



Executing Your Game Plan: Tips on Communication and Making it Through the Emotional Stages of Your Divorce

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

That’s one of the oldest and most circulated quotes about starting a long journey that seems almost impossible to complete at the outset. Many spouses who have made the decision to divorce feel the same way about the divorce process, especially if they have been married for many years and have children that need to be taken care of.

Sharp Divorce Coaching understands exactly how you’re feeling if you are planning to serve the petition for divorce to your spouse. Our team has heard nearly every situation under the sun and dealt with each situation accordingly. We pride ourselves on being a judgment-free zone and can help you at any stage of your divorce. While we are not a law firm and, thus, cannot give legal advice, we are there to provide you with a game plan to get through your divorce intact, with minimal stress. In this free resource, we will provide some tidbits of advice that can help you have a smooth divorce process.

Communication Tips

Whether or not you have children with your spouse depends on the amount of communication you need to have after your divorce. How to communicate and behave effectively as a co-parent is another topic entirely (and one we can help you with through our Co-Parenting Support Coaching Services); in this resource, we will cover some communication tips that are useful during and after divorce.

- **Set boundaries and parameters for communication between you and your (soon-to-be) ex-spouse.** Whenever and wherever possible, you should prepare for the way you want to send and receive communications to and from your spouse. We recommend laying out the types of messages that warrant a response, including the time frame for responding to messages. Remember: not every single message from your spouse needs a retort!

Another important consideration to address here is your preferred method of communication. For example, you might want to restrict communication regarding your divorce to email—especially if you know that in-person or over-the-phone communication often leads to bickering and arguments.

- **Carefully consider the tone of your communication.** The way you say something is nearly as important as the substance of your message. It might sound trivial, but one of the most common ways communication breaks down during divorce is due to the way one or both spouses communicate. One way to follow this piece of advice is to never send your spouse a message when you are angry, upset, or hurt. Those are natural emotions to feel (more on that later), but communicating when you feel those feelings can only invite hostility from your spouse.
- **Keep conversation focused on the issues at hand.** Divorce is a legal process and can also be thought of as a business transaction for spouses. There are some things that you must discuss with your spouse, but resist the temptation to rehash old conflicts or get in spats. If there are topics that are sure to result in arguments and that do not need to be breached, do your best to stay away from these potential triggers.
- **Don't put your children in the middle of your disputes with your spouse.** This might be the most important piece of advice we divulge in this resource. How well

your children process your divorce and, frankly, their future well being depend on how effective you are at shielding them from conflict and stress during the process. Additionally, you should never use your children as messengers between you and your spouse or use them as pawns during the divorce.

The Five Stages of Divorce

You've heard of the five stages of grief; it might surprise you that these stages (however imperfect) also easily apply to divorce. If this is confusing, you should understand that divorce is a *major life event*. What else is a major life event? Losing a loved one. In a way, divorce is a loss—you have lost (or are losing) your previous life. While divorce is the right step for you, this doesn't mean that you won't feel intense negative emotions along the way. Here is a roadmap for what you will likely experience emotionally during your divorce:

1. Denial. The reality of your situation has not quite sunk in yet. If you were not the one who initiated your divorce, you might spend a significant amount of time in disbelief that your marriage is actually ending. In fact, you might think that there is a way around divorce or that things can be reversed.

2. Anger. Subconsciously, you suppress many emotions during the denial stage to prevent you from becoming overwhelmed. When these emotions begin coming out, anger is likely the primary feeling you'll experience. You will feel like blaming your spouse (and others) for the marriage not working. Another emotion you might experience is fear—fear of being out of your comfort zone, fear of being unable to function after divorce, fear of losing your children.

3. Bargaining. Yes, divorce is not pleasant. Once you become fully aware of this, you might start to strategize on how to stop the process and just go back to the way things were—no matter how unpleasant they were. Spouses going through the bargaining stage often feel like they've "cracked the code" on the marriage and are willing to go to extraordinary lengths to make it work.

4. Depression. This is when you need the most support. You've probably felt at least a twinge of sadness throughout your divorce, but it is, by far, the most prominent during this stage. It can also feel like the longest stage. Things will feel hopeless and dark. Your behavior will mimic most (if not all) of the symptoms of clinical depression, which often requires therapy.

5. Letting Go/Acceptance. Once you've reached this stage, you're completely over your divorce for good, right? Unfortunately, we understand the answer to be, "no." However, you generally have accepted that your marriage is over and that you can now lean into your new normal. You will experience happiness and a sense of freedom and hopefulness. You've gone through the worst of it, but you may occasionally feel yourself going back to feeling depressed or angry. Nevertheless, reaching this final stage is a cause for celebration. You deserve to feel some amount of joy!

Remember: you will probably not experience the five stages of grief/divorce linearly. Divorce is a rollercoaster, and you will likely be in more than one stage concurrently. You may even feel like you're taking a step back. All of this is normal!

Conclusion

We are not your legal counsel or mental health counselor; we are your divorce *coach*. Sharp Divorce Coaching will provide you all the emotional support you need or want. However, we're much more than just that: we can provide an objective, unbiased look into your situation and, most importantly, come up with a game plan that aligns with your objectives and goals.

We are a judgment-free zone. Wherever you need to go, we will do everything we can to get you there. If you have further questions, get in touch with us on our website.

If you are ready to get started on your free 15-minute consultation with Sharp Divorce Coaching, please do so on our website. We would be honored to be your coach and advocate during a difficult time for you and your family.