



INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:

COVID-19
COPING SKILLS

DIVORCE IN A
STRUGGLING
ECONOMY

ON-LINE
PRIVACY

VOLUME VII EDITION I

JULY 2020

Making the Best of Covid-19

If you thought by now that you would be well into your divorce proceedings, and if you and your spouse are still living under the same roof, here are some tips to manage until courts re-open fully, and when you don't have to worry about being in a large gathering of people.

Commit to being cordial to your spouse. Even if you're sleeping in separate bedrooms, don't engage in angry altercations. Say "good morning" and how was your day," and "can you pick up some orange juice from the grocery?" If your spouse ignores you and doesn't respond in a similar cordial way, do your part anyway because it's the right thing to do.

Make time for you to be alone with the kids, and make time for your spouse to have time alone with the kids. If they are going to have another period of time with sheltered on-line education from home, they do not need to be in the middle of a domestic battlefield. If necessary to keep relative peace in the house, try bird's nesting – made famous by retired Judge Frank C. Mills, Jr. On a weekly basis, one parent leaves the house and stays somewhere else, and the other parent stays home with the kids. Then the next week they switch. The logistics should try to conserve marital resources – so do not make reservations for your week out of the house at an expensive resort. Stay with a friend or a family member.

Make the transition easy, and let your spouse handle all the responsibilities of child care, education, and general feeding, clothing and sheltering without help from you. Each parent needs to learn to live independently and to be a single parent. You will eventually be divorced, so learn how to do that now in weekly increments.

Make a plan to pay down consumer debt. Look at all your joint credit cards and put a hold on new charges so they can be paid off. Start with the cards that have the highest rate of interest, and work your way down. Dave Ramsey has a plan to get people debt-free, and this is one of his techniques. Cut back on your individual credit card spending. Many stores are not open, so there is no reason to just shop. Resist – and really resist – the urge to compensate by on-line shopping. Use this time to determine what you need versus what you want.

If you are unemployed, search the web to see if you qualify for unemployment or other forms of government assistance. If you receive a stimulus check – don't blow it. Parse it out on necessities. Talk to your lender about pausing payments on your lease or your mortgage. It may also be a good time to refinance with rates so low.

If the thought of living together with the spouse you want to divorce is untenable, then put together a marital balance sheet and ask your lawyer about mediation. Just because courts are essentially closed does not mean your case cannot be resolved. However, it is imperative that both parties participate in gathering financial information in order to compile a complete and accurate net worth statement. If one party neglects to include the amount of cash in a safe deposit box at the bank, and the divorce goes through without it being addressed, the divorce can be set aside and the parties get to go through that exercise again.

**"A Good
Marriage is
the Union of
Two Good
Foregivers."
Mark Twain**

**"Wisdom is
the Reward
you get for a
Lifetime of
Listening
when You
would Rather
Have Talked."
Mark Twain**



*Children are our most
valuable natural
resource.*

-Herbert Hoover



*Hope is the thing with
feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune--
without the words,
And never stops at all*

*-From "Hope" by Emily
Dickinson*



Divorcing in a Struggling Economy

Because of the strain in the economy, many couples are finding divorce more complicated than before. Some couples find themselves living in the same home as their spouse under circumstances that are less than ideal during a divorce proceeding. There are, however, several steps that a couple can take to make the best of the situation and reduce the stress on each other as well as children:

- As long as spouses are living under the same roof, schedule use of the washer, dryer, kitchen, and living areas to allow each party equal time and ample warning of any plans the other may have.
- Try your best not to involve the children in disputes or argue in front of the children.
- If you are selling your home, be realistic and open to offers that may be less than the asking price.
- Understand that with the current real estate market, your home may be on the market for several months, if not longer.
- Explain the living arrangements with your children and set ground rules early so that everyone involved knows what to expect. If expectations are set, strive to meet those expectations.
- Once separated, do not invite acquaintances of the opposite sex over while your spouse or the children are in the home.
- Try to continue attending any extracurricular events that the children may have.
- Set up a Post Office Box and secure e-mail for any legal correspondence pertaining to the divorce.
- Consider scheduling an appointment to speak with a counselor or psychologist to help you and/or your children during this difficult and emotional process.
- Find a hobby that will help relieve stress such as spiritual growth, reading, golf, fishing, hiking, or something else that interests you.

If you are thinking about filing for divorce or any law suit where your personal life or financial life might be at issue, then you need to be careful about what you post on your Facebook or MySpace site. For that matter, you need to be vigilant about any electronic communications, period. Anyone, including attorneys and other interested parties, can review Facebook and other social networking sites during pending litigation for evidence of the litigant's character or financial status. For example, if you post, "Wow! I am not twenty-one anymore... I just realized I can't stay up until two a.m." Although, it is possible that the person stayed up that late studying for a final, the inference that will be drawn in a custody dispute is that the person stays out late partying and does not have their children's best interest at heart.

Consider these tips to avoid seeing your electronic communications admitted into evidence while sitting in the witness chair:

- Keep your profile private. Facebook allows you to change your privacy settings. Only let Friends see your Wall posts and your Status.
- Make sure your Friends are really your friends and not your foes or fake friends. Do not befriend people who could intentionally or accidentally reveal facts about your postings to your spouse or ex-spouse.
- **THINK** before you post. Before you post, consider how your post would sound to a judge in the midst of a divorce or a custody battle. If finances are at issue such as in a modification of child support, do not post about shopping trips, expensive new toys, fabulous dinners, or pricey weekend trips.
- Clean up past posts. Remove previous postings that might damage your credibility or character.
- Be careful of the photos you post. Pictures of shooting your shotgun at the skeet range may seem innocuous but can be twisted into painting you as a violent individual. Avoid posting pictures that may be culturally or racially paint you outside the range of reason.
- Do not discuss your case on Facebook or MySpace. If you do, you potentially waive the attorney-client confidentiality.
- If in doubt, delete your profile and stop posting on Facebook and MySpace until your case is concluded and final.