



GO DIVORCE CLINIC®
THE END OF THE UGLY DIVORCE

Understanding Spousal Support

Stories About Spousal Support

Spousal support can be one of the most delicate subjects in a divorce. It is also one of the issues most likely to arrive at the negotiating table already loaded with fear, assumptions, and conflicting information.

Over the years, we have seen couples come into the process with strongly held ideas about spousal support gathered from friends, family members, internet research, movies, or stories about someone else's divorce. The difficulty is that another couple's circumstances may have very little to do with your own.

For couples trying to reach their own agreement, the first useful step is often to separate what they have heard about spousal support from the realities.

Why Spousal Support Can Be Difficult to Discuss

The words "spousal support" can mean very different things to two people leaving the same marriage. A paying spouse may hear the term and fear an open-ended and excessive financial obligation. The receiving spouse may see support as part of addressing what they believe should be recognized after sacrificing a career over decades of marriage.

A spouse who spent substantial years performing unpaid domestic work, caring for children, or supporting the other spouse's career may leave the marriage with less recent work experience, less career development, or a different present earning capacity. At the same time, the spouse currently earning more may be confronting the financial reality of supporting a separate household and part of another after years of managing one family economy.

Neither of those perspectives, standing alone, determines what the couple's spousal support agreement should be. They help explain why the subject can carry more weight than a simple comparison of two current paychecks—or a number produced by a spousal support calculator.

Reaching Your Own Agreement

Uncontested divorcing couples reach their own agreement about whether spousal support will be paid and, if so, the terms of that support. If you and your spouse have already reached an agreement, the GDC Portal can help you record the decisions you have made as part of your divorce documents.

If you have not reached an agreement, the GDC Portal cannot decide the issue for you, recommend what either spouse should accept, or advise either spouse about their individual legal rights. You may take additional time to discuss the issue together, use a separate neutral mediation process to help facilitate agreement, or seek independent legal advice.

Official California Resource

California Courts Self-Help Guide - Long-Term Spousal Support

<https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/spousal-support/longterm>

GDC is not a law firm and does not provide legal advice. This resource is general educational information for GDC Portal users and is not a recommendation concerning what either spouse should agree to in an individual case.