

# YOUR BITTERSWEET BEGINNING

A Workbook To Inspire Your Fresh Start

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Exclusively for clients of

MAIN LINE  
FAMILY LAW CENTER





# Welcome!

And congratulations on taking this important step in creating your next chapter. You've chosen a fantastic professional to assist you with the legal aspects of your divorce.

But divorce is a Human Process, with a legal document attached to it. This workbook is designed to help you create a strong foundation for everything else.

Whether the thought of your post-divorce future fills you with dread or delight, that's OK. It's even OK to feel a little bit (or a lot) of both emotions.

The time you spent with your ex was not worthless. It was meaningful. It had purpose. While on that path, you laughed, lived, and learned. You grew as a person. And now that your relationship is complete, it's time to move forward. To forge a new path, as the new person you are today... and to create the new person you will become tomorrow.

Are you ready? The answer is Yes. If it wasn't, you wouldn't be reading this. Right here, right now, you are where you need to be. You are embarking on a new chapter, and you're going to make it the best one yet.

Right? The answer, again, is Yes.

Let's get started.

*-Tara*



**“If you don’t know where you’re going,  
you might wind up someplace else.” – Yogi Berra**



# Part 1

## *Get Clear On Who You Are And Where You’re Going*

Divorce can bring a period of darkness and confusion. It's not uncommon for people to feel lost in the process of decisions, division, and disconnection. And while there are countless professionals available to assist you with everything from alimony to visitation, one of the most helpful things is something you can do yourself.

What am I talking about? I'm talking about identifying your values and setting goals.

It might sound goofy or nerdy. You might think another task is too much to take on. Or perhaps you're operating under one overarching goal to simply get through each day. But goals can prove to be well worth the effort, with long-term payouts.

### **Benefits of Setting Goals:**

- 1. Goals keep you grounded.** The process of setting goals takes you out of your emotions and gives the logical side of your brain something to do. And once your goals are set, they provide a continuous reason to be rational. From that point forward, you can consider your actions with respect to your goals. For instance, would a spontaneous shopping spree help you meet your monthly savings goal? Probably not. Having goals helps you make more productive decisions.
- 2. Goals set a foundation with your ex.** For those who share children, their relationship doesn't magically end with the delivery of a divorce decree. That's why it's important to cultivate a working relationship with your child's other parent. And what better way to do that than to set a common goal? Co-parents are more cooperative when they know they're not competing against each other, but rather working toward an intended outcome.
- 3. Goals provide stability for children.** Kids in transition crave security. They want to know what to expect, and they need to feel as if they have some control over their lives. Setting goals within your family can help. Your goal could be as simple as working to complete a puzzle. Or you might have more advanced aspirations such as planning to decorate a bedroom or hunting for a house that has two bathrooms and a pool. Regardless of the size, goals help children envision a specific future, and they know how they can play a part in making their vision a reality. As an added bonus, you'll likely find the process inspires deeper communication and strengthens your bond.
- 4. Goals brighten the view of the future (and therefore, the present).** In the darkness of divorce, the future might be unfathomable. I understand. It's easy to get bogged down in the drama and focus solely on the multitude of tasks that need attention in the moment. But what if you had a beautiful vision of what you'd like your life to look like at this time next year? What if you saw past the momentary madness, realizing that today gets you one step closer to your beach vacation or your dream job? Perhaps you'd wake up in the morning feeling hopeful and inspired to take action. Perhaps the momentary madness would be just a little less maddening.

In the following pages, you'll have an opportunity to explore your values before setting some intentions and goals for this new chapter in your life...

# What Are Your Values?

One key component in determining your goals is to first be clear about your top values and intentions. Circle your top 5 values from the list below and refer to them as you set your goals.

