

Whether you are uncoupling from a relationship, or find yourself suddenly uncoupled, this book offers sound guidance.

Answering many questions to help you navigate the challenges of separation, *Uncoupling* will help you move through each step and into the next phase of your life.

Personal experience and knowledge from experts will answer these and many other questions: Do you know the laws relating to separation? How to pick a lawyer? The range of resolution options? How to reduce your legal bill? How to tell your children – or your parents? Or that you need to care for yourself through this calamity?

Out the other side, how do you provide for yourself financially and manage your money and assets? If you are lonely (or bored), what are the advantages and pitfalls of dating online? And if you happen to meet the new love of your life, do you know how to protect yourself in the future?

Dip in as you reach each stage of separation for guidance on these and many other aspects of uncoupling.



About the author

Barbara Relph became a professional writer and editor in 2017 when her separation forced her to re-think her life. Now a true digital nomad, she travels between rural Manawatu and central Auckland, armed with her laptop, living her best life.

Having personally worked through many of the issues in *Uncoupling*, Barbara has a strong desire to ease the experience of others.

“I see clients every day who would benefit from *Uncoupling*.”

I couldn't have written it better myself.”

- *Antonia Fisher QC*
Relationship Property Specialist

Who is the target audience?

Uncoupling is a practical guide to separation for men and women in any age group anticipating or managing their relationship breakdown. It is sensitive to whether the reader is the person who left, or the person who was left.

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Trade orders: barbara@barbararelp.com

Recommendations

*I worked with Barbara for several years to achieve financial separation and was very pleased to be asked to review the legal section of **Uncoupling**. I took the opportunity to read the entire book, and I believe it to be an enormously useful resource for women and men at any stage of the separation process.*

When we met for the first time, post-financial settlement, I was delighted to see Barbara looking so well and happy, making the most of her writing and research skills, and putting her personal experiences to excellent use. I commented that it seemed separation was the best thing that ever happened to her. She agreed.

*I see clients every day who would benefit from **Uncoupling**. I couldn't have written it better myself.*

Antonia Fisher QC, Relationship Property Specialist

Barbara and I met when she was in the early stages of separation. We have talked through everything from legal problems to dating problems, and everything in between. In just a few years, Barbara has 100% turned her life around – her experiences are a great base for anyone “uncoupling”.

Robert Davis

***Uncoupling** is a practical and accessible resource for people at any stage of separation. Set out in a clear progression from the first few difficult days through to establishing a brand new life, it offers sensible guidance on so many aspects of separation.*

Lisa Martin, life coach

*As a recent fatality to an uncoupling, the first few sections of **Uncoupling** have helped me to understand and come to terms with my position and my legal rights. I'll leave the rest for when I'm ready to think about recreating my new life!*

Jill White, recently separated

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Sample excerpts

Children come first, an excerpt from *experiences of an adult child*

“ *My parents ended their long, toxic relationship when I was in my early 20s. I had always had a close relationship with my mother, sharing confidences while she shared complaints about Dad, but otherwise she kept her feelings very much to herself.*

I never witnessed warmth or romantic love between my parents. I could see that Mum wanted this, but their relationship had been too hostile for that to be possible. There was a lot of anger in the relationship and they both tolerated terrible behaviour from each other. Mum in particular seemed to encourage me to tolerate the same in my life. Despite all this, we did still manage to have some sense of family identity, we shared a sense of humour and had family rituals, and I have some happy memories of my childhood.

Before it ended, I knew Mum wanted to leave. I was supportive, but when she told me she had ended the relationship, I felt numb. Shocked. Worried about Dad and confused about what it meant logistically. I can barely remember this period, though it was only a few years ago. It heralded the beginning of an incredibly strange phase of my life, which I could never have anticipated.

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CONTRACTING OUT AGREEMENTS

The only way to not be bound by the Property (Relationships) Act is to enter into a Contracting Out Agreement under section 21 of the Act. This lets you set your own rules for ownership and division of property in the event that the relationship breaks down.

Contracting Out Agreements — or pre-nuptial agreements — are more common with second and subsequent relationships where the parties are more likely to have significant assets at the outset of the new relationship. They can be made at any time — even at the end of a relationship. A key component of a Contracting Out Agreement is to set out how future property is to be dealt with.

These agreements must be recorded in writing and signed off by each party's lawyer. The lawyer must certify that they have discussed the effect and implications of the agreement with you, with full disclosure and agreed values.

