

# There Are Five Divorce Profiles: Which one fits you?

[Download this file](#)

**Profiles:** [Early](#) • [Easy](#) • [Difficult](#) • [Legal Battle](#) • [Domestic Violence \(DV\)](#)

**Solutions:** [Common to Early, Easy and Difficult](#)

**Solutions specific to:** [Early](#) • [Easy](#) • [Difficult](#) • [Legal Battle](#) • [DV](#)

Each year, there are more than one million divorces in the U.S. So **whatever** is happening to you, something very similar has happened to a great number of other people and you can benefit from their experience and from academic studies of those who have walked the same path before you. During the years I was in practice, my firm participated in over 40,000 divorces that did **not** end up in court. Based on this wealth of experience and the studies, I was able to learn **exactly** how things work in **any** situation and **exactly** what you can do to make things better for yourself.

If you don't know what you are doing, it is very easy to make any divorce worse—it doesn't take much. An easy case can become difficult and a difficult case can turn into a war. But if you follow my advice, any divorce can be made better, even if you're at war. The steps you take depend on what stage you are in, what kind of divorce you have.

All divorce cases fit into one of five profiles, and the goals and solutions for each profile are a bit different. Read through the profiles and see which one fits you the best. Be sure to read the solutions for the Easy Divorce profile even if your case is not easy, because if you don't already have an easy case, I'm going to show you how to get one.

First, I will describe the five profiles so you can understand them and see which one fits you the best. In the following section, I'll spell out the goals and steps you should take for each profile, along with the information and tools you can use to reach your goals.

## A. The Five Divorce Profiles

### Early cases

You haven't broken up yet, or broke up only recently. This is good, because the earlier you start, the easier it is to heal wounds and lay a foundation for a smoother trip. The way you go about doing things now will have a powerful influence on how things work out in your future—for better or worse.

### Easy cases

If your spouse **won't come to court to oppose you**, you've got an easy case. It could be that he/she is long gone, doesn't care, or there's not enough involved to struggle over, or because you two can work out the terms of your divorce in a written agreement. In easy cases, all that's left is to file papers and go through some red-tape to get a judgment or decree of divorce and this shouldn't take long or cost a lot.

## Difficult Cases

**This profile fits most divorces.** Your spouse is in the picture and cares about how things will end up, but you're having some trouble (or you expect to) with discussing and settling terms—that is, you can't agree on how to divide property and debts, how much spousal support will be paid, if any, and how children will be supported and parented.

The reason divorce agreements are difficult is almost **always** personal—bad communication, bad history, bad habits, etc—and almost **never** about the law. Neither the law nor lawyers have any tools to help you settle problems that originate in your personal relationship. You do **not** want to try to settle your disagreements in court.

## Legal Battle

If you follow my advice you probably won't end up in a legal battle, but sometimes you simply can't avoid one or you might be in one already. If you're already in a legal battle, or if you can't avoid a battle even after following the steps in [Make Any Divorce Better](#), then you have to do what you have to do—get an attorney and fight. If you must fight, you might as well learn how to do it effectively, so welcome to the Battle Group.

## Domestic violence (DV)

DV includes physical attacks, threats, intimidation, verbal attacks on a personal level (put-downs, insults, undermining your self-confidence) and other efforts to control you. It can be difficult to distinguish between high levels of divorce conflict and forms of domestic abuse and violence. The DV profile is more about cases where your spouse has been an **habitual** controller/abuser over a period of time.

[Back to Top](#)

## B. Solutions for Each Profile

### Solutions common to Early, Easy and Difficult cases

- **Your goal** is to solve problems and settle issues without taking problems to court or hiring an attorney to represent you and “take” your case. Your goal is to end up with an **Easy Case** or, if your case is already easy, to keep it that way.
- Read my article, [The Good Divorce](#), so you will have a model to keep in mind and a clear idea of things you can try to accomplish to make (or keep) your divorce peaceful.
- Get my free [Divorce Checklist](#) and start working on those items.
- **Become informed.** Studies show that the single most important factor in a good divorce outcome is (1) becoming informed and prepared, and (2) being an active participant in your own case. That's what it means to “Do Your Own Divorce.”
  - **California.** If your case is in California, get [How to Do Your Own Divorce in California](#) and read a summary of California divorce laws, decisions you need to make and advice about how to make them. It includes step-by-step instructions for the paperwork to get your judgment with all the forms you'll need to do it.

- **Texas.** If your case is in Texas, get [How to Do Your Own Divorce in Texas](#), which has the same sort of content described above, but specific to Texas.
- **All other states.** Go to the **Reading Room** at [nolodivorce.com](#) and read my two articles: [How to Do Your Own Divorce](#), and [How to Learn About the Law in Your State](#).

● **Get organized.** As soon as you can, organize your facts, gather supporting documents. Start thinking about how to divide marital property, how much spousal support should be paid (if any), and how children will be supported and parented after separation or divorce. I created a set of [Divorce Worksheets](#) that will help you organize, think about and discuss the facts and finances in your case. Working with them will give you greater confidence in dealing with your divorce and will definitely save you time and money. These same worksheets come free with my [How to Do Your Own Divorce](#) books, or [Make Any Divorce Better](#) or you can get them [separately](#).