AUTHENTICITY	DETERMINATION	LEARNING	SPIRITUALITY
ACHIEVEMENT	FAIRNESS	LOVE	SPONTANEITY
ADVENTURE	FAITH	LOYALTY	STRUCTURE
AUTHORITY	FAME	MERIT	THANKFULNESS
AUTONOMY	FRIENDSHIP	OPENNESS	THOROUGHNESS
BALANCE	FUN	OPTIMISM	TOLERANCE
BEAUTY	GROWTH	PEACE	TRADITIONALISM
BOLDNESS	HAPPINESS	PLEASURE	TRUST
COMPASSION	HONESTY	POISE	TRUTH
CHALLENGE	HUMOR	POPULARITY	UNDERSTANDING
COMMUNITY	INGENUITY	RECOGNITION	UNITY
CONNECTION	HARMONY	RESPECT	VISION
CONTRIBUTION	JUSTICE	RESPONSIBILITY	VITALITY
CREATIVITY	KINDNESS	SECURITY	WEALTH
CURIOSITY	KNOWLEDGE	SERVICE	WISDOM

# Choose Your Intentions

Another powerful step before setting goals is to choose some intentions for yourself and the way you want to live your life.

Intentions differ from goals because they are more open-ended, less specific, and serve as a general direction rather than a final destination. After reviewing your values, you might choose a few simple words of intention...

## EXAMPLES:

Respect

Peace

Joy

Create

Growth

Love

Or you could choose a few statements of intention...

## EXAMPLES:

“I intend to seek understanding in all areas of conflict in my life.”

“I intend to shine light on darkness.”

“I intend to live with an attitude of gratitude.”

“I intend to embrace curiosity over fear.”

“I intend to create peace within me, regardless of what’s going on outside.”

# Choose Your Intentions

Use the space below to make notes about the values and intentions you would like to hold as you move forward on your journey.

# Ready... Set... Goal!

## Tips and Tricks For Setting Goals

- 1. Set SMART Goals:** Specific, Measureable, Achievable (and agreed, if setting shared goals), Realistic, Time-Specific

This framework can help, especially if you're working toward a shared goal with your ex. When you clarify as many aspects as possible, you'll find it easier to determine your action plan.

- 2. Have a Support System.** You don't have to do this alone. Working one-on-one with a coach can help you focus and your coach will hold you accountable. Or you might trust a friend or a family member to support you through the process. Whatever support you choose, don't be afraid to reach out when you need some empathy or optimistic cheering.

- 3. Remember Your "Why."** Don't forget to remind yourself what you want and why you want it. You can journal about your feelings or create a vision board to portray your end result. You might also post motivational messages or pictures around your home to help you stay on track.

- 4. Schedule Time to Focus.** Revisit your goals each week and make any necessary alterations to your plans. This is a good time to look back at how far you've come and also look ahead to consider the important next steps.

- 5. Determine and Reward Milestones.** If your larger goals feel overwhelming, break them down into mini-milestones. Throughout the process, focus on reaching the next milestone instead of the final goal. Along the way, take time to celebrate your accomplishments and give yourself a reward.



# Ready To Start Writing?

This workbook is intended to provide inspiration and guidance. There's no pressure to set a specific amount of goals or even to have one in each category. Where you choose to list goals, it might also be helpful to list your "why," as well as any milestones you'd like to recognize along the way. But it's all up to you. This is your process. Enjoy!

# Relationship Goals

You'll be creating a new type of relationship with your ex and the members of his/her family. If you have children, you have a similar opportunity to refresh or recreate relationships with them. What do you want these new and (hopefully) improved relationships to look like? How do you want to feel in them? And don't forget to evaluate your friendships too. It might be time to reconnect with old friends or search for a different crowd to encourage and support you in the new chapter of your journey.

## My Relationship Goals Are...

# Relationship Goals

**“By the mile, it’s a trial.  
By the inch, it’s a cinch.”**

## Financial Goals

Money touches all aspects of life. Perhaps you and your ex would like to set a spending limit on your divorce, ensuring you retain enough assets to divide. You might decide to begin saving additional money for kids' activities, a vacation, or a home improvement fund. Perhaps it's time to make some adjustments to your monthly budget or retirement plan.

## My Financial Goals Are...

# Financial Goals

**“When obstacles arise, you change your direction to reach your goal; you do not change your decision to get there.” – Zig Ziglar**

# Home Goals

Whether you're still in the marital home or you've moved on, it's important that you feel at home where you live. You can set goals focused on painting, planting, cleaning, or whatever unique improvements you desire. You might involve roommates or other family members in this process so they too can feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in their home.