Ideally you should review these agreements every five to ten years to make sure they still reflect the wishes of both parties, particularly if there have been any major changes in the relationship or the law changes. You will be reminded of the importance of Contracting Out Agreements in the section discussing new relationships because they offer protection in the event of another relationship.

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Taking control of your love life, an excerpt

OFTEN, not long after you have separated (and sometimes long before you are ready to forge a new life), you will be asked (frequently) when you are going to 'get back on the horse'. Literally, in those words. If you have been in a relationship for more than 10 years, dating has really changed. The time between ending a relationship and starting dating is very individual and you may find yourself encouraged out when you are just not ready. However, life can be lonely without someone to share it with, and most people find themselves seeking company eventually.

A lot will depend on whether you were the person who left or who was left. If you left, this may be an experience you were looking forward to, and you may even approach dating with what appears to be unseemly haste. If you are the person who was left, it may take a little longer for you to get to that point, but you will get there. There are no hard and fast rules.

While many men will already be back on the horse, women will often respond with a definite no thanks, and a reason why: *I've shut up shop — for ever! ... No thanks, I've had enough of men and relationships ... At my age? I'm never taking my clothes off in front of anyone again ... I can't be bothered with all that getting to know someone — it will just end badly anyway ... Why would I open myself up to more rejection?*

Sound familiar? Fair enough, maybe you're not quite ready. Everybody reading this book has had bad experiences in past relationships, but time changes the effect of these negative experiences, and one day you might feel the urge! Let's hope so. Having said that, many people are happy alone, satisfying their social needs in other ways.

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Resolving your dispute, an excerpt from *Litigation and “going to court”*

Litigation and ‘going to court’

Litigation is a pathway which ultimately leads to a court case. Not many disputes make it all the way to the courtroom; the vast majority are settled before that happens. Along the way some of the other resolution processes outlined above may — or will — occur.

Litigation usually relies on having a lawyer to advise and represent you, whether in negotiations or in court. If you choose to go to the Family Court without a lawyer (and an increasing number of people are doing this for financial reasons), you will be presenting evidence and questioning other witnesses yourself. To do that you will need to be aware of the rules of the Court, and the relevant law. This information is available online through the Ministry of Justice, but be warned, you will need a lot of time available to come to grips with the law, the court requirements, and preparation of documentation.

Most people appoint a lawyer. Having done so, you will likely instruct them to attempt to negotiate with your former partner’s lawyer. Before this negotiation can begin, evidence must be gathered so your lawyer has accurate information with which to make your case. This evidence may include valuations, financial analysis to determine the value of the assets to be divided, and further analysis of the law as it relates to your specific situation.

If the negotiation fails, a mediation may be proposed by either party. If everyone on both sides agrees that is a worthwhile path to pursue, a mediation can be held using the information you have gathered. If the mediation is successful and results in a signed agreement between the parties, the matter ends here.

If, however, the mediation fails and further negotiation is fruitless, the options left to you are:

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Author


ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Barbara Relph became a professional writer and editor in 2017 when her separation forced her to re-think her life. Now a true digital nomad, she travels between rural Manawatu and central Auckland, armed with her laptop, living her best life.

When Barbara realised there were no practical guides written on separation, she gathered together the excellent advice and stories, both professional and personal, from those who helped her navigate the complicated process of uncoupling. And wrote it down for you.

www.uncoupling.guide

 facebook.com/UncouplingNZ

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Publicity plan

With the background of the surge in separation and divorce post-COVID, the market for this book is unlikely to diminish.

The current media coverage of the outdated laws in New Zealand adds to the need for a plain English resource explaining the complex laws. When the law is revised, an opportunity will present itself for a second edition of the book.

Booksellers I have spoken to have expressed enthusiasm for *Uncoupling*, noting a gap in the market.

The publicity plan is constantly evolving, but includes:

- book launch, date and venue to be confirmed, and available for other engagements
- significant targeted Facebook marketing to divorce and separation support groups and other social media avenues where recently separated people gather such as online dating sites
- confirmed articles in legal publications, promoting the book to clients of specialist lawyers (I have had great interest from divorce lawyers because the book will enable their clients to be more informed about what the law is and what to expect from their lawyer)
- email marketing to key quasi legal bodies, including Community Law and Citizen's Advice Bureau
- a proposal for interview on National Radio
- contacting booksellers and libraries around New Zealand by phone, email, and in person where appropriate