THE Divorce NAVIGATOR

Charting Your Path to Freedom in Washington State

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INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a scary beast that sometimes sneaks up on you when you least expect it. Even when you know it is coming, the Washington State divorce process is complex, with many twists and turns that can lead to costly and painful mistakes. You may be stunned upon service of divorce papers or confused about where to start if you know that a divorce is needed.

No divorce is easy. It is rough on everyone, and maybe the feeling of dragging your spouse through the mud disturbs you. But you can mitigate your risks and lighten the load a little for everyone involved when you better understand what lies ahead of you.

Divorce can feel as if it is going to take over your whole life. You feel devastated about everything that is lost and unsure about facing it yourself. You need some help.

What should I do first? Who can I trust to help me? These are the questions that hit you on day one.

You are Not Alone

I wrote this book to help you understand the divorce process from day one to life after divorce in Washington State. From that first day that you get served or you serve your partner, you have a set of steps to follow. This book is the first step toward gaining some certainty of getting your family through the most trying times and choosing how your life will look after the divorce is final.

By the time you finish this book, you will understand how to take those first steps. You will know how to choose the right legal team that can guide you through the process and how to choose someone you can trust to help you actually make things better—so that you are not dealing with the other side on your own.

The Key to a Better Future

Acting immediately and not procrastinating when called to take action will work in your favor. Pushing off responding to your partner when they start proceedings or when their legal team requests something will not help you. By learning everything about how divorce works in Washington state and providing the details they need, you take back a little bit of control of your life.

After guiding hundreds of clients through their divorce processes, I have seen the best and the worst scenarios. Throughout this book, I provide the tools and resources you need to navigate your way through Washington's divorce process. You get

in-depth guidance that will help you evaluate what type of firm you should partner with for your legal team and how you can help them guide you to the most complete end to the divorce nightmare in the best way possible.

It is complex. It could get nasty, or maybe it will not if you are in an open, amicable relationship with your soon-to-be-ex. But it will be stressful and confusing at times, no matter what. The knowledge inside this book will help you navigate through all of that. You will get information that will encourage you to take the right steps at the right time to avoid the huge, costly mistakes that make divorce even worse and that often lead to divorce taking years longer than it would have otherwise.

I hope you will read this book and find a better path toward future happiness with less stress and come out the other end, reborn and full of promise, living the life you always wanted to live. Isn't it time you charted your path forward to freedom by taking the right steps today?

CHAPTER 1

Death, Taxes, and Divorce

Yes, We are Going to Discuss Divorce

There are three things people don't want to talk about: death, taxes, and divorce. Unfortunately, we're going to mention all three in this book. Or maybe that's fortunate, because you'll hear things that will help you get through the divorce process. Much of this book will also be applicable if you are facing a legal separation or dissolution of a committed intimate relationship, which are unique to Washington State.

If you picked up this book, you are likely here for one of two reasons: you are ready to initiate the divorce process, or you are considering it. Or, your spouse has either told you they want a divorce or you have been served divorce papers already.

Divorce happens for any number of reasons. You, your spouse, or both of you have decided your marriage is over. It may be that you can no longer stand to be in the same room as your spouse, let alone the same home. Perhaps you and your spouse have grown apart. You may no longer have shared interests, hobbies,

or goals. Perhaps your spouse has strayed, or you want to see other people. Or, worse, maybe your spouse is violent, abusive, or has a destructive habit that they refuse to change.

Any and all of these circumstances are valid reasons under the laws of the State of Washington to get a divorce or legal separation or to end your committed intimate relationship. In any event, you do not need to prove any reason why the divorce should happen. If either spouse wants a divorce, it will be granted. No fault needs to be alleged or proved. State law provides "irreconcilable differences" as the basis for all divorces in Washington state.

It's Only Temporary

Divorce is never easy. It's going to test you. You probably already feel the dread and pain of what's coming at you. Likely, you're feeling a complete loss of control.

I want you to know one thing, and I want you to hold onto this one thing as you read this book: **The pain of divorce is temporary.** You can get through anything if you know that it is temporary, right? You will get through it. It won't go on forever, and when it's done, your spouse's problems will not be your problems anymore. You won't have to argue about whether to buy a firm or a soft mattress, where to travel for vacation, or who will make dinner. All those problems will go away.

