

# Ten Steps for Anyone Considering Divorce

**By Matthew Crider, JD  
Family Protection Attorney**

Many of our clients here at Crider Law ask for practical suggestions before filing for divorce. So we have developed this list of suggestion. We previously have offered similar suggestions here.

Start with a good marriage counselor. If not marriage counseling, go at least for yourself. A divorce should be a last step, rather than a first step. There are three reasons to go into counseling. The first reason is to see if the marriage can be saved. The second reason is to build a support system for yourself. The third reason is to make sure you know everything you can about yourself, so that you will not make the same mistake and marry the same type of person again and again.

Whether you are a husband or wife, it is important to know as much as possible about family finances. Obtain copies of tax returns, investment accounts, bank statements, checking accounts, and credit card statements. Know what your mortgage balance is. Remember, the more you know about your family finances, including trying to list assets and liabilities, the better off you are in the event that a divorce occurs.

If you have children, consider what arrangement makes most sense with regard to custody. Is this a case where there should be shared or joint custody? Keep track of how much time you spend with your children, and how much time your spouse spends with the children. More and more cases end up with shared or joint custody, as well as with fathers having primary physical custody. These are important things to consider. It is also important to look at the situation realistically. Do not go in with an attitude of trying to punish your spouse, but look at what is in the best interests of your children going forward in the event of a divorce.

What are your financial needs for the future? What are the family finances? Prepare a budget. Remember that after a divorce, the family is divided in two and each party will have to figure out how to move forward economically. How secure is your job? Does your spouse work? Do you need to finish a degree? These are things that you should think about before filing for divorce.

Talk to an attorney. Make sure the attorney is someone who is knowledgeable and experienced in California family law. Make sure this is a person you can relate to, and feel comfortable with. Explore the costs of a divorce with the attorney.

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Think about what you want to do about the home. Will you want to keep it? Have your spouse keep it? Or perhaps sell it? Remember, in these tough economic times, in more

and more cases, we are dealing not with a division of the assets, but how the debts are allocated. These are important things to consider in filing for a divorce.

Keep a diary. Know what is going on whether you are the husband or wife. How much time do you spend with the children? If there are issues with regard to possible domestic violence, harassment or parental alienation, these are things that you should be keeping track of in a diary or journal. These should be kept in a safe place so that you will have them at your fingertips as you go through the divorce process. Be sure that your spouse is unable to find them. Keep track of e-mails, text messages, and other forms of electronic communications. Avoid confrontations. People have been set up by a spouse to try and get a domestic violence case filed, or for a personal protection order. Domestic violence can be used as a pretext to have one spouse or the other removed from the marital home. The laws on this issue differ from state to state.

What are your plans for the future? Where do you want to be in one year, five years, ten years? Remember, a divorce is a major step and transition in your life. It will have a major impact on you, as well as your spouse and children.

Build a support system. Consider who among your family and friends you can trust, because it is important to have a support system as you go through a divorce. Bear in mind, when you build this support system, that everyone is going to tell you something different. It is important to have the presence of mind to make your own decisions, but they should be informed decisions.

Evaluate your situation. Are you sure divorce is the answer? Are you sure the timing is right? Think about all the other issues that I have raised, and make sure that the decision you make is not just a knee-jerk reaction, but is carefully thought out. If you have been unhappy for a number of years, then analyze what makes the most sense. If it is because you are involved in another relationship, or thinking about another relationship, be very, very careful. Too many people leave one bad marriage for a relationship, and end up going through more than one divorce. Be true to yourself.

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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.

