

The Bahá'í Year of Patience and Divorce Quotations

A. Principles

1. Divorce is abhorred but permitted

It is, of course, important for the friends to realize that although divorce is permitted in Bahá'í Law, it is nevertheless condemned, and great efforts should be made to avoid it. It is always the hope that, during the year of patience, affection between the couple will recur and that divorce will not be necessary. (From a letter written on behalf of Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 15 February 1973, in LOG, pp. 395-6.)

2. 'Grounds' for Bahá'í Divorce

Concerning the definition of the term 'aversion' in relation to Bahá'í divorce law, the Universal House of Justice points out that there are no specific 'grounds' for Bahá'í divorce such as there are in some codes of civil law. Bahá'í Law permits divorce but, as both Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá have made very clear, divorce is abhorred. Thus, from the point of view of the individual believer he should do all he can to refrain from divorce. Bahá'ís should be profoundly aware of the sanctity of marriage and should strive to make their marriages an eternal bond of unity and harmony. This requires effort and sacrifice and wisdom and self-abnegation. A Bahá'í should consider the possibility of divorce only if the situation is intolerable and he or she has a strong aversion to being married to the other partner. This is the standard held up to the individual. It is not a law, but an exhortation. It is a goal to which we should strive.

It can be seen, therefore, that 'aversion' is not a specific legal term that needs to be defined. Indeed a number of other terms are used in describing the situation that can lead to divorce in Bahá'í Law, such as 'antipathy', 'resentment', 'estrangement', 'impossibility of establishing harmony' and 'irreconcilability'. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 3 November 1982, in LOG, pp. 390-1)

If a Bahá'í woman suffers abuse or is subjected to rape by her husband, she has the right to turn to the Spiritual Assembly for assistance and counsel, or to seek legal protection. Such abuse would gravely jeopardize the continuation of the marriage, and could well lead to a condition of irreconcilable antipathy. (Letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual, 24 January 1993)

3. At present, in most countries, Bahá'ís require a civil divorce as well as a Bahá'í divorce.

In general, however, a Bahá'í couple in . . . who are obtaining a divorce must, in addition to the Bahá'í divorce, obtain a civil divorce, and the civil divorce decree will usually cover all such matters as division of property, provision of support and custody of children. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 13 January 1983)

4. A Bahá'í, even one married to a non-Bahá'í, must wait one year from the time of separation until the Bahá'í divorce can be granted.

Should resentment or antipathy arise between husband and wife, he is not to divorce her but to bide in patience throughout the course of one whole year, that perchance the fragrance of affection may be renewed between them. If, upon the completion of this period, their love hath not returned, it is permissible for divorce to take place. God's wisdom, verily, hath encompassed all things. (Aqdas, para. 68)

5. There is a financial responsibility of one spouse for the other in the year of patience

. . . the basic principle of Bahá'í Law is that the husband is responsible for the support of his wife and children so long as they are married; that is until the granting of the divorce. In a particular case, however, it may have been the wife who was the bread-winner of the family or both the husband and wife may have been earning income. The Assembly should not ignore such specific situations and change them merely because a year of waiting is running. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, 24 February 1983, in LOG, p. 396)

The husband is obligated to support the wife and children until the granting of the Bahá'í divorce. This normally takes place at the end of the year of waiting unless it has to be postponed pending the granting of a civil divorce. Following the granting of the divorce the father continues to be under the obligation of providing the necessary funds for the support of the children, but he has no continuing obligation to support his former wife. (Summarized guidance from the Universal House of Justice given to Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers dated 5 January 1983)

Should a woman be divorced in consequence of a proven act of infidelity, she shall receive no maintenance during her period of waiting.[*mutatis mutandis*] (Aqdas, para. 70)

6. There is an on-going financial responsibility for the children

Following the granting of the divorce the father continues to be under the obligation of providing the necessary funds for the support of the children . . . (Summarized guidance from the Universal House of Justice given to Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers dated 5 January 1983)

B. Features of the Year of Patience

1. Purpose

The purpose of the year of waiting is to attempt the saving of a marital relationship which was originally accepted as valid in the eyes of Bahá'ís, and is now in jeopardy. (Letter from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 27 January 1969, in LOG, pp. 399-400)

2. Who must have a Bahá'í divorce?

Bahá'ís (whether one party or both are believers) should follow the Bahá'í law of divorce, i.e. one year of waiting, and not neglect this divinely given Law. Whether they were Bahá'ís when married or not has nothing to do with it. (From letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Spiritual Assembly of British Isles, 12 June 1952, in LOG, p. 395)