Divorce is a process, and in Washington State, it takes anywhere from 90 days to over a year. Ninety days is the quickest because you have to wait 90 days from the date of that the petition is

filed and served before you can enter or present the final divorce papers to the court.

The divorce process takes a while. Whether you're the one who is thinking about divorce and wants to move forward with it or the one receiving divorce papers, there's a lot to navigate. It's strenuous, emotional, and can be financially draining, making it extra important that you get the right people in your corner.

Types of Divorce

All types of divorce bring a heavy emotional burden to both sides, but each will impact how you're going to navigate the process in a different way. Being honest with yourself now about what type of divorce you want to pursue will help you get through it in the days ahead. I have created 3 broad categories to consider.

Amicable Divorce: You and your spouse have come to a collective decision that you both wish to end the marriage and go your separate ways. When everyone genuinely agrees on the terms of the divorce, property settlement, and the parenting arrangements, the process is usually shorter. It takes two to tango, and it takes both partners to stick with the plan and keep this type of divorce on track and out of court.

Mixed Feelings Divorce: When you and your spouse both agree the marriage is over, but you can't agree on how to divide your lives. In this type of case, there is often more ebb and flow throughout the divorce that can drag out the timeline. You need

to understand there will be days, probably weeks, when you'll feel upset and angry with the other side and yourself. There will be other days when it feels like such a relief that you're not in the same house with the other person anymore once you have physically separated. You won't have to negotiate the daily chores of life anymore, but you will need to negotiate bigger things that will have a high impact on your future life.

No Common Ground: You and your spouse are unable to communicate how to end the marriage. In these cases, there is often extreme anger, abuse, or abandonment. If you're entering the divorce process because you're really in an intolerable situation, you likely know already that it will be a heavy emotional burden. Especially when your spouse may be dealing with mental health, alcohol, or drug abuse issues, disengaging yourself from the other person's problems may take longer. You will have to rally all of your resources to get beyond that to build your own identity, release responsibility for someone else, and invest in a better future for yourself.

No matter which type you're entering, divorce causes both spouses to grieve, even when both parties actually want the divorce. You mourn the loss of the life you thought you were going to have when you entered the marriage and of what you expected your family to be. It takes time to process all that. Give yourself grace and find a good legal team. Focus on what you can control and let go of the rest.

You Have Choices

The divorce process is complex and full of decisions. At every step, there is an opportunity to make a choice—to have some control over how you will proceed in your case. How you look at each stage of the process and the adversity that may come up becomes the foundation for building your life after divorce.

You'll have choices that range from where to start, how to navigate the process, how to co-parent and provide for your children, and what to do about all the stuff you two own. Your choices will inevitably be influenced by your stressful thoughts at some point during the divorce. It is common for divorcing people to express feelings of helplessness. At some point, you may have a moment of "Why is this happening to me?" or "I can't believe my spouse is doing [*fill in the blank*]*?!*" and many more self-defeating thoughts and emotions. But, when you remember that you have control over your mind and thoughts, you will take back control of your life. When you reframe how you deal with that distress, you help build the foundation that rebuilds your life.

My goal for this book is to help you feel that you can choose your path forward while dealing with the loss of your marriage and the future you thought you would have. I want to empower you to recognize that you have a great number of choices and freedom over your life.

Divorce can be very freeing and empowering when you approach it with the right mindset, tools, and team to help you navigate the process correctly.

There is no one-size-fits-all divorce. There are several different paths you can choose. In chapter two, I talk about those paths and what to expect to help you understand everything and make the best choice for you.

CHAPTER 2

Charting Your Path

No Two Divorces Will Look Exactly Alike

The paths to getting a divorce can be very involved. You may be dealing with a completely amicable relationship with your spouse or a situation where you cannot even stand to speak to one another. There may be kids involved, complicated property and liabilities to sort out, and maybe some mental health or addiction issues to consider.

