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**With Your Host**

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## Ep #23: 5 Differences Between Divorce Coaching vs. Support From Friends and Family

You're listening to *The Sensible Split* podcast, Episode 23.

Today, I'm talking about how divorce coaching is very different from the support you get from friends or family.

*The Sensible Split* is a podcast for smart but overwhelmed women in search of a roadmap to a successful separation and divorce. If you are looking for guidance in navigating the practical, legal, and emotional aspects of divorce with confidence, this is the show for you. Here's your host, Master Certified Life and Divorce Coach, Divorce Attorney, and Mediator, Lauren Fair.

Hey there, friends. Welcome back to the podcast this week. I hope that you're doing great. I am really excited. I'm headed to Disneyland next week, for three days with my kids. We're going to celebrate Halloween time at Disneyland.

And my brother flew in yesterday to surprise my kids and come with us. Which is so fun. He's such a huge Disney fan, and my kids love hanging out with him. It just makes it extra fun to be able to include him in this trip. So I am really excited that we're approaching Halloween and getting to enjoy all of the festivities that go along with that.

I hope that you're enjoying your fall as well, and hopefully some cooler weather where you are. Here, in San Diego, just this week, it has started to cool down. I'm actually wearing a sweater today, so I'm excited. I'm just ready for sweaters and boots and pumpkin spice lattes, all the joys of fall. And so I hope you're finding some joy in your fall as well.

So today I want to talk to you about how working with a divorce coach differs from having the support of friends or family. I had a consultation earlier today with a lovely woman who is thinking about moving forward with divorce. And she, on the call, mentioned to me that one of the reasons she reached out for divorce coaching was because she didn't have any friends or family who had gone through divorce before to talk to about it.

I thought that was interesting and something that maybe you're thinking about too. And so I thought what a great episode to share with you today, to talk about the reasons why those two things are not the same, right?

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Divorce coaching is not the same as having a conversation with friends or family. Both are great, and I want to talk to you about the differences between those things. So if you can better understand what kind of support that is available to you in the divorce process, the better process that you can have.

I think it's a worthwhile thought exercise to go through when you're going through divorce, to think about, "What kind of support do I want or need around me?" I had another client recently, when she started working with me, she said, "I know I need support around me during this." And she had a very clear picture of what kind of support she wanted.

She went out and got that support, and that made the process so much better for her. And that consisted of both working with me as a divorce coach and also having support of friends and family. Sometimes it's just very different roles that friends and family play from what a divorce coach plays. And so I want to talk to you about those things today.

I have five major differences that I want to highlight for you. The first one is when you have a conversation with a divorce coach, you have a session with a divorce coach, you choose a very specific focus for the session, and you may not be in an emotional or mental place to do that right away.

That's totally okay. You don't have to come to the call with something already in mind. How the call starts, is you share everything that is currently on your mind, all of the concerns that you have, the fears that you have, whatever's bugging you that's gone on recently with your spouse, with the process, whatever unanswered questions you have, right?

You just sort of..., I like to say "back up the thought dump truck." You just say what's on your mind. And from there we take it and sort it out, and we prioritize what is most important for you to tackle first. And then we focus on whatever that is. And so it is a very specifically structured conversation that we have that is designed to move you forward in whatever way you want to go.

Sometimes when we have conversations with friends and family, I would say more than sometimes, probably a lot of the time, we're not focused on one particular task and actually moving something forward, right? Making a

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difference in the current situation. Sometimes what we're doing is we're talking to friends and family because we want validation, we want support, we want someone to commiserate with us.

It is totally fine to want those things. And it can be really useful to you at times in the divorce process to have that kind of support. But to have the ability to have that conversation, where we're walking through a specific structure... it doesn't feel structured to you, right? It's just, in my mind there's a specific structure that we are working toward because we want to stay on task.

We want to be efficient and productive in moving you forward in the process. So that's the first one, having a specific focus. And that's chosen by you, ultimately, with my help. So I help you sort out what's going to make the biggest difference here. What do we need to tackle first? And we get to all the things that need to be tackled, but we've got to prioritize first.