A Bahá'í who has lost his administrative rights is administratively expelled from the community and therefore is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Spiritual Assembly in the matter of laws of personal status, such as divorce, unless, of course, he is involved in such a matter through having a Bahá'í spouse in good standing from whom the divorce is taking place. His observance of such laws is a matter of conscience and he would not be subject to further sanctions for non-observance of Bahá'í laws during the periods he is without voting rights. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 6 April 1982, LOG p. 58)

3. How does it start?

The setting of the date of the beginning of the year of patience is not automatic. The Assembly must first determine whether grounds for a Bahá'í divorce exist and should make every effort to reconcile the parties. If the aversion existing between the parties is found to be irreconcilable then the

Assembly may set the date for the beginning of the year of waiting . . . (From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 7 September 1970, in LOG, pp. 395-6)

Thus the date of the beginning of the year of patience normally commences when one of the parties notifies the Assembly that they have separated with the intention of divorce. However, the Assembly may establish the beginning of the year of patience on a prior date provided it is satisfied such prior date reflects the actual date of separation and there is good reason for so doing. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 26 August 1965)

An Assembly is obliged to consider an application for a year of waiting from either party to a marriage, whether the other party wants the divorce or not. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 28 July 1985)

4. When does it start?

. . . a National Spiritual Assembly may, if circumstances justify it, back date the beginning of the year provided that this is not earlier than the date the parties last separated with the intention of obtaining a divorce. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 18 July 1985)

5. Who decides that it has started?

. . . the Local Assembly should determine, before setting the date of the beginning of the year of waiting, that irreconcilable antipathy exists. While a Local or National Assembly may request the advice of the Continental Board of Counsellors and their Board members, and should be grateful for their assistance, it is the Assembly's responsibility to conduct its own investigation and come to a decision. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 30 May 1983, in LOG, p. 395)

6. Can the year of patience be made shorter or longer?

It is not possible to shorten the period of waiting as this is a provision of the Kitáb-Aqdas. However, a National Spiritual Assembly may, if circumstances justify it, back date the beginning of the year provided that this is not earlier than the date the parties last separated with the intention of obtaining a divorce. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 18 July 1985 in LOG 398)

It is not within the discretion of the parties to a Bahá'í divorce to extend the year of waiting and ask for the Bahá'í divorce 'at whatever time they feel so inclined'. If there has been no reconciliation of the parties in the meantime, the Bahá'í divorce becomes final at the end of the year of waiting unless the granting of the civil divorce is delayed beyond that time.

The parties may, however, withdraw the application for Bahá'í divorce at any time during the year of waiting. Should they later desire to apply for divorce, a new year of waiting would have to be commenced. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 4 November 1974)

C. Role of the LSA in Overseeing the Year of Patience

1. NSA or LSA (or committee of either) to handle

The Bahá'í divorce must be handled either by the Local Assembly or by the National Assembly, but either may handle it at the discretion of your Assembly. (Letter from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, 23 February 1964, in LOG, p. 394)

However, it is necessary that Bahá'ís who intend to divorce be aware that they must consult with their

Local or National Assembly that basically a year of waiting must ensue before divorce can be effected, and that the Assembly has certain responsibilities toward the couple concerned about which they will be informed through consultation with the Assembly. (From the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 16 April 1967, LOG, p. 394)

2. What does the LSA do?

The procedure, briefly, is that when a Spiritual Assembly receives an application for divorce its first duty is to try to reconcile the couple. When it determines that this is not possible, it should then set the date of the beginning of the year of waiting. That could be the date on which the Assembly reaches the decision, unless the couple are still living together, in which case it must be postponed until they separate. If the couple had already separated some time before, the Assembly may back-date the beginning of the year; however, the earliest date on which it can be set is the date on which the couple last separated with the intention of obtaining a divorce. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Netherlands, 11 September 1986)

3. Responsibility of the LSA

When an application for divorce is made to a Spiritual Assembly its first thought and action should be to reconcile the couple and to ensure that they know the Bahá'í teachings on the matter. God willing, the Assembly will be successful and no year of waiting need be started. However, if the Assembly finds that it is unable to persuade the party concerned to withdraw the application for divorce, it must conclude that, from its point of view, there appears to be an irreconcilable antipathy, and it has no alternative to setting the date for the beginning of the year of waiting. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 3 November 1982, in LOG, p. 390)

4. Responsibility of the Couple

During the year the couple have the responsibility of attempting to reconcile their difference, and the Assembly has the duty to help them and encourage them. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 3 November 1982 in LOG, p. 390)

5. Things the LSA cannot do

* believing that a marriage is in difficulties, ask the couple in for consultation

