



I'M GETTING SEPARATED

How do I tell my Boss?

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Take a Few Days Off

When you're first confronted with the reality of an impending divorce, whether it was you or your partner who initiated the split, the trauma can be difficult to handle. Erica Baumer, co-owner of Sage Career and Life Consultants, suggests immediately using some days off to refocus.

"This is a grieving process," Baumer says. "If you have some leave time, don't be afraid to strategically use it. I wouldn't take a month off. Just take a few days off here and there to get grounded."

You need to get through the initial few days and come to terms with what's happening. You'll have the time to sit and ponder the thousand questions you'll be asking yourself, without interference from calls or emails.

Make those days all about you—feel all the emotions you need to feel, and then find ways to self-soothe. If you normally work out, try to get to the gym. Take short walks outside. Try yoga. Listen to music that makes you feel good. Try to avoid junk food.

If you can't take any time off, try to work remotely. When you get back to the office, you'll have that much more mental stability to focus and stay at a high performance level.

Divorces do tend to drag on, though, so keep an eye on yourself throughout the process—if you find you're suddenly struggling and unable to focus or think through your daily projects, it might be time to pop in an annual leave day. Just keep track of how much time off you have left as you may need to put aside some time for any court appearances as well. They're always during the week.

Why do you need to tell your boss about your divorce?

While it isn't required, it's likely that you will need to make changes to your health insurance, and other human resources paperwork.

It is also likely that you will need to miss some work due to court appointments, divorce coaching appointments, or divorce mediation.

Finally, it's likely that you will want your boss to know and understand that you are going through a difficult time at home.



How Should You Tell Your Boss About Your Divorce?

Avoid being too confessional

When you tell your boss about your divorce, do so in the context of your job and responsibilities. Let her/him know whether you will miss work, whether you will need help with your workload, and any other professional details. You don't need to explain the ins and outs of what went wrong in your marriage.

Let your boss know what she/he can expect

Provide as much information as possible regarding how the divorce will affect your job. Be honest, this is your chance to let him/her know if you will need extra time, attention, or understanding.

Don't use the divorce as an excuse

Unfortunately, the work world goes on no matter what is happening in your personal life. Realize that you will need to continue performing at work during the divorce process. While you should count on understanding and help from your manager and co-workers, you should also realize that there are still consequences for not doing your job.

Ask if you need to do paperwork.

When your marital status changes, you will probably need to update your information with the human resources department, such as tax information and health insurance information.

Working Through Your Divorce

There's no reason that divorce should cause you to take time off from work. With a good divorce coach, most of your paperwork will be handled by the office, and you will only need to respond to the occasional phone call and signature request. Court hearings, if required, rarely take longer than a few hours, so half-days from work can be expected.

You should look at your job as a safe constant in your life, something that will remain consistent through the chaotic times of divorce. That doesn't mean you should immerse yourself entirely in work, as socializing and spending time with your family is also crucial during a divorce.

Maintain the same job/life balance as you did before the separation to ensure you keep your employer happy and your mind at ease.

YOUR 5-STEP PLAN

1. TELL YOUR BOSS THE FACTS

Your boss needs to know you're going through a divorce. This event will change your life, and you have every right to expect your manager to make reasonable accommodations for you when life happens – but you need to speak up about it.

Divorce is definitely a “life happens” event, and whatever conversation you have with your boss can certainly be kept confidential.

The key is to skip the sordid details and stick to logistics: You are getting divorced or legally separated, you are committed to staying on track with your responsibilities as usual, but you may require some schedule flexibility as lawyer meetings, divorce coaching sessions and other obligations arise.

If you plan to tell colleagues about your breakup, that's fine; just be sure to tell your boss first. This not only protects your relationship with your boss, it protects your colleagues from any awkward situations with your manager as well.

2. GET HOLD OF HR EARLY

As part of wise, early, divorce planning, you likely need information that only your HR department can provide, including details on what your options may be for handling your retirement and super plan, your health insurance premiums and coverage, and your life and disability insurance and more.

Later on, as you near the end of the separation process, you'll likely need to change all your HR paperwork accordingly. You should be able to trust that requests for this information will be kept private, but feel free to sort this out by email with your HR team if you are uncomfortable meeting about it face-to-face. If you're self-employed, you'll have to work directly with your tax accountant, your insurance agent (life, trauma, health, etc), and super accounts to get everything up to date– from your tax info and health insurance coverage to the beneficiaries named in your life insurance and retirement accounts, and even your emergency contacts.

3. DRAW UP YOUR PLAN TO EARN

At least in the short term, both parties are poorer after splitting up. It's twice as expensive to maintain two homes instead of one, and you may find yourself making spousal maintenance and child support payments, which can be steep. Your lawyer can help you understand what to expect, but chances are you'll need to find ways to earn more money, sooner than later. This may mean focusing on your goals in your current job, discussing a plan for advancement with your boss, asking for an overdue raise, or strategising to change companies, launch a side business, or return to studying so you can switch careers altogether.

YOUR 5-STEP PLAN cont.

Contemplating dramatic work changes can feel overwhelming when your personal life is in flux already. But many people actually find they thrive professionally over the long term after a divorce or separation; sometimes the fear of financial instability proves just as powerful a motivator as the freedom to make career decisions outside of a toxic marriage. Since your home life is changing, now is probably a great time to reassess what you need from your career. For instance, if you've travelled extensively for work and will now share custody and care of your children, you may want a career that keeps you home more often, or at least offers a more flexible schedule. Whatever the case may be, take advantage of the pressing need for these changes to seek out a career move that works for you.

If you work part time, it's probably time to find full-time employment, even if there are small children at home whom you care for. Ex-spouses can expect to be fully supported financially by way of spousal maintenance and child support for a period of time usually up to two years. A career and income of your own is likely the best financial security for you, your family, and your relationship with your ex. No matter what, the sooner you take steps to improve your income, the more quickly you can move forward.

4. AVOID MAKING SUDDEN MOVES

But even while you're contemplating significant long-term changes, there are some moves you shouldn't make hastily.

Quit your job or turn down a big promotion.

Deliberately trying to minimize your income in order to reduce your spousal maintenance or child support payments, or so you can qualify for receiving more spousal maintenance or child support, never pays off. Not only can this be held against you in divorce proceedings, but the ramifications for your future career and income are potentially infinite.

Likewise, you should never take large loans, or otherwise cash out on your retirement accounts or pension or life-insurance plans, until after all legal proceedings have been finalised.

5. TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

This can be one of the most stressful times of your life. Build self-care into your routines, including your workday.

This means committing to healthy eating (including work lunches), minimizing after-work happy hours, hitting the gym before going to the office or during your lunch break, and getting fresh air and a walk at least once a day. It's the little habits like these that can matter the most.

Avoid at all costs taking calls with your lawyer or others during the workday, and try not to spend too much time discussing the details of your separation even with close colleagues. Your career can be a constant safe haven during the chaos of a breakup, so make sure you're not sabotaging that crucial piece of stability in your life.

You'll protect your mental health this way and may even see unexpected career growth as a result.

Would like some help to navigate
the process of your separation?

Reach out to one of our team at
support@theequalgroup.co.nz

www.theequalgroup.co.nz



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