## My Home Goals Are...

# Home Goals

**“Go as far as you can see; when you get there, you’ll be able to see further.” – Thomas Carlyle**

## Other Goals to Consider

## Fun Future Goals

## Big Dreams

## Professional Development

## Personal Health/Wellness

# Other Goals to Consider

# Part 2

## *Take Care of Yourself*

You might have heard the saying, “self-care isn’t selfish.”

It’s true. In fact, self-care is a key element in moving through breakup or divorce in a healthy manner. You can’t fully perform your other duties in life (as a parent, friend, employee, volunteer, etc.) unless you’re taking care of yourself first.

Remember: Put the oxygen mask on yourself before assisting others.

In this module, we’ll focus on the three elements of self-care:

*Respect Yourself*  
*Protect Yourself*  
*Invest in Yourself*

# Take Care of Yourself

## RESPECT YOURSELF Reflective Questions

What does “respect” mean to me?

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How do I show respect to others in my life?

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Have I respected myself as much as I’ve given respect to others?

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# Take Care of Yourself

## **Self-Care Step 1: RESPECT YOURSELF**

**The first step in respecting yourself is to accept yourself.** Wherever you are, whoever you are, and however you feel is OK. This is the current reality, and it's OK.

In fact, the knowledge that comes from examining your current situation is powerful. By noticing your feelings, you can determine your needs and take positive action to meet them.

**After accepting where you are, it's time to examine your self talk.** What kind of language is the voice inside your head using?

- Is it kind, considerate, and compassionate?
- Or are you kicking yourself while you’re down?
- Are you punishing yourself over what you “should” be doing?

# RESPECT YOURSELF

Make a commitment to keep your self-talk positive and respectful.

Speak to yourself like you would a cherished friend.

## NOTES/THOUGHTS

# Take Care of Yourself

Next, consider your overall health (combining the physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual aspects of your life). Are you overindulging in certain areas while neglecting other aspects of your wellbeing?

- Do you overeat or oversleep?
- Do you focus on your physical health, pumping iron at the gym while falling apart on the inside?
- Are you paralyzed by fear, feeling overwhelmed, and neglecting all aspects of health?
- Are you overachieving at work and accomplishing “success” while your spiritual wellbeing suffers?

This step invites you to do some deep self discovery. Where are you hurting? And in what ways are you hurting yourself? What's important to you right now? How can you meet these needs?

# RESPECT YOURSELF

Aim for a balance in your overall health.

## NOTES/THOUGHTS

# Take Care of Yourself

**Another important step in Respecting Yourself has to do with the company you keep.** Set your ex aside for a minute and think about your professional and social circles. Who are these people? Are they members of your support squad? Ask some important questions and consider making adjustments based on your answers.

- Can you speak for yourself amongst these individuals?
- Do these people respect you?
- Do you enjoy the company of these individuals?
- Do you feel supported in this group?

Are these people setting a good example for you? Does this group present a positive example for your children? Do you share values with this group? How do you feel when you're with them? Is this where you belong?

# RESPECT YOURSELF

Run with the right crowd.

## NOTES/THOUGHTS

# Take Care of Yourself

## Self Care Step 2: PROTECT YOURSELF

**This part of self-care is all about boundaries.** Protecting yourself is about your personal safety and emotional wellbeing as well as your humanity.

Let's start with securing your home. Is it appropriate for you to step up your security by **changing the locks, installing a security system, or perhaps getting a dog?**

Additionally, consider the boundaries within your home. What can you do to **ensure you have privacy and personal space to enjoy some quiet moments**? What doors can you close or lock? Can you create rules about noise after a certain time? In what ways can you escape besides physically escaping? A bubble bath? Reading a book? A 5-minute meditation?

## PROTECT YOURSELF

Secure your home, as well as your personal space within your home.

## NOTES/THOUGHTS

# Take Care of Yourself

**Next, let's talk about Social Media Boundaries.** These days protecting yourself online is just as important as protecting yourself offline. Here are some quick tips:

- Change your passwords (this goes for non-social accounts too).
- Think about what you're sharing, and with whom you're sharing it.
- Check your privacy settings and create lists on Facebook.
- Be careful about sharing divorce details online. Some information is confidential and anything you share can be used against you.
- Consider your connection with your ex, as well as your ex's family and friends. What are you comfortable seeing online? Is it time to unsubscribe, unfriend, or block?

