Welcome to Divorganize

DuBois Levias Law Group, PLLC is a women-owned law firm dedicated to helping families launch new beginnings through divorce. We've been providing divorce solutions in Seattle for more than 25 years. Divorce can feel like a dark time, but there are ways to regain control over this huge life transition. We can help you put your fears aside so you can make decisions from a place of strength and knowledge. We're here to tell you: A brighter future is possible and the Divorga-nize Planner is a helpful first step.

This Divorganizer is not legal advice. This Divorganizer is no substitute for a good lawyer. We put this guide together to help you get clear about what kind of result you want in your divorce and so that you can optimize and leverage the amount of attorney time spent on your case. This guide will prepare you to effectively meet with an attorney about your divorce. By completing the tasks we have outlined here in the Divorganizer, you may help save yourself mon-ey, time and future grief. The Divorganizer can educate you about the questions you need to ask yourself and the information you need to gather.

Try to work through the Divorganizer in order, especially if you are just contemplating divorce, or simply in the information-gathering process. No matter where you are in the process, start with the Divorce Vision section first. If you can get started and stick with your vision, you will quite likely create the results you desire, and it will help you and your children.

DuBois Levias
Law Group

DO NOT EMAIL YOUR DIVORGANIZER OR SHARE ELECTRONICALLY

Your Divorganizer should be completed offline and on paper to protect your personal information from cyber security breaches. We recommend that you mail us your Divorganizer to our office prior to your first attorney consultation. Attorney consultations are conducted remotely via zoom or by phone at this time due to the pandemic. We hope to resume in-person consultations just as soon as it is safe to do so.

The sections in this Divorganizer cover everything from putting together your Divorce Team to figuring out a Divorce Budget, to doing Parenting Research. Go through the Divorganizer at a pace that works for you, but make sure you complete each section. A good pace is probably one section per three or four days, or maybe one section per week. If you are really energetic, you might sit down and go through the entire Divorganizer all at once over the course of a week or so.

If you complete this Divorganizer before you meet with an attorney, you will quite likely save substantial money in attorney fees, since you will have already put together everything that your divorce lawyer would need for an initial assessment of your case. Or, if you choose to work with a mediator, you will be well on your way to having the necessary data.

So let's get started and get you Divorganized!

Gather Your Divorce Team

When you get a divorce you need to put together a group of people who will support you through the process. We call this your Divorce Team. Your team will hold you accountable to your Divorce Vision. The purpose of your team is to provide you emotional and practical support to help you bring your best self to the process. Do not share privileged legal strategy with your Divorce Team. In our experience, it is best to include people on your team who offer sound neutral support and do not take sides in your divorce. You want to remain focused forward and your team should include people who get that. Your team should share your vision for yourself. It might be your best friend, a member of your religious or spiritual community, a therapist or counselor, and maybe a co-worker who understands the other areas of your life like your work and career ambitions. Take a few minutes and think about who those people might be, then write down their names.

Now look back at your list. Do you notice any patterns of similarity among them? Do you absolutely trust each of these people to help you and not talk about your personal divorce issues with other friends, your community, or your ex-spouse? If you have any reservations about trusting someone completely, take them off your list and put down another name. Three or four people make a team, but if you have more, that's okay too. As you let go of the past to create your next chapter of life, you'll probably find that you will make new friends, new sincere connections, and you may even add people to your team as you go along.

One thing to remember: if you end up in litigation, these people can be subpoenaed, so if you have a lawyer, talk to her or him about how to avoid sharing privileged information with your team.

Now that you've built your team and reflected on these folks as a group, tease out what you think makes you trust them so much. Write down those trust points.

- Are they good listeners?
- Do they understanding parenting?
- Do they believe in your intelligence and strength?
- Do they understand your financial situation and goals?

By completing these steps, when you go to interview a lawyer or mediator for your divorce, you can try to find a lawyer who shares your values.

Create Your Divorce Vision

Take a moment and consider the value of creating a vision for yourself during and after your divorce. This is a really important place to start the divorce process and here's why: whatever we envision for ourselves in our life sets the tone, the pace, and creates our reality. Also, having a Divorce Vision means that in the middle of a process which sometimes can feel overwhelming and out of control, you actually can go back, read your Divorce Vision, and remember that you have a choice about who you want to be in this process. Put another way, you are going to be tasked with making a lot of decisions through the divorce process. Your Divorce Vision can help you prioritize what items matter most in your decision-making tree and keep you focused on your future well-being.

