**Note: This article originally appeared in the Kansas City Star on July 23, 2025. The content of this PDF reflects the article in full, but has been modified to remove advertisements, links to video and other items not relevant to the article, nor accessible in a PDF format.**

**PERSONAL FINANCE** Financial stress can worsen the pain of divorce. Here's how to lessen it By Kelly Stiefel Arias MBA-IM, CFP

Picture it: Your spouse has moved out and the house is now empty and quiet. You are alone with your jumbled thoughts and chaotic emotions. You may be reeling from grief one day and euphoric over your newfound freedom the next. You're exhausted in the morning and energized by the afternoon. You're in therapy reflecting on life's big questions and healing from heartbreak. It's an emotional roller coaster ride.

While in this less-than-optimal state, you must deal with financial stressors and make legally binding decisions with long-term ramifications. If you, like me, are in the midst of a divorce or have already survived one, you can relate.

The grief of losing a marriage is profound, especially if the divorce was not of your choice. Even if you feel it's the right decision and will be best in the long term, it may be one of the most difficult seasons of your life.

As common as divorce has become, Americans still believe in love and marriage. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics, just over 2 million marriages occurred in 2023 in the United States.

In 2025, The Knot Real Weddings Survey found that the average cost of a wedding was $33,000. This is not an insignificant amount of money for most people.

In 2023, CDC reported that 672,502 divorces and annulments occurred. Divorces also cost money.

A simple do-it-yourself divorce may cost only a few hundred dollars. A non-contested mediated divorce may run several thousand dollars. When both parties become acrimonious and lawyer up, divorces can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

An April 17, 2024, article by Prudential states that the average cost of a divorce is $11,300. However, that's just for the divorce.

Two separate households must now be supported with what was previously a shared household income. Those homes must be furnished, and there may be child support or alimony involved. Marital assets will be divided, and dollars will flow from one party's accounts to the other's.

All prior retirement planning was based on two Social Security checks and double the asset base in a shared home. That's ancient history now, and a new plan is needed for a new set of circumstances.

This may feel like a financial nightmare, but here are some ideas to help:

If possible, keep it amicable. A mediated divorce is faster and cheaper than a litigated divorce. Lawyering up benefits the lawyers who get paid on an hourly basis. This may not be necessary if both parties are willing to work together with a mediator.

Make sure the division of assets is truly equitable. As a financial advisor, I have seen clients who didn't want to fight for what was legally theirs when they divorced. They walked away with less than what was fair, and they're suffering for it in retirement.

If the budget is now running at a deficit, find or create new sources of income for yourself. Get that oxygen mask on. You'll need cash flow to pay for your life, and it's empowering to know that you can provide for yourself.

Work with a CFP professional with experience in divorce planning. They'll have the knowledge to help you do the best you can with your unique set of circumstances.

Dream again and update your financial plan to support the beautiful life that will surely be yours once you get through this.

Experience teaches us that we can pass through difficult times and still be OK on the other end. In fact, the strength, determination and resilience formed in hard times can lay a foundation for even better things to come. Keep the faith!

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