

HOW TO SURVIVE YOUR DIVORCE: A STAY-AT-HOME MOTHER'S GUIDE

WRITTEN BY:

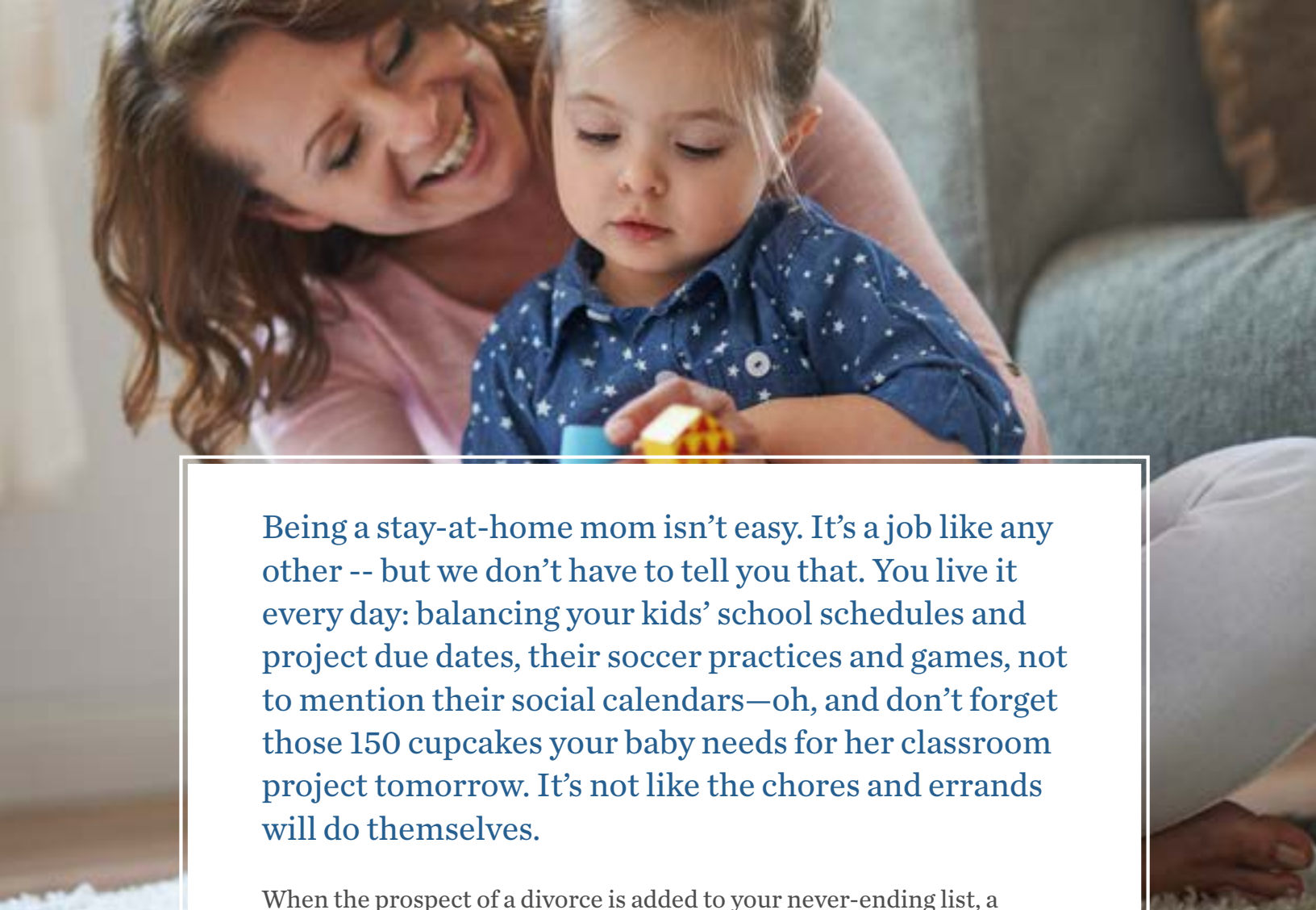
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I.

INTRODUCTION



Being a stay-at-home mom isn't easy. It's a job like any other -- but we don't have to tell you that. You live it every day: balancing your kids' school schedules and project due dates, their soccer practices and games, not to mention their social calendars—oh, and don't forget those 150 cupcakes your baby needs for her classroom project tomorrow. It's not like the chores and errands will do themselves.

When the prospect of a divorce is added to your never-ending list, a million worries instantly flood your mind. How will I make ends meet? What skills do I have for today's workforce? How will I keep the kids on their routine? How will I explain the changes in our lives to them?

Whether the D word was shockingly sprung on you, or you've been fighting for a long time to keep your marriage alive, you're probably feeling emotionally taxed and overwhelmed by the sheer expanse of legal matters that your division as a couple has created. You might not feel OK now, but you can regroup and you will stand happily on your own two feet again.

The secret? A little time, and making sure you have the resources you need to kickstart your new normal. Fortunately, you've found Babbitt & Dahlberg. With a little help from a nationally recognized Ohio family law firm, your questions on everything from equitable division of assets to child custody and negotiating parenting schedules will be addressed. We understand the peace of mind that comes as an informed, active participant in your life-changing experience.



THIS COMPLETE GUIDE WILL SHOW YOU...

- How to secure both financial freedom and quality of life for you and your children
- How to access child support
- Make the decision on whether you should reenter the workforce
- The best approaches for making your mark, if you do
- How to get your groove back, both emotionally and romantically
- How to decide the answer to the ever-popular, yet too-taboo-to-ask question: “How soon is too soon to date?”
- How to navigate social media through all this

While living as a single mom isn't always simple, thriving on one income can be.

We have your back.

II.

