Ten Tips for How to Wisely Use a Divorce Lawyer:

1. **Choose wisely.** This is your only divorce. You need to feel comfortable with and confident in your attorney. In choosing your lawyer, try to get referrals from other professionals and don't just hire the first on you meet if you do not connect well with her. If major problems arise, it may be wise to switch lawyers during your case.

2. **Keep it private.** Make sure you keep your communications confidential. If you allow others into your meetings, you give up the right to keep the discussion confidential. For this and other reasons, do not bring children with you to your appointments and make sure they are out of the room when you speak with your lawyer.

3. **Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.** While bad mouthing your spouse is wrong in almost every arena, *and especially so in front of your children*, your lawyer needs to know your spouses shortcomings, as they may be relevant to your case.

4. **Prepare for your discussions.** Whether you are going to meet in person or over the phone, have a list of items you wish to discuss. Otherwise you may forget something important. Send your list to you attorney ahead of time so she can be prepared to discuss them.

5. **Don't keep secrets.** There are rules that lawyers have to follow which require them to keep what you tell them confidential. It's better if your attorney knows of potential problems with your case so he can address them proactively. The worst time for a lawyer to learn of a problem in your case is during your trial.

6. **Limit your use of e-mail.** E-mail leads to a number of problems. 1. People tend to use it with great frequency which leads to unnecessarily large bills. 2. Your communication may not be confidential. Spouses, employers, and others may be able to read your e-mail without you knowing, which can harm your case. 3. Words only tell part of the story. Your communication will be more complete if you and your lawyer can see, or at least hear, each other.

7. **Do what you're told, when you're told.** If you've chosen a good lawyer, he's divorced hundreds, if not thousands, of people. If he asks you to do something, such as provide documents by a certain date, he is doing so for a reason. Railing to follow basic instructions can complicate or damage your case and make it more expensive for you.

8. **Use other professionals.** Treat your lawyer like a lawyer, not a therapist. While lawyers are also known as counselors, they are not therapists. Almost every divorcing person should be under the care of a skilled therapist. While your lawyer may be a good listener and may give good advice, she has no training to provide therapy; she usually charges way more than your

therapist; and she doesn't take insurance. Most lawyers are not well trained tax professionals or financial advisors. Ask your lawyer if he thinks you should consult these other professionals. If she says yes, do so.

9. **Speak up!** If your case is not going how you think it should, discuss that with your lawyer. If your bill looks inaccurate, discuss that with your lawyer. If your lawyer is not as responsive as you would like, discuss that with your lawyer. Unless your attorney knows you are upset or frustrated, he is unlikely to adjust and your frustration will likely increase. If you are please with your attorney, tell her. She has a tough job and positive feedback can be helpful.

10. **Seek a second opinion.** Whether you are please with the advice you are getting or not, sometimes getting a second opinion can be helpful. Two very good lawyers may have different insights and ideas. If you learn something useful when you obtain a second option, by all means, share that with your attorney. A good lawyer will not frown on your decision to gather helpful information (especially if you tell her ahead of time).

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