Whatever you face, you will be better off working with a legal team. I have had the privilege of operating a law firm that works as a team for our clients for more than 10 years. We have built a team and system that strives to partner with our clients, to translate legal processes, and to educate our clients so that they can make informed choices. The essential legal steps are the same, but your process for navigating them and your timeline will be unique to your situation. Let me show you what to expect in the easiest and most difficult situations.

The Easiest: The Amicable Divorce

When both parties are being amicable to one another and can settle everything with each other before we even file a document with the court, this divorce will likely have the shortest timeline. People often choose this when they have a priority in keeping all the terms private without having the details in a public court document. The amicable divorce is a more therapeutic approach to dissolving the marriage respectfully, rationally, and transparently.

Let me be clear, being amicable does not mean that you need to like your spouse anymore or even directly communicate with them. It just means that you two can sort out all the things that must be decided to complete a divorce. That may take the form of negotiations through your lawyers, a facilitated mediation or arbitration.

It takes some preparation. You and your spouse need to maintain the agreement and negotiate all the terms of a divorce. Each party can use an attorney who does the negotiation on their behalf and who shares drafts back and forth while talking to one another. Or, you can mediate early on, usually with your attorneys present, where all the terms are negotiated.

If this is successful, you will sign a Separation Agreement or Property Settlement Agreement or Contract under Court Rule 2A at the conclusion of the negotiated settlement or mediation. Divorce attorneys call these a CR2A for short. A comprehensive CR2A will state all the terms and will include who will file

the petition and who will file the final orders once the 90 days have passed.

The Most Difficult: Extremely High Conflict Divorce

Let me paint a picture of the other extreme. For example, you think that your marriage is going along okay, maybe with some bumps, but nothing that seems out of the ordinary. All of a sudden, you're served with divorce papers. Those divorce papers are handed to you by a stranger as you walk into work, and they include a notice that you have to immediately vacate your house because you've been accused of being domestically violent. You're prohibited from seeing your children or even talking to them for the next two weeks until a court hearing at a courthouse you've never been to or may never even heard of, and there is no provision for you to even pack a suitcase let alone grab your toothbrush.

You are blindsided, overwhelmed, and often confused when the allegations aren't even anywhere close to being accurate. There are so many possibilities going on in this case. It's possible the other person has mental health issues or is dealing with substance abuse or a combination of the two or they are just extremely angry. Their perception of reality can be very different from everyone else.

You, as the recipient, are scrambling to figure this all out while you're still in shock. You need to find a competent attorney who can take your case and have to come up with a deposit to pay the attorney. In Seattle, that's anywhere from five to fifteen thousand dollars just to get started. Someone you've never met

before may serve you with an automatic temporary financial restraining order saying you can't make any changes to any of your financial accounts except for the necessities of life. You may be wondering how you can even pay for an attorney.

You may have been served while dropping your children off at school and now you are temporarily homeless. Your whole life gets thrown into a tornado in an instant. A thousand thoughts run through your head. *Where will I sleep? How can I find clothes so I look presentable at tomorrow's meeting? What about the baseball game I was supposed to be coaching on Friday?*

Once a divorce petition has been filed, either spouse can go to court to seek temporary or emergency orders. Emergency orders can be issued without any notice to you. Hearings for ordinary temporary orders or a return hearing on emergency orders can happen as short as 12 or 14 days' notice. By the time you get to the hearing for any issue related to finances, you must have submitted the last six months of all your financial account records, the previous six months of pay stubs, and the last two years of tax returns. You need to put together approximately 20-25 pages of narrative declarations and witness statements explaining all the facts of the situation from your point of view while being coherent and relevant in those facts without getting emotional and pissing off the judge.

Is This You?

If you find yourself in this situation, you will need to get this stuff gathered quickly, so it is really important you understand what you need to have all together for an initial meeting with

your legal team. We're going to fully discuss that in chapter five, but if you're saying "yes" right now and feel this is you, you may want to jump ahead and start reading chapter five now.

Birds Eye View of Divorce in Washington State

Washington State Divorce Timeline

Below I have outlined the seven steps for a Washington divorce action. These are the steps that every divorce takes from beginning to end. The exception is when a divorce is very amicable, allowing everyone to skip step six.

Step One: The attorney completes and files divorce forms.

