

Divorce for Ladies, Not for Losers

A Woman's Guide For

A Healthy Not Harmful Journey

by

Cathe R. Evans Williams and Ouida Y. Jones



Cathe R. Evans Williams and Ouida Y. Jones

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INTRODUCTION

We, the authors of *Divorce For Ladies, Not For Losers*, have seen the toll that divorce takes on families firsthand from the perspective of a compassionate divorce attorney, in the person of Cathe Evans Williams, as well as from the perspective of a participant, that of Ouida Yvonne Jones. We can say emphatically that if you choose to participate in a contested divorce war, without first attempting to handle the divorce amicably, you are being destructive and quite possibly putting yourself in a position to be emotionally, financially, and spiritually destroyed. While this may sound alarmist, the truth is probably much worse. Our families and communities are in crisis to a large degree because many people, both husbands and wives, choose to act like idiots when “I do” turns into “I don’t.” The fallout from these acrimonious divorces contributes in large part to our increasingly dysfunctional society.

Divorce for Ladies, Not for Losers approaches divorce from a more healing and holistic perspective. The book readily acknowledges (and discourages) the natural reaction of the gut reflex to “get him (or her),” the heart reflex to break, and the soul reflex to cry. At the same time it will encourage what appears to be a less natural reaction in the form of the spiritual opportunity to grow, and the wisdom to get on with the next chapter of your life, while providing laugh-out-loud humor to help the seeds of wisdom take root. *Divorce for Ladies, Not for Losers* also encourages women to take a good, hard look at themselves and the role they played in the development of and subsequent degeneration of the relationship, instead of just playing the victim card. It finally empowers you with the information and resources to come out on the other side of divorce as a strong, vibrant, whole, and complete beautiful woman who retains her mind, her integrity and her money.

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If you are single, this book will help you examine, prior to getting married, what the costs are—both financial and emotional—of a failed marriage. If you are married and not happy, this book will provide you with options to consider such as counseling, a trial separation or maybe even legal separation instead of just rushing into the divorce process. For those that know they want a divorce, this book will cause you to consider less destructive (and apparently less popular) methods of divorce—uncontested divorce, mediation and collaborative divorce. You will also find resources, definitions, procedures, examples and stories that make you go “hmm” and help you take your divorce into your own hands.

Many angry (and hopefully uninformed) divorcing women end up spending their savings, their child’s college funds, and all of the equity in the marital house to “show him that he messed with the wrong one.” Worse, some women use their children as pawns or ammunition in a misguided attempt to be made whole. They carry their emotional baggage to each and every court appearance and look for healing from a process that is inherently designed to break apart. You will not be made whole in the courtroom. If you choose to go for the jugular, and use the courtroom as your weapon, you will lose in ways you cannot imagine and your children will lose most of all.

News Flash: The courts can only divide assets, divide debts, and determine custody of your children. And considering the adverse circumstances under which they are provided information in contested situations, the courts cannot truly know what is best for you or your family. They cannot assign blame. They cannot make him apologize to you. They cannot make the pain go away. They are a court of law, not a court of healing.

Co-author Attorney Evans Williams became fed up with the self-inflicting pain patterns she witnessed as a divorce attorney for several years. In this

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book she, along with thrice-divorced real estate entrepreneur and non-profit executive, Ouida Y. Jones, offers women an opportunity to make better life choices as it relates to their relationships. *Divorce for Ladies, Not for Losers* is the culmination of Evans Williams' many years of seeing families devastated by the limitations of the legal system, the apparent indifference of some of her fellow attorneys, and the inability of many parties to work through the divorce in a healthy manner. She has witnessed attorneys treat clients with less respect than she would give her worst enemy, and watched clients be so angry and ignorant that they basically said, "Thank you sir, can I have another" until all hope, money, custody, and reason were gone. Jones, a client of Evans Williams, had been married and amicably divorced three times. She has had the experience of sailing through the divorce process, virtually unscathed, as the result of sage counsel and her own spiritual mantra. Jones also brings her satirical approach to this emotional subject.

Ladies, your husband may or may not be a jerk, but the fact of the matter is that the divorce attorneys are not your friends (and in some cases can make your husband look like a Boy Scout), the judges are not your friends, and the only winners in a contested divorce are the ones that get paid by the hour to watch your life tragedy—their case—unfold. Don't get it twisted; you and your attorney are not on the same team. Your divorce is their case. It is not personal; it is business. They are doing their job. The more hours you fight, the more money they make. It is in your best interest to try to address your relationship issues outside of the courtroom, if at all possible. This book will provide you with information to accomplish that goal.

