

# Better Than Before Divorce™

## First Steps Checklist

For anyone thinking about getting a divorce, there are important questions you should ask yourself. You'll find 10 below and you may come up with more based on your particular situation.

1

### **Am I safe, and are my children safe?**

If you are worried about this at all, visit [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org) or call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

2

### **What does my support system look like?**

Do I need to expand it? (Hint, the answer is almost certainly yes.) Asking for and accepting help can be one of the most challenging and one of the most important parts of getting through divorce. Make a list of what would be helpful and who you can ask. Include things like picking up kids, going on a walk with you, or bringing over dinner.

Make a note of your priorities (spending dedicated time with the kids or being focused at work) and use your asks to accomplish those priorities. One cautionary note: be careful about soliciting too many opinions about your situation. You know what's best for you and your family, and if you need clarity around decisions and prioritizing the flood of information, consider engaging an unbiased professional, such as a coach, lawyer, or mediator.

3

### **Think about your key messages and write them down.**

What are you saying to family, children, friends, and co-workers? Hopefully, you and your ex could even work on this together, so your messages are consistent. Lead by example – start the process with kind words for the other. “He/she is a good person and parent. We’re sad, but committed to taking the high road and putting our children first. We want our family members to treat the situation this way as well.”

4

### **Do I understand my financial situation and have access to the information I need to get educated?**

To the extent possible, make a list of your accounts and passwords, where to find insurance policies, retirement information, trusts, etc. Information is power! Gather everything you can to educate yourself. If you don't have access to your financial documents, this could be an important area for an outside expert such as a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst.

5

### **What does financial security look like for me?**

This is very personal and important. Maybe you're in a big house but want to downsize. Maybe staying where you are is your top priority. Do your best to realistically assess what you want and need (and wants/needs may be different!).

6

### **What are my greatest strengths and weaknesses, and how will they matter during this time?**

It's a brutal irony that when the stakes are high, and we need to be at our best, we're often at our emotional worst. An honest and thoughtful inventory of strengths and weaknesses can help you prepare. Are you incredibly organized? Patient? Reactive, or hesitant to advocate for yourself?

For example, if you know you're angry and triggered by texts from your ex, create a library of three to five responses and a plan to minimize engagement. A response like, "I disagree with that characterization...I'll have the kids ready at 5," provides facts without the emotional engagement.

7

### **What can I do to be my best self during this challenging time?**

Ask yourself what you want to see when you look back on this time and think about what it will take to get there. Do your best to be honest about any story you might be telling yourself. Am I painting myself as a victim? The aggressor? Does my partner "deserve" whatever is coming? Do I? How can you change the perspective on the story, so you are leading with your best self?

8

### **Am I educated about the divorce laws where I live?**

Research the basics so you can choose the option that's best for you within the legal parameters of your state.

9

### **What is my personal mission statement?**

Divorce is a life-changing event that can have a negative impact and jumpstart a healthy and positive transformation. Creating a personal mission statement can provide clarity, direction, and purpose in all aspects of your life and will have the added benefit of helping you to establish and clarify important boundaries. One of my favorite templates can be found [here](#).

10

### **What is my true intention? Is this decision based in love?**

I recommend asking yourself these important questions at every decision point.

The divorce process is full of opportunities to second guess, lash out and react. Giving yourself the gift of thoughtful decision-making based on love and positive intention will not only help you operate from a place of strength and resilience, but it is likely that it will also ripple to those around you, improving the experience for everyone involved.