

Split decisions

Daisy Camp helps people deal with divorce's tough challenges

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Jennifer Morris knew that she had to get divorced. She just didn't know how to get divorced. So she grabbed the Yellow Pages, flipped to "A" for attorney, and picked a name whose address was nearest to her house.

She'd never do that again.

"You really should check out many lawyers," said the 36-year-old Minnesota woman, whose eight-year marriage ended a year ago. "I didn't know my choices. I wanted to get the ball rolling."

The ball started rolling, all right, but largely without her. Despite the fact that Morris sells real estate for a living, she had no idea how to make wise decisions about her own legal and financial future. On top of that, she was spent emotionally. Instead of feeling in control, she said, she let her divorce happen to her.

Determined to save other women from the same fate, she created Daisy Camp, a one-stop shop tackling many of the hardest challenges of divorce, from legal to emotional, in a supportive atmosphere. While the camps are directed at women, Morris also offers mini-camps for divorcing couples dealing primarily with legal matters and healthy co-parenting.

The latter is the biggest concern for men, Morris said. "Creating a parenting plan around the kids is big. They're just as much in the dark as women."

There's no canoeing at Daisy Camp's three-day retreats, but there are sessions titled "Real Estate ABCs" and "Financial Nuts and Bolts" as well as "Essential Oils." There's belly dancing and massage, too.

Her first camp in March, limited to 40 women, sold out. Web site traffic (www.daisycampforyou.com) has increased from 20 to 1,000 hits a day, Morris said.

Expect no suits or ties at Daisy Camp. The weekend's speakers, all volunteering their time to talk about legal, financial and spiritual topics, are asked to dress casually. Daisy Camp, Morris said, is all about turning down the noise.

"There is some crying, but a lot of laughing," she said. "There are morning walks, healthy eating. It's a place where you can feel really good."

Participants in the first camp came primarily from the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, but several drove in from Iowa, Wisconsin and northern Minnesota. They ranged in age from 20s to 70s, with vastly different stories.



Volunteer speaker Donna Bennett talks about career counseling at a session of Daisy Camp. Other topics include parenting, real estate and finances. (Courtesy of Jennifer Morris)

Some were leaving abusive marriages or spouses with alcohol or gambling addictions. Some "just lost interest." Some women were already divorced. Others were considering it.

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