DIVORCE
Overcome the Overwhelm and Avoid the Six Biggest Mistakes
Insights from Personal Divorce Coaches

Pegotty Cooper & Randall R. Cooper
Divorce

Overcome The Overwhelm and Avoid The Six Biggest Mistakes—Insights From Personal Divorce Coaches
PRAISE FOR

Divorce: Overcome the Overwhelm and Avoid the Six Biggest Mistakes—Insights From Personal Divorce Coaches

“I absolutely love what Pegotty and Randall Cooper have to say in this book.

I have done so much research and writing on issues pertaining to lawyer limitations, particularly when it comes to matters involving families. Lawyers serve a necessary and useful purpose in family law matters and for society as a whole. For one thing, they warn of unforeseen ‘what- ifs.’ Furthermore, words have meaning and the difference between ‘may’ and ‘shall’ could substantially change the meaning of a provision. Lawyers are wordsmiths in that regard. Moreover, divorce is a legal process.

Through working with qualified personal Divorce Coaches and other such professionals, lawyers’ limitations can be overcome. In putting together the right ‘team,’ divorcing couples can obtain better results at a lower overall cost. In this book, the Coopers help to explain how the ‘game of divorce’ should be designed to improve the odds of a successful outcome in the grand scheme of life.”

—Mark B. Baer, Esq.
Family Law Attorney/Mediator/Collaborative Law Practitioner
“This book offers a step-by-step process to confront divorce and take the necessary actions for a healthy divorce. Use this book and you will reduce the amount of time, money and emotion you expend on your divorce by no less than fifty percent. The questions at the end of each chapter offer many insights. This book can be used as a vehicle when going through divorce and also as a reflection and completion of anything unresolved as a result of the divorce. Bravo.”

—Debbie Schwarz
Judicial Assistant
Family Court Division of State of Florida

“This workbook will help you take charge of your divorce and ensure that you avoid the six most common mistakes. The authors provide easy-to-use problem solving tools and thoughtful exercises to help you rein in the emotions surrounding your divorce, and plan for the business side of the process. I applaud Pegotty and Randy for developing this workbook to help people during each stage of their divorce.”

—Laura Woodard
President, GrassRoots Marketing Group, Inc.

“Pegotty and Randy Cooper provide a practical set of tools readers can use to assess exactly where they are in the divorce process, where they want to wind up, and how to get there in an efficient, empowered and ethical manner.”

—David C. Barry, J.D., L.S.W.
Certified Divorce Coach® and Mediator

“Pegotty and Randall encourage readers to embrace their feelings and be their best selves in the face of divorce. Using this book and the process provided by these trusted coaches will help you maintain your power and dignity as you navigate the overwhelm of divorce.”

—Carla Higgins
Divorced mother of three young daughters
“As a person who’s gone through the divorce process, I understand the pain, overwhelm, confusion, and guilt that accompany the break-up of a family. Seeking guidance of trained professionals to facilitate healing is important, and Pegotty and Randall provide healthy and positive support in this book. Each chapter provides an overview of a mistake, insights about each problem, and then helps you develop clarity and a course of action before taking your next steps. The workbook format is especially helpful because it offers an opportunity for you to learn and grow as you reflect and write.

People make many mistakes during divorce, and Pegotty and Randall effectively focus on the most important ones to avoid, and then help you adopt new perspectives for a healthier divorce and a happier future. I recommend this book for anyone who feels overwhelmed by divorce.”

—Kim Clausen
Denver, CO

“A much-needed gem! Laid out in an easy-to-follow format—that takes much of the hassle out of sorting through the inevitable ‘gunk’ of a divorce—this book will evolutionize how people experience and successfully navigate all the potential traps and pitfalls of their divorce. The authors help you confidently put your divorce in the very best hands—YOURS!”

—Laurie Cameron
Master Certified Relationship Coach, Mentor Coach
Author of The Journey from Fear to Love

“Divorce can be the biggest emotional upheaval we face in a lifetime. This book reminds us to think about long-term personal goals and consider what we want to accomplish after our divorce so we can stay focused on these goals during our divorce.”

