

Abby Webb, Esq., who practices family law with Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer in Woodbridge, NJ, answers:



“I’m worried that this divorce is going to ruin me financially. Do you have any tips to prevent this?”

Divorce can be devastating – whether you initiated the filing of the papers or are on the receiving end. Throughout the process, the intensity of emotions you and your spouse may undergo can be traumatic and overwhelming. Below are suggestions to prevent and minimize your emotional and financial contributions throughout the process:

- 1. Accept that your divorce is a major change in your life.** This is true not only for you but for your child as well. Seek religious or therapeutic counseling if needed or suggested by your attorney. Your attorney is not your therapist. She can only give you legal advice and, hopefully, moral support. You will spend a lot of money if you treat your attorney as your “therapist”.
- 2. Do not let your emotions get the best of you.** No decision or directive to your attorney should be made from anger, sympathy, or apathy. The divorce process can be hurtful, but try to take yourself out of the equation to make rational decisions. The worst thing you can do is allow yourself to get involved in a tit-for-tat vendetta with your spouse. Directing your attorney to write or respond to daily letters and worse, motions, will only exponentially increase your counsel fees. The only ones who will benefit will be the attorneys.
- 3. Speak with and to your attorney about the divorce process.** Write down all questions and issues you have for your attorney and present them at one time, whenever possible. You will incur unnecessary costs if you call your attorney with questions several times a day, as opposed to having one ten- or 15-minute conversation.
- 4. Take an active role in your divorce and be honest with yourself and your attorney.** Do not hold anything back when speaking with your attorney. Sooner or later, everything will be known.

Common Divorce Questions

As featured in *Divorce Magazine*



Standing in front of the judge is not the time for your attorney to learn something new about you — especially if it is damaging to you and/or your case. Your attorney will know how to present whatever issues you have or had in the past to the court. Place your trust in your attorney. If you do not trust them or are unwilling to follow their advice, it is time to find a new attorney.

- 6. Do not demand that your attorney file a motion for every incident.** The fact that the children came home late could be the result of many things, such as traffic, misplaced sneakers, school bags, homework, etc. You should only be concerned when a pattern occurs that is not reasonably explained.
- 7. Do not think of your divorce as a “war” or battlefield.** You must remember that wars and battles cost a lot of money and are usually long and drawn-out, and lives are inevitably lost. Sometimes you have to fight to protect yourself. However, unless you are emotionally and financially prepared to go to war, do not start the fight if you are not prepared to finish it.
- 8. Remember that your case is not personal to your attorney.** You may want your attorney to be unfriendly to your spouse’s attorney. Your spouse already told you that his attorney is better than yours and you want to prove him wrong. Don’t take the bait! More can be accomplished by the two attorneys speaking civilly and advocating for their clients than posturing in and outside of the courthouse.

Remember that this is your divorce. You may not be 100% happy at the end and may not get everything that you want or think you are entitled to, but you should be able to leave the process respecting and loving yourself as a better person and parent.

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