YOUR FINANCES



MORE MONEY, MORE PROBLEMS! FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE IS WITHIN REACH

Your finances are often the scariest unknown when facing divorce, from the security of existing accounts to splitting up your assets and the source of future income. But don't let the thought of legal wrangling freeze you in fear. You can do this, and we'll help.

Read on for tips on prioritizing where to start, organizing your family's economic records and strategizing how to claim what you deserve. You'll thrive with financial stability in no time.

TACKLE YOUR FINANCES WITH PROFESSIONAL DIVORCE LAWYERS IN COLUMBUS, OHIO

How much is mine, and what do the kids get? Do we have pensions and retirement plans and private savings accounts? Who gets the house? And if we sell, who is in charge, and do we evenly split the profit?

As you consider everything you and your soon-to-be ex shared during marriage, more and more uncertainties are sure to surface. Before you do anything reactionary, take a deep breath. Give yourself a minute to mourn. Then, exhale, brush yourself off and positively move on. This chapter of your life will only make you stronger, smarter and savvier.

For the most successful transition into the next phase of your life, you'll [need a clear plan of action](#) and some helpful guidance. Take a look at how you can begin forming a financial strategy before you even meet with your divorce lawyers.

GETTING YOUR FINANCES IN ORDER

Knowing what it takes to keep your household running is a powerful piece of information. But if managing the finances wasn't part of your responsibility during your marriage, you may feel somewhat lost now that you're taking on the financial duties.

To avoid biting off more than you can chew, first, start with a 30,000-foot view of your finances by gathering all your financial records.

Some pertinent documents to locate include:

- Income and expenses
- Assets and investments
- Debts (shared and personal)
- Bank statements
- Titles and registration documents
- Tax returns

Once your attorney has your numbers in hand, and your soon-to-be ex has shared his, both of your attorneys will meet to craft a financial plan.

This strategy could look like alimony or spousal support, or it might shake out as a return to the workforce or the college textbooks. Both parties can be as much or as little as involved in shaping of your new arrangements.

CREATE A BUDGET

Now that you've established a clear path, it's time to run with a budget by keeping track of your finances and spending habits. You may be familiar with family budgeting as a married couple living together, but now, it's possible you'll need to relearn estimating your expenses as a single mom. Or, if you've never budgeted before, now is the prime time to master it. Better late than never, right?

HERE ARE OUR TRICKS FOR DESIGNING A FAILSAFE SPENDING PLAN:

» If you and your future ex shared a banking account, schedule time to visit your bank to open independent savings and checking accounts. You'll need accounts that are only under your control.

» Review your old bank statements to estimate your monthly spend on variables like food and gas.

» Write down a list of consistent luxury expenses that could be cut, if need be. Maybe it's your house that now seems extravagant, maybe it's your leggings obsession, maybe it's your daily Starbucks run. It might seem painful now, but eliminating unnecessary luxury items now can pay off down the road.

» Always overestimate. It's better to have a little cash left over at the end of the month rather than coming up short.

» Don't forget to set aside liquid cash for irregular or emergency expenses, like medical bills, car repairs and clothing.

» Research the costs of childcare, and the amenities of each potential provider, if your new plan includes starting a 9-to-5 routine. Add this expense into your budget.

» Add up all of your regular monthly expenses—including utility bills, rent or mortgage statements, student debt and car payments—so you know how much money it takes to run your household each month as a married family. This baseline number helps establish how much you'll need to maintain a similar lifestyle after divorce, and will be a major factor on your new budgetary constraints.

» Are these two numbers more than you're bringing in each month? That might be a good indicator that it's time to get back in the job market. Determine the lowest amount of hourly or salary pay necessary to meet your needs, then start dusting off your resume.

» Look ahead at your calendar for upcoming big spends. Is Christmas, a birthday or a preplanned vacation on the horizon? Although divorce might change the way in which you celebrate these occasions, it doesn't mean you can't have fun anymore. Plan accordingly, and factor it into your budget.

» Get creative by drafting a diversity of budgets, one for each possible route you could take. Now might be the perfect time to rewrite your journey. Account for the different expenses each potential direction requires, such as moving states to be closer to family versus renting an apartment.

While at first it may not be feasible to maintain the standard of living you had when married, rest easy in the fact that it won't last forever.

You will find a new normal.

Financial consciousness is just like learning to swim. Faced with drowning in the deep end, you'll empower yourself to keep working until you're a successful swimmer.

All it takes is practice.



III.

YOUR CHILDREN'S BEST INTERESTS



PROTECTING YOUR KIDS IN THE MIDST OF DIVORCE

Dividing your assets isn't the only problem presented by a divorce. How do you divide your children? Will you or your ex-spouse share time with them? Emotions are likely running high, so how will you compromise on schedules? And what about child support?

Ohio law lays the groundwork, but there's a lot that's left to a court's discretion when it comes to your children. The dedicated family attorneys at Babbitt & Dahlberg will fight for your and your children's interests. Here are a few things to expect when addressing domestic relations, including child custody, child support, and explaining the changes to your kids.

HOW IS CHILD CUSTODY IN OHIO SETTLED?

Ohio law settles the issue of custody on an individual basis, and the court doesn't give the parent with higher financial status preference. Rather, custody is established using a number of considerations, such as a child's wishes and rapport with parents and siblings, as well as either parent's stability with support payments in prior relationships. The court will also weigh other factors:

- Suitability of each parent as custodian
- Custodial agreements between the parents
- Psychological, emotional and developmental needs of the child
- History of domestic abuse
- Ability of the parents to communicate with each other
- Prior and continuing care of the child
- Safety of the child

When it comes to parenting time, the court will typically set a schedule providing which days of the week the non-residential parent will have the children, when the children are available for vacations, which holidays the children will spend with each parent, and so forth.