. . . There should be no intervention into the marital affairs of individuals in a Bahá'í community unless and until the parties themselves bring a problem to the Assembly. Prior to that it is not the business of the Assembly to counsel the parties. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 22 March 1968)

* insist on certain financial arrangements

In a country like the United Kingdom, where divorce is subject to the civil law, the function of the Assembly (or committee) in dealing with a divorce case is not primarily a matter of adjudication . . . If the matter can be amicably arranged between the parties, well and good. If not, the basic principle of Bahá'í Law is that the husband is responsible for the support of his wife and children so long as they are married; that is until the granting of the divorce . . . The application of these principles should not be in the form of an adjudication which the Assembly will require the couple to accept, but as a basis for an arrangement which the couple will amicably agree to and present to the Court for endorsement. If the Assembly is unable to get the couple to agree, it should leave the matter to the civil court. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, 24 February 1983)

The only provision in Bahá'í Law regarding the support of the wife is that which makes the husband responsible for her support during the year of waiting. This does not mean, however, that further support is prohibited; all such matters will require legislation in the future. At the present time it is the responsibility of the Assembly to arrange an amicable and just financial settlement between the couple, and any such arrangement must, obviously, take into consideration the financial situation of both parties and their relative responsibilities.

While it is obvious that the Assembly should encourage the husband to honour his Bahá'í responsibilities in paying the required support money, matters of support may be covered by the civil courts when a civil divorce is applied for and, in such a case, the wife would, of course, be able to invoke whatever civil remedy is available. In any case, at the present time National Spiritual Assemblies should not normally apply sanctions in cases of failure to comply with support requirements. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 6 February 1978)

. . . the civil divorce decree will usually cover all such matters as division of property, provision of support and custody of children. The function of the Spiritual Assembly in such ancillary aspects of the divorce is thus advisory rather than judicatory. In order to prevent, if possible, disputes between Bahá'ís in front of the law courts, the Assembly should attempt to bring the couple to an amicable arrangement about all such questions, which can then be submitted to the court for its endorsement. If the efforts of the Assembly are of no avail, then the matter must be left to the civil court to decide. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 13 January 1983)

* try to enforce a court order

Once the divorce decree with its related provisions has been handed down by the court, it is the obligation of both parties, as good Bahá'ís, to obey it and, if either is lax in so doing, the Assembly should advise him or her about his or her duties and press for their fulfilment. The wronged party, however, should at the same time be left free to apply to the civil authorities for the enforcement of the decision. Unfortunately such enforcement is notoriously difficult, especially when the parties subsequently reside in different countries. It is here that the action of the Spiritual Assembly, reinforcing the decision of the civil courts, can often be of help. Except in circumstances of unusual gravity or cases where the responsible party fails to obey a court decision to provide support for the children an Assembly should not contemplate imposing sanctions for lack of compliance in these matters. Actual enforcement should normally be left to the action of the civil courts. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 13 January 1983)

* insist on what happens to the children

. . . the civil divorce decree will usually cover all such matters as division of property, provision of support and custody of children. The function of the Spiritual Assembly in such ancillary aspects of the divorce is thus advisory rather than judicatory. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 13 January 1983)

It is preferable that the couple amicably agree on the custody of the children and submit their agreement to the Assembly for endorsement. (Summarized guidance from the Universal House of Justice given to Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers dated 5 January 1983)

* not recognise the end of the year of waiting because one party does not wish to proceed

Question: If, upon completion of the year of patience, the husband refuseth to allow divorce, what course should be adopted by the wife? Answer: When the period is ended divorce is effected. However, it is necessary that there be witnesses to the beginning and end of this period, so that they

can be called upon to give testimony should the need arise. (In relation to the witnesses, the Universal House of Justice has clarified that in these days the duties of the witnesses in cases of divorce are performed by the Spiritual Assemblies.) (Aqdas, Questions and Answers, Question 73, Note 100)

Divorce becomes valid even if one of the parties refuses to accept it, and after one year of separation . . . (Shoghi Effendi, 6 July 1935)

* pry

Assemblies are, of course, discouraged from probing unnecessarily into details of personal lives and the examination of a divorce problem should not go beyond what is necessary to ascertain whether or not such antipathy does, indeed, exist. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 30 May 1983, in LOG, p. 395)

D. `Rules' of the Year of Patience

1. Couple must live apart

Far from being required to live together during the year of patience, the parties are in fact prohibited from doing so. (Letter from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, 23 February 1964, in LOG, p. 394)

