

The Do's and Don'ts of Divorce

By Marisa W. Higgins, Esq.

If you are contemplating divorce, make sure you follow these rules to improve both the process and the outcome.

If you know others who are contemplating divorce, do them a big favor and share these rules with them.

DO'S

- **DO** make copies of all relevant financial documentation, including income tax returns, loan applications, wills and trusts, mortgage statements, credit card statements, bank statements, retirement statements, insurance policies and pay stubs. Keep all documentation in a safe place.
- **DO** make a list of all assets and personal property with approximate values.
- **DO** inventory any bank boxes or safety deposit boxes.
- **DO** obtain your credit report.
- **DO** change your pass codes on e-mail accounts, social media sites and cell phones.
- **DO** make a realistic budget for your life after the divorce.
- **DO** keep a calendar detailing the time you and your spouse spend with the children if parenting time is at issue.
- **DO** find a lawyer whom you trust and then follow his/her advice.
- **DO** follow court orders.

DON'Ts

- **DON'T** allow emotion to cloud your judgment when making important decisions about your case.
- **DON'T** cancel any life, auto, homeowners' or health insurance for your spouse unless the court orders otherwise.
- **DON'T** intentionally violate any court orders.
- **DON'T** send your spouse hostile or inappropriate text messages, e-mails or voicemails.
- **DON'T** post on social media any negative statements about your spouse and don't share information about your divorce or any new relationship on social media.

- **DON'T** open any new credit accounts in your spouse's name or jointly with your spouse.
- **DON'T** hide assets or misrepresent your income or debt. Doing so will only increase your legal fees, lengthen the divorce process, cause you serious financial repercussions and undermine your credibility with the judge.
- **DON'T** sell or give away assets while the divorce is pending unless your spouse agrees in writing.
- **DON'T** speak negatively about your spouse to your children or within earshot of your children.
- **DON'T** argue with your spouse while your children are present.
- **DON'T** put your children in the middle of the divorce process. Remember, this divorce is difficult enough for them without having to choose sides between their parents.
- **DON'T** use the children as messengers.
- **DON'T** make false accusations about your spouse to gain an advantage in the divorce.
- **DON'T** assume your divorce outcome will be the same as those of your friends, colleagues and others who have shared their divorce story with you. Remember, each divorce has its own set of facts and circumstances.
- **DON'T** draft your own separation agreement without having it reviewed by an attorney who can explain the legal ramifications to you.
- **DON'T** get stuck in the past. If you are having a hard time moving forward, speak with a qualified therapist who can help you deal with the divorce. Using your attorney as a therapist is never cost-effective. **FT**

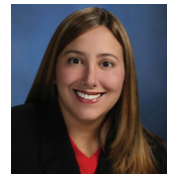
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