—Sue Lehman
Oakland, CA
“When I read a preview copy of this book, I found myself wishing I’d had access to this information—and a personal Divorce Coach—when I experienced divorce many years ago. A personal Divorce Coach would have encouraged me to carefully examine my choices, and perhaps I would never have given up the alimony and child support I needed and deserved. Because I was emotionally drained, I listened to my attorney, and now I realize he wasn’t working in my best interest. It’s all water under a long ago bridge, but it was a costly experience.

For those who are facing divorce today, this book is a good start to coaching yourself and finding your own wisdom. Pegotty and Randall bring their extensive experience and genuine hearts to this topic. I recommend their work and this book without reservation.”

—Lorraine Lane  
Business Coach and Author of Business-Building Referrals  
www.lorrainelane.com

“The authors of this book, personal Divorce Coaches, provide you with perspective on what to do—and what not to do—when navigating the journey of divorce. They offer you a roadmap with hazard warnings to keep you on track.”

—Wendy Ellen Coughlin, Ph.D.  
Licensed Mental Health Counselor  
Supreme Court of Florida Certified Family Mediator and Parenting Coordinator
To all those going through divorce, this book is our gift to you. If we help just one person avoid one of the biggest mistakes, it will have been worth it to us to write this book. Unwrap your gift.

Pegotty and Randall R. Cooper
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THE OVERWHELMING NATURE OF DIVORCE

Divorce. It’s a word that certainly didn’t enter your mind on the day you said, “I do.” Never in a million years did you think you’d be facing divorce—but here you are. It’s now a very real part of your life. According to the American Institute of Stress, divorce is one of the most stressful processes a person can undergo, second only to the death of a spouse.\(^1\) In fact, many people equate divorce with the death of a marriage. Coming to terms with the fact that you and your spouse will not experience *till death do us part* can exact emotional and physical tolls—and overwhelm every aspect of your life.

Between the difficulties of explaining the end of the marriage to family and friends, the grief over the loss of a valued relationship, and the pressure and anxiety of dealing with a legal process that has its own protocols and language it’s easy for those going through divorce to become overwhelmed to the point where they are out of touch with their everyday lives and have difficulty executing what used to be a normal routine. Your work life may be affected, your social life may change, and your emotional and physical health may suffer.

*Work Life*

Peak performance at work becomes challenging during divorce. Your feelings of failure in your marriage may transfer to your work. You

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\(^1\) Source: www.stress.org
may begin to view your work as insignificant or regard your work in a negative way, which could lead to subpar performance. You may also be distracted and unable to focus on the quality of your work and the attainment of your goals. This puts your future at risk at a time when you definitely do not need additional overwhelming stressors.

Social Life

You may find being around others is overwhelming during divorce, so you begin to detach from friends and family. Loneliness and depression can overcome you, and many times you may respond in unintentionally crass or crude ways because you feel so overpowered. You know you’re not acting like the “real you,” but you can’t help yourself—and others may no longer be willing or able to approach you.

Those you may be counting on to be part of your support circle may also feel their loyalty is torn and, rather than choosing allegiance to either “side,” your friends may back away to avoid being perceived as favoring one particular person or the other.

Family Life

Whether you realize it or not, when you’re overwhelmed by divorce you may isolate yourself from family members or pick unnecessary fights out of jealousy for a real or imagined situation. If children are involved, divorce can also overwhelm parenting. At a time when parental awareness is critical, you may be unable to focus on the day-to-day attention your children so badly need.

