

4 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE FILING FOR DIVORCE

Note: These questions are written with women in mind, since women initiate most divorces. Male readers, please adapt these to your situation.



So, you are considering divorce. Your married life is difficult, disappointing, not what you had hoped for. Perhaps you have known other people who divorced. Maybe your parents. Maybe you've been divorced already yourself.

Let me start with the most important question, dealing with the one and only situation where physical separation is absolutely necessary.

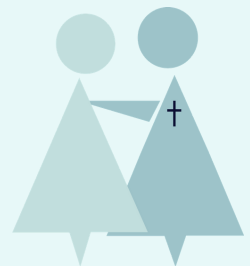
1. Are you or your children in physical danger? If so:
 - a. Move out.
 - b. File a restraining order.
 - c. Make a serious plan for self-defense, up to and including buying a gun and learning how to use it.

If he says he's "just joking" about hurting someone, you must still take these steps. If you don't challenge him, the "joking" may escalate.

You must have a plan in place, with all these steps ready to go, in quick succession, before you execute the first step. I strongly suggest you have a friend or relative helping you. If you go about separation from an abusive spouse in a half-hearted manner, you are likely to fail. By "fail," I mean that you will still be living with him in an even more dangerous situation than before.

If you are worried that your religion forbids divorce, please understand: self-defense is a basic human right. Moving out for your protection does not violate the general Christian prohibition against divorce.

If you and your children are physically safe, that's awesome. I'm glad! I felt I had to begin with this serious situation. Women and children in physical danger need our support.



Please, I beg you, do not use the term "abuse" to describe your situation. We women tend to stretch that term so far, it becomes meaningless. The woman whose husband threw her through the wall can and must describe it as "abuse." The woman whose husband says hurtful things needs a different term.

Yes, I believe you when you say he is mean. I believe you when you tell me the situation is painful. But please don't diminish what other women endure by calling unkindness "abuse."

If you or your children are NOT in physical danger, you have options other than divorce. And divorce may well cause problems you haven't anticipated.

2. Do you have children? If so:

read this [Special Report, Marriage and Equality](#). The author experienced the divorce of her parents. Her mother remarried, and her father remarried twice. She will help you understand divorce from the child's point of view. You can read this report in less than an hour. Or, [read this book](#), a compilation of stories from adults whose parents divorced when they were children. It is a bit longer. But these adults will give you an idea of what's in store for your kids, for the rest of their lives.

Do you think you don't have time to read? Please realize: divorce and its aftermath will absorb your time and energy for years. Take the time to do some reading before you file the papers.

3. Do you have a new boyfriend or girlfriend?



Stop right now. Your judgement is shot. [Chapter 2 of this book](#) explains how sex affects your thought process. Besides, second marriages are more divorce-prone than first marriages. How are you and your kids going to feel if you break up with their father for a new love interest, and the new relationship doesn't even work out?

4. Finally, and most importantly, **will your spouse be easier to deal with after the divorce than he is now?**

Divorce will do some or all of the following: publicly humiliate him, drain his bank account, induce anger, disrupt both sides of your extended family, and reduce his incentive to contribute to the family. If he's mean now, what will he be like in family court?

Your life after divorce will involve courts, police, social workers, psychologists, not to mention strangers poring over every aspect of your finances and personal lives. Are you sure divorce will be easier than what you're dealing with now?

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And by the way, if you objected to my suggestion in #1 above that an abused woman consider getting a gun, consider this. Every court order is backed up by the threat of violence. Police, jail, garnishment of wages: guns enforce all these things.

Once the courts are involved, you will not be able to control the direction those state-sanctioned guns are pointed. The courts may issue an order that forces your husband to do something you want him to do. You will be glad about that. On the other hand, they may issue an order forcing you to do something you don't want to do. Or, they may give him permission to neglect a responsibility he had previously been shouldering.

You may not always be happy with what the court decides for you and your family. Are you willing to take that risk?



As I said, if your spouse is not violent, you have options besides divorce. If you want to try to improve your marriage, read this book. It won't solve all your problems, but it will make life better.

Your friend,

Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse



PS: You can order all the books mentioned here. A \$63.85 value for only \$49.95. Divorce will cost a lot more than that.

