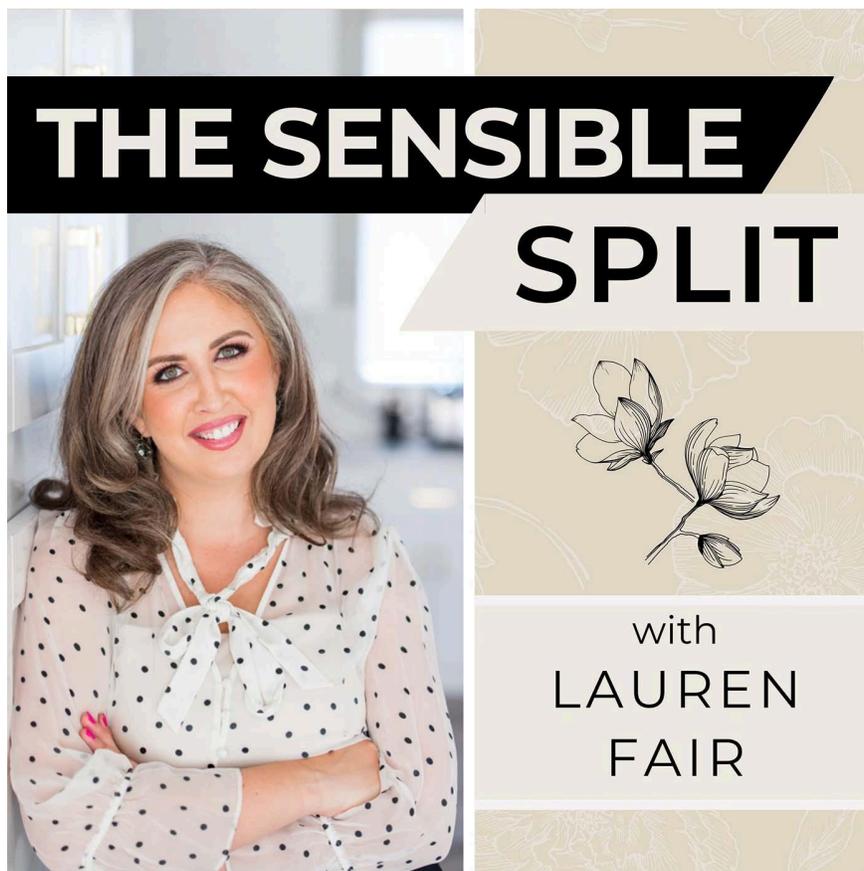


Ep #26: 7 Ways to Be a Credible Divorce Client and Get the Best Outcome



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lauren Fair

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You're listening to *The Sensible Split* podcast, Episode 26.

Today, I'm talking about what it means to be a credible client and how being a credible client is important to your success in the divorce process.

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, welcome back to the podcast this week.

I hope that you are having a great start to your holiday season. I just got back from my trip to Boulder for Thanksgiving week, and it was a great time. We took the whole family out for about a week to visit my in-laws that are out there. We spent a night in a cabin up in the mountains. I don't know if you're familiar with the Estes Park area, but we have a great time when we go there.

My kids have things that have now become a little bit of a tradition to do, and we got to do all those things and spend a lot of time with family. We also got to enjoy a little bit of a winter wonderland landscape. It snowed for, I don't know, about a day or so shortly before Thanksgiving, and it was enough that it made the landscape around my mother-in-law's house just look magical.

All the trees were covered in snow and everything, and the kids got to play in it, make snow angels, and try to build a snowman and things like that. We're from Southern California, so it's a big deal for the kids to get to play in a lot of snow. So it was super fun for them and just a good time overall.

Here we are, I guess, with a few weeks before we're heading into the Christmas season, and I hope that you are finding what works for you this holiday season. I know for some of you it might be a little different than it has been in the past. So I hope that you're finding some joy in it no matter where you are in the rest of where things are in life.

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So today, I want to talk to you about what it means to be a credible client in the divorce process and why it is important to be one. One of those reasons, and I'm going to get into the other ones in a moment, but one of those reasons is saving money on the process. If you don't know how a divorce coach can save you money, you're going to miss out on that opportunity, and I don't want that for you.