2. Couple must not have sexual intercourse

Sexual intercourse between husband and wife is forbidden during their year of patience, and whoso committeth this act must seek God's forgiveness, and, as a punishment, render to the House of Justice a fine of nineteen mithqals of gold. (Q&A no. 11)

3. Parties must not `date'

. . . although normal social relationship between each of the partners and members of both sexes is permissible, it is quite contrary to the spirit of the teachings for either party to be courting a new partner during the year of waiting. This should be made clear to the couple and they should be exhorted to conduct themselves as Bahá'ís. However, this is not an area in which the Assembly should resort to sanctions if either or both of the pair disregard this principle. (From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 15 February 1973, in LOG, p. 394)

Should a woman be divorced in consequence of a proven act of infidelity, she shall receive no maintenance during her period of waiting. [*mutatis mutandis*] (Aqdas, para. 70)

4. Parties must not remarry or announce new marriage plans

. . . the believer will be subject to sanctions if he should marry a third party within the year of patience itself, not only it is a violation of the year of patience itself, but also because even though a civil divorce has been granted, the Bahá'í divorce cannot be granted until the end of the year of patience. For this reason no marriage is possible during the running of the year of patience unless the parties to the divorce re-marry each other again in a civil ceremony. (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, 29 March 1966, in LOG, p. 52)

It is not within the spirit of Bahá'í Law for one to become involved in the announcement of new marriage plans while he or she is still legally married to another. There is no objection to urging the friends not to go so far as to seek consent of parents before the divorce becomes final in all respects,

but no sanctions should be applied to enforce such exhortation. (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, 17 January 1971, in LOG, p. 400)

5. Financial arrangements must be made for support of spouse

. . . the basic principle of Bahá'í Law is that the husband is responsible for the support of his wife and children so long as they are married; that is until the granting of the divorce. In a particular case, however, it may have been the wife who was the bread-winner of the family or both the husband and wife may have been earning income. The Assembly should not ignore such specific situations and change them merely because a year of waiting is running. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, 24 February 1983, in LOG, p. 396)

6. Financial arrangements must be made for the support of the children

Following the granting of the divorce the father continues to be under the obligation of providing the necessary funds for the support of the children . . . (Summarized guidance from the Universal House of Justice given to Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers dated 5 January 1983)

E. Things that may alter the duration of the year of patience

1. Breaking off the marriage after the vows are said but before consummation

Question: Should antipathy develop between a couple after the Marriage Verses have been read and the dowry paid, may divorce take place without observance of the year of patience? Answer: Divorce may legitimately be sought after the reading of the Marriage Verses and payment of the dowry, but before the consummation of the marriage. In such circumstances there is no need for observance of a year of patience, but recovery of the dowry payment is not permissible. (Aqdas, Q & A, no. 12)

[The consummation of marriage by a couple is, as you aptly state, an intimate and private matter outside the scrutiny of others. While consummation normally implies a sexual relationship, the Baha'i Law requiring consummation to take place within twenty-four hours of the ceremony can be considered as fulfilled if the couple has commenced co-habitation with the intention of setting up the family relationship. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer dated 28 July 1978, in LOG p. 389)]

2. The couple getting back together

The parties may, however, withdraw the application for Bahá'í divorce at any time during the year of waiting. Should they later desire to apply for divorce, a new year of waiting would have to be commenced. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 4 November 1974)

3. Intercourse

Question: If intercourse take place between a couple during their year of patience, and they become estranged again thereafter, must they recommence their year of patience, or may the days preceding the intercourse be included in the reckoning of the year? And once divorce hath taken place, is it necessary that a further period of waiting be observed? Answer: Should affection be renewed between the couple during their year of patience, the marriage tie is valid, and what is commanded in the Book of God must be observed; but once the year of patience hath been completed and that which is decreed by God taketh place, a further period of waiting is not required. Sexual intercourse between husband and wife is forbidden during their year of patience, and whoso committeth this act

must seek God's forgiveness, and, as a punishment, render to the House of Justice a fine of nineteen mithqals of gold. (Q&A no. 11)

4. A non-Bahá'í partner re-marrying

If a Bahá'í should marry another prior to the end of the year of waiting however, voting rights should be suspended as, under Bahá'í Law, he is still regarded as married whether or not the civil divorce has been granted. On the other hand, if a non-Bahá'í partner, having obtained a civil divorce, marries during the year of waiting, the Bahá'í partner is released from the need to wait further. (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 20 August 1974)

