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Jun

2008

What Is In A Name

Posted by SurviveDivorce as [Coping](#)

Should a divorced woman change her name after the “I do’s” become undone? Identity is certainly a consideration when getting a divorce as a name can affect children, parents, careers, life insurance, benefits, and more.

“Most of the time, women with children like to keep their married name so it’s consistent with their children,” says Sharon Sooho, a family law attorney in Newton, Mass., and a partner with Divorce.net. “Some women, even without children, prefer to keep their married name because it sounds better, or it’s the name they use professionally.” A few add a new last name and use their previous last name as a middle name.

Starting fresh often means claiming a new identity to go along with the newfound freedom.

A marketing director at Teachers College in New York, Diane Dobry divorced after 29 years of marriage. Diane had started a wine import business and wanted to name it after her maternal grandmother’s maiden name. “I was planning to change my last name to Kristof to match my new company name so I could say, ‘Diane Kristof, president of Kristof Wines,’” Dobry explains. “But someone told me it might not be a good idea because of possible problems relating to trying to collect on my ex-husband’s benefits if I do not remarry. If I change my name, it might be difficult to prove that I did not remarry, since it is not my maiden name.”

The easiest way to make an identity change at the time of divorce is taking back one’s birth name or a previous married name.

“When you divorce, the decree normally gives you permission to resume using your premarital name,” says Brette McWhorter Sember of Clarence, N.Y., a former divorce attorney. “If you want to choose another name, you have to go through a legal name-change process. It generally requires that you file a petition with the court explaining why you want the change. Then you have to publish a notice of the change in a newspaper of record chosen by the court, so creditors and other interested parties are notified. Then the change is finalized.” Filing fees for making a name change legal can range from \$100 to \$700.

Women who want to change their name to another family name might find that their children will disagree because now mommy’s name is different, which can give children a sense of detachment.

The days when one could simply change a driver’s license, passport, or Social Security card are gone. Each government, non-government agency has their own rules and requirements. Checklists should include memberships, clubs, insurances, schools, subscriptions, credit card companies, vehicle registrations, and home ownership documents.

Some women have chosen to completely drop their last name, à la Madonna and Cher. However, in the eyes of the bureaucracy, it could mean that their new last name was NLN, or No Last Name, which could become more trouble than it’s worth.

Whatever the decision, along with the paperwork, a new name becomes only one symbol that you’ve

restructured your life. When children are involved, consistency is the most important factor to consider.

2 Responses

1. [Linda Semn](#)

[September 21st, 2008 at 5:34 pm](#)

1

For me, name change was a very emotional issue. Although I'd been married for 26 years, I'd never felt like his name applied to me. However, when I moved out, I felt all kinds of guilt for not propping him up anymore emotionally or psychologically and, frankly, I went a little overboard with "being nice" during the period of separation. (Nothing physical, just some continued nurturing.) I knew my name change would be hard for him. So I waited for several months after the divorce was final, and I felt he'd had some time to get used to that, before I filed for a name change. Going back to my maiden name felt terrific! But I'm glad I waited for the dust to settle first.

2. **Thereselle Copeland**

[August 11th, 2009 at 7:34 pm](#)

2

can I change my divorce name back to a previous marriage name.

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- An advertisement for 'My Divorce Documents'. It features a blue square on the left with a white feather icon and a yellow button that says 'CLICK HERE'. To the right is a white box with the text 'Going through a Divorce?' in green, and the logo 'My Divorce Documents' at the bottom with the tagline 'We know what you're going through. We're here to help.'
- An advertisement for 'Build My Credit'. It has a blue background with the text 'BUILD my CREDIT' in white and red. Below that, it says 'After Your Divorce Rebuild Your Credit With FREE Help' and a yellow button that says 'click here'.
- An advertisement for 'Kiddie Castle'. It features a yellow background with a blue castle icon. The text reads 'Kiddie Castle' in a red banner, followed by 'ANYTHING A Prince or Princess MIGHT NEED!' in blue.

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