

UNEXPECTED DIVORCE CHECKLIST

When I finally got the courage to meet with a divorce attorney, I was so emotional that after the meeting, I didn't remember much. When the attorney told me all the things I needed to do before I could even file for divorce, it was very stressful for me because I didn't know how to find any of it. I was so scared, and being in the emotional state I was in, getting my expenses and all the other paperwork together sounded so daunting and overwhelming.

I was afraid of Paul at the time, and I knew I needed to get all this information behind his back. Paul was paying all the bills, so I was worried that I wasn't going to be able to get all the information. Thank goodness, I could get access to the credit cards and checkbooks to get an idea of our monthly expenses. I also needed access to three years of tax returns, and I knew this would prove difficult for me. Paul was our CPA, so how was I going to do this? I knew that if I searched for tax returns on his computer, he would know something was up, so I was only able to get one year. I found out later that I could have just requested the returns from the IRS and the state where I lived on my own.

No matter what your circumstances, it is important to know what it takes to run your household and your life in general, in case anything happens to you or your spouse, whether it be an unexpected death, divorce, diagnosis, or disaster.

Here is a basic list that I came up with at that time. You should personalize your own list. I think these items apply to most people, especially those with children.

You will need:

- Name and contact information of experts (divorce attorney, CPA, financial advisor, trust attorney)
- List of monthly expenses (don't underestimate!)
- Financial information (bank institutions, investment accounts, retirement accounts, balances of all accounts)
- Monthly bills and the balances of all (mortgage, utilities, cars, credit card debt, cell phone, etc.)
- Recurring subscriptions/memberships (gym, online services, etc.)
- How assets and debts are titled (in whose names)
- Insurance information (medical, life, auto, disability, etc.)
- Your personal expenses
- Your partner's personal expenses
- Medical expenses
- Travel expenses
- Entertainment/other discretionary spending
- Value of all assets (including any collectible items)
- Business expenses
- Outstanding debts/loans
- Children's expenses (day care, sports, medical, etc.)
- Children's education expenses (private school, college tuition, other college expenses, tutoring, etc.)

