

Why You Should Use a Divorce Registry

Older people need gift registries more than younger people

By [Judy Colbert](#)

| August 2, 2024

| [Family and Relationships](#)

Share



"I had a wedding cake made with a topper that looked like the bride was pushing the groom off the top." | Credit: Getty

"What great ideas," says Ellyn Levin, an educational consultant from Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. She's referring to divorce registries and showers. Levin was ahead of her time when she had a divorce party 20 years ago to celebrate the event. "I had a wedding cake made with a topper that looked like the bride was pushing the groom off the top. A chimenea was available if a guest had something — old photos or love letters — they wanted to get rid of by throwing it into the fire."

We're all familiar with the showers and congratulatory parties we attended years ago (school graduation, new job, engagement and wedding, and baby come to mind) that produced lovely

presents. We created registries so people could see what we needed and they could choose something from the list or off it. Now, those gifts are 20 - 30 years old (or older) and broken/worn, can't be repaired, are too large for daily use or for some other reason just don't fit into today's life.

Whether we're going through a divorce, downsizing or moving to a new climate, it's time for new things. Replace water skis with snow skis (or vice versa), flip flops for hiking boots, vintage objects with interconnected appliances and stainless steel for avocado. It's a perfect time for a shower!

'A Real Eye-Opener'

Although a registry and shower can have a greedy sound, it lets friends and neighbors know what we want/need within their capabilities. This is a way to show yourself, your children and others that something good can come from a drastic change.

Today's celebratory showers and registries can be much simpler than those of our younger days. Friends can gather at a coffee shop for an hour after work, revive (at least once) the old weekly bowling party, enjoy a picnic in a favorite park, or a BYOF (food) if there's a budgetary concern. Chalk it up to dietary restrictions. With so much of our society participating in giving activities, obtaining items from Buy Nothing, Pay It Forward, Acts of Kindness and similar groups can furnish a new household for almost nothing. They can also help us find a new home for the stuff we won't need in our new life. Not only is it easy on the budget, but it's kinder to the planet.

About ten years ago, Rene Mondy, a licensed therapist and transitioning from divorce expert, says, [Dear John The Box](#) was born when we started a divorce support group for women who met in various Atlanta locations. "Since the pandemic, we've found such options less inspiring which prompted us to create a registry to help deliver support to women online and to their homes. A client of ours, C. Williams, used our registry when she and her spouse divorced. The beautician received a crockpot and self-care box from the registry. Another client told me what she wanted was some wine and chocolates."

This is a way to show yourself, your children and others that something good can come from a drastic change.

"The registry has been a real eye-opener for most of my clients over 50," says Mondy, "in a good way. I feel it's helped them explore the possibilities of new milestones, and think of things to look forward to beyond just retirement parties and birthdays. What's also neat about clients over fifty is that so many are coming from backgrounds or eras like my own that may not have previously encouraged openly discussing divorce or the transition after divorce. I feel divorce registries are giving new energy and making a big difference for their healing journey after heartbreak."

[Meg Gluckman](#), a certified life and business coach, says, "When we are going through a divorce, our friends and family want to support us, but sometimes it's hard to know how. I encourage my clients to make very specific requests. That might look like checking in on them every couple of

days by text or meeting for coffee and a walk once a week. It can also mean asking for things that would make their life easier — like a new coffeemaker since your ex took the one you had shared. I love the idea of using a registry. It allows folks to be super specific about what would help them out and allows loved ones to know that what they are doing is exactly what the divorcing friend or family member wants."

A Fresh Start

A recent pop culture instance highlighted the idea of a divorce registry in April 2021 when Drew Barrymore televised an interview with Lori Simonelli, who had recently divorced after 17 years of marriage. Barrymore decided a registry would solve some problems by providing items, physical and emotional, that Simonelli needed. Three friends helped provide a registry and a trolley full of items were given to her.

Olivia Dreizen Howell, co-founder of [Fresh Starts Registry](#), notes, "This is a platform for those who are going through brave and bold changes, whether divorce, a job or career change, coming out, living through grief, and other transformations as you start again. We are positive and inclusive across the board with an ethos that divorce is a good thing, a positive thing, and of course, a Fresh Start. Since 2021, it's a way of blessing this new phase in your life and making yourself a continuing part of it."

Chedva Kleinhandler is a recent Fresh Starts client who realized her birthday was a month after her divorce and for the first time in her life, she says, "I felt the urge to throw myself a real party. I thought of ordering pizza and inviting people home, but I realized I wanted at least 30 people. I ended up renting a small event space, hiring a cocktail service (that felt very important) and ordering some food platters."

"The party helped me achieve closure and open my next chapter with a lighter heart."

"Since many of the guests didn't know each other," she continues, "I printed cards with quotes that spoke to me, and asked everyone to write their name on a sticker, choose a quote and introduce themselves and [explain] the quote they chose as an ice-breaker. What I didn't expect, and really made the night so much more special and meaningful, was that people used the quotes they chose to tell the stories of how they met me or describe how they saw my divorce journey. Many of my friends who were there were also going through divorce so there was a lot of identifying."

The tech entrepreneur, founder of a tech marketing agency, organized the event herself with help from friends. She debated with herself and decided to invite men and women, with about three or four men in attendance. There was a mix of divorced, married, separated and a few single people. "The party helped me achieve closure and open my next chapter with a lighter heart. It was also very meaningful to celebrate, be celebrated, and receive so much love after a very, very hard time in my life."

Regardless of the reason you are entering a major life change, take time to explore the options open to you. Look forward to an exciting and challenging way to explore this phase that rejoices in the new you.

[Judy Colbert](#), the author of 36 books, writes about travel and the business of travel. [Read More](#)