**Apply similar logic to your offline relationships.** Who can you trust? Be sure you're sharing appropriately. Set boundaries on contentious conversation, and communicate the consequences when a line is crossed.

## PROTECT YOURSELF

Set and adhere to relationship boundaries on and offline.

## NOTES/THOUGHTS

# Take Care of Yourself

**Now I want you to consider a more personal form of protection: protecting your mind and your humanity.** A lot of people allow themselves to become hardened through the divorce process. They adopt an angry attitude about love and friendship. They abandon hope and thwart the healing process. Don't let that be you.

In addition to setting boundaries in your home and your relationships, consider limiting what you allow to go into your mind. Is the news bringing you down? Are you watching violent TV shows that heighten your anxiety? Do you easily get caught up in others' drama?

It might be time to **turn off the TV, hang up the phone, and maybe even take a break from social media altogether.**

Protect your kindness, compassion, and ability to love, accept and connect with others by feeding your mind and heart things that feel good.

# PROTECT YOURSELF

Reduce your exposure to negativity.

## NOTES/THOUGHTS

# Take Care of Yourself

**One last boundary to consider is money.** When considering your current and future financial picture (income and obligations), think about any limitations that might be a good idea. Is it time to downsize your car, home, or credit card spending limits?



# PROTECT YOURSELF

## Set boundaries to curb spending

## NOTES/THOUGHTS

# Take Care of Yourself

## Self-Care Step 3: INVEST IN YOURSELF

**The final component of self-care sounds like a financial commitment, but it doesn't have to be.** You can invest in yourself by devoting time, money, or focused attention toward the goals you previously set for yourself. Before getting started, consider what it is you're investing in. Take a few minutes to picture your Ideal Self (perhaps refer back to your goals). Who are you in a few years? Imagine it, and then begin...

# INVEST IN YOURSELF

## Financially

- Contributions to your retirement account
- Savings (rainy day, vacation fund, etc.)
- Team up with a professional financial advisor

# INVEST IN YOURSELF

## Emotionally

Therapy  
Coaching  
Journaling  
Spending time with friends  
Spending time alone

## NOTES/THOUGHTS

# Take Care of Yourself

# INVEST IN YOURSELF

## Spiritually

Go to church

## Switch to a different faith community

Spend time in nature

## Read books

Attend seminars/workshops/retreats

# INVEST IN YOURSELF

## Physically

## Diet

## Exercise

## Nip/tuck

## Personal products

## Hairstyle

## Wardrobe

# INVEST IN YOURSELF

## Mentally

## Books

## Courses/trainings

## Back to school

# Take Care of Yourself

# INVEST IN YOURSELF

## Professionally

Consider your career track

## Further education

## Additional responsibilities

## Wardrobe

## Resume writing services

## Staffing agency

# INVEST IN YOURSELF

## Personally

## Hobbies

## Vacation

## Rest and relaxation

## Massage

## Girls/Guys night out

What makes your soul sing?

## NOTES/THOUGHTS

# Part 3

## Mark This Occasion



When you think about it, our society has a number of rituals to contain a variety of occasions over the course of a lifetime.

We have baby showers.

We have birthday parties.

We have graduation ceremonies.

We have retirement celebrations.

We have funerals.

Oh, and of course, we have weddings.

But what about when it comes to divorce? (never mind the snarky divorce parties featuring PG-rated cakes and burning photos of the ex)

Unfortunately, our culture has no uniform norms for dealing with divorce. We have no social structure to acknowledge the grief, honor the union, and mark the new beginning.

This void invites chaos. Without social support, divorcees sink into grief and become enveloped by shame. Exes blame each other in a desperate attempt to feel better about themselves. Children's hearts get broken. And families are destroyed.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

I invite you to step up and set a new example by holding your own personal separation ceremony.

# Mark This Occasion

## Your Separation Ceremony Honoring What Ended And Recognizing A New Beginning

Think of a separation ceremony as a combination of a wedding and a funeral. It's a ritual of celebration: an occasion to honor the past, accept your losses and look forward with optimism while you vow to take positive action as you step into the next chapter of your life.

