Restlessness or feeling is if you're being slowed down
- Significant weight fluctuations

If you experience thoughts of death or suicide, it's extremely important to get help immediately. Depression is like any other injury, and getting it treated by a professional is the best way to correct the issue. trigger depression.

## Survival Strategy No.10 : STEER CLEAR OF RISKY BEHAVIORS



When you're hurting, it's easy to grasp at anything that looks as if it will remove your pain. However, there are things that can defeat the progress you've made and result in extremely negative outcomes.

Naturally, it's best to steer clear of using drugs or alcohol as a means of coping with pain or loneliness. You also have to curb impulsive behavior – psychologists say that people who are grieving tend to act on unwise impulses with sometimes disastrous results – and avoid making major decisions that aren't related to your divorce.

Each of these things could come back to haunt you, particularly if you are embroiled in a custody battle or are having a difficult divorce. These behaviors can also delay your emotional recovery and make the entire divorce process more difficult on you than it needs to be.

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# YOU'LL SURVIVE YOUR DIVORCE

(AND YOU MAY EVEN SURPRISE YOURSELF)

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Even if you only employ half of the strategies we've outlined in this book, you're going to be a step ahead of others who didn't receive any guidance about surviving divorce.

The truth is that you will come out of this stronger and more resilient than you were pre-divorce. While divorce is never an easy process, you will learn about yourself, your children and your ability to cope with the most difficult situations.

Through decades of practicing law, we've seen people emerge from divorce emotionally healthy and ready to take on the world.

We can help make that happen for you, too. Keep your eye on the big picture and let us handle the rest.



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