Washington is a no fault state with mandatory forms that must be used in each divorce case. Your lawyer will not need to know why you want the divorce and the other side doesn't need to build a case against you about why the divorce should or should not happen. There are standard forms we have to use, which means there are a lot of boxes that have to be checked. The paperwork will not always tell the whole story of the situation.

Automatic Financial Restraining Order

These orders are issued as soon as a divorce case is filed as a matter of local court rule in many counties in Washington State. These orders are issued as a mandatory and routine step in the process because the court wants everything to stay as it is at the beginning of the case. This way we can get a baseline of how much money and debt the couple has and prevent hiding or waste of assets. These orders discourage people from draining savings accounts or making large purchases upon the initiation of the divorce. As in, who needs a new Ferrari right now? It's simply a means to establish a fair baseline from which to work. They can be modified by agreement or request to the court.

Don't panic when this happens to you. You're allowed to pay for necessities of life and for reasonable attorney fees. The court considers the attorney fees a necessity, along with rent, groceries, insurance bills, utilities, etc.

Step Two: You serve your spouse, or your spouse serves you.

In an amicable or semi-amicable divorce, if the recipient (you or your spouse) agrees to acknowledge the receipt of the petition just by signing a simple document, then there is no need for a process server to deliver the papers. In this scenario, when you are the initiator, we may ask if you would like to talk to your spouse about accepting the service of process. Or, we can speak to their attorney if they already have one. In this case, you save money by not having to pay a process server to have the documents handed over. It becomes less of a shock for the respondent, preserves their dignity and empowers them by allowing them to take control of how they receive the paperwork.

Promoting empowerment of your soon-to-be-ex may not sound desirable at the moment, but it is an opportunity for you to set the tone for the case toward civility and efficient use of resources. There will be some cases where cooperative service is not advisable. A good legal team will discuss the strategy with you outlining the pros and cons for your situation. If a process server is advisable for your circumstances, expect the expense of hiring a process server to chase them down and serve them the papers.

Step Three: The recipient responds.

If you served the papers, your spouse has another standard form to fill out in Washington. (If you are the recipient, you must fill out these forms.) The recipient has to state that they agree on each point that needs to be hit according to the statutory elements or that they disagree. If there is a disagreement, then there also needs to be a very brief statement as to why. Often, just one sentence will suffice, such as "I don't think they counted all the debts" or "I think the parenting schedule should be different."

If you are served, you will see that you have 20 days to respond, but don't sweat it. Engage your attorney in that period. They are going to follow the process to give notice to the court and opposing party that you are represented by an attorney. There is a minimum 90 day timeline before anything can be finalized. Do not feel that you are 100% stuck with what's on the response. If you change your mind on something three months later during mediation, it will be taken care of. Things are changeable until final orders are entered. They evolve during the course of the process.

Step Four: Discovery and negotiation take place.

As soon as divorce is initiated, we have many choices about how we gather and exchange information. In many cases, it helps to be agreeable when exchanging information. There is often an enormous amount of data and paperwork that needs to be gathered in order to complete the divorce. The information must

be exchanged one way or another. If you and your spouse can agree to divide and conquer this task, there will be less work. For instance, it may be that one person handles the tax returns and the other handles the credit card bills. You both agree to collect and exchange things in your respective area of knowledge and access, allowing things to move along with less time and expense than other discovery tactics. Whenever advisable, being open and cooperative in sharing information on both sides makes the process much easier.

When parties cannot or will not agree to exchange information, then we turn to Interrogatories and Requests for Production. These are discovery tools that compel a party to answer written questions and provide documents or similar things under oath. On the extreme end, when no one wants to be cooperative, interrogatories can end up being hundreds of questions due within 30 days. Almost without fail, if one side serves the other with Interrogatories and Requests for Production demand, you can bet that it will be reciprocated.

Discovery can escalate from interrogatories to depositions and subpoenas. When you or your spouse find it difficult for some reason to get the information that is needed, some things have to be subpoenaed from the bank, insurance company, employer, etc. When interrogatory answers are vague or incomplete, then your legal team may recommend depositions for the recalcitrant spouse and potential witnesses. These, of course, involve more time and money. In extreme cases, this is also where we can collect early testimony from forensic evaluators and professionals to pinpoint or even challenge weak positions.

