

10 Key Ways to Communicate With Your Family Law Attorney

**By Matthew Crider, JD
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Communication in any relationship is critical. Many marriages fail because of a failure to communicate. A divorce is one of the most traumatic times in your life. Psychologists have said and studies have shown that the worst thing anyone can go through is the death of a child. The second worst is the death of a spouse in a good marriage. And close behind, ranking third in stressful events is a divorce. The following are my 10 key tips on how to communicate with your attorney.

Keep a written list of issues and questions. You are being charged by an attorney for his or her time and expertise. Do not call your attorney every day. Save these questions and contact your attorney with several questions rather than one at a time. This is an economical way to cover issues and still have your questions answered.

Communication. You can communicate with your attorney by email, which is becoming more the rule than the exception. Do not send an email every hour or with every thought. I now find that I spend hours every day going through emails with some clients emailing me several times a day. This can prove very expensive. Again, cover several issues or questions at once Do not abuse email.

A good telephone conversation can resolve many issues. Do not call your attorney every day. Again, save your questions and ideas. Cover several in one conversation. Do not hesitate to brainstorm with your attorney.

You can always communicate with your attorney by fax.

Your case is important. This is your life. Make sure you receive a response. No matter how you communicate with your attorney, whether by email, phone, fax or snail-mail, these all deserve a response from your attorney. One of the major reasons why attorney/client relationships breakdown is because attorneys fail to communicate in a reasonable and prompt fashion.

You can always communicate by snail mail. This is a good way to communicate if there are several issues to be raised, but it is also a slow means in our era of high technology and demands for instant gratification or answers.

If you have questions or issues, don't be bashful. Remember that your attorney is working for you. Communication is a two-way street, and it is important to communicate. You deserve to know what is going on. You deserve to know what strategies are being raised. If there are issues that you have questions about, you deserve answers. They should all be in a timely fashion. There was once a study done with regard to phone calls and messages, and when a client reasonably expected a return call. The possible

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answers were: immediately, within three hours, within four hours, by the end of the day, within 24 hours, or whenever. The correct response was within three hours. In reality, that is often impossible, but it is reasonable to expect a return phone call within 24 hours. I always try to return calls and respond to my client's e-mails by the end of the day because I know that people are going through a very traumatic time in their lives, especially in a family law situation.

This is one of the most important situations in your life. It is frightening, agonizing, and especially if it is something that has been forced upon you by an unexpected divorce by your spouse, is a horrible experience. I repeatedly talk to many of my clients about the divorce diet where they suddenly start losing tremendous amounts of weight. It is important to take care of yourself, not only legally, but also emotionally and give yourself time to breathe and make sure you are taking care of your medical and physical needs.

If you and your attorney are having problems, discuss them. Don't be bashful. If you feel that something is not being properly handled, ask your attorney the reasons for it. If you have not been notified about a hearing or the next steps in your divorce on a timely basis, you have a right to know. Talk to your attorney. Remember that your attorney is working for you. This is your life, and you and your attorney should be working together so that you can make independent and informed decisions.

Meet with your attorney. Face to face communication is critical. At the initial consultation, this is how you establish a rapport. This is how you decide whether or not you are going to retain a particular attorney. Don't hesitate to ask questions. Don't hesitate to take notes. Make sure that before you retain an attorney, that this is the person who you will entrust one of the most important times in your life to. Don't hesitate to have regular meetings so that you can make sure that you are both on the same wavelength, and working together. You and your attorney are part of a team. This is important.

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About Matthew Crider, J.D.

Matthew Crider formed [Crider Law PC](#) in 1999 so he could help individuals through the California divorce process by providing creative solutions as their trusted advisor and legal counselor. His divorce and family law practice focuses on assisting people in dissolution matters, including divorce, child custody and visitation, child and spousal support, spousal support and alimony, and parental rights.