If either parent requests joint custody (called shared parenting in Ohio), the court must take into consideration additional elements, such as the distance between the parents' homes, the age of the child, the child's school and vacation schedule and each parent's willingness to reschedule missed parenting time.

HOW IS CHILD SUPPORT IN OHIO DETERMINED?

A multitude of elements come into play when a judge reaches the issue of child support, from parents' incomes to the child's needs. Overall, the court aims to preserve the standard of living your child is accustomed to through your and your ex's income level.

In most instances, the court calculates support using a formula mandated by Ohio state law. The formula assesses factors such as each parent's pre-tax income and the percentage each contribute to the household's total income, against allowances such as additional children or support obligations either of you may have, as well as daycare and major medical insurance costs for the children of this marriage. As you might expect, the number of children being supported is also considered in the final number.

However, if your combined gross incomes exceed \$150,000 annually, or is less than \$6,600 per year, this blanket equation is nixed for a case-by-case court decision. Your attorney can analyze your financial documents to provide you an estimate of the child support the court might impose.

Once a dollar amount is determined, there are different methods available to collect the support. Most commonly, the court issues an order requiring the paying parent's employer to withhold the amount of child support from that parent's paycheck and to pay that amount directly to Ohio Child

Support Payment Central. Or, if the parent is self-employed, the court can command the paying parent to set up an automatic withdrawal from a bank account. Portions of workers' compensation benefits and retirement benefits may also be withheld to fulfill a child support obligation.

The support obligation is ordered as a monthly amount due to be paid in periodic increments until your child reaches age 18, or until he or she graduates from high school, whichever comes second. Special allowances exist for children who are medically unable to be self-sufficient by the age of 18.

Keep in mind that a court's decision isn't set in stone. Significant changes in the factors that determined the original support order could justify a change down the road.

CAN I MODIFY MY CHILD SUPPORT?

Think you're stuck with the child-support agreement the court dished out in your divorce settlement? If you're on the receiving end and your ex suddenly seems to be living much more comfortably, or your income drops dramatically, it could be time for a child support modification.

My ex received a significant raise after we divorced. Can my child support be increased?

Yes, depending on a number of factors. There are two ways to do so: either through an administrative review by the Child Support Enforcement Agency, or by court order upon a motion from either parent.

Either parent can request an administrative review or adjustment of your child support order not less than 36 months from the date the order was established or the last time it was reviewed.

According to the [Ohio Department of Job and Family Services](#), a review means "a caseworker looks at both parties' income and information to see

if child support should be changed or if health insurance should be added or changed.” Then, the caseworker decides if an adjustment is warranted—whether it be an upward or downward change in the amount of child support in view of Ohio’s guidelines, or adding or changing provisions for health-care needs.

Either parent may also file a motion to modify the support order with the court at any time. The court will schedule the motion for a hearing, and issue new orders after testimony and evidence regarding income and expenses has been provided.

Under either method, child support is only modifiable if the requesting parent can demonstrate a “[material change in circumstances](#)” to the child or the custodial parent after the last order was issued. A material change also includes a change in the needs of the child. Issues the court has already ruled on cannot be heard again.

The agency or court must decide if a change in circumstances exists and, if so, determine the proper amount of the new support order.

When considering a motion for child support modification, the court must recalculate the amount of support using the same child-support worksheet and guidelines as first used. If the recalculated amount is more than 10 percent greater or less than the amount of support required under the existing order, then that difference alone can be considered a material change in circumstances substantial enough to justify a financial adjustment.

Possible outcomes of [child-support modification](#) include:

1. No change
2. Increase in current child support
3. Decrease in current child support
4. Addition of a medical support order

My ex has taken a hefty pay cut since our divorce. Does that mean I could get a reduction in the amount child support I receive?

Just as support can be increased, it can also be decreased if your ex proves a [material change in circumstances](#). While a cutback in the amount you receive might infuriate you at first, think about it this way—would you rather see a number your ex finds manageable, or begin receiving notices that he’s stopped paying? Sometimes, some is more helpful than none.

Whether he petitions the CSEA for an administrative review or asks the court to modify his support, there are no guarantees. And remember, when a party requests that his or her case be reviewed, he or she might take on the risk of support being increased or simply staying the same.

According to the [Ohio Department of Job and Family Services](#), common reasons for qualifying for a review and adjustment include:

- Unemployed or laid off, through no fault of your own, for at least 30 consecutive days.
- Experienced at least a 30-percent decrease in gross income or income-producing assets for a six-month period because of circumstances beyond one’s control, with the expectation that the decrease will continue for an extended period of time.

In addition, [some circumstances exist that would allow you for an early review](#), including:

- A permanent disability
- Incarceration or institutionalization for the duration of the child’s minority status with no income or assets available to pay child support
- Active military duty
- An increase or decrease in the cost of child care or health insurance.



HOW TO MINIMIZE THE IMPACT ON YOUR CHILDREN

If you're just beginning down the path of a divorce, shape talking points with your ex before you announce the split to your children. Clear up any unknowns or discrepancies, as a solid front will inspire in them a sense of security amid the overwhelming news.

Incorporate both best and worst case scenarios as well as plans for keeping your children's lives as similar as possible, from home life to school and social life, for optimal stability.

When you do finally discuss the transition as a family, do not place blame or apologize. Rather, stress that this will make you both better, happier parents once you're apart.

During this transition, encourage your children to talk to you. What better way to teach them effective coping skills than by example? Helping your children through your divorce means putting their needs ahead of your own. Openly arguing with or criticizing your ex might harm your child emotionally, and it could also affect your parent-child relationship.

