



Annette Jones Shares Her Top Tips on How to Survive Separation

So you have separated from your partner. Depending on the circumstances, you may be feeling all manner of things. Some of the common feelings are sadness, anger, unhappiness, frustration, hope, and even relief. Don't worry you are not alone!

As you are probably aware separation is not a rarity, although it is different for everyone. We all cope in our own way to survive one of these most challenging times in our lives. However, help is at hand and the following is a guide I offer for separation. It certainly helped me.

Do

Attempt to work things out for property settlement with your former partner. I know it can be hard to put your emotions aside, however it will speed up the settlement process and reduce the solicitors costs.

Be realistic and get all the facts about your entitlements in a property settlement. The Women's Legal Service is great for guidelines and advice, but don't expect them to define

exactly what your entitlements are. You can find them at www.wlsq.org.au.

When you decide on a property settlement, seek a solicitor's advice. It will be the court that decides if the settlement is fair and just, however a solicitor will know too.

Monitor your children for behavioural changes; separation affects the family unit, not just Mum and Dad.

Make time for yourself every day, time to nurture and care for you. Emotionally, we are similar to a bank account - we have to make deposits before we can make withdrawals. When separation occurs there are many decisions to be made and these can be quite stressful (withdrawals). To spend time relaxing and doing the things that make your heart sing and bring you joy (deposits) is important.

Surround yourself with supportive friends and family. Girlfriends are wonderful at this time. They'll support you, entertain you, laugh with you, cry with you, or just be there for you.

Take a moment, take several moments, to sit quietly by yourself and ask, "where would I like to be 2 years from now, what would I like to be doing, where would I like to be living, and how do I want to be feeling?" Take stock of yourself. Spend some time exploring what you want out of life, what you enjoy, what you would like to experience. Dream big and put an action plan together where you do something every day to move toward these dreams. This gives you something to focus on in the tough times, and you will know you have something to look forward to in the future.

Get Grateful. What DO you have in your life right now that you are thankful for? Make a quick list of 10 things. In our fast paced world we can be guilty of thinking, if I can have this I can be happy, or if I could go there I could be

happy, if I had that job, that dream romance, that great holiday etc. Reality is, there is only now. Happiness is not a future event; you can choose to be happy now! Look around, what do you see? There is no past, that is gone, tomorrow hasn't arrived yet, so we can't live there, there is only the present. What "presents" are surrounding you that have gone unnoticed? A beautiful garden, happy children, clear blue skies and bright sunny days?

Don't

Don't necessarily employ the best family law solicitor money can buy, or one with the most impressive credentials and experience, as your partner may just use a common law solicitor. Your more experienced solicitor may then have to spend time (and your money) educating your partner's solicitor on family law. One of my letters cost over \$500 and was to educate the other solicitor on a particular point of family law!

Don't speak ill of your former partner, especially within earshot

of your children. It just makes you feel worse and creates more negative energy. Focus on what you do want and take action every day to achieve it.

Don't go on a spending spree, this is just an emotional exercise to fill the void. There will be plenty of time for celebrating your new life when all is finalised.

Don't jump into a new relationship straight away. Resolve your issues (we all have them) before developing a new relationship; otherwise your baggage will turn into luggage and will be carted into relationship after relationship.

Engage and fun after the breakdown of a relationship and works with you to start anew and even brave getting back into the dreaded 'D' word, 'Dating'.

More tips, info, help, and support can be found in Annette's book and on her website www.theseparatedwomansguide.com.