The second difference is when you are having a conversation with a divorce coach, their attention is undivided and on you. They are listening intently to what you have to say. That's a very different experience to have what we would call in the coaching world "holding space". Having space held for you is a very different experience than talking to friends and family usually.

Because usually, outside of a coaching conversation, what we experience is that the person that we're talking to sometimes is just waiting for us to finish talking because they already want to say something in response. So rather than them listening to understand, they're listening to respond. And that's a very common thing. It's not a judgment on your family member or friend that that's how they are. It's a very, very normal thing.

But to have a coach listen to you, to understand and give you that undivided attention, it's an experience that we don't get normally out in the world during the day, for the most part.

So especially when you're going through divorce, when it's a very isolating time, it's a very emotionally activating time, it can be a lonely time, it can be very helpful to have that attention on you. And for you to have that space held for

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you, so that you can work through these issues that are really difficult for you, with someone listening intently to you.

The third difference is when you work with a divorce coach, you have neutral and judgment-free support. Family members and friends often know you for a long time. They know a lot about your history. They know a lot about your spouse. They know a lot about your kids, your family situation in general, and they have opinions. Of course they do, right? They have opinions.

Some of the friends or family members might have a lot of opinions. Some of them might be very vocal about their opinions. And while you may want certain family members or friends opinions, some of them you may not want. And it's important to be intentional about whose opinions you onboard in the divorce process.

Oftentimes, I'll speak to clients who are having some difficulty with friends or family members offering too many opinions and having an agenda for what you decide, what the client decides, right? So when you work with a divorce coach, that coach is aligned with you. Yes, they are in your corner, but they are neutral as to the outcome of your matter, as to the decisions that you make. It's a judgment-free zone.

For example, I have a client who's thinking about staying in their marriage or leaving the marriage, it's not uncommon for them to have family members who think one way or the other. Maybe they have a family member who thinks divorce should never be an option. Maybe they have a family member who thinks they're at fault for where the marriage is.

Maybe they have a friend that never liked the spouse and the client should leave, right? There is a lot of benefit to having a neutral, judgment-free professional who can help you talk through your own thoughts and feelings about the situation and sort those out in a very intentional, informed manner. Without fear of being judged for it in that space.

So being able to tune out the voices of everyone else and listen to themselves. And that might include considering someone else's opinion, and it might not. Someone else's opinion could be data that you consider, among other things,

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but not in an overriding way where it drowns out your own voice, your own thoughts, your own feelings about the situation.

And when we have that neutral, judgment-free space, we can talk through all of this in a way that opens up possibilities and allows you to come to your own conclusions, regardless of other people's opinions. Always, my agenda for you is only for you to make the best decision for you, so long as you have all the information necessary for you to feel comfortable making that decision. Making that decision with eyes wide open, right?

And it doesn't only apply to going or staying. It's things throughout the process, right? If you move forward with divorce, everybody's got opinions about what you should do. And so while you want to be informed and have all the information available to you that you need to understand the process, to understand your options, you are the one that has to live with the outcome of your divorce, not anyone else.

So it's important that you have a space where you can walk through what your options are and make decisions with someone alongside you who is professional, educated, supportive, and also isn't there to judge you about what those decisions are.

All right, a fourth difference is, a divorce coach is experienced in divorce across different family situations. Because of that, you're in a better position to provide yourself neutral education on what your options are and help you walk through the possibilities that lie before you. What I mean by this is, sometimes when friends and family members have those opinions that they share with you, it's based on their own personal situation with divorce. Sometimes.

And when someone goes through divorce, they have impressions of that process that are created by their own experience of it. An example could be if someone goes through a custody issue and they feel that they got an unfair resolution. So sometimes things that I hear might be, "Well, California favors mothers and not fathers." That now is taken as fact and applied to every scenario. Whenever that person who had that experience talks to other people, that's what they tell them.

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So you could imagine, if you're a man and you're talking to someone who is telling you, "Oh yeah, I've been through the divorce process and California favors mothers," then you're taking away from that conversation the impression that that's the case in every situation. Like that's just what to expect in the divorce process, is that mothers are going to be favored.

