

DIVORCE OPTIONS® . . . Next Steps . . .



By attending a Divorce Options® Webinar, you've begun this life transition effectively. You've learned the pros and cons of four different ways to divorce. You've probably already identified one or two ways that best fit your family's budget and values. Given the amount of information provided, many attend these webinars more than once. Do you know what your spouse/partner thinks about which process best suits your family?

1. If your spouse has not attended the class, your first step may be to support his/her attending our free webinar. When trust has eroded, you may wish to start by saying you "want your spouse to hear *from professionals, not you*, what *all four divorce options®* are, so you can both be *equally informed*, and make a *joint decision* about what's best given your family's budget and values." There's no leverage/advantage for you when your spouse *doesn't* attend. Set the tone by expressing your intention to show up for each step of whatever process you *both* choose, with respect and integrity. The same class is offered online at no cost all over the state, by different practice groups, with additional locations and times listed here: CollaborativeDivorceCalifornia.com.

If your spouse is too upset about the prospect of divorce to talk about it, look up our or others' classes in the next month or so, and offer by email, and/or leave the list where s/he/they can see it. *Being patient at the beginning of the process may help you create a more amicable and effective context for moving forward.*

Couples are rarely ready for divorce at the same time. Consider seeking short-term (2-8 sessions), **Decision Counseling** for couples on the fence about Divorce. The process helps couples decide with clarity and confidence to either keep the relationship as it is, separate/divorce, or invest in intensive couples therapy for 6 months. All VDC mental health professionals are equipped to provide Decision Counseling. *Regardless of what you decide or think you want*, clarity will help you both to either: a) invest more fully with clearer goals for couples' therapy, or b) share responsibility for what is/is not working, and be more "agreement-ready" as you move towards separation/divorce (youtube.com/watch?v=rg0xd1kvaQM).

2. If you both attended the webinar (ideal), you might begin a conversation in person or by email. Email sometimes allows people to be less reactive, calmer and more respectful. Affirm your intention (#1). *Listen first.* Ask your partner which process s/he thinks is best and why, *before "selling" your own ideas.*

3. If you agree on a process, invite your spouse to look over the website for Virtual Divorce CA (VirtualDivorceCA.com) that offers professional help for all 4 options and online resources. You can each take the initial step of making a list of questions, calling and interviewing professionals, and sharing your results.

4. If you have **different ideas about which process** best suits your family, ask if your spouse is interested and open to listening, *before sharing the process you prefer and why.* If your spouse isn't ready to listen, make an appointment time to talk about it at a later time. If you've both shared your preferences and you still can't agree, make a joint appointment with a professional you met in class. Get help assessing the pros and cons of each process *for your family*, so you can reach an agreement. **Choosing your divorce process is the single most important decision you'll make regarding your future** -- emotionally, financially and legally.

5. When you can, **there are several things you can do to begin preparing:** Write down questions for professionals once you agree on a process; Gather financial documents (Tax returns for past 3-4 years, Bank statements, Credit card statements, Retirement accounts, Stocks/Bonds, etc.); Identify and begin choosing self-care resources and support systems that will steer you away from blame and negative judgments (these make the process much harder and more expensive for you and your family); and, look up co-parenting resources (VirtualDivorceCA.com) about how to *tell your children together*, and the do's and don'ts of co-parenting respectfully to limit the negative impact on your children, so they can recover.