

## Ep #3: 5 Simple Steps to Reduce Divorce Overwhelm



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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You're listening to *The Sensible Split* podcast, Episode 3. Today, we're talking about how to start saying goodbye to divorce overwhelm.

*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, everyone. It's Saturday, and I just got back from having a massage. I'm feeling great. I'm excited to talk to you today. Tomorrow is New Year's Eve, and it's my daughter's sixth birthday. Yes, I have a New Year's Eve baby, and it's so fitting for her. She has such a big, sweet, fun personality. It just makes so much sense, now knowing her, that that's when she chose to come into the world.

I have noticed that life seems a little different lately. I'm heading into a bit of a new chapter personally. It's like all of a sudden, I feel like I don't have little, bitty babies anymore. I suppose I don't, but they're still so little in so many ways. But at the same time, I feel like I'm getting some flexibility and some freedom back, which is nice. Maybe you've been there at some point, too.

I'm really looking forward to all that 2024 is going to bring me, and I really hope it's a great ride for you too. Today, I want to dive in and talk to you about divorce related overwhelm. So many women that I start working with report feeling super overwhelmed.

I want to look at first, what really is overwhelm? Overwhelm is a feeling or a vibration that you sense in your body. In the early stages of the divorce process, it's typically generated by your brain being overloaded with thoughts about the uncertainty that lies ahead. We've talked about that in a previous episode.

There are so many things that you're just not sure how they're going to shake out in the process. And there are so many fears and questions and things you've got to get done that are swirling around in your mind, that is creating that feeling of overwhelm. Which makes you feel a certain way in your body. That you know when you're feeling that, okay, that's overwhelm.

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If you're anything like a lot of my clients, you're probably having thoughts like, "I don't know where to start. When and what should I tell the kids? I've never done this before. Can I keep the house? I don't know how I'll ever make all of this work financially. I'm overwhelmed and don't know what needs to be done first. I don't know if I need or can afford a lawyer. I want to do this right, but I'm not really sure how. Should we try mediation?"

Overwhelmed is caused by swirls of thoughts just like these. Feeling overwhelmed because your mind is running wild, jumping from subject to subject. Envisioning the worst when there are no answers. Shutting down or freaking out for all these things you have to do or learn, that you don't know how to do already. It can be super exhausting.

Questions without answers turn into fear. And when we're feeling a lot of fear, that, in and of itself, also just feels super overwhelming. When we're feeling overwhelmed, it's kind of like when we're feeling anxious; like we talked about previously. What happens when we're experiencing all of this overwhelm in our body? It's just a crappy feeling. We don't like to feel that way; it's unpleasant.

Maybe we start taking action, or not taking action, from that place of feeling overwhelmed. Where we might start neglecting other tasks at home or at work. Not being our best selves when we're interacting with our kids. We may be responding in a reactive, kind of emotional way, to things that are happening, things that are being said to us, things that we're just encountering in the day.

A lot of times, I hear from my clients that they aren't eating the way that they should be. A lot of the time, I find that divorce related overwhelm has them not eating as much as they'd like to or they need to, or sometimes it's the other end of the spectrum and they're eating more than they want to, kind of eating your feelings, right? Another big one is sleeping. If you're not sleeping properly, this might be the impact of so much of the overwhelm related to this process.

Another one we sometimes don't really think about is shopping. That was a big one for me, at one point in time. I love to shop. I love the feeling of going out and getting something beautiful and new. There's nothing wrong with any of these things inherently, it's just when we're doing them to a degree that we don't want

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to, and they're creating results for us in our lives that we don't like, is when we really want to look at, "Okay, is this something that is coming from the feeling of overwhelm in a way that I don't want to continue?"

So, no matter how overwhelm is showing up for you in your life, I suspect that there's a part of it that you'd like to go away. You'd like it to go away and not come back, right? I want to walk you through my five-step process to reducing overwhelm.