Whereas, under the law, there is nothing that says that. That's not actually what the law is. It's debatable how that concept might show up from case to case. But the point is when your only experience with divorce is your own situation, or someone who is a loved one that you've seen go through it, of course because you want to support them, or for you yourself you've gone through it, of course you had an experience and you drew conclusions from it. That's okay.

That's okay, that's your experience. This person who thinks that California favors mothers, that's okay. He can keep that impression. We're not trying to change that. But it is only gathered from their own experience.

When you're a divorce coach, you see people go through this process under many different circumstances, and you see what makes a difference in terms of certain resolutions and what doesn't. And you, through that experience, start to see that certain stereotypes, certain broad stroke conclusions, like mothers are favored in that process, it's not so black and white.

And when you have a broader range of experience, because you're a professional who is working in the divorce industry every day, you can be more objective. You can help a client open their mind to a lot more than you can when you approach it from a closed-minded perspective that comes from your own experience only. I Hope that makes sense.

The fifth difference is divorce coaching is outcome oriented. We're always looking at what we're doing today focused on the result that you want for yourself, the result that you want in the substantive issues, the result that you want for your future, the result that you want for your kids. So that we can be very strategic and very mindful about where we're spending our resources. Where are we spending our time, our money, our emotional investment in this?

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We don't want to focus on things that are not going to affect the outcome. We always want to be thinking about how we are moving forward? How are the things that we're doing today related to the outcomes that we want? It even could be, what is the outcome of this conversation that I would like to have? How do we strategically approach this communication in a way that is designed to get the result that we want from this conversation?

An example of that would be, oftentimes I help clients prepare to go through the mediation process. Mediation is a voluntary process, so both spouses have to agree to go to mediation. If they haven't already agreed, and my client wants to go to mediation, then one of the things that I do to support them is help ensure that they are prepared to address that issue with their spouse. And the goal for that conversation would be to get an agreement to go to mediation. So that's the outcome that we're looking for.

So how do we approach that conversation in a way that is most designed to get the outcome that we want, which is an agreement to move forward with mediation? There are so many outcomes in divorce. It can be micro ones, like the conversations that we're having, a response that we're looking to get to a request that we've made for a change to the parenting schedule.

Or it could be big things, like who gets the house at the end? Or how much support do I end up getting at the end? So we're always rooting what we're doing, strategically, in the outcome that we want.

And when we're just having conversations with friends and family, usually we're not focused on the outcome. Usually we get caught up in the emotions of rehashing the past, rehashing how ridiculous your spouse is, and how unfair the process is, or things like that. Which again, it's very helpful to have somebody to talk to about those things, to vent.

It's great to have some family or friends who are available to you for that, but that's not going to get you through the process. That's not going to help you make smart decisions about what your next steps are. That's not going to have you planning for the outcome that you want and taking steps toward that outcome.

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In summary, the support of friends and family can be invaluable during this time. I want to encourage you to reach out to friends and family for support as you go through the process. But also, when doing that, to think carefully about what kind of support you want from those friends and family. That might be different, depending on the person that you're getting support from, right?

One friend might be great at one kind of support, like just being with you when you're feeling lonely, taking you out for dinner, or whatever it is. And you might have a family member whose input you trust a lot about financial decisions. And so maybe you want to talk to them about some financial decisions before you make them. So having support from friends and family is very helpful.

We just want to think about, what are we expecting of them? How do you want that support throughout the process? And then you want to think about, what other professional support do I need? Because having a conversation with a professional in the divorce process is just very different and not a replacement for support of friends and family, or vice versa.

So if you want support confidently navigating the divorce process in a way that saves you time, money, and energy and is laced with compassion, I would urge you to have a consultation with a divorce coach. I would love to be that one, who gets to chat with you about where you are and where you may be unclear on what your next step should be.

All right, that's what I have for you this week. Thank you so much for tuning in. I look forward to talking with you again in the next episode.

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