“You're dealing with a lot of grief and personal feelings. But always avoid criticizing the other parent in front of the children,” advises [Jennipher Cole](#), LPC-S, a marriage and family therapist. It's your job to [put the kids first](#) and remove pressure on them to choose sides. In

younger children, Cole says, the stress of contentious divorces can lead to regressive behavior like bedwetting; older children and teenagers may experience low self-esteem and risky behavior.

Supporting your kids also means listening. You may feel the need to justify your actions or prove your ex to be in the wrong; resist the temptation. That's not for your kids to hear. Be compassionate, let them verbalize their concerns, and reassure them the divorce is not their fault. Consider scheduling therapist visits for them during the process, giving them an outlet removed from the situation will encourage them to talk openly about their feelings. And most importantly, love your kids more than you despise your ex.

Badmouthing your ex only puts your children in a “[loyalty bind](#)” and breeds further resentment from your ex. To that end, [don't make your children a go-between or spy](#). As tempting as it might be to make a snide remark about the other parent, this will only hurt your kids rather than your ex.

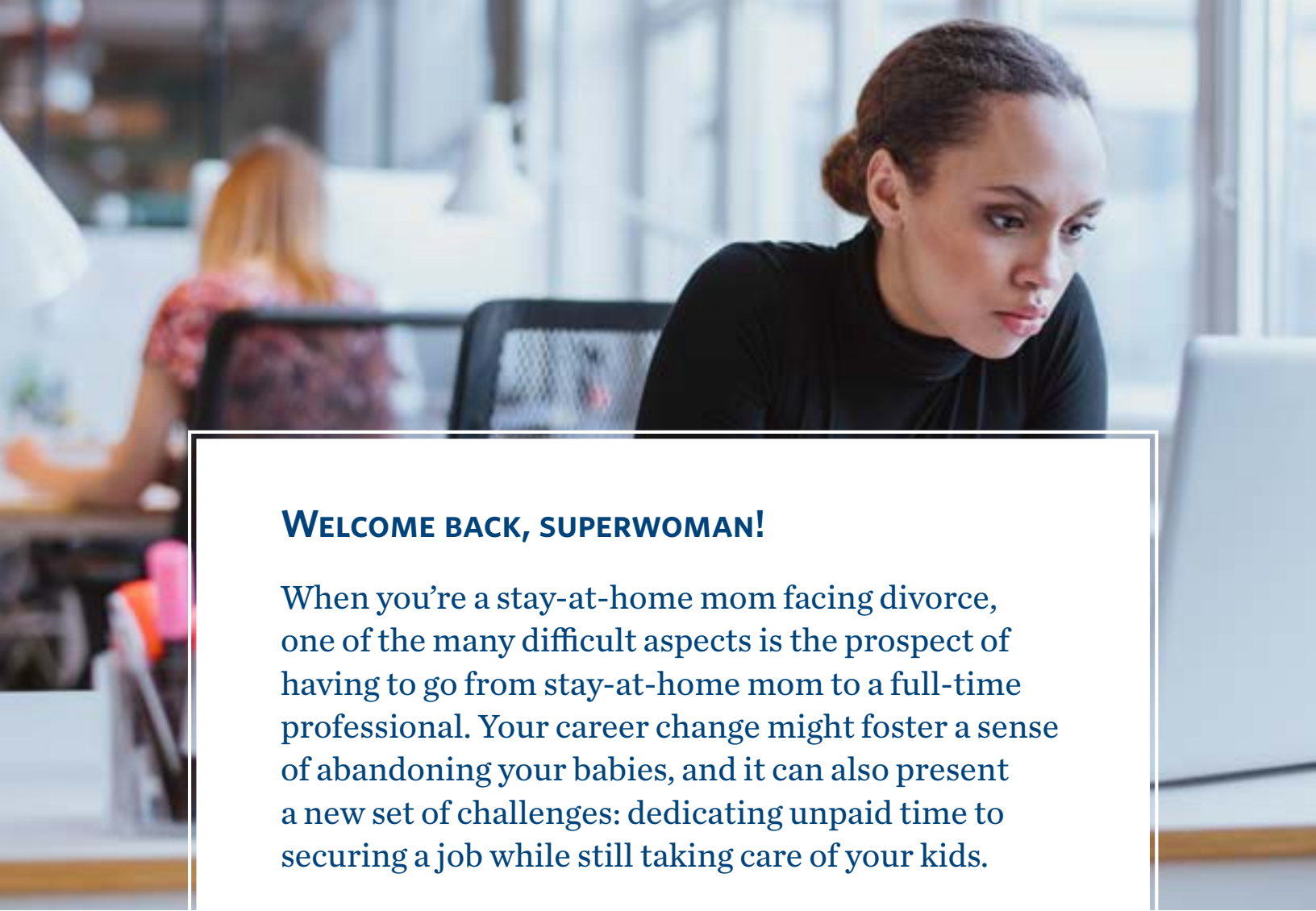
On the flip side, intentionally keeping the ugly details between adults allows you to [protect your kids from the drama](#). A mutual determination to shield your children from negativity can also give you and your ex a front to form an alliance on.

Even if the divorce is the result of betrayal, such as an affair, your children don't need the truth. “It will only confuse the children, may destroy their relationship with the other parent and could have a monumental impact emotionally,” [says divorce consultant and educator Deborah Moskovitch](#).



IV.

RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE



WELCOME BACK, SUPERWOMAN!

When you're a stay-at-home mom facing divorce, one of the many difficult aspects is the prospect of having to go from stay-at-home mom to a full-time professional. Your career change might foster a sense of abandoning your babies, and it can also present a new set of challenges: dedicating unpaid time to securing a job while still taking care of your kids.

Dipping your toe back into the job market can be intimidating, but it can be the turning point to building your personal and financial stability. Follow the steps below to help ease your transition and regain your independence.