"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them."
—Maya Angelou, Letter to My Daughter

Examples of your Divorce Vision should include aspirational goals such as these:

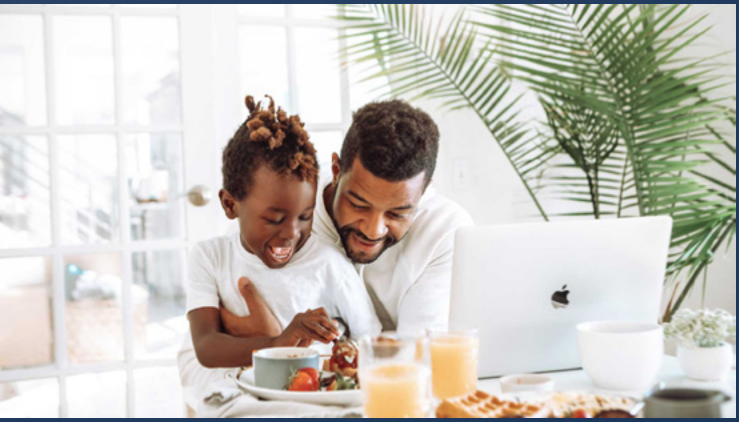
- I want to have an exceptional co-parenting relationship with my child's other parent.
- I want my home to be a sanctuary.
- I want my children to feel unfettered love from both of their parents.
- I want financial security.

While it may not feel like it all the time, there are key moments where you will have control over how this process unfolds. Sometimes, long after a divorce, people find themselves stuck letting the divorce process itself set the tone for and inform how they're going to live the rest of their lives. But it doesn't have to be that way. You get to decide how you are going to behave and how people are going to remember the way in which you conducted yourself. If you start now with an idea of who you want to be through this process and stick to it, your Divorce Vision can have an extremely powerful and positive impact on many aspects of your life, both now and in your future.

On the next couple of pages, we've given you a few questions to consider to get you started. You can just sketch this out for yourself at first—you don't need to spend hours doing this, and you can do a little at a time. The point is to get your Divorce Vision down in writing before you go any further in your divorce. So let's get started.

When you go through a divorce, one of the most important things to know about yourself is what you value. Your values for yourself, your family, and your community will all have a big impact on your decisions.

Start by asking this question: What are my values? We don't mean whether or not you are a good person, or believe in certain things, but your practical values that show up in the way you relate to people, spend money (or save it), that sort of thing. How do your values play out in your day-to-day life?



So, for example, are you someone who values stability? Do you value living in the same place for a long time? Or do you value variety, moving around, trying new things all the time? How about your sense of privacy versus publicity—do you value attention and having a high sense of style that goes along with that, or do you value a low profile? Do you have strong relationships with people or nature, or do you prefer to go it alone? How about love? Do you enjoy loving others and being loved or are relationships just not that important to you? Maybe your heart is in your work or a vocation. Think about how your values will inform your divorce, and how you can incorporate your values as you move through the divorce process.

Here are some examples:

- Health and wellness
- Financial stability
- Monogamy
- Family life, children
- Travel
- Intimacy
- Peaceful resolution
- Education
- Community and public service
- Faith/Spirituality

Once you've pinpointed your values and have written them down, ask yourself this question: What can I do to incorporate these values into my divorce process? How will my life after my divorce reflect these values? The divorce process is a great time to reconnect with who you really are, and to let your personal style and integrity shine through.

- **Who do you want to be on the day you get divorced? How do you see yourself on the day you get your divorce? How do you want to feel? What will you do on that day? Who will you be with? How is it going to look? Be specific.**
- **What do you want your life to look like one year after your divorce? Be specific.**
- **Where do you want to live? What does your house or apartment look like? Who do you live with? How do you feel?**
- **Where are your kids going to be? Where are they going to be going to school?**
- **What kind of job will you have? Will it be the same as your job now? Will you go back to school? Retrain for a different job?**
- **What will your financial situation look like? What bills will you have paid off? How much money will you have saved? How much will you be earning?**
- **What will you do in your free time?**
- **What will you look like? What will your body look like? How healthy will you be?**
- **Who are your friends going to be?**
- **What about a new romantic relationship? What will that look like?**
- **What's your relationship with your ex-spouse going to look like?**
- **How about your relationship with your kids?**
- **What is your life going to look like five years after your divorce?**

Examine Your Finances

If there's ever been a time in your life to face your finances, this is it. You don't need to tell your spouse, but this is what you need to do: go through that file cabinet or online accounts that you may have been avoiding (because no one really wants to face the condition of their finances).