I want you to at least know about the opportunity and decide if it's right for you. I'm passionate about making the divorce process possible without completely draining your financial resources. And today's episode is another installment of how we can do divorce better in that regard and others.

So what does it mean to be a credible client? Being a credible client in divorce means approaching the process with a mindset that supports constructive, efficient, and a goal-oriented process. A credible client is someone who prioritizes practical solutions over what might be otherwise the kind of normal knee-jerk emotional reactions and is prepared to engage effectively with their attorney, mediator, and or coach.

Here's what it involves. I want to talk to you about key traits of a credible client. What does it look like when you're being a credible client? The first thing that a credible client does is they focus on the business of divorce. What I mean by that is they are focused on the action items and what needs to be done in order to move the divorce forward; like the business part of it, the legal aspect of it, right?

Engaging in what is a necessary part of the divorce transition, which is the legal process of it. Credible clients view divorce as a process to resolve financial, legal, and parenting matters rather than an opportunity to dwell on the past or assign blame. So we're not focused, in the business of divorce, on what happened in the past, although some history is important, certainly. But we're not focused on problems from the past.

We're focused on how to create solutions to the issues that need to be resolved. When you're going through a divorce, it's easy to get caught up in the emotional story of what happened: who said what, who did what, why the marriage fell

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apart. But navigating divorce effectively means focusing less on the past and more on what lies ahead.

This shift is what we call moving from the *story* of divorce to the *business* of divorce. Now, the story of divorce I know is important, but it's a matter of how we handle the story of divorce, right? What are those facts that are important for your legal process? What of those are important just for your personal processing? And filtering those things out so that you are communicating the most important information to the people involved in the business of divorce.

And then we're dealing with the story pieces in the divorce coaching context or in therapy, depending on what the issue is. But it's not that we want to just totally dismiss what's happened in the past. That's not what we're talking about here. What we're talking about is filtering out the parts that don't help us move forward to be dealt with separately, to be dealt with by the right professional, to be dealt with in the right context, and have you be focused on how to successfully navigate the divorce process.

Because you're going to be expected to do that at a time where a lot of these emotions and thoughts about what happened in the marriage and why you are where you are, are still very fresh and coming up. So this is a tricky thing to do and it's why a lot of people need support with it.

So if that's you, there's no shame in needing support in it. Pretty much everyone does, okay? I'm divorced myself. I was an attorney when I got divorced. And so I knew what I needed to do in the business of the divorce, right? But it still was so difficult because of what was happening emotionally related to the relationship.

And so being able to deal with those things effectively, and with the right support, can help you really use your resources in navigating the process as effectively as possible. The business of divorce, when you're engaging in that productively, involves asking the right questions, communicating clearly, and understanding how the court system works.

It also means recognizing that the process is often structured around legal and judicial requirements not necessarily tailored to your personal needs. To keep

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things moving forward, it's essential to provide information when asked by the professionals involved.

And to stay focused on practical solutions rather than emotional reactions, so it can be very clear to the professionals involved, and also, if you're in a litigation context, to the judge. So if you're going to court for your divorce, it can be very clear to a judge who's focused on the business of divorce and who's not. And it can also be similarly clear to a mediator or an attorney. I'm going to get to the relationship with those people a little bit later in this episode, but that's also an important piece of this.

Regardless of the professionals that you're working with, you want to be focused on the divorce in a way that has you prepared to effectively engage in them so that the important parts of your story for them, in terms of the outcomes that you're looking for, can be heard, okay?

And that kind of leads us to number two, clear communication. Credible clients communicate clearly. They express their thoughts and needs clearly and listen to the advice of their professionals. You've hired the professionals for a reason, right? And so you want to take their advice to heart. You ultimately get to make the decision, but you want to be able to express what you need them to know and also to be able to listen to what they're saying to you.

Effective communication reduces misunderstandings and helps move the process forward smoothly. I can always tell as a divorce professional, when I get communication that is not clear and very emotionally driven, that that particular person is in a space where they're having some difficulty being in a position where they are able to participate in the process as effectively as they can.

