

The power of preparation



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How to support clients ahead of the divorce process

Most divorce expenses stem from lack of preparation, not legal costs. For family solicitors and mediators wanting to help their clients divorce in the smoothest way possible, recognising the importance of preparation before delving into the legal aspects of divorce is critical. Preparation, both logistical and emotional, empowers individuals to take control of their situation, navigate the separation process efficiently, and avoid costly mistakes. Encouraging clients to invest time in the initial stages instead of rushing ahead is not just worthwhile – it is essential.

Treating divorce first and foremost as a life experience can help clients approach this challenging transition better equipped for the path ahead. By taking time to understand the intricacies involved, clients can avoid many of the pitfalls that complicate the process and thereby reduce stress and expense. As solicitors and mediators, you are often the first port of call for divorcing individuals, and you therefore play a vital role in guiding them to ensure they are ready for the journey ahead.

Emotional preparation

One of the first steps in this preparation is addressing common misconceptions about divorce. Many clients enter the process burdened by myths, such as believing that divorce must involve an expensive legal battle or that the court will “punish” their cheating spouse in their favour. These misunderstandings often lead to unnecessary anxiety and unrealistic expectations. By dispelling myths – such as the idea that mothers always get primary care of the children or that divorce inevitably harms children – professionals can provide reassurance and a more accurate picture of what to expect. Highlighting the reality that many divorces can be resolved amicably through out-of-court negotiations can encourage clients to approach their case with a more constructive focus.

Mindset, therefore, is another critical element of preparation. A problem-solving attitude can pave the way for productive discussions and lead to outcomes that work for all parties involved, particularly when children are at the centre of decisions. Solicitors and mediators have an opportunity to set the tone early,

emphasising that amicable resolutions are often faster, less costly, and emotionally healthier for everyone.

Emotional readiness is as important as logistical planning. Divorce is not just a legal or financial matter – it is an emotional journey. Encouraging clients to seek coaching or counselling, or to join support groups to connect with others who have navigated similar experiences, can provide invaluable support. Divorce coaches can also help clients develop coping strategies to manage stress and maintain focus during the process.

Practical preparation

Understanding the various options available for divorce is another important step. Many clients are unaware that litigation is not the only route. Most professionals are already aware of this, but some still do not take the time to explain the various non-court dispute resolution (NCDR) options available. Helping clients select the approach best suited to their circumstances and priorities is key to entering the process with a clear plan of action.

Logistical preparation is equally crucial. Solicitors and mediators can support clients in gathering the necessary documents early on. These can include financial records, bank statements, tax returns, property deeds and pension information. Having these materials organised in advance not only saves time but also reduces stress when formal proceedings begin, in particular financial disclosure. Clients should also be encouraged to take time to gain a clear and realistic view of their financial standing after divorce. Developing a budget and understanding their financial position can help them make informed decisions. Recommending the services of a financial adviser or a PODE, where appropriate, can add clarity to this often-complex aspect of divorce. Similarly, sharing best practice about how to legally safeguard their money in case they need access to cash during the divorce can prove extremely valuable.

Many of you will also have had clients who worry about informing their spouse and children about the decision to divorce. These conversations require careful planning to ensure they are approached constructively and respectfully. Divorce coaches are specifically trained to support clients through these difficult

conversations to avoid an escalation of conflict and long-term emotional damage. Role-play and scripting can be extremely valuable tools in preparing for these painful announcements. As solicitors and mediators, you can help your clients by referring them to someone who can help them prepare. You also play a key role in emphasising the importance of discretion and avoiding publicising personal details – particularly on social media – to prevent unnecessary complications.

In the early stages of the divorce it is also important to help your clients assemble the right team of professionals

to support them throughout the process. I encourage you, as professionals, to draw on your network of resolution-focused specialists to ensure your clients are receiving advice on all the relevant aspects of the divorce, from mortgages to pensions to co-parenting.

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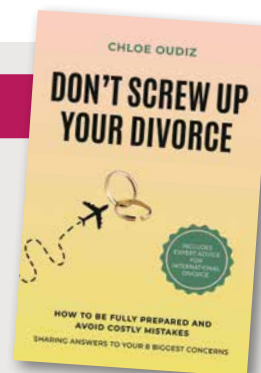
Chloe is the author of Don't Screw Up Your Divorce, which integrates personal experiences and professional expertise to create practical guidance on the divorce journey:
dentscrewupyourdivorce.com

BOOK REVIEW by Rebecca Hawkins, Family Solutions Now

Don't Screw Up Your Divorce

By Chloe Oudiz

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Chloe's *Don't Screw Up Your Divorce* is a highly readable guide designed to help individuals navigate the often-upsetting journey of divorce with clarity, confidence, and composure. Drawing from her personal experiences and professional expertise as a Certified Divorce Coach®, she delivers not just practical advice but also emotional support, making this book a must-read for anyone contemplating or undergoing a divorce. The book is written in a clear, conversational style, avoiding legal jargon and making otherwise overwhelming topics easy to understand.

The book is structured around eight critical questions that most people grapple with during divorce: from debunking common myths to managing emotional upheaval, understanding legal options, and preparing for life post-divorce. Importantly, it doesn't just cover England & Wales – other jurisdictions are often referenced. This structure offers readers a logical, step-by-step roadmap that demystifies the process and empowers them to make informed decisions. It makes the book easy to dip in and out of; each chapter can be read on its own and in any order.

One of my standout takeaways is Chloe's candid recounting of her own divorce journey. She details two contrasting experiences: an amicable separation that, despite its emotional toll, was managed with relative ease, and a second, more contentious ordeal marked by legal battles and strained relationships. These anecdotes add real authenticity to her advice and will resonate with readers who may feel isolated in their struggles.

I like the way Chloe deals head on in addressing common misconceptions about divorce. She debunks myths (which we've all heard time and again) such

as “divorce always requires an expensive legal battle” and “mothers always get custody of the children”, replacing fear-driven assumptions with facts and practical strategies. Her emphasis on the importance of emotional preparation before initiating legal proceedings is invaluable.

Chloe reminds us that understanding emotions and managing them effectively can significantly influence the outcome of a divorce. Something for the professionals to bear in mind too.

The book also highlights the significance of mindset. Chloe encourages readers to approach divorce not as a battle to be won but as a transition to be managed thoughtfully. Her discussion on conflict styles – understanding both your own and your spouse's approach to disagreement – will be a useful tool for people in conflict.

Chloe explains the psychological aspects, offering exercises to help readers process their emotions and redefine their personal goals. Her tips on co-parenting, especially after a high-conflict separation, are compassionate and grounded in real-world experience. This sits well alongside the legal and financial information that she provides, which often covers multiple jurisdictions.

This will be a great resource for almost all of our clients – whether they're in the contemplation stage or deep into the process. I will have this on my shelf in the office, ready to recommend.

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