Physical and Mental Health

Lack of sleep, poor eating habits, emotional turmoil, and loss of exercise all contribute to feeling deluged and overwhelmed during divorce. When you don’t feel your best physically and mentally, dealing with even the slightest challenge is difficult, and divorce usually involves tremendous stress and major upheavals that require huge reserves of physical and emotional strength and resilience (“bounce-back-ability”).
The overwhelming nature of divorce can challenge your cognitive abilities and influence even your simplest thoughts and actions. What you usually consider to be routine tasks and easy decisions suddenly take monumental efforts to achieve. Simple things such as obeying a stoplight, picking up the dry cleaning, ensuring the security system for the home has been activated or simply taking out the trash on time become a challenge. When you’re overwhelmed, you experience a decline in thinking skills, the ability to remember and reason, and the ability to make sound decisions.

Divorce is a process that can overwhelm your life. If not approached properly, decisions made during this period can result in serious mistakes that can have long-term consequences for everyone involved. The overwhelming nature of divorce leads to six common, yet entirely avoidable, mistakes: forgetting who the decision makers are, taking a “my way or the highway” approach to negotiation, limiting your resources to only your attorney, throwing in the towel, betting the farm on another relationship, and wanting guarantees and certainty. These six mistakes are far from inconsequential mishaps: They can lead to a number of major legal, financial, and other wrong turns.

So, how do you cope with being overwhelmed and avoid the six biggest mistakes people make in divorce? How can you embark on your journey, maintain your dignity and sense of self, and make the best decisions? The first step is to acknowledge that, while divorce can be overwhelming, any obstacles the process presents can be overcome with the help of others. Now is not the time to try to “go it alone.” There are too many important decisions to make, and you need personal and professional support as you travel through the mounds of legal, financial and emotional issues you face. Certain experts can explain the legalities, outline your options, and identify the consequences, but not all professionals can help you help yourself.
That’s what a personal Divorce Coach does. A personal Divorce Coach provides guidance as you sort through your thoughts, helps you tap into your creative and problem-solving skills, and prepares you mentally for the rollercoaster of emotions you’ll experience. A Divorce Coach ensures you don’t have to “go it alone.”

In this book we are giving you insights about how to coach yourself as a start to moving through the overwhelm which often leads to making the biggest avoidable mistakes in divorce. Use the insights we have gotten from our work with hundreds of divorce clients to help you tap into your wisdom. And if after doing the reflective exercises in this book you aren’t getting the traction you want, or you keep finding yourself in the overwhelm, a personal Divorce Coach can be a great partner in helping you to move forward, to gain clarity and confidence so that you have the courage to move forward in your divorce journey.
PERSONAL DIVORCE COACHES

Whenever we hear the term *coach* in connection with football, baseball, or any other sport, we automatically understand what a coach is and what a coach does: coaches support their teams by providing strategy, tactics, and feedback to achieve the overall goal of winning. In recent years, particularly in the last decade, industries other than sports have embraced the coaching concept. Personal coaching has emerged as a significant force in helping people overcome the obstacles which prevent them from moving forward. Personal coaching does not replace therapy or mental health counseling; and many professionals have begun to develop a parallel practice of coaching as part of their service to clients.

The International Coach Federation, recognized widely for establishing the core competencies of coaching, defines coaching as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. It is an ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses, or organizations.” In other words, not unlike sports coaches, personal coaches work together with their clients to assess where they are today and help them set goals for where they want to be in the future. Coaches then help their clients create and execute the plans to achieve those goals. Personal Divorce Coaches do that as well, and they specialize in helping those going through divorce. Personal Divorce Coaches may be called upon during any of the three phases of divorce.
The Three Phases of Divorce

The divorce process encompasses three phases: pre-, during, and post-divorce. The pre-divorce phase begins the moment you first experience frustration, insecurity, or dissatisfaction in your marriage and consider divorcing a viable option. During this phase, you may suspect things aren’t right and fear finding out the truth. You may also have a gut feeling your spouse has already abandoned the relationship. It’s not uncommon for many individuals to develop deep issues of anxiety and anger that can take an emotional and physical toll.

You may ask yourself: Should I or shouldn’t I? What should I be doing now to protect myself? How can I ensure stability for my family? What plans do I need to make if, indeed, divorce is the answer?

