

TO DIVORCE OR NOT TO DIVORCE – THAT IS THE QUESTION

These are unprecedented times to be sure. More people than ever are working from home and e-learning is often still required. Going through COVID has caused many people extended “cabin fever.” However, while some of us may fleetingly think about the “D” word, some may be seriously thinking that is may be a good solution. But is it really what you need right now, especially if that decision is during a time of high anxiety and stress for everyone? Here are some cons to consider before you move forward:

1. **The Financial Expense:** On August 18, 2020, Lawyers.com answered the questions “How Much Does Divorce Cost in Illinois?” They listed the hourly rate for Illinois attorneys based on where you live as \$260 - \$330. Where we are, that hourly average is at least that, maybe more. Lawyers.com also listed that total fees averaged \$11 – 14,000. However, with highly contested matters, that amount is much higher. I have seen attorneys charge more than \$100,000.
2. **The Emotional Cost:** The financial cost is obvious. However, I believe the emotional cost is even greater. People are at their worst emotionally during a divorce, on edge, being pulled many ways, having to make life changing decisions in very little time and sometimes not much knowledge. Many litigants must live together during the process because of the finances or because neither party is willing to move out, adding to the stress. And in Will County, at least, without physical abuse, it is very difficult to force a spouse to move. So it is essential to seek legal advice before making any decision such as moving out – or even starting a divorce.
3. **Children Complicate Things:** Here is the worst emotional cost! Asking a child where they want to live, telling them they can’t be in an activity because the other spouse won’t help pay for it, or parents fighting over parenting time or using the children to send messages to the other parent—these can all emotionally traumatize children. It is nearly impossible to avoid this trauma.
4. **The Fallout:** People are shocked to learn that on average, a divorce takes 1 ½ years in Illinois. Obviously, less contested ones take less time and more contested ones take longer. And for many, finalizing the divorce isn’t the end, especially if there are minor children. There is often fallout that lasts for years, both financially and emotionally.

So what about Pros? Even if a divorce becomes necessary, it isn’t normally a happy event. If there is abuse, then living apart may relieve some of that. If a spouse will no longer communicate or is unwilling to go to counseling or otherwise try to repair a marriage, then there may be no other option. Health professionals say divorce is similar to a death psychologically and the stages of grieving are basically the same—anger, depression, blame, guilt, etc. University Hospitals posted on Healthy@UH on July 2, 2015 that divorce is one of the top most stressful life events.

I’m here to help when you need me, with 23 years of experience in family law. But before you take that step, carefully consider other options—counseling, reading books like “The 5 Love Languages: the Secret to Love that Lasts” by Gary Chapman or “The Love Dare” by Alex Kendrick, made popular by the movie “Fireproof” or going to a marriage conference.

And most of all, be kind to yourself, be kind to others, and when you need me, give me a call!