



Fatherly

7 Reasons Couples Are Filing For Divorce During COVID

This is why couples are calling it quits, according to divorce lawyers

*By Jeremy Brown
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COVID-19 cast a harsh light on a lot of relationships. With fewer places to go and fewer distractions to occupy their time, couples were forced to stare at — and reconcile with — the once-ignored realities of their marriages. The pandemic also brought with it an immense load of stress combined with close quarters that makes arguments much more likely. The not-so-simple truth is that some couples can work through and overcome while others cannot. This is always the truth about divorce, but it hits a lot harder during the pandemic. While it's hard to say exactly what divorce numbers look like during the pandemic, the reasons for divorce are both the same and different as they always are.

COVID conditions, however, can act as an accelerant. “The global pandemic has forced couples to co-exist, in tight quarters, for extended periods of time,” says Aliette Carolan, a family law attorney and founder of TheQuickDivorce.com. “I imagine that if couples were on the brink of separating before the quarantine started, then their decisions became crystal clear after spending numerous months together in their homes.” Carolan adds that “some have realized that there is no time to waste being unhappy, unfulfilled, and unsatisfied by their relationships.”

To understand the situation more, we asked an array of divorce lawyers to let us know some of the big reasons couples are filing for

divorce during COVID. If anything, hearing what has made couples file for divorce is helpful for couples who want to make damn sure it doesn't happen to them.

1. Confrontation Was Simply Unavoidable

Before COVID forced everyone indoors, it might have been easier for couples to avoid confronting the aspects of their marriages that irked them. They could work late, take classes, socialize with friends and indulge in whatever distractions kept them from examining their relationships. However, the lockdown of the spring and early summer took away many of those distractions, leaving couples with no way to avoid all of the issues they had been trying to cover up. "Now people are in a situation where they're under the same roof and they can't get away from each other," says Ken Jewell, a matrimonial lawyer and founder of Jewell Law, PLLC. "So if people don't have the tools to reconcile their differences of opinion, it grows into a lack of respect for one another."

2. The Lack of Ability to Express Themselves

The pandemic has taken away a lot of things that we have taken for granted, as well as a lot of things that we all enjoy being able to do, such as seeing friends and family. Frustration over this situation can only be exacerbated by the holiday season. If couples don't have the tools to express their feelings and talk openly about their frustration, it can lead to bitterness and squabbling over other issues, all of which can end with a visit to a lawyer.

"Instead of saying, 'I feel really angry that I can't go see my mother for Christmas,' or whatever it is, they will take it out on their spouse," says Jewell. "And that's where it can become hostile, as the other person gets defensive. Then you have two people who are engaged in a dance, and if they can't get themselves out of it, they end up in my office."

3. They Have Different Goals

At the outset of a marriage, love can blind people to certain things that should be visible. Differences in personality that are fundamental enough to cause long-term problems (ie different approaches to money management) should be identified outright. But also having different views on where each of you wants to go in life. One partner may be focused on his or her career, while the other may be interested in starting a family. These divergent goals can eventually catch up to a marriage and cause disruption. And this reality doesn't stop during COVID. "That's a true irreconcilable divorce situation," says Jewell. "I actually had that in my first marriage. My ex-wife did not want the things that I wanted in life and I didn't want the things that she wanted in life. And it just becomes a case of both partners saying, 'I love you, but I want different things.'"

4. A Realization That They Got Married for the Wrong Reasons

Many people get into a marriage with blinders on, believing that the glow of the honeymoon phase is indefinite or, worse, that getting married will solve the problems in the relationship. Neither of these situations are true and, if they are the reason you're getting married, then you are setting yourself up for failure from the outset. Especially during a situation like a pandemic that made everything feel tighter, this reality became clear to many. "I think a lot of people go into marriages thinking that they're going to get along, they've been getting along great for a year and they couldn't imagine their life without this person. They're ready to settle down and this is the person who's there," says Jewell. "But they don't realize who they're living with. One of the jokes I have is that it should be as difficult to get married as it is to get divorced."

5. They Don't Want the Kids to Suffer

It's not so much the stress caused by the constant presence of the kids, not to mention the pressures of remote learning. It's more the fact that, with the kids in the house all the time, it becomes much harder for parents who are having marital problems to keep those problems concealed. "Remote schooling means children are always around to

hear gripe sessions between parents,” says Divorce Attorney Daniel Stock of Daniel H. Stock PLLC. “Some couples are feeling that a split may be better than exposing the kids to continued strife.”

6. Financial Concerns

Money is always a source of strain in a marriage, whether it's the lack of it or the fact that one partner tends to spend too much of it. But, in a world altered by COVID, attorneys are also seeing that many spouses are looking ahead to the future and reconsidering how much they want to invest in their marriage, emotionally and otherwise. “With the pandemic hopefully coming to an end and a return to economic prosperity on the horizon,” says Stock, “partners who earn the lion's share of a couple's income have an added incentive to cut the cord and not add more money to the marital pot that gets divided in a divorce.”

7. Resentment Bubbles Over

A running meme on social media posits that all of us will come out of the COVID quarantine as either a “hunk, a chunk, or a drunk.” For most couples, it's that middle selection that has proven to be the most problematic. Having your significant other home all the time in sweatpants, eating ice cream and working on the couch can start to fuel seeds of dissent and resentment in a marriage. “It's not the sweatpants alone, of course,” says Stock. “That's just another element in a marriage that already isn't working. It just adds to the urge to throw off the shackles of a marriage that isn't working and start dating that fuels more divorces.”