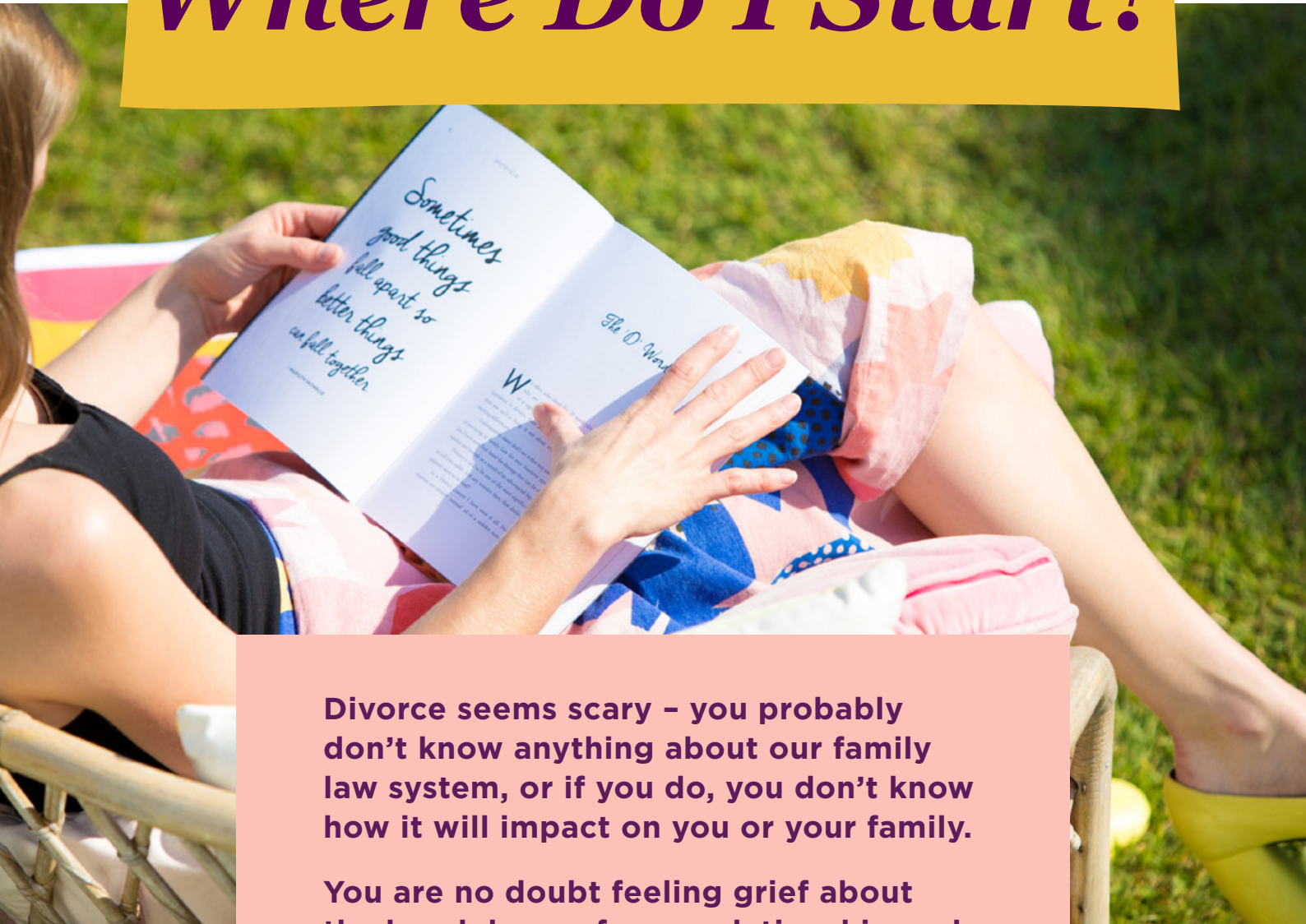


Where Do I Start?



Divorce seems scary – you probably don't know anything about our family law system, or if you do, you don't know how it will impact on you or your family.

You are no doubt feeling grief about the breakdown of your relationship and concerned about how your separation will impact you, your former spouse and your children.

Whilst it is a grief and loss, divorce can be a process you can learn more about, be actively involved in and manage with respect for your former partner. It can be something you and your former spouse can look back on with some pride.

Slow down

A powerful thing to remember is that, unless you are facing particularly extreme circumstances, there is no real rush to sort out the legal issues arising from your separation.

If you are married to your former spouse and you are not formally divorced, then there is no legal time limit in place to finalise your property or your parenting matter. If you are divorced, then you have 12 months from the date your divorce becomes effective to finalise your property matter and formalise it, or commence proceedings in the relevant Court. There is still no legal time limit in which you are required to formalise your parenting arrangements.

Create a holding pattern

Think about the next six months for your family. What do you need? What does your former spouse need? What do your children need?

By only thinking about the next six months, you are able to focus on your family's short term needs and come to an arrangement that meets those, but only on a short term basis. This does not necessarily mean these arrangements will be what will happen on a final basis.

There is a significant benefit to this as it allows you and your former spouse the time you need to grieve and to contemplate your long term needs, whilst meeting and dealing with your short term needs.

Educate yourself

A key component to your separation is empowering yourself with the information and the tools you need to be an active participant in your separation. It can be overwhelming to know where to start with finding reliable, easy to read, practical information.

Our clients find it beneficial to start reading "**Splitsville - How to separate, stay out of court and stay friends**", a book by Clarissa Rayward.

You can download your copy of the first chapter for free and find out more at:

<http://www.bflc.com.au/product/splitsville-the-book/>

If you are in a de facto relationship, you have two years from the date of your separation to finalise and formalise your property matter, or commence proceedings to do so, and there is still no time limit in relation to your parenting matter. It is a powerful thing to remember this.

A common mistake for families is to jump in straight away to discuss their big picture final arrangements, when their grief is too new and they are not ready, when there is simply no need to do this. Starting to negotiate too soon can be the downfall and reason that families ultimately do not reach agreements in amicable ways. So remember, ask yourself whether or not you have to negotiate now for your big picture final arrangements and whether or not you and your former spouse are ready.

Make a conscious decision and commitment

You and your former spouse have the power to choose the type of divorce you want to experience.

If you want it to be respectful, harmonious and focused on the needs of your children, then make the commitment together to do this. Even by making this commitment, it will narrow the forum in which you discuss your parenting and property arrangements, for example through collaborative practice.

This commitment doesn't mean you can't be sad or upset at your former spouse, but it means you are committed to looking back on your separation with some pride.

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