

Karen Stewart knows first-hand how taxing divorce can be – hers took more than four years to finalize and left her with a \$500,000 legal bill.

Ms. Stewart, a certified divorce financial planner, knows how exhausting, emotional and incredibly expensive it can be when separating from a partner. As founder of Fairway Divorce Solutions, she urges clients to explore options that will leave them sitting in the best financial position possible after the dust has settled.

According to Ms. Stewart, when divorce is on the table, many couples automatically head to their respective lawyers, a route that their family and friends have gone in the past. However, seeking alternatives to the traditional methods could be a more cost-effective option.

One alternative is seeking mediation through an organization like Fairway Divorce. A free consultation will provide you with a fixed rate for services and a greater understanding of the process and proceedings attached to divorce.

The goal of mediation is to have one mediator conversing with each partner individually to get each other on the same page as quickly and cost-effectively as possible. Of course, a mediator's process and costs should be compared to the process and rates of a lawyer or any other alternatives. Seeking a referral is always the best way to find a lawyer, but if you'd prefer to seek out a lawyer yourself, [click here to find a divorce/separation lawyer in your area](#). Equipping yourself with a list of questions to ask your lawyer during your first consultation will help you to determine a more realistic time and cost estimate. Ms. Stewart also recommends taking a friend or an impartial family member to each consultation, as too many people are caught up in the emotional element of their divorce, leading them to forget to ask the tough questions or share the important details that could save thousands of dollars.

Locating a professional who can help you navigate your new financial picture as early as possible is also important. Adjusting to less disposable income, the increased costs of running a household solo, and figuring out how to best restructure common investments can be overwhelming. A consultation with a financial planner can help you to get a handle on the financial impact of your upcoming divorce. Running the numbers on your divorce may actually take the emotion out of the equation, instilling logic and the urgency needed to get your divorce wrapped up as quickly and painlessly as possible.

If you're contemplating divorce, or know someone in the early stages of separation, take the time to ensure you're going the best route for the long run. Regardless of the route you ultimately take to finalize your divorce, you've worked hard together to build your net worth, so you should work hard to preserve as much of it as possible.

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