Your spouse may or may not be the most honest person in the world, but try not to focus on that right now. Instead, take control of your future and locate every piece of financial paper or data related to your life. So don't rely on the information that he or she gives you. Find out how much money is in the bank. Find out where you have bank accounts. Contact your broker or employer and find out how much money you have in 401(k)s and IRAs and pensions. If you run into an obstacle, tell your lawyer.

Look online at sites that put a value on houses and find out approximately what your house is worth (you will eventually need a certified appraisal, but for now get an estimate). Find out the approximate values of your cars and any other assets that you have—boat, RV, summer property, club memberships, any interest you or your spouse might have in a business, old 401(k)s you may have forgotten about … you get the idea. Everything you own that has significant value should be on this list.

Know Your Marital Assets and Debts

Whatever you do, don't forget you must also value any businesses you or your spouse own or that the two of you own together. Many people make the mistake of not realizing that a business is a marital asset and needs to be valued. Maybe it's a landscaping business or a hair salon or a consulting business, or maybe one of you is an accountant or an architect or a mechanic with a car repair business. All of those businesses may have value and you need to find out what the value of that business is before you can reach a fair and equitable distribution of your assets. Obviously, you don't have the expertise to value a business. You will need a CPA, and probably a lawyer, to figure this out. But at this point just be aware that a business is an asset.

You or your spouse may have stock awards that vest out into the future. These will need to be valued according to the law in your state. Likewise pensions must be valued by expert who are qualified to do so. If either of you owns a patent or other intellectual property, like a book, put those on the list. You don't need to figure out the value, but your lawyer will need to know that they exist.

One thing to know is that anything either of you owned before marriage, or gifts you've received during marriage, or inheritance you've received might be considered separate property in your divorce. This has lots of implications you can discuss with your lawyer, but the key issue to know is that your lawyer will want to know about potential separate property. And it's important to know that the person proving separate property needs proof to show she or he had the property before marriage. So, this is the time to find things like deeds to property you may have owned before marriage, or proof of inheritance along with proof of where it was deposited and kept during the marriage. And like with your other assets, it's usually best to try and sort this out before you leave the marriage.

This is the time to get it all out, put it all out on a table by yourself without any help from anybody else, and just take a look and see what you've got. And figure out what you don't know. Then when you consult with a lawyer, you'll be prepared. This information will make it much easier for your lawyer to give you good advice.

Now, fill out the forms on the following pages—you will need all of this information for your divorce.

Your Personal Information

» **Full Name:**
» **Maiden Name:**
» **Social Security #:**
» **Residential Address:**
» **Is your residential address within city limits?**
» **Your mobile phone #:**
» **Your home phone #:**
» **Your email address:**
» **Your driver's license #:**
» **Your place of birth (city, state, country):**
» **Your date of birth:**
» **Highest year of education you've completed:**

Your Work History

Employer #1:

» **Occupation:**
» **Employer Address:**
» **Employer Phone:**
» **Start and end dates of employment:**
» **Monthly gross income:**
» **Monthly net income:**

Employer #2:

» **Occupation:**
» **Employer Address:**
» **Employer Phone:**
» **Start and end dates of employment:**
» **Monthly gross income:**
» **Monthly net income:**

Your Spouse/Partner's Personal Information

- **Full Name:**
- **Maiden Name:**
- **Social Security #:**
- **Residential Address:**
- **Is their residential address within city limits?:**
- **Mobile phone #:**
- **Home phone #:**
- **Email address:**
- **Driver's license #:**
- **Place of birth (city, state, country):**
- **Date of birth:**
- **Race (often required by a court form):**

Your Spouse/Partner's Work History

Employer #1:

- **Occupation:**
- **Employer Address:**
- **Employer Phone:**
- **Start and end dates of employment:**
- **Monthly gross income:**
- **Monthly net income:**

Employer #2:

- **Occupation:**
- **Employer Address:**
- **Employer Phone:**
- **Start and end dates of employment:**
- **Monthly gross income:**
- **Monthly net income:**

Your Marriage & Relationship History

- **The date you moved in together:***
- **Date of marriage:**
- **Date of separation*:**
- **Place of marriage (city, state, county):***

*These dates have legal significance in many states. You may want to discuss this with a lawyer if you're not very clear about the date you moved in together or the date you separated.