And it directly impacts the cost of the support that they get from the professionals. It also just makes it more difficult for them to be understood, for the important parts of their story to be understood, by the professionals so that those important pieces can be addressed.

All right. The third thing that credible clients do is they have reasonable expectations. They understand the realities of the legal system and don't expect the court to deliver emotional justice in the way that they may personally define

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it. So if you don't have reasonable expectations, there is a huge risk of wasting time, money, and also emotional resources in being fixated on an outcome that may not be something that's actually possible to receive.

And so to be able to have reasonable expectations is something that is very important to a successful divorce process and getting through it as effectively as you can.

The fourth key trait of a credible client is they cooperate timely. They provide requested information and documents promptly, enabling their legal team to work efficiently on their behalf or enabling the mediation to move forward, etc. So you might be surprised, if you're not already mid-divorce, about how much paperwork you need to complete for a divorce. There are differing levels of that depending on the path that your divorce takes.

But there are a lot of lulls in the process and many of those are created by action items that the clients have not completed. And so when we see someone who is timely providing information that is organized and completed well ... you followed the instructions, it's easy to follow, etc. ... then that translates directly into cost savings and the process moving along as efficiently as it can.

Also, the better organized your information is, and the more timely it's provided, probably the more successful result you're going to get.

The fifth trait of a credible client is emotional awareness. So while it's natural to feel emotional ... I mean, obviously, emotions are a huge part of the divorce transition ... credible clients don't let those feelings dominate their decision making. They are very aware of how their emotions may be driving certain actions that they're taking, including certain decisions that maybe they've made in the past.

And so what we want to do is become very clear about what emotion would be driving us to make a decision versus another decision. And do we like that? Is that the decision that we want to be making based on the emotion that is driving that decision?

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We want to, instead of reacting impulsively sometimes, we want to pause and be able to examine what the right next step is, and ensure that whatever emotion that we are making decisions from we are comfortable with. Because we want to make the most grounded decisions possible, that are aligned with what our future goals are, not how our nervous system may have us in overdrive, in this particular moment, might otherwise lead to.

So they work toward finding solutions that benefit everyone, particularly children. We want to be always thinking about how we can do the least damage to the family so that there is the least damage imparted to children. And I'm going to come back to that a little bit too, in a few moments.

The sixth trait of a credible client is they are open to solutions. They are focused on finding solutions, and considering all options that may be on the table, in order to find the best solution as opposed to being fixated on problems. They're willing to explore options and compromises and rather than fixating on only one, single acceptable outcome.

And this flexibility in thinking can lead to faster resolutions and better long-term outcomes.

The seventh, and last, trait of credible clients is accountability. They take responsibility for their role in the process, making informed decisions and collaborating with their legal or mediation team as an active participant in that process.

So now that you know what it means to be a credible client, what it looks like when you're being a credible client, why does that credibility matter? By approaching divorce in a prepared manner and with a practical mindset, credible clients save time and money by avoiding unnecessary conflict or delays.

When you achieve personal clarity on your legal objectives, are an effective communicator, are focused and decisive, you understand how you are billed by your attorney, and how to work with them effectively, etc., you save money on divorce legal fees.

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Credible clients also reach better resolutions. When you are organized and able to focus on communicating only the part of your divorce story that is relevant to the legal issues, you increase your chances of a favorable outcome for yourself and your kids. Credible clients also protect their emotional well-being and the well-being of their children.

One of the main focus areas of true divorce coaching is conflict management and reduction. And we know that the less conflict children are exposed to, the better short-term and long-term outcomes for them. And also for you, as the client, the importance here is helping fortify you to be able to endure what you need to in order to get through this process, in terms of that emotional protection of yourself.

So regardless of what your spouse may be doing in this process, we always want to look at where your power is in this. Where is your power in being able to protect your emotional well-being? What are the things that you can do?

Credible clients also create the best relationship with their divorce team as possible, and that translates into feeling more supported and confident in the process; less conflict, lower costs. So being a client with reasonable expectations, managed emotions, and effective communication skills makes you the client your team loves to work with and helps you get the support that you need when you need it.

I've worked in the divorce industry for a long time. I can tell you from experience that divorce professionals work with people who are in very different places, in terms of grieving the end of the relationship, and also clients who have very different levels of emotional awareness and regulation.

