## Goals for Divorce

The process of legal divorce is frequently complicated by the fact that participants, including the parties and their attorneys, often enter the process with conﬂicting agendas motivated primarily by self interest. Alliances form between attorneys and clients to further the agenda of the client. They work to this end using an adversarial process which too often pits one family member against the other, frequently to the detriment of the family as a whole.

### As a forensic psychiatrist, I've witnessed the impact of high conﬂict divorces on families. My book and articles ofer practical strategies supported by mental health professionals for establishing common goals that prioritize children's well-being. Learn to navigate divorce with maturity and compassion to build a healthier family dynamic post-separation.

Establishing common goals for the divorce which is adopted by all participants usually lessens the turbulent nature of the adversarial process used to resolve disputes. The adoption of a list of common goals should be accomplished when the legal process is ﬁrst initiated. The list of common goals should then be used as a means of keeping everyone on track and diminishing conﬂict as the legal divorce unfolds. This list should include the following:

1. To protect children from parental disputes by not placing them in a position of siding with one parent over the other.
2. To minimize the losses that the children experience, including the loss of their home, friends, school environment, healthcare providers, sitters, family traditions, and familial relationships, including their relationships with parents, siblings, and extended family members.
3. To support the relationships between siblings.
4. To always make decisions in the children’s best interest, including the development of a parenting plan.
5. To promote the healing of wounds and feelings of loss that family members inevitably experience.
6. To provide the children time with each parent suficient to allow them to have meaningful relationships based on the children’s emotional and developmental needs and the ability of the parents to satisfy their needs.
7. To develop a system of communication between the parents that allows them to make decisions regarding the children, coordinate parenting eforts, and develop a new family structure based on what is best for the children.
8. To divide assets in a manner that is fair and allows both parents to remain on their feet from the time of the separation forward.
9. To manage one’s emotions in a mature fashion and refrain from acting out feelings in a destructive manner.
10. To resolve parental disputes in a minimally adversarial fashion using the least expensive means available.
11. To remain emotionally available to the children throughout the divorce or provide them a relationship with another adult who can meet their emotional needs if the parents are unable to do so.
12. To minimize the number of life circumstances to which the children must adjust, including the introduction of new family members (such as paramours and their children), a move to a diferent environment, a signiﬁcant change in the parents’ work schedules, and a signiﬁcant decline in their standard of living.

Meeting these goals takes work, patience, maturity, and emotional strength. It means putting one’s own needs second to the children’s. And it means thinking before acting. Although adhering to these goals can be very dificult at times, your children will thank you later.

***Learn the proven strategies from me, as I’m a behavioral health therapist to foster a constructive divorce process. Understand common goals that protect children, preserve family relationships, and promote healing. Whether you're going through a divorce or supporting loved ones through it, my book ofers guidance for a more harmonious post-divorce future.***