Please complete the checklists below to the best of your ability. If some of this information doesn't apply to you, that's okay. Simply write "n/a" or leave it blank.

Your Child(ren)'s Personal Information

First Child:

» **Full Name:**
» **Date of birth:**
» **Gender:**
» **Place of birth (city, state):**
» **Social Security #:**

Second Child:

» **Full Name:**
» **Date of birth:**
» **Gender:**
» **Place of birth (city, state):**
» **Social Security #:**

Third Child:

» **Full Name:**
» **Date of birth:**
» **Gender:**
» **Place of birth (city, state):**
» **Social Security #:**

Fourth Child:

» **Full Name:**
» **Date of birth:**
» **Gender:**
» **Place of birth (city, state):**
» **Social Security #:**

Checking Accounts *(Yours and/or Your Spouses)*

Checking Account #1:

» **Name of bank/institution:**
» **Account #:**
» **Date account opened:**
» **Name(s) on the account:**
» **Current balance as of __________ (date):**

Checking Account #2:

» **Name of bank/institution:**
» **Account #:**
» **Date account opened:**
» **Name(s) on the account:**
» **Current balance as of __________ (date):**

Checking Accounts (Continued)

Checking Account #3:

- » Name of bank/institution:
- » Account #:
- » Date account opened:
- » Name(s) on the account:
- » Current balance as of _________ (date):

Debts *(Yours and/or Your Spouses)*

Debt #1:

- » Name of bank/institution:
- » Brief description of debt:
- » (e.g., Credit Card, Mortgage, Line of Credit, Student Loan, Auto Loan)
- » Account/Loan #:
- » Date account/loan opened:
- » Name(s) on the loan/account:
- » Current balance as of _________ (date):
- » Amount of monthly payment:
- » Is the above payment the minimum, required monthly payment? If not, please state the amount of the minimum monthly payment:

Debt #2:

- » Name of bank/institution:
- » Brief description of debt:
- » (e.g., Credit Card, Mortgage, Line of Credit, Student Loan, Auto Loan)
- » Account/Loan #:
- » Date account/loan opened:
- » Name(s) on the loan/account:
- » Current balance as of _________ (date):
- » Amount of monthly payment:
- » Is the above payment the minimum, required monthly payment? If not, please state the amount of the minimum monthly payment:

Debts (Continued)

Debt #3:

- Name of bank/institution:
- Brief description of debt:
- (e.g., Credit Card, Mortgage, Line of Credit, Student Loan, Auto Loan)
- Account/Loan #:
- Date account/loan opened:
- Name(s) on the loan/account:
- Current balance as of _________ (date):
- Amount of monthly payment:
- Is the above payment the minimum, required monthly payment? If not, please state the amount of the minimum monthly payment:

Savings/Money Market Accounts *(Yours and/or Your Spouses)*

Savings/MM Account #1:

- Name of bank/institution:
- Account #:
- Date account opened:
- Name(s) on the account:
- Current balance:

Savings/MM Account #2:

- Name of bank/institution:
- Account #:
- Date account opened:
- Name(s) on the account:
- Current balance:

Stock & Investment Accounts *(Yours and/or Your Spouses)*

Stock/Investment Account #1:

- Name of bank/institution:
- Account #:
- Date account opened:
- Name(s) on the account:
- Current balance:

Stock/Investment Account #2:

- Name of bank/institution:
- Account #:
- Date account opened:
- Name(s) on the account:
- Current balance:

Retirement Accounts *(Yours and/or Your Spouses)*

Retirement Account #1:

- **Financial institution:**
- **Type of account (e.g. – 401(k), IRA):**
- **Account #:**
- **Date account opened:**
- **Name(s) on the account:**
- **Current net balance as of __________ (date)**
- **Is there a loan or another encumbrance against the account? ____________ If so, please state:**

a) date of loan:

b) amount of loan:

c) purpose of loan:

Retirement Account #2:

- **Financial institution:**
- **Type of account (e.g. – 401(k), IRA):**
- **Account #:**
- **Date account opened:**
- **Name(s) on the account:**
- **Current net balance as of __________ (date)**
- **Is there a loan or another encumbrance against the account? ____________ If so, please state:**

a) date of loan:

b) amount of loan:

c) purpose of loan:

Property *(Yours and/or Your Spouses)*

Auto #1:

- **Is there a loan or other encumbrance against this property?**
- **Title held by:**
- **Name of bank:**
- **Account #:**
- **Date of the loan:**
- **Amount of the loan:**

Auto #2:

- **Is there a loan or other encumbrance against this property?**
- **Title held by:**
- **Name of bank:**
- **Account #:**
- **Date of the loan:**
- **Amount of the loan:**

Property *(Yours and/or Your Spouses)*

Auto #3:
- Is there a loan or other encumbrance against this property?
- Title held by:
- Name of bank:
- Account #:
- Date of the loan:
- Amount of the loan:

Boat/RV:
- Is there a loan or other encumbrance against this property?
- Title held by:
- Name of bank:
- Account #:
- Date of the loan:
- Amount of the loan:

Business #1:
- Name/DBA:
- License:
- Is there a loan or other encumbrance against this property?
- Name of bank:
- Account #:
- Date of the loan:
- Amount of the loan:

Business #2:
- Name/DBA:
- License:
- Is there a loan or other encumbrance against this property?
- Name of bank:
- Account #:
- Date of the loan:
- Amount of the loan:

Real Estate Holding #1:
- Address:
- Is there a loan or other encumbrance against this property?
- Title held by:
- Name of bank:
- Account #:
- Date of the loan:
- Amount of the loan:

Real Estate Holding #2:
- Address:
- Is there a loan or other encumbrance against this property?
- Title held by:
- Name of bank:
- Account #:
- Date of the loan:
- Amount of the loan:

Create a One Page Financial Overview

Now, take the information about your marital assets and debts and put it all together on one page. You can use anything that works for you—lined or graph paper, a Table in Microsoft Word, a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets—it doesn't matter. The important thing is to get everything gathered in one place, to do the math, and see what you have. Once you have an overview of your finances, you will have a bird's eye view of your financial situation, and that will help you make smart decisions about the bigger picture.

You can figure out the net value of your estate by adding up all of the assets with their values and subtracting all of the debts that you owe. This is generally what will be divided in your divorce. There are some issues that your lawyer will want to discuss with you about assets that may be considered legally separate property, such as gifts and inheritance, or maybe money or investments either of you had before you got married.

Your New Budget

One of the things that happens when you get divorced is that your monthly budget changes. And usually the amount of money that you have to spend each month on living expenses goes down—not always—but usually. So it's extremely important for you to figure out how you have been spending money every month. This way you can decide exactly what you will need to live and exactly where you can cut out expenses that are not necessary. Going through this budgeting process will also help you understand whether you will need to collect maintenance or alimony for a while and what that number should look like. (Note: If you earn more than your spouse, you may have to pay him or her spousal maintenance.)

This budgeting work is one of the most important processes you can go through if you are getting a divorce. Why? Because it's the monthly financial roadmap for your future. If you create an intelligent budget and stick to it, it will make your post-divorce life much easier to plan for, because, for instance, you'll know how much money you need to earn if you go back to work. This will affect your job search or possibly lead you to consider training for a different kind of work. Creating your budget will help you make those kinds of decisions.

Your Spousal Maintenance

Spousal maintenance differs from state to state. So the first thing you need to do is check with your lawyer. Since we practice in Washington, we'll call it maintenance. Maintenance is often paid by the higher wage-earning spouse to the lower-wage-earning spouse. So, if you make more money than your soon-to-be-ex-spouse and he or she stayed home with the kids or didn't work, or makes less than you do, you may end up paying your ex-spouse maintenance. The reverse is also true—if you stayed home while your spouse worked or you make less than he or she does, you may be entitled to receive maintenance. If both of you have relatively equal incomes or earn good wages at your jobs, there may not be a need for maintenance

Here in Washington, maintenance is determined according to the statutory factors. Basically we have what is commonly called "rehabilitative maintenance," which is the way the law allows the non, or lower wage earner to get back into the workforce in a meaningful way. Except in very long marriages, it may not be reasonable for the lower wage earner to ever be able to support her/himself, so in those cases sometimes long term maintenance is appropriate.

In other states, spousal maintenance is decided by statute. That means the state makes a law setting the formula for how much spousal maintenance will be awarded. Other states determine a maximum amount of maintenance that you can get. In some states, you cannot get maintenance unless you've been married for a certain number of years. In other states, if maintenance is awarded, there's no end date, which means it goes on basically forever. And in other states, certain factors have to be looked at. The length, amount, and circumstances to be considered all vary from state to state. Obviously, you have to do your research for Washington state.