SEVEN WAYS TO RETURN TO THE WORKFORCE AFTER DIVORCE

Once you have your finances in order, it's time to approach employment. Even if you've been out of the office for decades, or if you've never stepped foot in it, there are key steps you can take, right now, to gain your ground in the workforce.

1. Look for ways to save money on daycare by finding freelance jobs you can do from home. While it might not be a long-term sustainable solution for everyone, it can be a viable option while you're searching for the permanent position that suits you best. Parents are increasingly getting the best of both worlds as the number of flexible and work-from-home job opportunities rise.
2. Be social, and brush up on your communication skills. Not only do the applicants you're competing against use social media, so do employers. Post to LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to show that you're up on industry trends while showcasing your social know-how.



3. Cast your net(work). Reviving your social media networks do more than prove you're up with the technological times. They also provide a great pool of connections to potential employers. According to Career Horizons, an advanced career-5coaching service, at least [70 to 80 percent](#) of jobs aren't advertised publicly. That means your hours hunting openings online could be better spent offline, networking. Rally the relationships you worked hard to build and don't be afraid to ask for help or favors.

4. Research the best companies to work for in your area. The Society for Human Resource Management and AARP compiled a list of the [Top 50 Employers](#) who recognize the value of older workers and tend to recruit mature workers. Local business magazines and journals often publish similar rankings.
5. Search for openings at smaller companies. Lower operating budgets can mean that smaller businesses can't afford to recruit high-salary employees. Someone with your experience (who isn't demanding an exorbitant salary) could be just what they're looking for.
6. Get certified. Adding skills and certificates to your resumé, such as the latest technology or advancements in your field, shows you've stayed up-to-date while out of the office. You can also look into earning a specialized certificate from a community college or trade association.
7. Consider temporary or contractual jobs. Staffing agencies often have an "in" with companies you wouldn't otherwise have when applying for a job cold. Additionally, a fixed-term position gives you the chance to feel whether a specific job or industry is one you really want to be in. You never know if the opportunity could lead to a full-time or permanent position.

If you're based in Central Ohio, visit the [New Directions Career Center](#), a resource dedicated to assisting women transitioning back into the workforce and helping them move toward financial stability. The Center also offers career guidance and a network of women you can connect with who are in similar situations.



STILL NO LUCK IN THE JOB SEARCH?

While the court may order spousal support, Ohio doesn't have any specific [spousal support](#) guidelines. If needed, the court will establish "appropriate and reasonable" support by considering different factors such as:

- Your standard of living before your separation
- Your income or your earning ability
- Your health
- Your education
- The duration of your marriage

IT'S ALL IN THE MENTALITY

Sure, redesigning your cover letter and resume, searching and apply for jobs, and going on interviews can be draining. Yet, time and again, we hear the hardest part of returning to the workforce is negotiating your mental outlook on the situation.

It's easy to feel defeated or less-than your former status, pre-mom. These emotions might keep you from your next shining gig or from finding who you're meant to be. Don't let them stand in your way. Confidence is always key, and it speaks louder than any gaps in your work experience.

The amount of extra income you have doesn't define who you are. The job title you have doesn't make its mark on your core personality. Your kids don't care if you're an admin, a CFO, or a fairy princess. Soak in the lesson of this new journey.

V.

HOW TO COPE



ONLY ONE WAY TO GO: FINDING YOUR TRUE SELF AFTER DIVORCE

Feelings of release and freedom wash over you and are immediately replaced by fear, loneliness, doubt— and then suddenly it's back to hope and excitement. Guilt creeps in. You wonder: will I feel this way forever? What have I done? Should I have tried harder? How is this impacting the kids?

Divorce isn't neat. Divorce will have a life-long impact on you—just like any experience. That's how life works. Every major event in our lives affects, prepares and shapes us. Now, at this particularly impactful fork in the road, you have two choices: hide, or seek.

We challenge you to seek -- to use this time to heal and find out who you really are. Maybe you found her in your 20s but lost touch somewhere between “I do” and “I don't.” Perhaps you never had the opportunity to discover your inner beauty before two became one. But no matter your past or the intricate, gritty details of the present that only you and your spouse know, you are here now with the power to shape your day and future. Sometimes, what you don't want is exactly what you need, what will set you free.

Henry Ford said it best:

“Equip yourself with these reminders to learn something from your new exploration.”



KEEP EMOTIONS IN CHECK

With emotions flying, divorces can get messy quickly. If your husband lashes out or belittles your newfound independence, be calm, knowing that pointless arguments only generate drama.

Instead, do your best to remove your emotions from the equation. Try to let hurtful comments roll off your back. Even though [emotions may be raw](#), it's important not to let them influence your decisions or cloud the path toward your goals.

A good way to stay on track and keep emotions from persuading you to make unsound choices is to [create a list of achievable goals](#), such as finding the right divorce attorney or searching for an apartment to create your happy space. This will help you stay focused and keep your feelings in check.

SEEK OUT A SUPPORT NETWORK

Building a support network can be the most effective step you take toward coping with your divorce and the emotions that go along with it. Strategically seeking out support resources— including trusted friends, family and possibly a therapist or support group—is critical for healthy coping.

But, energy flows where attention goes, so keep your conversations positive: no male-bashing, and absolutely no talking badly about your ex. Your support network should be an outlet for happiness and encouragement.

If you don't feel like you have a support network of loved ones, prioritize developing one. Reach out to your children's pediatrician; make friends with teachers and school administrators. If you're relocating, make finding a close-knit neighborhood high on your checklist, especially if you have children.