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CHAPTER ONE

What Were You Thinking Before You Married Him? Things You Should Have Considered Before “I Do”



Picture This

You are a successful entrepreneur. You own your own business; have your own house and car. You travel extensively and are active in your community and your church. You were dating a man for several years who was just not right for you. He continually cheated on you and when asked about marriage, he dummied up. Finally, you decided you had enough. You figured you weren't

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getting any younger which meant you couldn't keep doing that ninja stuff in order to catch him and this wasn't conducive to raising a family.

You have to go out of town again for your job, and you're sitting in the limo with the same driver that you've used for the last couple of years. He's been interested for the last several months and notices that you're looking kinda down. He starts chatting you up and the next thing you know, he's cheered you up and asked you for a date. This guy's no fool, he knows you're a catch—you don't have any kids (so there are no babies' daddies) and you have plenty of assets as well as a great career. He reels you in with a wooing straight out of a romance novel. There's the flowers at work and home, candlelit dinners for the birthdays, holidays, and just because. You ask yourself, why didn't I notice this guy before? All your friends and family are just as impressed. He's thoughtful, romantic and ambitious. What more could you ask for? Then he pops the question. You're ecstatic. So what, you've only been dating three months—you both know what you want, right? You're on the rebound and he's been married twice before, but that's no big deal—right? You're vulnerable and so you're not on your game. Your radar is down.

You plan the wedding together—it's going to be big. He's paying for it—he insists. You'll pay for the honeymoon. Everything goes off without a hitch. Then you get a credit card bill in your name, for a credit card that you never applied for. The bill is for \$10,000. You look at the items on the bill, and damn if it's not the stuff from the wedding. You immediately call the credit card company to confirm what you now suspect, and the representative tells you that there is an authorized card holder on the account and guess who it is—Yep, the man of your dreams—or now your nightmares. This fool (you don't call yourself that yet) has gotten a credit card in your name and paid for your dream wedding with it. You immediately confront him about it and he smoothly (a bit too smoothly—like he's done this before) explains that he was

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short of funds but that he wanted to make sure you had the wedding of your dreams. He explains that he intends to pay off the entire bill, so don't you worry about it—"he's got this," he says. That's the first strike—he stole your credit. Next, he brings something home—and I don't mean a pet. In fact, in order to get rid of it, you need a prescription. That's strike two. The final strike is when you find out he's smoking pot (at a minimum) and he doesn't have glaucoma. You don't roll like that.

Now, you want a divorce. You're mad at him, he lied to you and you're a victim. Never mind the fact that you knew you shouldn't have rushed into a new relationship without healing from the previous relationship. You were looking at your beau through rose-tinted glasses. Your spider senses, normally sharp, were dulled by your previous pain. Now this man, whom you've only been married to for two months, wants you to pay him in order to get rid of him. For a brief (we hope brief) moment, you figure it will be cheaper to hire "Carlos, the Jackal" to rid you of your problem than to pay this clown.

So how did you allow yourself to get into this kind or a similar kind of jam? How could you have prevented it? If you are already married, keep reading this next part to help you keep it real and identify where you went wrong this time and to gather insight that will be useful to you next time. Don't worry; just because you slept through your prep course and disregarded the signs of trouble prior to getting married doesn't mean you have to flunk the rest of the class. Pay attention to the voice inside as you read the following paragraphs. We do not claim to be psychiatrists, just women who have experienced pain—one of which happens to be an attorney who has also watched pain in action during divorce. If you are not married yet, but happen to be dating, read this next part with a fine toothcomb and honestly answer the questions. Then check your gut and respond accordingly. If he's not the one, don't dress him up in borrowed clothes. The truth can come out now or after

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you say “I Do” costing you hundreds, possibly thousands, of dollars and tears later.

THINGS YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSIDERED BEFORE YOU GOT MARRIED
ABOUT HIM:

Was he employed? Legitimately? (By that we mean did he get a 1099 or W-2, not did he bring home lots of cash covered with white stuff or brag about handling his business and having secret bank accounts in the Bahamas.) Did he have a “situation” that sent him on an involuntary stay before? Could he take care of himself? How was his credit? How did you know for sure? Were you equally yoked spiritually? Was that important to him? Was he honest? Had he been married before? If so, how many times and how did he treat his ex-wife or wives? Children? Did he say she was crazy and it was all her fault? How did he treat his parents and other family members?

THINGS YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSIDERED BEFORE YOU GOT MARRIED
ABOUT YOU:

Did you know who you were? Did you know what you wanted? Were you happy? Were you clear on why you chose him? Was he a rebound relationship for you? Were you employed? Were you honest? Were you flat broke and desperate, expecting him to take care of you? Were you on some “he completes me” type crap? Were you bringing heat to the table or just ashes? Were you self-sufficient? How was your credit? Did you have a history of picking the wrong guy? How was your relationship with your father? Had you realized yet that your relationship with your father was significant as it related to your choices in men? Did your fiancé bring out the best or worst in you? Were you a different person when you were with him? Was that different person a better person or worse? Were you weaving or wiggling and telling him it was

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real? Did your friends and family like him? Did you keep him on the low then spring him on them when it was too late to get their opinions?

