

NJ Family Law Coronavirus Special Series

Quarantined With Your Divorcing Spouse?

Five Helpful Tips From a Mental Health Professional

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This is the third article in our continuing series of Family Law Issues and the Coronavirus Crisis. Our first article on co-parenting during the crisis can be viewed by clicking [here](#); and our second article on financial issues and the crisis during divorce can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

In conversation with Carolee Kallmann MA, LPC, LCADC, a mental health expert whose practice focuses in part on families during divorce, we asked her if she had suggestions for spouses who are in the midst of separation or divorce, but who have to live in the same home due to the current crisis. The below are five of her recommendations for this very difficult situation.

1. **RADICALLY ACCEPT** that you cannot change your partner. You can, however, change your own response – that is, your thinking to the words/actions of your partner. If you change your thinking, you will change your emotions, and thus your behavior.
2. **ABSOLUTELY RESOLVE** that you will not internalize and take hurtful words of your partner personally (even if that appears to be the obvious intention). Do not allow yourself to be sucked in. Try to take a detached observer role – much like watching a character in a movie or television show – or a cloud moving in the sky.
3. **EXERCISE. EXERCISE. EXERCISE.** Regular exercise (of 35 minutes duration) several times a week, during which one increases the heart rate (but not to the point of exhaustion), has been shown to have mood enhancing results.

4. If you live in a house, go outdoors and start SIMPLE Spring cleanup tasks. You will likely experience IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION – which one does not experience in relationships – especially conflictual ones. Also, you are physically distancing yourself from your partner while, at the same time, doing something beneficial to your property investment.
5. AVOID ALCOHOL. The first area of the brain that is affected by alcohol consumption is judgment. The present circumstances are difficult enough. Do you really want to undo yourself and then spend more money for additional legal consultation as a result of problematic conduct?

These tips seem obvious, yet they can be difficult under the best of circumstances. Now, in the midst of a pandemic, where many of you need to be in the same home with your estranged spouse, the stress to maintain a respectful home, especially with children present, can seem almost unbearable. If you need help, contact a mental health professional. Talk to your lawyer. Avoid direct confrontation. That is the reason you have professionals to help you. Let them take the pressure out of the situation for you. For further information about Family Law issues during the Coronavirus Crisis, including Divorce, Separation, and Parenting Time, please contact Jan L. Bernstein, Esq. at 201-975-4417 or at JBernstein@PhillipsNizer.com.