



Divorcing in Maine

Family & Emotional Considerations in Divorce

These slides are the property of the Maine Divorce Workshop, put on by TogetHER Invested. Please do not use, share, or reproduce without written permission.

Handled well, your divorce will be a stepping-stone to your highest freedom and most conscious living”

~ Gabrielle Hartley, Esq

- Today is an invitation to consider divorce and separation in a new way.
- Be intentional in this process –what do you want? who you want to be? how to emerge with your integrity intact?
- Choose your team wisely; don’t go it alone – beyond an attorney or financial professional, gather a trusted group of family, friends, therapist, coach and/or support group.
- This is not a simple process, whether you are the leaver or were left. Divorce is the death of a dream. Often called “crazy time.”
- *NOTE: Special support is recommended when there is a history of domestic violence or interpersonal violence.*

Separation and Divorce is a Process

- There is no one typical response to divorce or to grief and loss. It is as individual as you are, your relationship, and the separation circumstances.
- Common stages of grief as you move from intimate partners to stable and apart: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance.
- Be aware of your unique emotions and response to the situation without judgement. Realize your spouse may not feel the same.
- Divorce grief, in particular, may include a “trying out” phase of new freedom or revenge; going out partying, having casual sex, etc. Use caution here for yourself, your heart, and protect your children.

Sharing the News with Children

- Do's and don'ts of sharing the news with children of any age:
 - Tell all the children at once but expect different reactions.
 - If possible, tell the children together with their other parent.
 - Reassure children this was not their fault, there is nothing they can do, and that both parents will continue to love them and be involved.
 - Do not speak badly of the other parent to or in front of the children. And don't allow other family and friends to do so. Nor use them as messengers.
 - Beware of using older children as confidantes. They need to have healthy attachment to each parent. Remember to get your own support.
 - Children of ANY age still need good parenting, protection from adult conflict, and their own support team (teacher, therapist, relative).

Additional Considerations with Children

- The success of your children's adjustment depends on the level of communication and conflict between you and their other parent.
- Strategies for communication: weekly co-parenting call or email. Limit texts to urgent and emergency issues only.
- What if your spouse speaks badly of you in front of the children?
- What if your child is reluctant to go to the other house?
- The benefits of a peaceful transition between houses and rituals.
- Some danger signs in children – regression, aggression, depression, and withdrawal.

Strategies for Divorce Changes

- Prepare for various reactions when sharing the news with family, friends, and colleagues. Alliances may shift, and new ones may appear.
- Prepare for difficult days ahead: holidays, emotional anniversaries, and surprise reminders trigger loss (places, songs, restaurants, celebrations).
- Prepare yourself for more alone time. Make a “fun list” for yourself and days with your kids; plan to redecorate your space, join a book group or a new class; make plans for holidays. Build new rituals with your kids.
- Learn to master your emotions as best you can – when triggered, PAUSE, before you impulsively REACT, and RESPOND with integrity. Example, Have a friend or attorney read emails before you hit Send.

Taking Care of Yourself

- Stay grounded by writing in a journal, developing a meditation practice or use simple breathing exercises and mantras for times of stress.
- Stay organized with your divorce documents, with help if needed.
- Take breaks from divorce matters. Exercise or watch funny movies.
- Get help if you are struggling or feeling stuck. Remember, you will get through this.
- Through self-compassion and self-forgiveness, you develop the clarity and courage to untangle yourself from lingering resentments toward your former spouse, to go on and create the life you dream.