THINGS YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSIDERED BEFORE YOU GOT MARRIED
ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP:

Did you communicate well about your fears, pain, dreams? Were you honest with each other? Were things between you too good to be true? Did you think about and map out realistic path(s) to get you where you wanted to be together in one year? Three Years? Five Years? Did you agree to discuss or not discuss any drama from previous relationships or did you just pray that your skeletons would stay in the closet? Did you participate in pre-marital counseling? If not, why not? Were you afraid that you wouldn't have gotten married if you did? Were you comfortable with starting your marriage in fear or did you do the denial thing?

THINGS YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSIDERED BEFORE YOU GOT MARRIED:
ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN, HIS CHILDREN AND YOUR FUTURE CHILDREN
TOGETHER

How did he get along with your child(ren)? How did your children get along with him? How did you get along with his children? They with you? Did you both agree on how you were going to discipline his children? How would he discipline yours? Did you both agree on how you were going to make decisions regarding the children? Did your other children get along with his children? Does anybody have Bebe's kids? If so, were they yours? His? Did you really want to breed with this man?

Had you discussed your previous sexual situations? Were you of the same accord when it came to sexual relations? Did you enjoy sex with him? If not, had

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you ever enjoyed sex? Were you thinking that things would change after you got married and that somehow he would be able to . . . you know, but that was just your imagination? Had you both had STD (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) testing (especially HIV, herpes and hepatitis) done? Were you both negative? Did you see his results? If they were in crayon, or there were misspellings, did you get a second opinion or let your denial kick in again because he just didn't look like he had anything?

If these questions made you uncomfortable, then you should have asked more questions. You should have participated in pre-marriage counseling or individual counseling before you said "I do." Well . . . should have . . . would have . . . could have. You probably didn't and look what happened. The "real" killed the fantasy and you feel robbed, abused and victimized. Hurry up and own your messed-up part so you can go ahead and get to the healing part. If you need some help, please consult a therapist or counselor specializing in these types of situations. We all need some help sometime. This might just be your wake-up call.

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING

Just in case you didn't do it before, let me give you some helpful advice about pre-marital counseling. Pre-marriage assessment inventories are being used by marriage counselors as a way of getting couples to ask hard questions prior to getting married. The inventories are not a predictor of the success of a marriage, but they are aimed at getting couples to ask themselves how well do they know their partner, how ready are they for marriage and how well do they know themselves. The assessments are used by counselors and the couples to assess compatibility and point out possible problem areas for the couples so that further discussion can be facilitated in a less emotional environment. For example, Candy and her fiancé attended pre-marital coun-

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seling basically to rubber stamp the relationship they both thought was perfect. Through the assessment inventory Candy found out that her fiancé had been married three times before, unbeknownst to her. They had never talked about the number of times he had been married before, just that he had been married before. When this issue came up in pre-marital counseling, he said she never asked how many times he had been married, so he didn't think he was being deceptive when he told her he had been divorced, leaving out the number of times. Thanks to pre-marital counseling, she decided to leave him before they got married and before more skeletons fell out of the closet that she specifically didn't ask him about.

Here are some resources, including books and websites about premarital counseling and assessment inventories that may be helpful when identifying the next husband:

www.aamft.org

is the website for the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

www.familytherapyresources.net

www.prepare-enrich.com/couples

is a website which contains the PREPARE Pre-marital Personal Relationship Evaluation, an assessment inventory.

www.relate-institute.org

www.premaritalonline.com

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STD testing is also an important component for premarital discussion. Many (probably most) couples think that discussing past relationships is in poor taste and/or not necessary. In this day and age of “killer sexually transmitted diseases” it is not only advisable, but absolutely necessary for couples to address their sexual past. This includes use of shared hypodermic needles, unprotected sex with more than one partner, etc. If you are not willing to do it for yourselves, you have to consider the lives of any unborn children you may decide to have. These children or your ability to have children could be affected by STDs. We encourage every couple to each go for STD testing. Below are websites with information on STD testing:

www.tstd.org is a website which provides information on STD testing, including local centers where the tests can be performed discreetly and for a reasonable cost. Let’s be honest, a lot of people do not want to be tested by their family physician because they would be embarrassed if it came back positive. How do you explain to old Dr. Bob, your dad’s golf buddy, that you caught a little case of herpes?

Other STD testing websites:

www.stdweb.com

www.labsafe.com