

DETOXING YOUR DIVORCE

BY NANNETTE HOLLIDAY

CASSANDRA KALPAXIS ADDRESSING PARTICIPANTS AT DETOX YOUR DIVORCE.
PHOTO: STEFANO CAMMARANO



DIAMOND TRAFFET



Dispute Resolution
Centre Australia



EATING HEALTHY
RETREAT LUNCH
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CASSANDRA KALPAXIS FOUNDER
OF DETOX YOUR DIVORCE RETREAT.
PHOTO: STEFANO CAMMARANO

Can you actually detox your divorce?

With almost half of all marriages ending in divorce annually, I attended Australia's and the world's first Detox Your Divorce Retreat weekend for women in the idyllic New South Wales seaside town of Terrigal to discover the facts.

Standing under giant evergreen pine trees as the Pacific Ocean waves pounded thunderously on the white sandy beach and the sun's rising golden glow stretched across the horizon, I pondered what the next two days would deliver in this peaceful setting.

Divorce is anything but peaceful. It shatters lives. It pulls families apart and often affects how children enter adulthood and their married lives. Some people never fully

recover, even if they've sought often-expensive professional assistance.

Lawyers are renowned for making zillions from the bitterness between divorcing couples. So, why has a firmly established family lawyer created this Detox Your Divorce Retreat to assist people in navigating separation and divorce amicably?

"The law has changed, and I'm an advocate for changing the traditional narrative of family law," says Cassandra Kalpaxis, Director and Principal Lawyer, Kalpaxis Legal.

"Most people aren't walking around with loads of money. It's time lawyers adapt and provide the information people want, like navigating their journey outside the Family Law Court, fixing things amicably.

"Lawyers are still required for formalising documents and sometimes assisting with the process. But I believe in arming people with the knowledge and tools to keep things amicable from the outset. Children are at the forefront of separation and

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YOGA TO START THE DAY
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CASSANDRA KALPAXIS AND HUSBAND ADAM
PHOTO: NANNETTE HOLLIDAY



THE KALPAXIS DETOX YOUR DIVORCE TEAM.
PHOTO: STEFANO CAMMARANO



CASSANDRA AND SHANNEEN INTERACTIVE SESSION AT DETOX YOUR DIVORCE RETREAT. PHOTO: STEFANO CAMMARANO

I HAND-PICKED EACH SPEAKER FOR THEIR REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES. ACADEMIC POINTS OF VIEW DON'T CONVERT INTO REAL LIFE, AND MY RETREAT IS ABOUT REAL LIFE. REAL HANDS-ON ADVICE AND STRATEGIES.

divorce. We need to protect them. If I can educate people around that at this retreat, then I've been successful."

When Australia's no-fault divorce became legal in 1975, the following year, divorce rates skyrocketed. From 1 per 1000 to 4.6 per 1000 population. The average rate now sits at 2 per 1000.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures in 2019 shows the Northern Territory had the least marriages (789) and divorces (308) for all Australian states and territories. But since 2009, our divorce rates sit consistently around half the marriage rate.

Today, a third of all first-time marriages end in divorce, while 60 per cent of second or third-time marriages are failing, and one in five children are growing up in a divorced household. Many divorces also occur after 20 years or more of marriage once the children

have completed school or left home.

These figures were evident amongst the dozen women participants at the retreat—each sharing their story or engaging in interactive role playing over the two full-on days.

The environment was relaxed and comforting, with ample one-on-one time available for the women to talk further to the professional speakers and make new friends with other participants.

"I'm particularly passionate about the holistic approach to separation and divorce," says Cassandra. "The unique line-up of experts and topics covered is aimed to assist and enlighten the women at the retreat."

Topics covered included everything from navigating the relationship breakdown, the physiological perspective, grief, stress, anxiety,

the physical aspects of separation and divorce, domestic violence, AVOs, dispute resolution, self-care through naturopathy, eating well, wealth management, yoga and mediation classes.

Not once were we talked at. Each speaker discussed their life journey and how to navigate their area of expertise successfully. The sessions were helpful and eye-opening for all attendees.

"I hand-picked each speaker for their real-life experiences," Cassandra says. "Academic points of view don't convert into real life, and my retreat is about real life. Real hands-on advice and strategies."

Her own experiences, not just as a family lawyer but as a woman and new mother whose own marriage almost became another statistic back in 2015, was the catalyst for creating the retreat.

DR.LURVE INTERACTING WITH PARTICIPANTS SHANNEEN AND JESS.
PHOTO: NANNETTE HOLLIDAY



"Every marriage has issues at one time or another, and mine is no different. Thankfully my husband was open to seeking professional assistance. I know the strategies and techniques delivered over the weekend actually work. Adam and I still live by them daily. We're committed to stay on track for our children and enjoy the rest of our lives together."

Participant Jess Cummins says the retreat has allowed her to reflect on how far she's come since separating from her husband, how she feels about love and the various ways to communicate more successfully.

"He's in the army. We lived in Darwin at the time and my independence developed there. Because he was only home for a week or two, I wouldn't raise any issues. I wanted everything to be perfect during those times together," she says.

"Moving back to Sydney meant he was always around. I no longer covered things up, and the cracks were obvious. We sort professional help, but my mind was already made up. Now we're determined to remain amicable for our son's sake."

Like many other participants, Shanneen Bagala enjoyed the friendliness and approachability of the speakers.

"I'm definitely making appointments with three of them," she says. "The retreat has made it easier to identify with them and feel comfortable spending the money."

All participants also received a gift box with a range of discount vouchers from each speaker and other businesses. Plus, many items to make a woman feel extra special.

It was evident the beach was the

perfect place for this inaugural retreat. There were no doubts about how to move forward or resolve each participant's concerns about separation or divorce.

Cassandra's next Detox Your Divorce Retreat for women will be at Byron Bay on 22-23 May. A men's only retreat is slated for 25-26 September in Sydney and a couple's retreat for 20-21 November.

"Each retreat is personalised. The men's retreat will feature male speakers, their journeys and a different narrative and masculine activities," says Cassandra.

"I envisage the couple's retreat to be for those who want to know how they can keep their relationship on track or those wanting an amicable separation."

All retreat information is available at detoxyourdivorce.com.au