Therapy and support groups can also help keep you accountable, which

in turn will stave off feelings of isolation and despair. Secluding yourself can [raise stress levels, reduce concentration, negatively affect your work relationships and overall health](#). If you don't already have a support system, commit yourself to interviewing several therapists until you find the right fit, or join a support group that is welcoming and authentic.

REDEFINE YOURSELF

While divorce may close one door, it offers the opportunity for you to open many others. Grieving is a process that everyone moves through at their own pace; looking at this time as a period of self-discovery can help you conquer feelings of isolation.

“Take up new hobbies, activities, interests—expand yourself. Stay busy in a constructive way,” suggests [Patricia Covalt, PhD](#), a Denver-based licensed marriage therapist.

The [nonprofit organization Mental Health America](#) suggests reconnecting with things you enjoyed doing independent of your spouse, or check out something you've always wanted to try. Signing up for a class, volunteering and investing in your hobbies don't just take your mind off of your daily circumstances—they can help connect you with other adults. By capturing your attention and [bringing your focus away from the past](#), new interests can help you think of yourself as an explorer and a decision-maker rather than a victim. It isn't divorce that defines you, but how you choose to move through it.

BE WILLING TO COMPROMISE

Refusing to budge over trivialities, or to even speak to one another, will only end up [costing both of you more money and time](#). However, [having a conversation with your spouse](#) about what compromises you can both make to ensure your divorce is as amicable as possible can help you get on with your life that much faster.



Be ready to discuss matters such as:

- Division of assets
- Liabilities
- Spousal support
- Parental rights

If you can come to an agreement across the board, you may be able to finalize your divorce much faster and less expensively than through a drawn-out, contentious process. Sometimes, it's in both of your best interests—emotionally, physically and financially—to be as compromising as possible to reach a mutual understanding. The faster you and your spouse are able to reach a compromise, the sooner you both can move on.

Sometimes, though, it's not that easy. If you're dealing with an ex whose first language is narcissism and second is anger, a better strategy might be to just listen, according to doctor of psychology and human studies, [Dr. Reena Sommers, in her book *How To End A Marriage*.](#)

“No amount of discussion, debate or arguing will change the mind and attitude of a person who is bent on thinking and acting unreasonably,” she writes.

Sommers also advises using your energy wisely. In other words, don't waste time on someone who is completely unreceptive to logic. If your spouse truly believes you're out to get him, then no amount of convincing or arguing can change that. To help come to terms with his perception, it's important to realize that those who do care for you know the truth about your character.

“Unless your spouse's unreasonableness is interfering with your relationship with your children, your personal relationships or your career, then let it go,” she writes. However, if those areas are affected, especially when it comes to your children, it's better to seek the advice of an attorney.

Most reassuring of all? A [2014 study](#) of a large number of children found that children living with one parent are just as happy as those with two. Let go of the fear all too common in divorcing or divorced parents that you're ruining your kids forever. Focus on loving and reminding them of their worth.



VI.

READ BEFORE YOU POST

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA SPEAKS DIRECTLY TO THE DIVORCE COURT

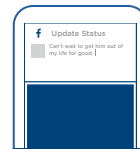
You update your status:

“Can’t wait to get him out of my life for good.”

He Instagrams a photo of his new Mercedes.

You add a photo of your night out with the girls to your Snapchat story.

He changes his relationship status to
“It’s complicated.”



Is this simple one-upmanship, or the nail in the coffin to losing your spousal support?

A survey by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers [reported](#) that 80 percent of divorce lawyers have seen an increase in social media evidence in the court rooms. How can you and your lawyer prevent your online activity from being used against you?

IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING NICE TO SAY, DON'T SAY IT AT ALL





**It turns out that your mother was right all along.
Sometimes, silence is better than speech.**

Anything you post online should be considered public and permanent. Even if you delete a post, someone could have captured a screenshot of it while it was still up. Worse, the court might issue an order allowing your ex to retrieve all of your data from the social media site and use it against you. Even Snapchat, which made a name for itself with shareable images that “disappear” after less than 10 seconds, can be nabbed with a quick screengrab.

A good rule of thumb is that if you wouldn't say it to your judge, don't post it online.

THE BEST OFFENSE IS A GOOD DEFENSE

Update your privacy settings so only those who need to see your posts are able to do so. Facebook even has a “close friends” privacy settings, as well as a function that allows you to approve all posts that you're tagged in.

When you're out, ask your friends not to tag any photos of you at social functions. Even the most benign posts can be used against you. Do you want photos of you with a beer in your hand made public when you're trying to win custody of your children?

Disable your location settings on all social media. For example, Facebook can pinpoint your location while you're using its messenger, and Twitter can include your whereabouts in a tweet via Foursquare. Turning off this function prevents your ex's lawyers from making a case against you based on where you have been and when, and can protect your safety if your divorce has the potential for violence.

If you use an app on your phone, chances are it has some sort of privacy settings. Spend some time investigating them so you know what you're looking for.

EMAIL AND TEXT MESSAGES CAN BE USED AGAINST YOU

Because texting and email are second nature, we can forget that everything put into writing is there to stay. Nothing is private. That's why you should never text or email information that could be contradictory to what you've said in court.

"In the context of a divorce, if either party has shared information digitally that is at odds with what they've conveyed in person, or in legal documents, it can create serious problems," writes Forbes contributor Jeff Landers. And it's not just the negative content that can hurt; your "happy" Facebook posts might be used to undercut claims of depression or emotional hurt.

Social media, email and text messages can give your ex's divorce lawyers plenty of ammo against you that can be tough to defend. Messages sent in the heat of anger seem to be the ones that worm their way into court. Before you fire off an invective-filled retort to the inflammatory email or text message your ex just sent, take a minute to compose yourself and consider what you want to say. Chances are you'll find the words to say it more civilly, reducing the chance of regret later.