Go back to your budget section and review it. If you can compare your budget with your spouse's budget and it looks like either one of you will need some financial help, there are a couple of things you can do. You can agree on a maintenance payment for a certain period of time. If you can't agree, you might end up in a trial where a judge will decide.

Create Your Divorce Vision for Your Children

Now that you've had a chance to think about where you're going with your divorce, it's time to create a vision for your kids.

Remember from your own Divorce Vision how valuable it is to see yourself in the future? Now it's time to work on what it's going to look like for your children. Creating a Divorce Vision for your children means that in the middle of the process, but especially after it's over and you have a new life, you can actually go back, read your Divorce Vision for Your Children, and remember what is best not for you, or your ex-spouse, but for your kids. Remember, the children are not divorcing their parents. It's important that you cooperate to maintain a stable and loving environment for them to grow up in.

On the next couple of pages, we've given you a few questions to consider to get you started. You can just sketch this out for yourself at first—you don't need to spend hours doing this, and you can do a little at a time. The point is to get down in writing on paper your divorce vision for your children now, before you go any further in your divorce. It will have a big impact on the decisions you make because you will be making them out of love and concern for someone else. This is a very powerful place from which to do your decision-making. So let's get started.

» **What do you want your children's lives to look like one year after your divorce? Be specific.**

» **What's your relationship with your ex-spouse going to look like when it comes to the kids?**

» **What's your kids' relationship with their dad/mom going to be like?**

» **How about your relationship with your kids?**

» **Where are your kids going to be? Where are they going to be going to school?**

» **What will your kids be doing in their free time?**

- How healthy will your children be, both physically and mentally?
- Who are their friends going to be?
- If your kids are old enough to work, what kind of jobs will they have?
- How much money will you have saved for your kids' education? How much money will you be able to give to contribute to their schools?

Your Ex is Not Your Child's Ex

Brainstorm some ways to be supportive of your children's relationship with your ex-spouse. Yes, even if you can't stand your ex-spouse. We know, we know, it's hard. Can you think of a way that you've seen your ex connect with your children? Or the way the children admire your ex? Or a memory of why you decided to have a child with your ex? Often, your ex may possess a quality that made your relationship impossible, but can you push yourself to "flip the script" on that narrative? Here are some examples of how you can "flip the script".

- Old Script: "My Ex is so possessive and controlling."
  - FLIP IT: My ex will do everything in his/her power to protect our child and show pride in our child's efforts.
- Old Script: "My Ex is too demanding of our kids."
  - FLIP IT: "My ex and I both want our children to be successful and have opportunities to try new things and excel in school."
- Old Script: "My ex doesn't set enough limits with our kids."
  - FLIP IT: "My relationship with the kids is more secure than my ex's relationship. It's probably a good balance for the kids to sometimes have more flexibility."
- Old Script: "My Ex is too rigid with the kids."
  - FLIP IT: "The kids don't push back on my Ex like they do me and it's nice to be "good cop", and I also want to be able to work together for our shared goals for our kids."

Your Parenting Research

Now that you've learned how to take your focus off of your ex-spouse, you know that your real focus needs to be on your children. So the question is: What's best for my children? There is an amazing amount of free information online—articles and books, many of them by scholars who have spent their lifetimes studying the effect of divorce on children. And as you might expect, how much time your children will need with each parent is based on where they are in their emotional and physical development.

If you've got toddlers, research has shown that toddlers need frequent, regular and short, periods of time with their non-custodial parent. If your kids are older, it's going to be a different amount of time. If they're teenagers, they might have some say-so on what they want to do and how they want to handle it. Talk to your lawyer about your individual situation and your child's unique needs. Do your research now, take action in your custody and parenting plans, and you will be paid back in the years to come with happier, healthier children. Doing right by your kids in divorce is also good for you in the long run.

Make a list of what you've learned from your research. What surprised you? How are you going to use this information?

Your Child Custody and Scheduling Ideas

The next thing you should do if you have children and are heading into a divorce is to get some books about children and divorce. The web has many good suggestions, and your local library will also undoubtedly have good resources as well, since this is a common issue. It is very important to consider the fact that although you are divorcing your spouse, your children are not divorcing their parents. Please review our recommended reading.

