

High End Goals

How To Identify Your High End Goals

Near the beginning of your collaborative divorce process, you will be asked to identify your “high end goals.” You have high end goals, even if you are not presently aware of them. High end goals are statements of what matters to you (your **interests**) and how you want your life to be (your **goals**) and what you believe you must have to go on in life (your **needs**), both during and after divorce.

Goals are not positions. For example, “I want to keep the house” is a position. The underlying high end goal might be stated “I want a place to live where I can be comfortable and where my interactions with the kids will feel normal” or “My parents gave me the house, and I want to honor that gift.” Your high end goals may begin as positions; when you think those positions through, you will grasp your needs and interests that make the position sound desirable to you.

For most people, stress in the divorce process makes it difficult to clearly state their high end goals. What follows represents high end goals (and sometimes “positions”) that others have identified. Perhaps these sample statements will help you put a finger on what matters most to you.

When you have identified your high end goals, look them over. Are they positions? If so, which of your needs and interests lie below those positions? What solutions, other than your position, might meet your needs and interests?

After you have defined your high end goals, prioritize them. Prioritizing helps remind you what matters most to you if it comes time to make compromises.

Children

- I want my children to be happy, feeling good about themselves, and well-adjusted.
- I want us to both provide consistently great care for the children.
- I want our children to experience a “two house happy home” with discipline, expectations, permitted activities, affection, curfews, chores, and bedtimes that are consistent between our two houses.
- I want to support my co-parent and be supported in turn.
- I want to learn better parenting skills.
- I want my co-parent to learn better parenting skills.
- I want to better understand what my children are experiencing in this divorce process.
- I want our children to have deep, meaningful time with each of us.
- I do not want to be apart from my children for extended periods.
- I want to participate in major decisions concerning our children.
- I want to keep our children out of our conflicts.
- I do not want our children to carry messages for or report on the other parent.
- I do not want our children to feel they need to take sides.
- I want our children to talk freely about their experiences.
- I do not want our children to feel stress about the financial uncertainties we are feeling.
- I want our children to have great relationships with their grandparents and other family members.
- I want our children introduced to new people in our lives with care and intelligence.
- I want our parenting arrangements to be flexible enough to meet our children’s needs.
- I want to be able to move my residence and that of the children.
- I do not want the children to move from their current neighborhood and schools.
- I want our parenting arrangement to make the children’s lives stable, predictable, and familiar.
- I want our parenting arrangement to provide specific time schedules that we both honor.
- I want our children to live near enough to both parents to facilitate easy access.
- I want to meet regularly to talk with the other parent about the children.
- I want to develop mutually respectful communication with the other parent.
- I want full access to all pertinent information relating to the children.
- I want to be able to telephone, text, or email our children at any reasonable hour.
- I want the other parent to speak respectfully about me around our children.
- I want to provide care for our children whenever the other parent is unavailable.

- I want our children to experience only high quality child care.
- I want to participate in child care decisions, even when the children reside with the other parent.
- I want our children raised in my religious tradition, and to participate actively and regularly.
- I want our children to experience religious traditions other than my own.
- I want our children to have healthy diets, regular exercise, and good medical and dental care.
- I want to attend all our children's medical appointments.
- I want us both to share care of the children when a child is sick.
- I want our children to continue attending their current schools and remain in this school district.
- I want us both to participate in school activities and parent-teacher conferences.
- I want our children to excel academically and attend college.
- I want us to share the same educational goals for our children.
- I want us to work with our children on their homework every day.
- I want our children to continue in their current extracurricular activities.
- I want us to agree about new extracurricular activities and both to support those new endeavors.
- I want to be able to take the children with me on vacations.
- I want our children raised in their own cultural heritage.
- I want our children's lifestyle to remain the same during and after the divorce.
- I want us to teach our children to be financially responsible.
- I want us both of us to set aside money for the children's college educations.
- I want us to agree about how we will finance the children's college educations.
- I want us to share the children's expenses based on our proportional shares of income.
- I want our children's-expense sharing to be simple and transparent.

Finances

- I want each of us to have enough money to live comfortably.
- I want to maintain an enjoyable lifestyle.
- I want to own a home.
- I want our respective lifestyles to be approximately equal.
- I want to begin working and pay my own way.
- I want to retire when I planned to retire.
- I want to work in the home and parent for the next ____ years.
- I want to work part-time so I can continue rearing the children.
- I do not want to work outside the home at any time in the future.
- I want to get some education and start a new career.
- I want to enjoy what I do to earn a living.
- I do not want to consistently work overtime.
- I want more free time.
- I want to get out and stay out of debt.
- I want my finances to be independent of my former partner's finances.
- I want to learn budgeting skills and spend only what I earn.
- I want to understand investing.
- I want my partner to learn to earn money.
- I want my partner to learn to budget and restrict his or her spending to that budget.
- I want the costs of this divorce kept to a minimum.
- I want to repair my credit rating.
- I want to be happy with our divorce financial settlement, and for it to last.
- I want to change careers.

Personal and Emotional Goals

- I want to conduct our divorce negotiation with respect and dignity.
- I want our issues to remain private.
- I want to build a respectful relationship with my partner.

- I want to be more emotionally stable.
- I want my partner to be more emotionally stable.
- I want us both to have good relations with our in-laws after the divorce.
- I want us both to keep our mutual friends, and make our separation comfortable for them.
- I want to make amends for the mistakes I have made.
- I want to address my problems, which have contributed to this divorce.
- I want to rebuild trust between me and my partner.
- I want my partner to trust me more.
- I want to manage my emotions better.
- I want to recover from my addiction.
- I want to maintain sobriety in my addiction.
- I want to learn to manage my anger.
- I want to stop hitting when I am frustrated.
- I want to rescue this marriage.
- I want to know that we have tried as hard as we are able to save the marriage.
- I want my partner to know how much he or she hurt me.
- I want my partner to apologize for the pain inflicted on me.
- I want to behave honorably.
- I want to settle this divorce consistent with my religious or spiritual values.
- I want to seek annulment of the marriage.
- I do not want my partner to live with his or her new girlfriend or boyfriend.
- I want to listen better.
- I want to relieve my sadness or depression.
- I want to be less angry, frightened, or bitter.
- I want to be less compulsive.
- I want to take the medications needed to treat my mental problems.
- I want to do the talking therapy needed to help me cope better with life.
- I want the divorce to be over.
- I want to start healing from this transition.
- I want to be generous.
- I want my partner to recognize that I have been generous.
- I want to speed up the divorce.
- I want to slow down the divorce.
- I want time to process my emotions so we can make good decisions.
- I want to give my partner time to process emotions so we can make good decisions.
- I want us to be able to attend all our children's future events without feeling uncomfortable that the other partner is there.
- I want to look back on this divorce process and say to myself that I behaved well.

TO PRIORITIZE YOUR HIGH END GOALS, ASK:

- Can any of my goals can be eliminated?
- Are my goals realistic?
- Can my goal be accomplished in a divorce process?
- Which goals would I make a major sacrifice to achieve?
- Would I view my goal as legitimate if my partner were seeking it?
- Is my goal a disguised position?
- Does spite motivate this goal?
- Does this goal serve only to slow down or speed up the divorce process?
- Is my goal consistent with my values?
- How much sacrifice am I asking of my partner to achieve my goal?

(Adapted from Mark Weiss's adaptation of Webb and Ousky, *The Collaborative Way to Divorce*. Mr. Weiss is a collaborative attorney and a founder of Seattle Collaborative Law Training Group.)