USE YOUR CONNECTIONS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

While you're keeping your cool online and staying mum about your divorce, it's possible your ex isn't being quite so coy. Or maybe his buddies are getting him into hot water. Even if you and your ex are no

longer Facebook friends, or following each other on other social media platforms, odds are you still have plenty of mutual connections.

Maybe a friend Instagrammed a #WhatHappensInVegas photo, a LinkedIn connection spotted that big promotion, or your husband's new girlfriend tweeted a photo of the Prada bag he gave her—all while he's claiming to be too broke to pay spousal support. Doing your homework could show your spouse is hiding assets.

Another online space you might not think to check? Dating sites. Forbes contributor [Jeff Landers](#) writes, "Don't assume he's been smart enough to keep a low profile. His ego might overcome his better judgment." If he's telling the court he can't afford spousal support payments, while also boasting about his recent trip to the Bahamas on Tinder, it probably won't work in his favor.

FIVE KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER BEFORE SHARING:

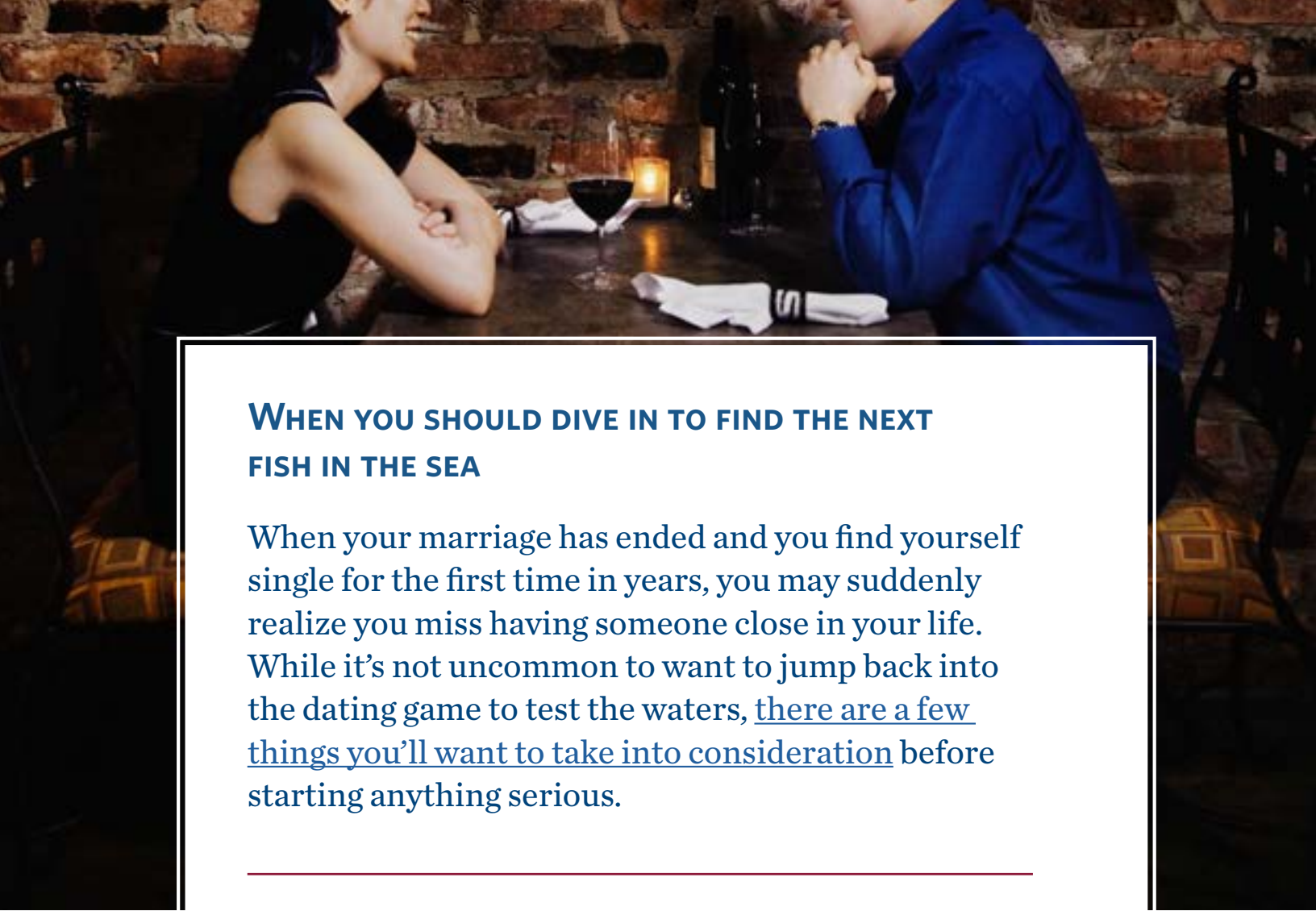
- 1.** Be careful about check-ins at locations via Facebook or Foursquare that might leave you answering difficult questions.
- 2.** Keep your profile and your relationship status private. Your ex's lawyers do not need to know about your new love interest.
- 3.** Consider limiting your friends' (or others') ability to tag you in photos at parties or social functions.
- 4.** Never air your dirty laundry online or mention your ex.
- 5.** Never lie. Any untruthful comments can be used against you in court, even when they're made on social media.

Some litigants have even gone so far as to take down their social accounts altogether, opening them again once the divorce is finalized. With the proliferation of such sites, however, that kind of “social media nuclear option” is becoming more and more difficult. It’s up to you to decide how much is too much – just remember that the Internet is forever.



VII.

SHOULD YOU DATE?



