



Helping Your Friend Through Divorce

What Can I Do To Help?

- **Be Supportive and Listen**
Divorce is stressful and expensive, and it helps their relationship with their lawyer and their case to have a support system outside of the legal case. Be a good listener – your friend gets a lot of advice from attorneys and professionals during their case and may feel more stress if they get advice from too many people.
- **Help With the Children**
If there are children involved you can help by watching the children when your friend attends court dates or meetings with their lawyer. You can also help with transportation of the children to school, sporting and other events.
- **Keep An Open Mind**
There is generally a lot going on behind the scenes in a divorce. It can add to the stress of the process to have friends and family pressuring for a certain outcome in the divorce.
- **Go to the First Meeting with the Lawyer**
You may not be able to participate in the first meeting with the lawyer but it would be comforting for you to be there.

Should I Loan Money to Hire a Lawyer?

- If you do loan money for a lawyer, be prepared for your friend to make decisions with which you may not agree.
- Do not expect to be able to communicate with his/her lawyer directly or have any say in the direction of the case.
- Be prepared to never see the money again.

What If I Fear for My Friend's Safety (generally in the case of a female friend)?

- **Help her find resources about domestic violence**
Some examples are the National Domestic Violence Hotline or SafePlace here in the Austin area. She may not be able to safely acquire or store this information at home.
- **Go to court hearings with her for support or help her apply for a Protective Order**
Courthouses can be really scary and intimidating, and it is comforting to have friends there for support. You can also go with her to apply for a protective order at her local County Attorney's office.
- **Respect where she is in her relationship**
Your friend may be scared and emotionally unable to stand up to her abuser as they are going through a divorce, so standing by her, even if you disagree with her decisions, is a great gift to her.

What If I am Friends with Both the Husband and the Wife?

- Don't feel like you have to pick sides. If you are friends with a couple going through a divorce, they may want you to pick sides, especially if there is a perception that you might help their "side" of the case. It may help both spouses to remain friends with them during a divorce.
- If you are called into a hearing, all you can do is tell this truth. It is a good idea to talk to the attorney of the spouse who wants you to testify ahead of time.

Should I Let My Friend Stay with Me?

- **Be clear on how long your friend can stay**
Divorces can take a year or more to resolve, so know what you're getting into and set limits you can live with.
- **Be clear on the financial arrangement**
He/she may or may not receive any financial support during the divorce, depending on the circumstances.
- **Be safe**
Divorces can cause erratic behavior by the friend's spouse. It might be better to help pay for a hotel room for your friend rather than put yourself in the middle of the conflict.

Should I Tell Them About My Own Experiences in a Divorce?

- **If you talk about divorce, avoid the specifics of your case**
Divorces are very fact-intensive and there are often detailed legal principles that go into property division and support. It can be counter-productive to tell your friend the details of your case because your friend will likely have a very different situation with his or her finances and the children.
- **Share information about professionals**
If you found a good attorney or counselor to help you through your divorce, this information may be helpful for your friend.

About Noelke English Maples St. Leger Blair, L.L.P.

Advocates for Civility in Divorce

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