

## Your First 10 Steps After Separation: A Divorce Survival Guide for Women

### 1. Ensure Immediate Safety and Stability

- If you're in a high-conflict or abusive situation, prioritize safety for yourself and any children.
- Consider temporary housing, safety planning, or seeking legal protection (e.g., restraining orders) if needed.

### 2. Get Emotional Support Early

- Divorce is emotionally intense. Reach out to a therapist, coach, or support group for women going through separation.
- Avoid isolating yourself—this step is crucial for clear thinking in the next phases.

### 3. Secure Your Financial Independence

- Open personal bank accounts if you don't already have them.
- Begin tracking your income, expenses, and any shared accounts.
- Review your credit report and consider freezing joint credit if necessary.

### 4. Gather and Organize Key Documents

- Collect copies of:
  - Tax returns (3 years)
  - Bank statements
  - Credit card statements
  - Mortgage/rent agreements
  - Insurance policies
  - Pension and retirement accounts
  - Birth certificates and passports

### 5. Document the Separation Date

- Record the official date of separation—it has legal and financial implications (e.g., property division, support calculations).
- Make note of living arrangements and changes in shared responsibilities.

### 6. Consult with a Divorce Lawyer (Even for Friendly Splits)

- Know your rights before you make any agreements.
- Consider a lawyer who supports amicable solutions like mediation or collaborative divorce.
- If affordability is an issue, look for legal aid clinics or free consultations.

### 7. Create a Co-Parenting Plan (If You Have Children)

- Begin thinking about what's best for your children in terms of custody, communication, routines, and stability.
- Avoid using children as messengers or emotional supports—they need clarity and calm from both parents.

### 8. Define Your Immediate Living and Income Needs

- Where will you live during and after the divorce?
- Will you need to return to work, increase hours, or request spousal/child support?
- Start budgeting based on a single-income household.

### 9. Start Setting Boundaries With Your Ex

- Begin shifting communication to email or parenting apps (like OurFamilyWizard or TalkingParents) for clarity and documentation.
- Establish emotional and logistical boundaries to protect your mental space and reduce conflict.

### 10. Create a Vision for Your Next Chapter

- You don't need to have everything figured out, but start asking:
  - Who am I becoming? What do I want life to look like after this?
- Start journaling, planning, or working with a coach to rebuild your identity, confidence, and long-term goals.