Today, on this episode, I'm going to walk you through the first three steps of that process. And then, I'm going to tell you where you can go to get a free resource, that's going to help you work through these first three steps. And that also contains the latter two steps for you, as well. Okay, so let's get started.

Step one is, channel the thoughts swirl, that is, the thoughts that are swirling around in your mind that are creating the overwhelm, by doing a thought download. What is a thought download? That's simply, you're going to write down everything that is going through your mind.

Because it's really easy to just get really stuck in the feeling of overwhelm and not really be able to identify all of these thoughts that are creating it. Carrying all these fears, questions, and to-dos that you have around in your mind, is tiring. We want to identify what all these thoughts are and separate them from yourself by writing them down. This is the first step to taking command over them.

So, start by writing out the most pressing thoughts and questions you have that are swirling around in your mind. This might include fears or questions about the divorce process, or things that you think you should do, you have to do, or you need to do. They can be general or specific.

The goal is just to get them out of your head and down on paper to clear out your mind, gain clarity on what issues might be the most pressing for you right now, and become aware of any thought patterns that might be contributing to your overwhelm.

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What I mean by that is, what do you notice about these thoughts? When you look at them all on paper, are there any patterns to them? I'll give you one example.

For me, when I feel overwhelmed, sometimes what I notice, when I look at what I'm thinking, I tend to awful-ize. Another term for that would be "catastrophize." But for me, I like the word "awful-ize." It makes a lot of sense for me when I am looking at what I'm doing with my thoughts and those circumstances.

So basically, awful-izing, or catastrophizing, is taking a situation and thinking that the worst-case scenario is going to happen. Most of the time, I've noticed now, that it never really is as bad as you think it's going to be. But that's just where I noticed that my mind likes to go, whenever I'm presented with something that seems like it could be a threat, could be a little scary, or could be a little uncertain. I tend to think the worst-case scenario is going to happen.

Get curious and look at the thoughts that you have. Also try to notice, are there any patterns here that might be contributing to feeling overwhelmed? You also don't want to judge. Whatever your thoughts are, don't judge what they are. Just write them down. Be honest with yourself. It's okay for them to be whatever they are.

Step two is, categorize and prioritize. Let's take each thought or question that you identified in step one and categorize it. So, you have your list of all the thoughts that you have; you're going to empty out your mind, make sure you have all of them down. And then, we're going to take each one of those and determine: Is this a to-do item? Is this a fear or is this a question that I have?

Once you have them categorized we're going to take each category and run them through a few questions. Okay? For your to-dos ask yourself: What on this list seems important but does not really need to be done right now? Really be honest with yourself on this one. Many to-dos that we have for ourselves seem like they're super necessary, but they really aren't when we examine them closely.

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So, there's going to be to-dos that, yes, they need to get done. But there are some, I suspect, that seemed like they really have to get done but if you examine them closely and honestly, they probably don't. Let's look at what to-dos don't really need to be done, or they don't really need to be done right now. For any of those, we're going to cross them off the list.

Secondly, look at which one of these is the most timely issue, or one that is going to move you along the most. For that one, we're going to prioritize it and start with it. Then, take the rest of the to-dos and rank them in order of how much you think completing them will help you calm any immediate fears, answer any burning questions, or just tend to your overall wellness.

Then we're going to look at the fears. Just notice that the fears are probably questions that are waiting to be answered. For each fear ask yourself: Is this a rational fear? Why, or why not? Divorce is a traumatic event that threatens our sense of stability, purpose, and how we generally see the world.

Naturally, this can be really overwhelming to our brains and our nervous systems. Our brains are designed to protect us, and they often do that job by creating fear, in response to triggers, by default. It can be helpful to really check those fears. To discern what's a real fear that you want to listen to, and what might be a fear that just doesn't deserve to take up any space in your brain right now?

For fears that really require your attention, consider: What information do I need to know in order to calm this fear? Again, if you have a fear, look at how you could convert that into a question to be answered. An example of this might be, "I'm afraid I won't be able to financially support myself after divorce." If that is your fear, ask: What information do I need to know in order to calm this fear?