A separation ceremony can include both you and your ex, allowing you to release each other with respect. It is a forum through which you might speak vows to each other and your children as your family evolves. Or, a separation ceremony can be a more solitary affair where you alone acknowledge your journey and vow to appropriately care for yourself as you move forward.

Your ceremony should be unique to you, your family, and your needs. You might choose to invite lots of friends and family members and follow the ceremony with cake, champagne, and celebration. Or, you might opt for a solo shindig in your home, surrounded by your favorite flowers and poetry, while soft music plays in the background.

You might not be ready for a ceremony just yet, and that's OK. One day, you'll know it's time.



# Mark This Occasion

## Before Your Ceremony

### Exercise: Expressing And Releasing Emotions

In order to move forward in the healthiest way possible, you'll want to release anything that no longer serves you. This might be toxic emotions or resentments from the past. It might also be some unhelpful beliefs about yourself, life, or love. Whatever it is, this exercise can help you solidify your intention to move ahead, unencumbered by this negativity. You can do this alone, or incorporate it into your separation ceremony.

- 1. WRITE YOUR FEELINGS.** You can do this in the form of a letter to your ex, to yourself, or to The Universe. Share your deepest turmoil, the lessons you've learned, and your intentions as you move forward.
- 2. RE-READ THE LETTER.** Do you feel satisfied with what's written? If anything is missing, add it now and read it again.
- 3. BURN YOUR LETTER.** Take your letter and a fire-proof container outside under appropriate conditions (not too dry, not raining, not too windy) and light your words on fire. Watch as the element of fire transforms your words and the smoke carries your intentions into the air. Say a little prayer that pertains to what you had written.
- 4. BURY THE ASHES.** Add some water to fully extinguish any embers and pour the remnants of your ceremony into the Earth, preferably in an area of vegetation. Trust that the natural cycles will recycle your pain/anger/etc. into new growth.

# Mark This Occasion

## Now It's Time To Plan Your Ceremony

First, think about your vows. Throughout this program, you've set goals, embraced appropriate support, and considered healthy self-care. From this day forward, you'll be spending the rest of your life with YOU. What would you like to promise the person you see in the mirror?

## VOWS TO MYSELF:

# Mark This Occasion

## Now It's Time To Plan Your Ceremony

Next, think about your ex, the past you've shared, and any future involvement you might have. This is an opportunity for you to convey gratitude and set an intention. What would you like to say?

## VOWS TO MY EX:

# Mark This Occasion

## Now It's Time To Plan Your Ceremony

Do you have children? If so, what vows would you like to make to them?

## VOWS TO MY CHILDREN:

# Mark This Occasion

## Now It's Time To Plan Your Ceremony

Now it's time to think about your guest list. Will this be a family affair? A solo celebration? Or an intimate gathering?

I'D LIKE TO INVITE THE FOLLOWING FAMILY MEMBERS...

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I'D LIKE TO INVITE THE FOLLOWING FRIENDS...

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IF USING AN OFFICIANT, I'D PREFER...

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# Mark This Occasion

## Now It's Time To Plan Your Ceremony

Close your eyes and imagine your separation ceremony. Is it a formal affair? Or are you barefoot in the forest? Is there music? Are there flowers? What does the air smell like? Where is the light coming from? Are there spiritual readings?

THE SETTING FOR MY CEREMONY WILL BE...

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THE DRESS CODE FOR MY CEREMONY WILL BE...

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I'D LIKE TO INCORPORATE THE FOLLOWING MUSIC, POETRY, ART, ETC...

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WHEN THE CEREMONY IS OVER, I'D LIKE TO...

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# Mark This Occasion

## Now It's Time To Plan Your Ceremony

Use this space to make any additional notes about your vision for this occasion...

# YOUR BITTERSWEET BEGINNING

## CONGRATULATIONS!

This is the official end of the workbook. If you've made it this far, you're already writing the next chapter of your life! I hope this work has left you feeling inspired and confident... ready and willing to tackle whatever comes next.

Please know that I'm sending you happy vibes and best wishes as you move forward on your unique path. May you live, laugh, and love bigger and better than ever :)

*-Tara*



## Extra Thoughts/Notes

