

7



Tips to survive the early days of a separation



Ian Walker
Family Law and
Mediation Solicitors

1

KNOW WHERE YOU ARE IN THE HEALING/GRIEVING CYCLE

Everyone's divorce journey is unique. All these stages are completely **normal** reactions to a breakup. They can change daily, hourly or even minute by minute. You may cycle through them multiple times.

#1

Denial - feelings like 'this is not real', 'this can't be happening'. This is your brain trying to protect you from pain.

#2

Anger - this is a high energy emotion, feelings like 'how dare they do this to me!' or 'I hate them!'

#3

Bargaining - this is your brain postponing the confusion and sadness. You think of scenarios like 'if I had been a better spouse, then they wouldn't have left me'.

#4

Depression - the situation begins to sink in. You may not want to get out of bed, or you may just want to cry. It is really important that you take small steps to take care of yourself at this stage.

#5

Acceptance - this does not necessarily mean that you are *happy* about what happened, but you can accept it and feel hopeful about a new future for yourself.

BE AWARE OF HOW THE BODY CAN RESPOND TO STRESS

2

Following a stressful situation, your body may go into...

Fight mode - this might look like arguing, being aggressive or trying to defend yourself.

Flight mode - you may run away from the situation in the hope that it turns out okay.

Freeze mode - this is where you respond by not doing anything at all.



Flop mode - this is where you try and appease the other person.

These responses are all **normal** ways that we respond to stress. However, we need to find healthy ways to push through them. Keep reading for some suggestions...

3

SPLIT YOUR DAY INTO SMALLER CHUNKS

When everything seems too overwhelming, try splitting your day into smaller chunks of time, and **congratulate** yourself each time you finish that chunk.

1. It does not matter if you split your day into big or small chunks.

2. You may want to start off by chunking your day into hourly chunks...

3. For instance: get up, have a shower, make breakfast, get dressed.

4. Over time, you will be able to manage bigger chunks.

4

THINGS TO DO AND THINGS TO AVOID

Here are ways that you can take good care of yourself during this period. Be gentle with yourself, and avoid the coping strategies that are listed below, they will make you feel worse in the long-run.



Eat little and often - have small meals if you are struggling to eat. Focus on slow energy-releasing foods.



Caffeine - particularly in the evening



Too much alcohol



Working 24/7 - or keeping so busy that you are exhausted.



Drugs



Exercise - spend a bit of time outside in the fresh air.



Sleep - create a bedtime routine that calms you.

MINDFULNESS

Try doing the following exercise to help centre your thoughts when your head is swirling with questions about what your future might look like..

5



Name 5 things you can see



Name 4 things you can hear



Name 3 things you can touch



Name 2 things you can smell



Name 1 thing you can taste

6

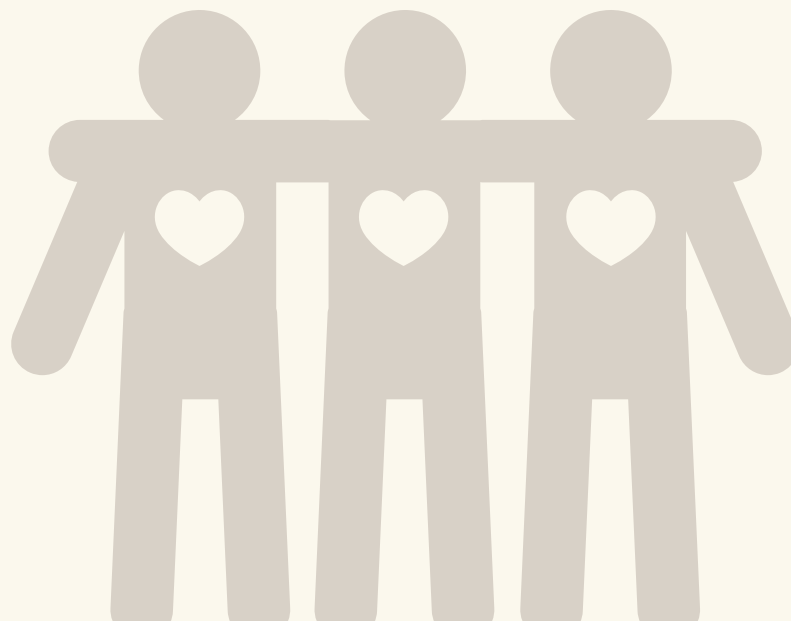
KNOW YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Setting up a network of people who will support you throughout your divorce is a hugely positive step forward. Here are some examples of who to include:

Friends and family: spend time with the people who help you feel good, who are kind and supportive but not intrusive. Pick people who won't drain your energy.

Legal advice: get some tailored legal advice on your available options. Everyone's divorce is different, so it is important to be advised on your specific situation and position.

Emotional support: this could be a therapist or a coach. Heightened emotions during a divorce can push things off course, so having some emotional guidance can be beneficial.



7

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

Focus on you and NOT on what your ex is doing.
Here are some things that you CAN control:

#1

What you watch on TV

#2

What music you listen to

#3

What you look at on social
media

#4

The questions you ask in
your head

#5

Who you spend time with

#6

What you wear

Choose the things that will make YOU feel good.