● **Learn problem solving.** If things are difficult—or might get difficult—get my book, [Make Any Divorce Better](#) and learn about the specific things you can do to smooth things out and keep them that way. The things you can do for yourself are far more effective than anything any attorney can do for you. As advised in that book:

- **Best not to talk to your spouse** about divorce until you learn how to communicate in a way that will help reduce conflict, create a foundation for negotiation, and how to negotiate effectively.
- **Best not go to an attorney** until you are informed and prepared—unless, that is, you face an emergency. Read [What's an emergency?](#) Before you visit an attorney, you want to have already organized your facts and documents and know what kind of attorney you want to choose, what questions you want to ask, and what you can and cannot expect from an attorney. To learn about various types of attorneys and other professional divorce services, read my free article [Who Can I Call?](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## Solutions for Early cases

All goals and solutions for this profile are [covered above](#).

## Solutions for Easy cases

In addition to the common solutions [covered above](#), here are tools to help you complete an easy case and make sure it stays easy.

● **Keeping easy cases easy.** Most cases are delicate and easily stirred up. To learn how to keep an easy case from blowing up into a difficult one, I recommend that each spouse have a copy of [Make Any Divorce Better](#) and follow specific steps to calm conflict and negotiate effectively.

● **Spouse on board?** It's very difficult to divide major assets or arrange parenting without your spouse's participation, so **your goal** is to settle things in a **written settlement agreement**. The sample agreements that come with [How to Do Your Own Divorce](#) and [Make Any Divorce Better](#) are fine for simple cases but not ideal for dealing with major debts or assets like real estate, pension or investment funds, or

complex situation. This is where **DealMaker** software is ideal. It is useful for dealing with the most common options for real estate or retirement funds and, if you have minor children, it guides you in the creation of a comprehensive parenting plan. **DealMaker** asks you to enter your information, make some decisions, then it writes a professional settlement agreement that you can sign as-is or edit with any word processor.

- With an easy case, you can do the paperwork yourself, or you can get it done inexpensively. In California or Texas, you can do it with my **How To Do Your Own Divorce** books. In other states, go to the **Reading Room** at [nolodivorce.com](http://nolodivorce.com) and read my article: **How to Do Your Own Divorce**. To find someone to help you do your paperwork, read my free article **Who Can I Call?**

[Back to Top](#)

## Solutions for Difficult Cases

You do **not** want to try to settle your disagreements in court—unless you have an emergency situation, that's the worst thing you can do. Read **What's an emergency?**

**Your goal** is to take specific steps that will make your case smoother and easier, to turn it into an **Easy Divorce** so you can make a written agreement and do the paperwork yourself or get it done inexpensively. There are a lot of things you can do for yourself to make things better, steps that have helped tens of thousands of couples, so they can help you, too. My goal is to show you how to solve the problems of a difficult divorce without taking them to court, and help you turn it into an Easy Divorce.

**Here are tools** to help you. In addition to the common solutions **covered above**, here are tools to help you turn a difficult case into an easy one and make sure it stays easy.

- **A written settlement agreement** is essential in your case. The sample agreements that come with **How to Do Your Own Divorce** and **Make Any Divorce Better** are not ideal for dealing with major assets, but **DealMaker** software is. It helps you create a parenting plan and is especially useful for dealing with the many possible options for real estate and retirement funds. **DealMaker** takes your information, asks you to make some decisions, then writes a sophisticated, professional settlement agreement that you can sign as-is or edit with any word processor.

- **If you have trouble** working out terms, you don't need an attorney, you need a mediator. Read **Who Can I Call?**

- **Collaborative law.** If you want to be represented by an attorney, try to get a Collaborative Lawyer on both sides. Read more about this in **Who Can I Call?** In California, **Divorce Helpline** does collaborative law as well as mediation and arbitration.

- **Arbitration.** If you can't resolve issues in mediation, consider going to arbitration rather than to court. It is similar in that the arbitrator hears evidence then imposes a decision, but the setting is more informal and an arbitrator is paid by the hour so will take the time needed to understand the facts about your family and situation. A judge has to move cases along quickly, so will tend to hurry through divorce cases and not take the time necessary to understand you and your family situation.

[Back to Top](#)

## Solutions for Legal Battle

Keep in mind that this is a **legal** battle, it's all about business—you do not need to battle on a personal or emotional level. In fact, you will be more effective and healthier if you don't. But you **do** need to learn:

- How to deal with extreme conflict
- Damage control
- How to protect children
- Winning strategies—hardball or softball?
- How to fight effectively at less expense
- How to choose and use your attorney
- How to fire your attorney (if you want to)

[Make Any Divorce Better](#) discusses this information in detail.

The most important thing to remember about legal battle is that you can and should continue working to move your case toward negotiated or mediated agreement, using all the steps discussed in [Make Any Divorce Better](#). This book and the worksheets that come with it will help you stay in control of your attorney and your case.

You should discourage any legal action, heavy-handed letters, or activity that you think is not absolutely necessary and instruct your attorney that you do not want to try to settle divorce issues in court. Instead, you want to negotiate and mediate as soon as possible, and the attorney should work toward that end and avoid litigation. Also talk about this directly with your spouse, if possible, either in person or by mail. Couples frequently end up working out their own terms without their attorneys.

[Back to Top](#)

## Solutions for Domestic violence (DV)

If you are dealing with a habitual controller/abuser, someone with a habit and history of psychological undermining, over control, or physical abuse, our usual advice for difficult cases is useless because controller/abusers tend to be unresponsive to reason. Their need to control or abuse is too strong. Instead, read my free article, [What You Can Do About Spousal Abuse During Divorce](#).

**Safety first.** If you fear for the safety of yourself or a child, don't take chances. Go somewhere safe. Visit a friend or relative or a DV shelter—anywhere you can't be found.

**Get specialized help.** What you need most now is personal advice and counseling from someone who specializes in domestic abuse. Ask any local police agency or the court clerk to refer you to local shelters and domestic violence support groups.

[Back to Top](#)