Map out your children's current schedules at home, at school and at activities. Now take a moment and view this schedule from your child's perspective paying particular attention to each parent's work hours. Be honest: how would you want to split your time between your parents? Are there certain activities you would want with Mom? With Dad? How would you want Mom and Dad to behave at your soccer game, or band concert? What about your birthday? Consider how you can put your children's needs over your own.

Depending on your child's age and the situation, typically, your job is to normalize the divorce for your child, not to fan the flames and say, "Oh, I know it's going to be really hard over there sleeping at Mommy/Daddy's house." Your job is to say, "You know what? You're going to have a great time with Mommy/Daddy, s/he can't wait to see you!" You want your child to feel really loved by both parents.

Another thing to avoid is placing your child in the middle of adult decisions. It's a huge mistake to put your child in the middle of your divorce and have your child bringing messages back and forth between parents, or to put your child in the position of having to answer questions like "Oh, where do you want to sleep tonight, at Mom's house? Or at Dad's house?"

Here is where you get a chance to think hard about what you would like your new family schedule to look like. Just because you're getting a divorce does not mean you won't have to keep a family calendar—you will. If you haven't kept one before, now is the perfect time to start. Your schedule will become more complicated after your separation and divorce because now two different families—yours and your ex-spouse's— are going to be in play. So, start working on a new family child custody schedule that you think will work best for: a) your children and b) you. Put the kids first. If you organize your custody and parenting schedule around their needs, it makes other decisions that much easier. You can't go wrong putting your kids first in the divorce process.

If you're new to keeping a family calendar, there are several apps specifically designed for co-parents:

- **Our Family Wizard**
- **Talking Parents**

Recommended Reading

For Your Marriage

- *The Good Marriage* by Judith Wallerstein & Sandra Blakesee
- *Boundaries in Marriage* by Henry Cloud & John Townsend
- *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* by Dennis Gottman
- *The 5 Love Languages* by Gary D. Chapman
- *Stop Walking On Eggshells* by M.S.T. Mason
- *It's All Your Fault* by Bill Eddy

For You

- *Helping Your Kids Cope With Divorce The Sandcastle Way* by M. Gary Neuman
- *Crazy Time : Surviving Divorce and Building a New Life, Revised Edition* by Abigail Trafford
- *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered* by E. Mavis Hetherington & John Kelly
- *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce : The 25 Year Landmark Study* by Judith S. Wallerstein, Julia M. Lewis, Sandra Blakeslee
- *What About the Kids? Raising Your Children Before, During, and After Divorce* by Judith S. Wallerstein & Sandra Blakeslee
- *The Two Roads to Divorce* by Lenard Marlow
- *The Co-Parents' Handbook: Raising Well-Adjusted, Resilient, and Resourceful Kids in a Two-Home Family from Little Ones to Young Adults* by Karen Bonnell
- *The Truth About Children and Divorce* by Dr. Robert Emery
- *Renegotiating Family Relationships* by Dr. Robert Emery
- *The Good Divorce: Keeping Your Family Together When Your Marriage Comes Apart* by Constance Ahrons
- *What About the Kids? Raising Your Children Before, During and After Divorce* by Judith Wallerstein, PhD. & Sandra Blakesee
- *Collaborative Divorce: The Revolutionary Way to Restructure Your Family, Resolve Legal Issues and Move on With Your Life* by Pauline Tesler & Peggy Thompson

Recommended Reading

For You, continued

- *Putting Children First, Proven Parenting Strategies for Helping Children Thrive Through Divorce* by JoAnne Pedro-Carroll
- *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss what Matters Most* by Douglas Stone
- *Calling It Quits: Late-Life Divorce and Starting Over* by Deirdre Bair
- *He's History, You're Not: Surviving Divorce After 40* by Erica Manfred

For Babies & Toddlers

- *Two Homes* by Claire Masurel & Kady Macdonald Denton
- *It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear* by Vicki Larson

For Young Children

- *Dinosaur Divorce* by Marc Brown & Laurie Krasny Brown
- *Was it the Chocolate Pudding?* by Sandra Levins & Bryan Langdo
- *We're Having a Tuesday* by DK Simoneau
- *My Stick Family: Helping Children Cope with Divorce* by Natalie June Reilly
- *I Don't Want to Talk About It* by Jeanie Franz Ransom
- *Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce* by Cornelia Maude Spelman
- *At Daddy's on Saturdays* by Linda Walvoord Girard