The second phase of divorce, during divorce, can be a tumultuous process for both spouses as they enter this period of transition from married to legally-divorced. This stage usually begins with one spouse’s decision to dissolve the marriage and ends with the legal settlement and divorce decree.

Once the legal process is complete, the post-divorce phase begins. Now that all assets have been divided, and the divorce is final, you can take positive steps and move toward the next chapter in your life.

How Can a Personal Divorce Coach Help?

When anyone undergoes a life-changing experience, it’s important to have as many support systems in place as possible. Although family and friends may give sympathy and encouragement, they can’t provide the expert advice and support of a personal Divorce Coach.

Sound Decision Making

A personal Divorce Coach provides you with a sounding board and thinking partner, a professional who can help you make sound decisions based on rational choices and practicalities rather than on sheer emotion and impulsive behavior. Sound decision making
entails looking at various options and assessing how each will likely unfold in the future. It also involves being willing to listen to others whose opinion may differ from your own, as well as seeking the perspectives of experts who have a better view of how these situations like yours usually turn out in a court of law and in real life. And, let’s face reality: Divorce is a highly emotional process for almost everyone involved. A personal Divorce Coach will help you step back from your immediate emotions and understand what you to believe to be your best-case and worst-case scenarios, and that will help you in discussions with your attorney or mediator.

Goal Setting

A personal Divorce Coach works with you to set and achieve goals—for yourself and your family. This includes taking the next step in preparing yourself for the process of divorce, as well as laying the foundations for a successful future and helping you transition to your new role as you enter the next chapter of your life.

Building Resilience

Resilience is an individual’s ability to bounce back from tough times. A process for pulling out the strengths you already have and enhancing your ability to find the reserves to keep going in a more-than-difficult situation. A personal Divorce Coach helps you build your personal strategy for resilience so you can deal more effectively with the change and disappointment of divorce.

Remaining True to Your Purpose and Values

When you are overwhelmed by divorce, you may cast aside your personal values or standards, and forget about your life purpose. A personal Divorce Coach will help you reacquaint yourself with your values and determine which of those values you want to fully honor during the divorce process. (For a complimentary values assessment, please visit www.CertifiedDivorceCoach.com/values.) If you’ve never given thought to your life purpose, there is no better
time than the present. Don’t worry if it sounds cumbersome: Your personal Divorce Coach will guide you through this process.

Tim Kelley, in his book, *True Purpose* ², defines life purpose as “the difference you’re meant to make.” Keeping your personal values and “the difference you’re meant to make” front and center during your divorce will make your decisions easier and your choices more clear.

*Leaving Your Baggage at the Door*

We all have “baggage” we carry around with us: judgments, thoughts, feelings, automatic ways of responding, past experiences, and more that affect our behavior and decisions. As you enter the divorce process, it’s important to let go of that baggage—or at least leave it at the door. You don’t need additional worries overshadowing your interactions with your children, spouse or the divorce professionals with whom you’ll work throughout your journey. Your personal Divorce Coach helps you examine your baggage and figure out how to put it aside until you’re ready to get rid of it completely.

*Alternative Approaches*

A personal Divorce Coach can help you understand the various process options available to you as you navigate the process of divorce. The most common methods, depending upon the circumstances, include retaining separate family attorneys to represent each spouse, engaging in collaborative divorce, joining together to hire a mediator, or engaging in self-representation.

Personal Divorce Coaches work with you in a very holistic way and help you to address a wide variety of concerns that come up during the divorce process. Their multifaceted approach includes helping you examine your particular needs and helping you understand the impact

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² *True Purpose* by Tim Kelley. Transcendent Solutions Press (April 1, 2009)
of every decision you make from start to finish. A personal Divorce Coach can help you through the rough spots in your divorce in three areas: the business of divorce; setting and accomplishing goals, and doing the internal work that leads to a happier and healthier life. Personal Divorce Coaches help you in ways that include understanding the impact of the decision to divorce and getting organized for the process to helping you communicate more effectively. In short, they’ll help you avoid the biggest mistakes people make in divorce. When you can nip these mistakes in the bud it is easier to change the course of your divorce.

