

WISER WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Post-Divorce Financial Planning Checklist



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MANAGEMENT

This is the beginning of something good.

You did it! Now that you've made it through your lengthy divorce process and have a settlement in hand, the next step is to start your life over on the right foot. I know the divorce process is overwhelming, and that you are likely emotionally and physically drained, but you need to stay strong. Just because your divorce is finalized doesn't mean everything is a done deal. You still have a few more things to take care of and since you are solely in control of your future, now is the time to put yourself on a path for success.

After working with many clients post-divorce, I have compiled a checklist of items to address. It is important to walk through every aspect of this checklist so that you can button up each area of your financial and legal footprint. This will enable you to press the reset button for a fresh start on your new financial journey, while also ensuring that you think ahead to the future.

- Missie Beach

Meet Missie Beach, CFP®, CDFA®

Missie has 20+ years of financial planning experience. She is a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst® who is passionate about helping divorced women learn to navigate their finances and confidently plan for the future. She can provide the expertise and support you need as you embark on this new journey.



Your Post-Divorce Checklist



☐ CHANGE YOUR NAME

If desired, the easiest time to legally change your name is when the divorce is being finalized. Wrap this into the divorce settlement process instead of waiting until after the fact. It will save you a great deal of time. Just let your divorce attorney know of your intentions. Arguments can be made for keeping the married name or reverting back to your maiden name, but it's your personal preference. Your friends, family, and the business world will adapt and call you whatever you wish.



☐ CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS

If you have moved out of the marital house, change your address with the post office so that your mail is forwarded. The post office will forward mail for a year. It is also good practice to contact all service providers, friends/family, lenders, financial institutions, alma maters, airlines, employers, etc.



☐ UPDATE YOUR LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Make a beeline to see your estate attorney to update your will, power of attorney, healthcare directive, and any other legal documents that name your ex-spouse as a beneficiary or decision maker. You would be surprised at how often this critical area is overlooked. If something happened to you, would you want your ex-spouse in charge of your estate? Perhaps your children might even be adults now and able to assume some of these roles.



☐ UPDATE YOUR FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

Read and reread your divorce settlement to determine each account's disposition and update your bank accounts, investment accounts, and any other financial accounts accordingly. Remove your ex-spouse's name and update your contact information with any name and/or address changes. This is also a great opportunity to close unused accounts and consolidate repetitive accounts of the same type.



☐ CHANGE YOUR PASSWORDS

Hopefully, you've already done this while you were in the divorce process, but if not, change your passwords for everything as soon as possible. Stop reading now and change your passwords, and resume reading once you've finished. It's that critical. You don't want your ex-spouse snooping on your new financial savviness. Be sure to abandon any password naming conventions you used in the past with which your ex-spouse might have been familiar. Also, it's a good idea to enable 2-factor authentication whenever you can.



☐ UPDATE YOUR BENEFICIARIES

Make sure to change the beneficiaries on your life insurance policies at work and any outside owned policies to remove your ex-spouse as a beneficiary (if not required as a condition of the divorce settlement). Also, don't forget to change your retirement plans (401ks, IRAs or similar) and any brokerage account beneficiary from your ex-spouse. This should be prompted when you work with an attorney to update your estate plan. Also, check your 529 plans for your children. Spouses are normally listed as controlling parties so you should update this as appropriate.



☐ UPDATE YOUR EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Per the divorce settlement, contact your employer's benefits department to make any changes to your benefits. Depending on which spouse will be covering children or each other for medical/dental/vision, this is the life event where changes are possible. Change any other compensation plan beneficiaries where the ex-spouse is named and is no longer required to be named per the divorce settlement.



☐ REVIEW YOUR CREDIT REPORTS

Sign up for a free credit monitoring service like Credit Karma. Use a website like Credit Karma or annualcreditreport.com to pull your current credit report and check it for accuracy. Make sure that there aren't any joint accounts that were not closed during the divorce. Also, look for any other inaccuracies or errors that need to be corrected. Finally, go to each credit agency (Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion) and freeze your credit. This will stop anyone from opening new credit in your name. If you need a new line of credit, it is an easy process to "unfreeze" your credit temporarily.



☐ CONSULT WITH A CPA

Have you heard the phrase "Nothing is certain in life but death and taxes?" Well, this still rings true and divorce presents various scenarios of both tax savings and tax consequences. What tax bracket will you be in? What dependents can be claimed? Should your tax withholdings from your paycheck change? Talking with a CPA can help you plan taxes for the year of your divorce, but also look at tax strategies and savings for the future. The last thing you want is an unexpected tax bill after an already tough year.



☐ MEET WITH A FINANCIAL PLANNER

Another way to set yourself up for financial success is to talk with a financial planner. Going through the financial planning process can be very beneficial, especially in terms of your long-term financial future. Typically, they will look at areas including investing, cash flow management, retirement planning, risk management, estate planning, education and tax planning. Your financial advisor can help you create a new financial plan that is uniquely your own.



☐ REVIEW & ADJUST YOUR BUDGET

Now that family dynamics have changed, it is necessary to review your budget and make any necessary adjustments. A place to start is with the DRFA (Divorce Related Financial Affidavit) that you created at the beginning of the divorce process. This has all your expense categories and your monthly expenditures pre-divorce. So much changes post-divorce that you need to review each line item and ask yourself what that looks like going forward. Overall, your budget needs to decrease as one household is splitting into two. Your income (whether it is your salary alone or with spousal support and child support) needs to cover your expenses. Period. This might be the hardest part of the divorce process, but living within your means will help you long-term.



☐ SEEK SUPPORT

No one gets married and plans to get divorced one day. It takes a toll on your mental and sometimes physical health. Make sure to surround yourself with those people in your life who can be supportive. Don't dwell on the past or focus on the negatives that brought you to a divorce. Consider seeking support from a therapist who can help on a professional level. Find like-minded women (or men) who are in your situation or have walked in your shoes. Share stories of what has worked for you as you reinvent yourself, establish a new path in life, and make new goals.



☐ CELEBRATE YOUR NEW BEGINNING

I always tell my clients that while divorce is typically draining, it can also be an opportunity for a fresh start. How often in life do you get the opportunity to press that restart button? See it as a gift and take time to celebrate your new beginning and focus on your future. Buy yourself a small, indulgent gift as a reward for making it through to the other side. Look at all the positive aspects – you are now in charge of your destiny. You'll find that you feel empowered when it's just you behind the wheel, directing the course, and calling all the shots. Seize this opportunity to make the most out of your new path.

Worry less about your finances & enjoy this new stage of life.

I realize it can be stressful and overwhelming to navigate financial decisions after divorce, especially if you weren't making those decisions before. You don't have to be an expert in investing when you partner with someone who is. I can work with you to create a financial plan tailored to your unique situation and goals. I will be there to provide the expertise and support needed as you embark on this new journey.

If you have questions about how our financial planning process works, feel free to reach out. If you're ready to schedule a consultation with me, you can schedule it on your own by [clicking here](#) or by giving our office a call.



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