The more credible that you can be in your approach to your relationship with the divorce professionals, you're going to the top of the list when they have multiple clients who they need to get back to. Because you're easier to talk to, right? You're more practical. You're in a position to hear what they're saying, right? They're humans.

If someone's easier to deal with, then they're more likely to provide the attention in a more prompt manner sometimes; when, especially for litigating family law

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attorneys, they often are in court a lot, then they're back in the office, and they've got a bazillion emails to get back to. Is it easier to get back to the one that is organized, easy to read, and very practical and structured in a way that they can work through quickly? Or the one that goes on for six pages about the story of divorce?

Same thing with mediators. They're humans too. And they like to work with people who are prepared, who have reasonable expectations, who are practical, and who are there to get things done. So it's not about having this process be devoid of emotion; completely not what the goal is here.

But it's about having a space to be able to start to separate out those things. To effectively move through both the emotions of the process and the business of divorce piece of it as well. And to be able to have those two tracks running separately and in tandem, in a way that sets you up for success, right? Because I know that's what you want.

So how do you become a credible client? Primarily, you've got to get support. You've got to educate yourself. And learning about the legal process and your options and how to manage all of this as early on as possible will set you up for becoming a credible client sooner rather than later.

Working with a divorce coach helps you to process your emotions, make informed decisions, develop a clear plan, and to move forward with the execution of that plan. It can help you become a credible client. And by embodying these traits of a credible client, you not only set yourself up for a smoother divorce process, but you also create the foundation for a better future post-divorce.

So you might find a coach helpful if you're encountering a few different things. One is, you may be very much in the story of your divorce. Divorce can be overwhelming, and during this time it's normal to feel like your logic and common sense have taken a back seat to stress, anger, or sadness. These emotions can seep into every conversation, making it difficult to work productively with your attorney or mediator.

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You might find yourself stuck replaying the past instead of planning for the future. Maybe you don't see a way forward, you don't know your next step, or you just can't move forward. Maybe you and your spouse do not see eye-to-eye on how to resolve your differences. Perhaps emotions are running high and they're getting in the way of grounded decision-making or just maybe interfering with your daily life.

It might be hard to focus at work or in parenting your children. Perhaps your children are in the middle of the conflict and they're witnessing a lot of conflict. They might be utilized in the conflict.

Sometimes you just know you need savvy support in this process. I've had clients before say they just know when they need support and they need a tribe around them. So if any of this sounds familiar to you, you may benefit from divorce coaching.

Divorce coaching isn't about therapy or dwelling on what went wrong. It's about helping you become the best version of yourself during a difficult time. A divorce coach is someone who can help you regain focus, manage your emotions, and make thoughtful decisions during this challenging time.

We want to communicate effectively with your attorney or mediator, stay focused on practical solutions, let go of the emotional story of divorce, and start taking ownership of creating the future that you want. And by working with a divorce coach, you'll become a more engaged and confident participant in your own divorce process, ready to tackle challenges and make the best decisions for yourself and your family.

I totally get it. When you're going through a divorce, it can be hard to be at your best. I certainly wasn't at my best. You know you're a credible person, but you're just not sure how to be a savvy, incredible divorce client, perhaps. And if that's you, of course not. I mean, you don't get divorced every day.

So as a partner to you in divorce, when I work with clients, I help them navigate this transition as best as possible and avoid costly mistakes. And if you're thinking about getting divorced in 2025, then I would love the opportunity to talk

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with you about how I may be able to support you in successfully navigating this process.

The time to do that is now. If you are thinking about moving forward with divorce after the holidays, and I know that there are a lot of you who may be doing that, ... I know it's very common to push pause on moving forward with a divorce over the holidays ... but if you're planning on moving forward with one in early 2025, there is a lot to do to prepare for that, before you decide to move forward, before you file, before you have that conversation.

There's a lot of prep work to be done that is some of the most meaningful work that we can do together. So if you are thinking about moving forward with divorce in the new year, then I would love to chat with you in a consultation soon.

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

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advised to seek the advice of qualified legal professionals regarding their individual situation.