When it comes to making determination around parenting, discovery may involve evaluation and psychological testing of the parents, observation of the parents with the children, talking to teachers, counselors, and coaches, and producing a report on the parenting experts' opinion about what is in the best interest of the children. Then, the attorneys may do a deposition of those evaluators and professionals, and there can be cross-depositions. This is something you'll have to consider if you have children.

There is a wide spectrum of what discovery can look like—how expensive it can be, and there's always room for negotiation along the way. Just about everything in divorce is negotiable, including how you're going to exchange information, what needs to be exchanged, and what needs to be done by professionals.

Generally all of the assets and debts need to be given a value. This can either happen by agreement or by court determination after hearing from experts at trial. For example, during your divorce, each attorney may hire an appraiser to provide a valuation of the house. Then, the two experts' opinions will be presented to the court. At a trial, each appraiser would give testimony supporting their valuation and the judge then decides what value to assign to the property after considering the evidence.

Alternatively, the parties may simply agree to an estimated value for a piece of property. They may look at Zillow, comparable recent sales in the neighborhood and the property tax record, and then the parties will discuss and agree on the average of those numbers to give a value to the house, for example. You will have choices to make about whether to compromise on estimated values or invest in experts to defend your position.

Step Five: Parties settle, and the mediation and negotiation take place.

Depending on how the negotiations play out, mediation is used in varying degrees. Spouses with their respective attorneys' help may be able to agree upon a number of issues and then take the outstanding disputes to mediation for a facilitated negotiation. Others resolve the whole case at a very long day of mediation.

Let me provide you an example. Let's say that a couple agrees on what the parenting plan should look like for their children after discussion with their attorneys. They complete the parenting plan form through negotiation and back and forth document exchanges with their attorneys. Then they sign it and present it to the court for finality. The problem is they can't agree on how to divide up any of the property. In this case, we can go to mediation on just the issues that are in dispute, which is the property division.

Sometimes, everything is in dispute, and sometimes, everything strategically gets negotiated at once. Technically, exchanges of money or property cannot be used as a bargaining chip for parenting time, but in reality, I have seen it happen. Sometimes, it makes sense and can be benign when it is centered on where the kids are going to live and go to school. That can dictate how much is needed in child support, spousal support and how to handle the equity in the family home.

When mediation is successful, it gets documented in a settlement agreement, also called a property settlement or separation contract. There are many variations on the title, and

they basically all mean the same thing. We also use Washington State's Superior Court Civil Rule 2A to say that this agreement, when signed by both parties, or their attorneys, has the same binding effect as if it was issued by a judge in court.

Step Six: When parties do not settle, you go to trial.

Often, a typical divorce case with children involves one to five days of trial. All the information must be presented to the court in a question and answer format before a judge. Any sort of documentary evidence that you want to have introduced for the court to consider has to be prepared as an exhibit and authenticated. For example, if your spouse challenges the legitimacy of the bank account statements you present as exhibits, then you must bring someone from the bank to verify that the bank records are the real thing. If you and your spouse cannot agree on the authenticity of records, then you have to call in all these other people to simply verify records and pay them for their time. It can get expensive.

It takes time for the attorneys to get through the questions and present the information. When you are completely disagreeable, everything has to be formally litigated on the record. That involves testimony from you, your spouse, and anyone else necessary to provide first-hand knowledge about the relevant facts and your position. Then, the judge gets to decide.

Judges have hefty caseloads, so they have little time to think about these things despite the best of intentions. They only get to see a limited view of what is on paper and what is said in

testimony, through question and answer format. It never really tells the whole story of the family or their finances.

Appeals Happen

Most people are unhappy with the outcome when a trial judge has made a decision for them in their life. It is just human nature. No one likes things being done to them. Be ready for an appeal if your case goes to trial. There is always the risk that your spouse can appeal a trial decision or an arbitration decision. Appeals can take years to go through the system to reach a final resolution. Plus, they are really expensive.

Step Seven: The judge signs the final divorce order.