F. Things that don't change the year of patience

1. One partner dating

Therefore, although normal social relationship between each of the partners and members of both sexes is permissible, it is quite contrary to the spirit of the teachings for either party to be courting a new partner during the year of waiting. This should be made clear to the couple and they should be exhorted to conduct themselves as Bahá'ís. However, this is not an area in which the Assembly should resort to sanctions if either or both of the pair disregard this principle. (From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 15 February 1973, in LOG, p. 394)

2. Infidelity of one partner

. . . if one of the parties conducts himself or herself in a way that is blatantly or flagrantly immoral the matter should be handled as any other similar case would be . . . (From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 15 February 1973)

G. When the year of patience ends

1. When is the Bahá'í divorce final?

. . . if the year of waiting comes to an end without reconciliation the Bahá'í divorce must be granted as at the date of the granting of the civil divorce if this has not already taken place. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 4 November 1974)

. . . even though a civil divorce has been granted, the Bahá'í divorce cannot be granted until the end of the year of patience. (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, 29 March 1966, in LOG, p. 52)

2. Does a Bahá'í have to pay alimony?

The House of Justice states that there is no general requirement in Bahá'í Law for a husband to continue to support his former wife beyond the ending of the year of waiting and the granting of the divorce. Therefore, in the absence of a ruling by the civil court or of an agreement between the couple registered with the Spiritual Assembly, there is nothing further for your Assembly to do in this case. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 13 January 1983)

The only provision in Bahá'í Law regarding the support of the wife is that which makes the husband responsible for her support during the year of waiting. This does not mean, however, that further support is prohibited; all such matters will require legislation in the future. At the present time it is the

responsibility of the Assembly to arrange an amicable and just financial settlement between the couple, and any such arrangement must, obviously, take into consideration the financial situation of both parties and their relative responsibilities. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 6 February 1978)

3. What happens to the children?

It is preferable that the couple amicably agree on the custody of the children and submit their agreement to the Assembly for endorsement. Normally in the case of very young children custody is given to the mother unless there are compelling reasons which make this inadvisable.

Regardless of which parent is given custody, the children should be so educated that they may develop a proper Bahá'í attitude towards, and due regard for, both parents. Fair and practical arrangements should be made to protect the rights of the parent not having custody to associate with the children and spend time with them.

Usually custody arrangements continue until the child comes of age unless, of course, new circumstances transpire during this period which call for a review of the arrangements.

. . . Following the granting of the divorce the father continues to be under the obligation of providing the necessary funds for the support of the children, but he has no continuing obligation to support his former wife. (Summarized guidance from the Universal House of Justice given to Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers dated 5 January 1983)

4. What if the ex-spouse does not pay a court order?

Once the divorce decree with its related provisions has been handed down by the court, it is the obligation of both parties, as good Bahá'ís, to obey it and, if either is lax in so doing, the Assembly should advise him or her about his or her duties and press for their fulfilment. The wronged party, however, should at the same time be left free to apply to the civil authorities for the enforcement of the decision. Unfortunately such enforcement is notoriously difficult, especially when the parties subsequently reside in different countries. It is here that the action of the Spiritual Assembly, reinforcing the decision of the civil courts, can often be of help. Except in circumstances of unusual gravity or cases where the responsible party fails to obey a court decision to provide support for the children an Assembly should not contemplate imposing sanctions for lack of compliance in these matters. Actual enforcement should normally be left to the action of the civil courts. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 13 January 1983)

While it is obvious that the Assembly should encourage the husband to honour his Bahá'í responsibilities in paying the required support money, matters of support may be covered by the civil courts when a civil divorce is applied for and, in such a case, the wife would, of course, be able to invoke whatever civil remedy is available. In any case, at the present time National Spiritual Assemblies should not normally apply sanctions in cases of failure to comply with support requirements. (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 6 February 1978)

H. Tricky situations

* People who cannot for one reason or another, usually financial, move out of the house during the year of patience

* Non-Bahá'í spouse gets a quicky divorce

* The whereabouts of one partner is unknown

* A violent man will not leave marital home, making the woman homeless and causing civil case or benefit problems

I. Some Tips

- * appoint 2 people, usually a man and a woman, to deal with the divorce 'off table'
- * try to get the couple to meet together (not easy)
- * deal with violence swiftly -- do you have a policy on this?
- * remember you are dealing with fragile people at a fragile time

J. Oft-heard statements

- * we don't need to go through a year of waiting because
- * my case is different because _____ (fill in the blank)
- * I refuse to meet the LSA because I don't want to wash our dirty linen in public
- * we are NOT having problems
- * there is no point -- we will never reconcile
- * I didn't love him/her from the beginning, so in a way we are already separated, so we can backdate the year of patience to our wedding day

Notes: LOG = *Lights of Guidance*