For Tweens

- *Rope Burn* by Jan Siebold
- *The Divorce Express* by Paula Danzinger
- *The Divorce Helpbook for Teens* by Cynthia MacGregor
- *My Parents Are Getting Divorced: How to Keep It Together When Your Mom and Dad Are Splitting Up* by Florence Cadier
- *Help! A Girl's Guide to Divorce and Stepfamilies* by Nancy Holyoke

Recommended Reading

For Tweens, continued

» *What in the World Do You Do When Your Parents Divorce: A Survival Guide For Kids* by Kent Winchester & Roberta Beyer

» *The Days of Summer* by Eve Bunting

» *Loon Summer* by Barbara Santucci

About Parenting Plans

» *Using Child Development Research to Make Appropriate Custody and Access Decisions for Young Children* by Joan B. Kelly & Michael E. Lamb

» *Developing Beneficial Parenting Plan Models for Children Following Separation and Divorce* by Joan B. Kelly

» *Creating Effective Parenting Plans: A Developmental Approach for Lawyers and Divorce Professionals* by John N. Hartson & Brenda J. Payne

» *Parallel Parenting for High Conflict Families* by Philip M. Stahl

If You Want a Collaborative Divorce

» *Avoiding Litigation* by Sherrie R. Abney

» *Beyond Winning* by Robert H. Mnookin

» *Collaborative Divorce Handbook: Effectively Helping Divorcing Families Without Going to Court* by Forrest S. Mosten

» *Collaborative Divorce: The Revolutionary New Way to Restructure Your Family, Resolve Legal Issues, and Move on with Your Life* by Pauline Tesler & Peggy Thompson

» *Collaborative Practice: Deepening the Dialogue* by Nancy J. Cameron

» *Collaborative Family Law* by Richard W. Shields & Victoria Smith

» *Complete Guide to Mediation: The Cutting Approach to Family Law Practice* by Forrest S. Mosten

» *Mediation Career Guide: A Strategic Approach to Building a Successful Practice* by Forrest S. Mosten

Recommended Reading

If You Want a Collaborative Divorce, continued

- *Navigating Emotional Currents of Collaborative Divorce: A Guide to Enlightened Team Practice, with a Foreword by Pauline Tesler, Esquire* by Kate Scharff & Lisa Herrick
- *The Collaborative Way to Divorce* by Ron Ousky & Stuart Webb
- *Unbundling Legal Services: A Guide to Delivering Legal Services a la Carte* by Forrest S. Mosten

Getting Back Into the Dating Scene

- *Get it Right This Time* by Amy Schoen
- *He Is Just Not That Into You* by Greg Behrendt & LizTuccillo

For Stepparents & Blended Families

- *The Happy Stepmother* by Rachelle Katz
- *Stepfamilies* by James H. Bray & John Kelly
- *Keys to Successful Stepfathering* by Carl E. Pickhardt
- *Stepmonster* by Wednesday Martin
- *A Career Girl's Guide to Becoming a Stepmom* by Jacquelyn B. Fletcher
- *Stepcoupling* by Susan Wisdom & Jennifer Green

Schedule Your First Consult

You don't need to complete your Divorganizer before you schedule a consultation with one of our lawyers, but if you do, you'll probably find your initial consult more productive, cost effective, and meaningful. That said, if you are in a situation where you need to move quickly, you can certainly set an appointment and work on your Divorganizer as time permits.

Remember that the hardest part of a divorce is that you'll be making some of the most important financial decisions of your life at a time when you may be understandably emotional and also having to support your children as they go through one of the most stressful times of their lives as well. So, the more you can gather and get down in a usable format, the more energy you'll have to focus on your family and the big decisions you have facing you.

Here at DuBois Levias Law Group, we love supporting our clients as they turn their courageous endings into brave beginnings! We're looking forward to meeting you and supporting you through your divorce process so that you can manifest the vision you imagined in the first few exercises of your Divorganizer.

Give us a call at 206.030.5139 and Rachel will set you up with the best attorney for your particular situation.

DO NOT EMAIL YOUR DIVORGANIZER OR SHARE ELECTRONICALLY

Your Divorganizer should be completed offline and on paper to protect your personal information from cyber security breaches. We recommend that you mail us your Divorganizer to our office prior to your first attorney consultation. Attorney consultations are conducted remotely via zoom or by phone at this time due to the pandemic. We hope to resume in-person consultations just as soon as it is safe to do so.

DuBois Levias
Law Group

Schedule an Online Consultation

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We also have offices in Edmonds, Port Townsend and Mill Valley.

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