No matter what path you take, you must have the Final Divorce Order presented to a judge and signed by a judge to be officially divorced. Even if you mutually agreed on that property settlement agreement three months ago, you are not divorced until a judge signs a final order. Only then are you free to remarry, file your future tax returns on your own, and truly get on with your life. If that involves changing your last name through the divorce, this is when you can do it—not before without filing a separate case. In Washington, I've seen men and women pick totally brand new last names after a divorce, and hey, why not?

As you can see, the steps in your divorce process go smoother when things are amicable. Hopefully, I have helped you understand what to expect when things cannot be amicable.

Now, let's talk about legal separation and compare that process to the divorce process.

Legal Separation

A legal separation in Washington is much the same as divorce. The mandatory forms have a checkbox asking if you are requesting divorce or separation. People sometimes pursue separation first because they think they might get back together or because they want to stay on one person's health insurance. Other times, people choose that route for religious reasons. Legal separation isn't as common as it used to be, mainly due to fewer companies allowing separated spouses to stay on the health insurance these days.

The biggest procedural difference is that legal separation can be finalized immediately. There is no 90-day waiting period. However, six months after the court has finalized a separation order, either party can make a simple motion to convert the legal separation order to a divorce order. Everything that was already established during the separation order is automatically converted into a divorce. It's a mandatory conversion, which only requires one party to ask for it. That's when the legal status of the marriage ends because all the other steps have already happened.

Collaborative Divorce Law: Is this the right process for you?

The official formal process is one in which both partners agree to participate in the collaborative law divorce process. They each hire attorneys who also agree to participate in this process.

Everyone signs an agreement to share information that's relevant to the matter.

They hire joint experts to guide them on the financial and parenting decisions.

Parties agree to hire new attorneys if either of them opt-out of the formal Collaborative process.

The benefit is that the Collaborative Law process helps maintain a more positive relationship with your soon-to-be ex spouse. This can also help maintain a less stressful atmosphere for the children.

The downside is that if one party changes their mind and no longer wants to follow Collaborative Law, then all attorneys must withdraw and the whole process starts all over. This process can also be more expensive than other forms of divorce due to the cost of experts and time.

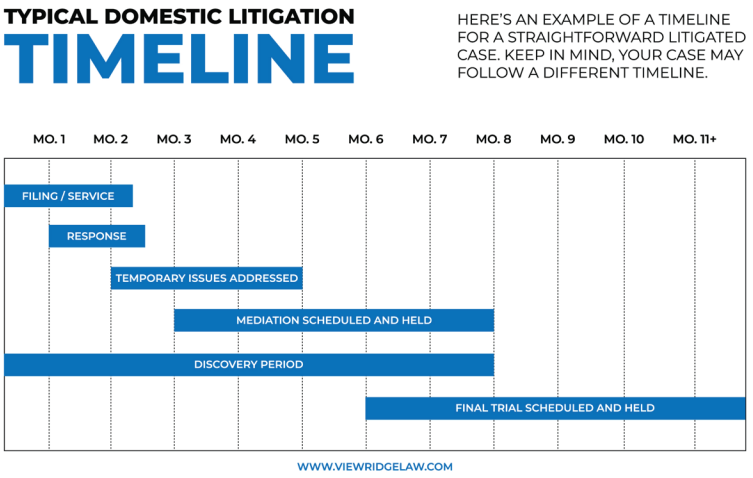
The Collaborative Law process can be the best choice for your family going forward through the divorce. Alternatively, you may wish to incorporate elements from the Collaborative Law process into your chosen divorce process to help minimize stress and cost without the downside of starting over with new counsel.

You can learn more inside the Collaborative Law video on our resource page at www.viewridgelaw.com/divorcenavigator/collaborative-divorce.

Typical Domestic Litigation Timeline

The typical timeline for divorce in Washington is 12 months. It can take as little as 90 days, which is the state minimum, but even if you are amicable with your spouse, I would plan on a year. Even when you eliminate the trial, there is still a lot to get through. Gathering information, negotiating, mediation, envisioning your new life…everything will take some time.

Here's a typical timeline laid out in the steps we just went over.