WHEN YOU SHOULD DIVE IN TO FIND THE NEXT FISH IN THE SEA

When your marriage has ended and you find yourself single for the first time in years, you may suddenly realize you miss having someone close in your life. While it's not uncommon to want to jump back into the dating game to test the waters, there are a few things you'll want to take into consideration before starting anything serious.

WHEN IS IT ACCEPTABLE TO START DATING?

While everyone has their own advice for how to mend during divorce, most would agree there isn't a magic threshold between "ready" and "not ready." In general, divorcées need time between ending their previous relationship and building a new one.

If you start a relationship too quickly before you've worked through your previous one and reevaluated your personal goals and interests, you may be setting the groundwork for a second divorce. Be honest about your post-divorce relationship desires. Are you looking for another serious partnership right away? Or do you want to play the field?

Even though dating someone new might seem appealing when you're going through a divorce, give yourself a healthy amount of time to assess what you're really looking for in a partner. Identify the issues you had with your ex and try to avoid people with similar attributes.

WHAT IF I HAVE CHILDREN?

While divorce can be difficult on children, [it's a much better alternative](#) than staying in an unhealthy, emotionally divorced relationship. However, it's best not to complicate a marital split early on by introducing a new face into the mix, particularly when your kids may still be going through emotions of separation and anxiety. Consider your new relationship through their eyes.

It may not help their adjustment period to introduce them to a new flame who may or may not be a part of their lives in the long-term.

However, if you feel the need to date, or you're already dating someone, be upfront with your new partner about [meeting your children](#), and how it's going to be handled. It's also important to find the sweet spot when telling your kids—if you hide it for too long, it could create trust issues or resentment.

WHAT IF I'M ALREADY DATING SOMEONE?

Sometimes, when people ask about potentially dating during a separation, it's because they're already in a relationship.

If this is the case, be prepared to clue your ex in. It may be uncomfortable, and even a little scary, to have an open conversation with him about your new relationship, but it's far better than the fallout of him finding out on his own.

Why? Because if your ex hears about your new partner from your children, or just happens to see you two together in public, it may create feelings of mistrust and betrayal, which can make maintaining a mature relationship far more difficult. This also shows your ex you have respect for the life you shared, and continue to share, through your children.

Additionally, keep your interactions with your beau appropriate in front of the children. There's nothing inherently wrong with dating during a divorce, but flaunting a fresh relationship or behaving inappropriately in front of your kids may create unnecessary roadblocks to resolving the case.

If it's possible, you may also want to consider putting things on hold during the divorce, as new relationships tend to make the process more difficult. Amicable separations can turn into messy breakups if your previous partner finds out you're already seeing someone else. Explain to your new partner you just want your divorce to be as clean and drama-free as possible, and that you'd like to slow things down until the storm has passed.

WHAT IF MY EX IS ALREADY DATING SOMEONE?

Good for him. Your job is not to police his actions or motives. Instead, your job is to continue being the mom your kids need you to be, which means ensuring your ex still values his time with the children.

Don't bash your ex or his new flame to your kids, as it could prove counterproductive, driving them away from you or their father.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE READY TO DATE

Ultimately, you know yourself better than anyone else. Start slow or start fast. Hit on those you're interested in or sit back and let them come to you. Try online dating or go traditional. Join a singles group, sign up for a gym membership, get into a book club; surround yourself with likeminded people who naturally get you and help you feel more confident.

Whatever you do, do it with grace and optimism because nothing is more contagious than someone exuding their true inner shine.

And if you need to vent? [Find a healthy way to do so](#) without dragging anyone else with you. Take a kickboxing class. Walk in nature. Meditate. Journal. Or just breathe. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

*The end of a marriage doesn't have to be the end of the world.
Now that you have a better grasp on the steps you'll take during and
after the divorce process, it's time to show this new challenge who is boss.*

*We look forward to being alongside you as you negotiate this
adventure, to get you to the place you were made for, and to encourage
you every step of the way. Thanks for choosing us.*



ABOUT BABBITT & DAHLBERG

At Babbitt & Dahlberg, we're not just Columbus divorce attorneys—we're involved and respected members of the Columbus legal community, passionate about putting you first. We believe our direct approach and client-attorney interaction is critical to the success of your case.

The attorneys at Babbitt & Dahlberg collectively share more than 60 years of experience in family and divorce law. We're members of the Columbus, Ohio and American Bar Associations, and are actively involved with the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML). We've taught and lectured for CLE courses and other valuable divorce seminars in the Midwest—and have even judged moot court competitions for law school students.

Our reputation, case history and national awards from organizations like Best Lawyers in America the Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers, and SuperLawyers speak for themselves. If you're seeking a law firm that protects your priorities and uses its collective experience to achieve the best possible outcome, then look no further than Babbitt & Dahlberg.

G. Jay Babbitt



Recently included in Best Lawyers in America and consistently securing a spot on the Top 50 Columbus Area SuperLawyers list, Jay has spent the past 30 years as an Ohio family attorney, earning the respect and trust of his clients along with the central Ohio legal community. He is a member of the AAML and an OSBA Certified Specialist in Family Relations Law.

C. Gus Dahlberg



Recognized as a Rising Star by Ohio SuperLawyers and an OSBA Certified Specialist in Family Relations Law, Gus is a respected and experienced attorney in family law. He is an active member of both the OSBA and the ABA, and is currently serving as the chair of the Marital Property committee for the ABA's Family Law Section

DeAnna J. Duvall



With a slew of awards and valuable experience under her belt, DeAnna Duvall is more than prepared to take the world of family law by storm. She's tuned in to family and matrimonial law, utilizing her strengths of swiftly thinking on her feet and diffusing situations as they occur.



To set up a consultation today with Babbitt & Dahlberg's Columbus divorce attorneys, call 614.228.4200 or fill out our [online form](#).