

The Five Keys to Your Next Best Life

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Major life changes, such as divorce, are challenging. Women going through divorce have unique needs beyond securing the services of a divorce attorney. Knowledge empowers, and *The Guide to Good DivorceSM* program identifies five very important areas that all divorcing women should consider. We call them *The Five Keys* to a fuller, happier, and healthier life. They include:

1. Acquire Legal Knowledge
2. Engage in Divorce Financial Planning
3. Gain New Life Skills
4. Practice Wellness
5. Create New Communities

1. Acquire Legal Knowledge

If you are thinking about divorce, it is a good idea to seek legal information and advice early, even before you make a decision. Consulting with an attorney early will help you consider a number of factors that may or may not have occurred to you, including the timing of your filing, your spousal rights under Texas law, what is separate and what is community property, who qualifies for spousal maintenance, and much more. A great place to start is by looking for an attorney who is Board Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in Family Law. Per the Texas Bar, of the more than 92,000 attorneys licensed to practice in Texas in 2019-20, only 7,000 had earned the right to be recognized as Board Certified. Of that small amount, only 875 were Board Certified in family law. Board Certified attorneys must pass rigorous testing, have significant trial experience, and stay current with the ever-changing area of family law by attending numerous Continuing Legal Education seminars throughout any given year. Their expertise is an invaluable asset when navigating the difficulties of divorce.

2. Engage in Divorce Financial Planning

One of the most important aspects of the divorce process involves finances. For starters, you must gain a clear understanding of your finances, and of how decisions made during the divorce process will impact the rest of your life. Here are some additional issues to consider:

- What happens to the family home?
- What about pensions and social security benefits?
- What about dividing retirement plans?
- What are taxable and non-taxable assets?
- What about executive benefit plans such as stock options and restricted stocks?
- What are the tax implications of your divorce?

Once you have answered these questions, you should develop a financial plan with regard to income, expenses, assets, and investments.

This component of divorce can get complicated. You may benefit from the advice and counsel of someone beyond the experience and training of a divorce attorney, such as a financial planning expert, or better yet a Certified Divorce Financial Planner®. They can use their knowledge of divorce rules to help you calculate an equitable division of assets based on individual circumstances.

3. Gain New Life Skills

Your lifestyle is likely to change dramatically following divorce. Now is the time to think about and plan for what lies ahead. How will you support yourself? Maybe for the first time in your life, you have the freedom to pursue long-forgotten dreams or goals. It could be time to get that college degree or advanced training. You may have always wanted to open a bed-and-breakfast in the Texas Hill Country, move to the mountains, visit remote regions of Asia, or teach school. Whatever your dreams, now is the time to plan and prepare for how you will make them a reality. Your future is in your hands.

4. Practice Wellness

Many women focus on their husbands and families for much of their lives. As you begin to transition through divorce, now is the time to focus on yourself and your physical, psychological, and spiritual needs. It is a perfect time to experiment and try new things. Get a new hairstyle and, maybe, a new hair color. Take a painting class. Update your wardrobe with some new pieces. Sign up for a yoga class or get a personal trainer. If it is difficult to go out safely due to the pandemic, do not be discouraged. Join dance or exercise classes streamed online. Learn new skills using online course programs. Work on personal projects you may have neglected in the past, such as reading through your book collection, or picking up a beloved hobby again. This is also a great time to clean closets and donate what you no longer want. Out with the old and in with the new – including a new you!

5. Create New Communities

Some of your “couple” friends may or may not make the transition with you through divorce, so plan now to look for opportunities to make new friends. Your place of worship may offer events and activities for singles. Another good idea is reaching out and reconnecting with old friends. There is also the whole world of online dating if that sparks your interest. ***The Guide to Good DivorceSM*** seminar can be a great place to meet other women undertaking the same journey, and to forge new communities! We hope to see you there, soon!

Divorce can be difficult, but it can also be transformative. With *The Five Keys* from ***The Guide to Good DivorceSM***, we are certain you can find the path to a new, better you.

*Sam M. “Trey” Yates, III is a Houston-based Board Certified Family Law Attorney and creator of ***The Guide to Good DivorceSM*** seminars for women. If you have questions about your Texas divorce, please contact The Law Office of Sam M. “Trey” Yates, III, P.C. for a consultation. If you would like more information about Trey Yates’ 2021 *The Guide to Good DivorceSM* seminars, please visit www.GuideToGoodDivorce.com or call 713.742.6606.*