

Preparation for Alimony Negotiations Leads to the Best Outcome

By Rebecca L. Palmer

Opportunity, sacrifice, and disenchantment are never equal in a marriage and cannot be measured in dollars and cents. That is why negotiating alimony during a divorce proceeding can be a complex process. One partner typically feels like the other partner had an easier time throughout the marriage, and therefore, they deserve compensation commensurate to this feeling.

Negotiating support after a divorce is not something you plan for, but Florida has the 4th highest divorce rate in the country, and data shows 40 to 50 % of marriages in the U.S. will end in divorce. It's good to be prepared when you enter into alimony settlement negotiations with statistics like these. Here are three tips to help get you through.

Manage your emotions:

There is always a level of emotion, from sadness to anger, when it comes to divorce and spousal support. If you want to get through the process quickly, my advice is to have a broad perspective and focus on the outcome, not the person or specific things. Try not to think about the settlement as what you are getting or what they are getting. Instead, focus on the entire financial picture and take a realistic view of what you both need. This is not the time to dig up the past but a time to look toward your future.

Understand your needs and what can be provided:

Before you enter negotiations, you should have a clear picture of the daily, monthly, and yearly budget during your marriage and what you will need moving forward, rather than accepting guideline calculations. This budget will also help drive a solution-oriented conversation and keep either side from

asking for or denying support that does not align with income, assets, and spending. For instance, if your spouse makes \$50K, you will not get \$75K in support.

Structuring alimony options:

Heading to the court for a lump sum is not always the best approach to negotiation. Payment options may be more agreeable for the person who will be paying the support. With the help of a CPA, a conversation may take place about shared marital assets and the actual short-term and long-term needs of each individual, as well as the terms of the support. A specific monthly amount for an agreed-upon duration can be easier to manage and less disruptive to each party's lifestyle. Payments can also be structured in increasing or decreasing increments depending on cash flow. This could also help sustain your former marital quality of life.

No matter who you are or what support you seek, divorce can be very stressful and emotionally draining. The key to a focused and meaningful alimony negotiation is preparation.

Rebecca L. Palmer, Esq. is a Family & Marital Law attorney practicing in FL. She is the Managing Partner of the Rebecca L. Palmer Law Group, and she can be reached at rebecca@rlplawgroup.com.