Your personal Divorce Coach will provide an understanding, nonjudgmental, and patient environment that nurtures you as an individual and fosters feelings of safety and support. This environment, which coaches are specifically trained in, helps empower clients. And because personal Divorce Coaches don’t dispense legal advice, they’re not bound to serving clients by geographical limitations.

A personal Divorce Coach:

• prepares you for the process of divorce by helping you organize papers and other materials, recording questions you
may have, and providing a sounding board as you clarify your priorities about property, parenting, and future needs.

• helps you avoid huge emotional and financial mistakes.
• identifies key areas of decision-making during the divorce process.
• helps you employ a sound decision-making process.
• focuses on what’s important to you and helps you set goals accordingly.
• works with you to define a path for achieving your goals, and supports you as you move forward.
• helps you to build a strategy for building resilience and using your best strengths.
• enhances your understanding of the divorce process by providing professional experience and educational resources.
• helps you develop better communication skills so you will be more credible during the legal process.
• helps you understand the potential pitfalls you may encounter and provides you with strategies for avoiding these pitfalls.
• assists you with resources during the divorce transition and helps you lay new foundations for the future.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Pegotty Cooper and Randall R. Cooper have been happily married for 30 years. Both of their first marriages ended in divorce. Today, they are not only partners in marriage, they also are partners in business: They are the founders of Divorce Coaching, Inc., a firm that trains and certifies individuals to become personal Divorce Coaches.

After 25 years working in executive positions in large organizations, Pegotty decided to start her own coaching practice. She’s been coaching—and assisting people undergoing divorce—for more than a decade. In addition to her experience in life and business, Pegotty’s qualifications include certifications from several highly reputable coach training organizations: the Coach Training Alliance, 6 Advisors Coaching Academy, Arbinger Institute, ReCareer Institute, and The Productive Tension Institute.

Randall enjoyed a long career in the Financial Services industry, including executive positions at major financial institutions, and ultimately established his own fee-only financial planning practice. After becoming a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst™, in 2005 Randall was certified as a family mediator by the Supreme Court of Florida.

As a family mediator, he facilitates negotiations between couples during all aspects of the decision-making process and helps them reach a settlement agreement.
After he was certified as a Financial Coach in 2010, Randall experienced a revelation: Although he enjoyed working as a family mediator, he really wanted to also work with individuals involved in the divorce process. Because mediators are not permitted to work with only one spouse, Randall decided he also wanted to be a personal Divorce Coach. At that time, most personal Divorce Coaches focused on the post-divorce transition of their clients. Randall, however, knew that the greatest opportunity to make a difference in the outcomes of the divorce process occurs at the beginning of the process: helping each client view the overall process, determine clear wants and needs, and plan short- and long-term strategies to effectively maneuver through the divorce process while avoiding the biggest, most common mistakes people make.

Randall’s original idea has since gained momentum, and three years ago, he and Pegotty founded Divorce Coaching, Inc. To develop a curriculum that would meet the high standards for their CDC Certified Divorce Coach® training and certification program—taught through the CDC College for Divorce Coaching®—Randall and Pegotty consulted several highly trained and experienced professionals who serve individuals engaged in the divorce process. CDC Certified Divorce Coaches must meet rigorous standards established by the CDC Board of Standards®. To date, Pegotty and Randall have graduated more than 50 personal Divorce Coaches and have conducted dozens of classes on The Biggest Mistakes People Make in Divorce.

Pegotty and Randall developed the CDC College for Divorce Coaching®, the CDC Board of Standards®, Divorce Coach Ethics and Professional Responsibilities guidelines, and additional requirements to establish professional criteria for Divorce Coaching.

Pegotty and Randall reside in the Tampa Bay area with their two adopted cats, and enjoy all of the activities and natural attractions on the west coast of Florida: walking on the beach, snorkeling, birding, kayaking, biking, and exploring.