

## Dating through a divorce? 6 reasons to be careful



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**It's no surprise there's been a huge spike in covi-divorce inquiries as lockdown eases. Family barrister, Francesca Dowse, tackles this tricky time**

It's a well-known fact that law firms see a huge surge in divorce inquiries in January, following rows at [Christmas](#). But COVID-19 has turned everything on its head this year – and now [Covi-divorce](#) inquiries are a thing. Inquiries are outstripping the usual seasonal New Year rush, with more than a 40 per cent rise during March and mid-May, compared with the same period in 2019. If you're also thinking about dating through divorce, [Francesca Dowse, family barrister at 4PB](#) advice is... think twice.

Navigating divorce proceedings without incident is hard enough: [dating](#) through that process adds complexities in numerous ways. Divorce puts you under a spotlight in every area of your life and that spotlight can extend to your new partner. Perhaps you didn't bargain for this, but you should be prepared as starting a relationship during your divorce proceedings can taint the spirit and end something potentially special.

The divorce process has been simplified in recent years, partly due to the online system which allows you to file at the click of a button. Seems easy? Thankfully for most, it is. But that's the first hurdle. It still takes a long time for the process to take its course to finality and for [financial matters](#) to be resolved. In some cases, it can take up to a year (some longer) for proceedings to end so if you have met someone you wish to spend time with, understand that there are no 'quick fixes' to being free.

Of course there are positives to dating, such as helping with **loneliness** and low self-esteem, and with Dowse's six vital points you can navigate your way through these tricky times.

## Dating through a divorce

### 1. When you are actually free of the ex

So many people get this wrong and think they are free when they are not. A Decree Nisi is not a divorce. It is provisional and one step closer to the final stage being the Decree Absolute. If you are dating from the outset and enter a relationship with another, it can add more heat to an already 'white hot' flame. Your **new partner** could become directly embroiled in the end of your marriage. And no, you cannot re-marry. Yet.



### 2. Emotions will be raw

Dating someone new during divorce can seem like revenge to the other. Divorce is a painful process full of unpredictable psychological and emotional feelings. As much as your legal team can prepare you for some of the more predictable events, often, dating someone new causes the other party to act poorly, to become more entrenched in their pain and to obfuscate proceedings as much as possible. When all you want to do is be free, that's not helpful to anyone, especially not your new relationship.

### 3. Put the brakes on cohabitation

This is a big step that could leave your new partner wide open to financial scrutiny while you remain under the spotlight. Don't rush this. Keeping money and housing separate has obvious benefits and doesn't create problems from the new partner.

### 4. Think of the kids

Children are the most emotional subject in divorces. The heightened sense of raw emotion means it is most important to navigate through this area well. When the soon to be 'ex' discovers you are dating someone new, fights often arise about the **children meeting the new partner**. A parent doesn't want to feel replaced so this can trigger numerous issues between the adults that could delay proceedings and result in more hearings. That's an expensive decision that could be harmful to the children. If you must introduce the children to the new partner do it with respect. That involves having a candid conversation with your ex first and offering them some information to make them feel more comfortable with it. Don't jump into this decision lightly.

## **5. Keep court private**

Nothing is more antagonising than bringing the new partner to court. It's seen as antagonising and causing the other unnecessary emotional stress in an already stressful environment. In turn, this inflammatory act can cause the 'ex' to behave in a number of poor ways. Keep them separate. Keep them at home or on the phone.

## **6. Be honest yet keep it light**

**Relationship breakdowns** are inevitably littered with negative behaviour, so it's important to not to poison the new relationship with detail from the last. This can be a tempting opportunity to re-write history and sell a rose-tinted story. Be honest with yourself and be honest with the new partner but remember they are not a sounding board. If they are the next new 'one' you don't want the relationship to buckle at this stage.