Your Future is Part of the Timeline

In most cases, you will also create your future budget. Both sides in a divorce are obligated to fill out a document called a Financial Declaration. Essentially, it's a declaration of what you think it will cost you to live once you are physically separated. It breaks down rent, utilities, food, transportation, and all your other existing bills, including loans and credit cards, and your reasonably anticipated future expenses.

You have time limits to get this stuff done. This is an opportunity to write your new life into being and get into the nitty gritty details of your future. You don't want to race through big decisions like where you will live and how much that will cost, but you do want to take action. It is a balance. Dream, reflect, journal and do your research.

This is not the time for pride and ego. Here is what I mean. Over the years I have seen a fair number of people adopt the attitude of, "I don't want his money. I don't want to be relying on her. I will figure it all out myself." They may end up not negotiating for enough to actually and reasonably support their kids continuing to go to school in the same neighborhood where they had been living or give themselves enough time to become self-reliant as a single person.

Don't cut off your nose to spite your face. Make sure you have enough information to make an informed decision to create your new life.

Here is Where We're Going...

The rest of the chapters in this book are going to help make sure you have a lot of the information you need going forward. We're going to talk about what's coming up next and how you can navigate your way through the divorce process in the best way possible.

Chapter Three will determine what your priorities will be going through this divorce, what you want your life after divorce to look like, how to manage your expectations, and taking care of yourself through the process.

Chapter Four will quickly outline the things you should do and the things you should not do so you can present the best case.

Chapter Five will go in-depth in the discovery and negotiation phase and what information you're going to need. I'll guide you on what to expect from interrogatories and depositions.

Chapter Six will help you understand what you should be prepared for if you have children. I'll help you understand the parenting plan and child support order.

Chapter Seven will go into income and how it is handled with your divorce.

Chapter Eight will go over real property and how negotiating those assets works.

Chapter Nine goes over personal property and financial assets and debts in detail, as this can encompass much more than you may be considering right now as you read this.

Chapter Ten involves taxes and what you need to consider while your divorce is in process.

Chapter Eleven deals with estate planning, which is something I encourage you to address as soon as you begin the divorce process.

Chapter Twelve shows you how prenups and similar relationship agreements can help you enjoy a stronger relationship next time while protecting your beautiful new life.

Chapter Thirteen introduces the professionals who may become involved with your divorce process and the roles they play on your team.

You have the overview and the timeline, but as I mentioned, your path forward is full of many choices. The rest of the book will help you navigate those decisions and see the best choice for you and your children affected by your divorce. Please read all the chapters. They contain information you will need, and I've tucked in tools and resources to help guide you through the most difficult and confusing moments of divorce.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mackenzie Sorich is an attorney in Seattle, Washington. She is the owner of View Ridge Family Law & Estate Planning, which she founded in 2014 to serve families when life's problems become legal problems.

Before establishing her own firm, Mackenzie focused on family law and dependency law (foster care) for many years. Through this experience, she recognized the limitations of the legal system in addressing families' holistic needs during tough times. She sought to establish a law firm that would recognize litigants as whole people who are a part of complex family structures. This seed was planted by her hands-on work with families during law school. Throughout her practice, Mackenzie has found deep satisfaction in guiding people through the complexities of the court system, conquering crises, and planning a brighter future by partnering with her clients and team.

At View Ridge Law, Mackenzie is dedicated to easing the uncertainty and challenges of the legal process by offering practical solutions with a holistic outlook. Central to her

practice is empowering clients to face the future with truth and optimism.

Mackenzie's firm covers a broad spectrum of family law and estate planning services, including adoption, custody, divorce, child support, probate, wills, trusts, and more. From initial planning to complex trials, the firm excels at providing guidance and advocacy tailored to each client's needs.

Mackenzie grew up in Omaha, Nebraska, in a hard-working blended family. She attended undergraduate college at the University of Southern California, where she discovered that she loved talking about the law and wondering what makes people tick. She returned to her home state to obtain her law degree at the University of Nebraska.

The beauty and adventure of the Pacific Northwest drew her back West. Mackenzie has made Seattle her home with her own blended family. In her free time, she enjoys exploring the outdoors with loved ones, savoring good food, and traveling the world.