The fear reframed as a question would be: How much support would I be entitled to if I were to get divorced? The information that you might need to know in order to calm that fear would be, for example, the answer to that question. You see? Fears, oftentimes, are just simply questions that require answers. So, we need to be really clear on what those fears are, so we can begin to look at,

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“What is the question that needs to be answered here, and where can I get the answer to it?”

And then finally, for each question ask yourself: How will knowing the answer to this question help me? Which answers will help me make the next best step forward? Start there.

Rank the remaining questions in order of how much you think completing it will help you calm any immediate fears or answer any burning questions. Okay?

In step three we're going to close the information gaps. So, for any of those fears, questions to do's, etc, we're going to identify what information you need to know in order to calm the fear, answer the question, or educate yourself, in order to resolve them smartly.

For each one, ask yourself: From what reliable source can I obtain this information? Here's a word of caution for you. Resist the urge to go down a googling rabbit hole or ask your friends or family for legal advice. I have so many clients that have come to me, potential clients, who, in the beginning of the process, have learned information from friends or family who mean really well, but who aren't professionals in the field.

Or they have Googled something and read an article that has given them a certain piece of information that is inaccurate. This can cause misunderstandings and unnecessary stress. Sometimes that misinformation can cause you to kind of freak out, or maybe in the opposite way, be overly confident in your position on a particular issue.

Divorce laws vary by states, and they have different practical implications to different cases in the same state. So, a qualified divorce professional in your area can give you the most reliable information. Even though there is this wealth of information out there on the internet, and yes, some of it might be accurate, the problem is that a lot of the time it's unclear whether that information is applicable to your particular situation. It lacks context or clarity about what particular situation it might apply to, and in what particular jurisdiction.

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If you don't know where to start with finding a reliable source of information, start with a coach who can help you smartly decide who to consult for what issues, and who ultimately to hire.

I want you to notice what we're doing here. We, in the first three steps, are beginning to take the sort of knotted up ball of yarn in your head, that are all those thoughts that are swirled and tangled up in there, and we're starting to untangle them to get very clear on what is causing you to feel overwhelmed, and we're creating a plan to reduce the overwhelm. The cure for overwhelm is having a plan to address the specific causes of it.

All right, so we've made it through the first three steps: channeling the thought swirl, categorizing, and prioritizing, and then closing information gaps. So now, I want to direct you to my website, where I provide a free resource to help you work through the first three steps of this process, for you personally. Also, it introduces you to, and walks you through, steps four and five of the process to reducing overwhelm.

If you are interested in receiving that free resource, go to [www.TheSensibleSplit.com/overwhelm](http://www.TheSensibleSplit.com/overwhelm). You just enter your email address, and I will send you an email with the free download of my Sensible Woman's Guide to Divorcing Your Overwhelm.

The guide is going to walk you through organizing your mind, so you can have a clear action plan for yourself about how to move forward toward getting out of your personal overwhelm.

My specialty is teaching you how to confidently navigate the legal process, strategize confidently, quickly make decisions, and manage the emotional rollercoaster that comes with divorce. I help you get out of overwhelm, indecision, and inaction, and into moving forward toward a brighter horizon. I hope today's episode helps you take one useful step in that direction.

Thanks so much for listening, and I'll see you next time.

To celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away a \$100 Amazon gift card to each of three lucky listeners who follow, rate, and review the



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show. I would love your honest feedback so I can create an awesome podcast that is helpful to you.

Visit [www.TheSensibleSplit.com/podcastlaunch](http://www.TheSensibleSplit.com/podcastlaunch) to learn more about the contest and how to enter. Do it soon because I'm going to be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode!

Thank you so much for tuning in to this episode of *The Sensible Split*. If you're looking for more information and guidance to help you successfully navigate a divorce, please visit [www.TheSensibleSplit.com](http://www.TheSensibleSplit.com).

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