1 How This Book Can Help You: Your Financial Guide to Divorce

A Step-by-Step Roadmap

Most people head straight into divorce without preparing themselves for the journey that lies ahead. Whether or not the divorce is of your choosing, you need the necessary guidance and useful information.

The primary purpose of this book is to help you make informed and intelligent choices concerning financial issues in divorce. In plain English I explain the fundamentals—illustrating how to set goals, deal with finances, navigate the legal process, and protect against unforeseen events.

This book is, in essence, a step-by-step roadmap of everything you need to know about the financial aspects of divorce. You are initiating self-empowerment to take control over your divorce.

How to Make Your Best Financial Decisions During Divorce

In this book, I focus on the three primary financial components of divorce: maintenance, child support, and property. I explain all financial topics and legal terms. I outline approaches for making critical financial choices, tips for managing your costs, strategies for successfully negotiating property division and support, and tactical advice (as well as cautionary notes) for ensuring a sustainable and reasonable divorce settlement.

Think of this book as an indispensable financial resource and guidebook for anybody thinking about divorce, going through divorce, or experiencing post-judgment financial challenges. You will gain the knowledge and tools you need to advocate for yourself as well as measure your capacity to obligate yourself financially.

This book does not provide any legal advice or legal opinion. You must work with your own attorney to get legal advice. I am not an attorney. I am a divorce financial expert, and this book is designed to provide you with accurate financial information, as I believe that thorough financial preparation will make a huge
difference in your divorce experience and outcomes. From a basic introduction to a sophisticated analysis of finances, this book is a must-read for anyone interested in getting the best results for their divorce.

This book describes:

- The divorce process
- Property law
- Financial issues
- Financial definitions
- Financial strategies
- The pros and cons of short- and long-term financial decisions
- Taxes and tax implications of decisions
- What-if’s
- How-to’s
- Debt and creditworthiness
- College planning for divorcing families
- Special needs planning for divorcing families
- Negotiating, how to settle, or when to go to trial
- Your financial situation after divorce

Yes, You Are Unique

It is commonly said that 50 percent of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. Recent divorce statistics show that 41 percent of first marriages end in divorce, with that percentage creeping much higher for second marriages to 60 percent and for third marriages to 73 percent.¹

No matter how prevalent divorce seems to be, your situation is unique. Everyone’s divorce story relates to money, and you must therefore get at the heart of your values to enable good decision-making. Only you know your personal priorities, concerns, and challenges. Do not let a third party dictate what they are to you, or worse yet, make permanent decisions for you without your informed consent. Divorce is not just about the money—it’s about your life.

Most people head straight into divorce without being prepared for the journey that lies ahead. Divorce client’s concerns vary with age, and many people go back and forth trying to decide how and when to pull the trigger to divorce. Spouses may be at odds when it comes to slowing down or speeding up their divorce; however, you will find that divorce is both a marathon and a sprint. In addition, there are many different ways to divorce. Few are wrong. But no matter if your divorce is planned, unplanned, expected, or unexpected, you must be fully prepared.

This is not just any book on divorce. This book outlines each phase of divorce so you can better understand how to start planning for your outcome. This book

will help you take back control of your life. You will learn the language of finances and the art of negotiation, and you will discover what you need to know about money and divorce: How to determine what you need, what you want, what you are entitled to, and how to reinvent yourself after divorce.

In addition, this book contains valuable, essential information about the divorce process and related financial issues. It describes in detail how to protect yourself financially before, during, and after divorce. Whatever you are feeling, this book provides guidance not only to educate you, but also to help you thrive during the process and afterwards.

What You Do Not Know Can Hurt You

You need to know how to navigate your divorce to achieve a successful outcome for you and your family. Divorce is one of life's biggest trigger events and touches many aspects of people's lives, including legally, financially, emotionally, and psychologically. It is multidimensional and marks the transition from being in an economic partnership to a single independent life.

No one can diminish the impact of divorce on families. However, the concept of minimizing risk, cost, and pain has brought about the novel idea of holistic divorce. Legal options for divorcing are evolving accordingly as more couples yearn for a better approach to ending their marriages.

If You Are Feeling Overwhelmed

Divorce is not the best time to learn about how to deal with money and financial decisions. More than ever, couples and families have greater resources for engaging a team of professionals (such as your attorney and divorce financial planner) in their divorce process. It is therefore important to be aware of the various stages of the divorce process, the role of each professional, and how best to evaluate who you need on your team.

You are pivotal in driving your divorce, and you are your own best advocate for your needs. The reality is that you will be called upon to make some of your biggest decisions when you are least ready to cope with them. You must take your time and assume responsibility for understanding all of your financial information and decisions. As hard as this sounds, divorce is a business transaction that will affect the rest of your life.

Preparation

The key to surviving and thriving after divorce is to understand as best as possible how to prepare for it. During a divorce, you will discover that there are certain components over which you will have little or no control. It is to your advantage to recognize early on which parts of your divorce fall into this category so you do not waste your time and energy working against, rather than with, the system.
This book will help you get ready to deal with your divorce. It provides comprehensive factual information about divorce each step along the way. You will find checklists, personal and financial information forms, charts, and references to resources. This book is broken into chapters and organized by topics relating to your personal life. It will help you get organized and focus on the key essentials of divorce while dismissing many distractions. Each chapter can be read separately, but it is best if you read all of them to understand the legal framing of all issues impacting divorce finances.

Mistakes to Avoid

In this book you will find information about some of the biggest and most common financial blunders in divorce. For many of these, it is crucial that you have advice from a divorce financial planner so that you do not get sucker punched or commit to an unsustainable agreement.

Learn the ropes, think for yourself, get a divorce financial expert involved early on, and use the actionable ideas in this book to tailor everything for your particular situation.

Beware of Tall Tales

All too often, well-meaning but misinformed colleagues, friends, and family members will want to share their stories and advice about divorce with you. Even though everyone claims to have your best interests at heart, often their information is rife with myths and false facts. At a minimum, it is one-sided or biased, and at worst, it can be dangerous for you to rely upon. If you are feeling confused and overwhelmed, you may discover that searching various websites for answers to your divorce questions may be unsatisfying as well.

If Only I Had Known That . . .

Instead of regretting decisions and saying “I wish I had known,” this book will provide you with straightforward, easy-to-understand, reliable answers to many of your questions:

- How do you prepare for divorce?
- How do you start the divorce process?
- How much will it cost?
- How long will it take?
- Who do you need to hire?
- How do you protect your children?
- What is your financial situation?
- What do you own and what do you owe?
- What are the financial decisions you need to make?