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A Roller Coaster Ride

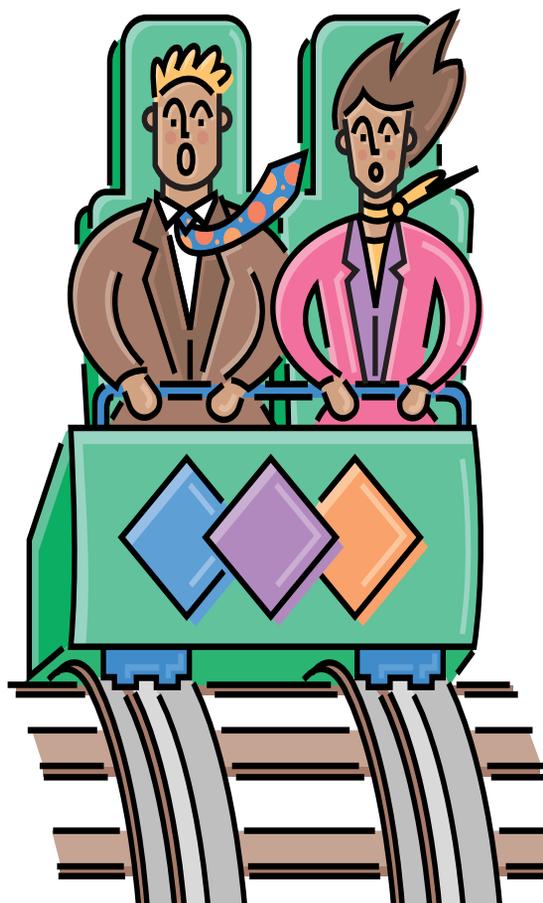
How to navigate an emotional divorce.

BY MELISSA NICKELSON

Just as there are two parties in every divorce, there are two sides you must face during the process: the business side and the emotional side. During a divorce, your emotions are like a roller coaster—up, down, sideways, and fast. It is difficult to discuss the case when you are fixated on betrayal, anger, and hurt. You cannot focus on the issues or answer basic questions.

Naturally, you don't want to make life-altering decisions in this state. Hire an attorney and also see a professional so that you will have someone to talk to about your emotions. This

is important because if you don't deal with your emotions, you get trapped in the "drama trauma" of divorce and do not make smart choices. The following tips will help.



1. Educate yourself. Your attorney probably completes most of the routine daily tasks in a case without much thought. Yet, to you, this is all new and scary. Know what to expect. For example, prior to a temporary orders hearing, have your lawyer explain the possible outcomes—from settling the case before the hearing to talking to the judge in chambers. Remember to ask questions often, as during times of emotional distress, the brain only works at around 20 to 25 percent capacity.

2. Communicate with your attorney. Know your attorney's typical response time with regards to returning phone calls and emails. People expect quick answers with email, but they need to understand that lawyers are not always available.

3. See a professional. You might think you cannot afford to pay someone else, and my response is that you cannot afford *not* to. You are making life-altering choices and need to be calm and rational during the decision-making process. There are several options for professional help during a divorce.

4. Be a better witness. Learn from

your attorney the best way to testify, talk about the do's and don'ts, and practice until you feel comfortable going on the stand. Take the time to really work with your lawyer so that you tell your story in the most efficient manner.

5. Set boundaries. You need to focus on the big picture. Don't get caught up in the emotional drama. Use your time with your attorney wisely. Remember that you hired your attorney for her professionalism, knowledge, and experience. She's your advocate. **TBJ**

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