

What We Know

ARTICLES & INSIGHTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Secure Your Oxygen Mask First

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"If there is a drop in cabin pressure, panels above your seat will open, revealing oxygen masks. If this happens, pull a mask toward you until the tube is fully extended, place the mask over your nose and mouth, slip the elastic strap over your head, and adjust the mask if necessary. Breathe normally and note that oxygen is flowing, even if the bag doesn't inflate. Secure your mask before helping others."

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Air travel has never been fun for me. I tolerate it because I view it as a necessary evil. I want to get to my destination, and to do so I must deal with the hassle of air travel. I do not like airplanes. I do not understand them. The mechanics of aerodynamics make no sense to me. I am putting my life in the hands of some pilot I have never met. The seats are small and uncomfortable. I have zero control over the plane or its occupants. Making one's way to the restroom requires an act of Congress.

Obviously, flying creates great stress for me. The only way I can get through it with my sanity in check is by adequately preparing, practicing a little self-soothing, and by keeping my eye on the prize, knowing the destination will be more than worth the journey.

Divorce is not unlike the anxiety-inducing experience that is airline travel. People going through a divorce put their lives in the hands of attorneys, therapists, financial planners, and other experts to help them navigate the process. The process itself is complicated and fraught with questions and very few clear answers. People working their way through the process of divorce many times feel helpless and out of control. And unfortunately for many, the destination can seem just as bleak, if not more so, than the journey.

If you are currently moving through a divorce, there are two things I want you to know: **(1) you have the power to make the destination worth the journey, even if you did not ask to go on this trip; and (2) if you put your oxygen mask on first, so to speak, you will have the ability to help yourself and your children safely land at your destination, through healthy and effective decision making along the way.**

Much like my own process to carry me through dreaded air travel, here are three ways in which you can “put your oxygen mask on first.”

1. Be prepared. Make sure to do some research regarding the team of professionals whom you will ask to come alongside you in this journey. Meet with a lawyer and get educated about your rights and obligations. Meet with a financial advisor or planner and understand the economics at play. Find a mental health professional who can help you effectively and efficiently through the grieving process.
2. Take care of yourself. In these times of significant stress, it is essential to focus on your physical, mental and emotional health. Particularly if you have children, you cannot help them through this journey unless you are functioning and able to do so. Put your oxygen mask first!! Make it a priority to eat whole, healthy foods, and plenty of them. Get adequate sleep. Keep up with your exercise regimen, and if you do not have one, create one! Meditate or pray. Find comfort in your religious practices. As I mentioned before, having a mental health professional who can assist you in navigating the emotional stress of this situation is key. Don't be afraid to lean on your friends and family for support, but know it's okay to walk away if support is not what you receive. It is your life, not theirs, and only you know what is best for you and your family.
3. Focus on the destination. Whatever the reasons you find yourself on the path of separation and divorce, you are here. Regardless of whether this path was your decision, a joint decision, or the last thing in the world you wanted, you must now move through the process, toward some future destination. You have the power to direct yourself to this destination. It can be beautiful, created by acceptance, self-love, and growth, or it can be bleak, characterized by hurt, bitterness, and resentment. You have the choice, and I get that it is not an easy one. It is much easier to wallow in self-pity than to hold your head up and put a smile on your face.

Remember that the passage of time is a great healer, and if you secure your oxygen mask first – act with preparation, take care of yourself and focus on being positive – you and your family will weather any turbulence you encounter along the way.

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