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# AVOID THE BEDLAM:

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**10 KEY STEPS YOU MUST TAKE  
TO *PREPARE FOR DIVORCE***

*A Unique Approach to Family Law*



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Even in the best of situations, a divorce can be chaotic and unpredictable. When there is a significant amount of conflict, it can seem virtually impossible to get through your day. While divorce is never easy, there are some proven strategies that you can use to avoid chaos and conflict during the different stages of your divorce. Read through the following ten steps that you should take to prepare for a civil and productive divorce.

## **Start Taking Notes**

In the coming months a lot of things are going to happen, and some of them will have important long-term consequences. For most people, it is impossible to remember every detail of what goes on leading up to a divorce. This presents a problem in court. Start a notepad or calendar that contains things like what money was spent, what conversations took place, what agreements were made, and anything else you may believe to be relevant. While it will not all be helpful during the actual divorce, you never know what may prove to be invaluable.

## **Follow Your Credit Report**

Running your credit report as soon as you are sure you are getting a divorce will serve two main purposes. First, it will help give you a snapshot of your current financial situation. Divorce can wreak havoc on your finances, so being aware of your situation is critical. Additionally, it will also show you what accounts are currently open. This way, if your spouse tries to open a new credit card or other account without your knowledge, it will be much easier to tell. Finally, keep track of unusual charges on credit cards or other accounts.



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## **Put Together a Support System**

Divorce is emotionally draining. Throughout the divorce process (and well beyond) you are going to want to have a good support system in place. Start thinking about friends and family now so you know where to turn if you need someone's support. You may even consider contacting a professional therapist to help you navigate your feelings during this turbulent time. Family and friends are helpful, but not always completely honest and open because they love you, and may not want to cause you any more pain than you are already experiencing. A third party can give you advice which is honest and unbiased. There is absolutely nothing wrong with leaning on others during this difficult time, and for many people, it will actually give them the strength they need to persevere.

## **Make a List of All Your Assets**

Once it becomes clear a divorce is imminent, make a list of all your assets; photographs or videos are perhaps the most helpful way to keep track of your things. This includes things like property, cars, bank accounts, retirement accounts, life insurance policies, other investments, and anything else you can think of that was accumulated during the marriage. You will need this during the divorce, and the earlier you have it, the longer you will have to think about what is there and how to divide it during the divorce.

## **Start with Areas of Agreement**

When negotiating during any stage of your divorce, it is a good idea to start with areas of agreement. The more things that you can work out on your own, the fewer will need to go to court.

Using mediation can be a great way to come to agreements.



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Remember, there will always be time to fight it out in court for the things that absolutely cannot be agreed upon, but taking care of what you can now helps to reduce the overall cost of a divorce, and minimize the need for conflict.

## **Understand the Art of Compromise**

Regardless of the circumstances, no one ever emerges from divorce proceedings having prevailed on every issue. While many things are worth fighting for, sometimes it is acceptable to compromise. Think about the issues most important to you, and start there. For less important matters, compromising may be a useful way to avoid conflict. At the end of the day, the goal is to resolve the case and move on with your life. Remember, resolution has value!

## **Be Ready to Stand for What's Important**

Despite the best efforts of you and your attorney, occasionally conflict cannot be avoided. The Bedlam Law team is prepared to fight for whatever is most important to you, whether it is your children, property, or other assets. At some point we may say, "we are going to need to hear it from the judge." This means that an offer is so bad the only way we could encourage you to take it is if it were the order of the Court. Our team will never encourage you to compromise your principles.

## **Try to Keep the Kids Out of It**

Divorce affects children as much or more than their parents, so it is extremely important to put their needs above anything else, especially your needs. Never use children as a bargaining chip; you may unintentionally cause them more pain.



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Even if the other parent is not, it is important that you always put the needs of your children first. Providing for the children's best interests is always our top priority.

## **Leave the Fight to the Attorneys**

It is rare for a divorce to occur without some level of conflict. Just because a fight needs to occur does not mean it needs to be between you and your soon-to-be ex-spouse. Navigating conflict in these situations is for your attorney. Allowing an attorney to advocate on your behalf is not only going to be a more effective option, but it can also help to minimize the long-term damage to your relationship. Remember, most divorced couples will still need to at least associate with each other for some time after the divorce (especially if there are children involved). If you cannot say anything nice to your ex-spouse, do not say anything at all.

## **Hire an Attorney**

One of the most important things you can do to prepare for a divorce is hire an experienced divorce attorney. Attorneys are able to help you to navigate the often-complex legal landscape, and also fight on your behalf to ensure you are getting what you are entitled to by law. Without an attorney, a divorce is undoubtedly going to be far more chaotic and stressful than is necessary. Without an attorney, you will likely make decisions you will later regret, such as allowing your spouse to keep their retirement when the law says half of it is yours.



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We understand how many different issues can arise during a contentious divorce when the proper steps are not taken. Bedlam Law is committed to helping you manage the chaos and avoid it whenever possible. If you are considering a divorce, or your spouse has approached you with their desire to get a divorce, you must move quickly to enlist effective legal representation. Every decision you make can have a major impact on the outcome of your case, and the sooner you can sit down with our team for a consultation, the sooner we can put a plan in place to help you avoid the pitfalls that lead to bedlam.

Please do not hesitate to reach out today via our useful contact page, or feel free to call Bedlam Law any time at **405-232-2444**.

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