



Lowenstein Sandler's Women's Initiative Network Podcast: Real Talk

Episode 59 –
The Professional “Game Face” During
Personal Change

[Megan Monson](#)

AUGUST 2026

-
- Rachel Dikovics:** Welcome to the Lowenstein Sandler podcast series, the *Women's Initiative Network: Real Talk*. I'm Rachel Dikovics, counsel in Lowenstein's White Collar Defense Practice Group and a member of the Women's Initiative Network at Lowenstein Sandler. Before we begin, please take a moment to subscribe to our podcast series at Lowenstein.com/podcast, or find us on iTunes, Spotify, Pandora, or SoundCloud. Now let's take a listen.
- Kathryn Daniel:** Welcome to another episode of the Women's Initiative Network Real Talk. I'm Kathryn Daniel, an associate in Lowenstein's Trust and Estate Practice Group.
- Megan Monson:** Hi, and I'm Megan Monson, a partner in Lowenstein Sandler's Executive Compensation and Employment and Benefits Practice Group. Happy to be here today.
- Kathryn Daniel:** Yes. And on today's episode, we're going to discuss the challenges that female professionals encounter in the workplace related to divorce, and how to navigate the issues of going through this life-altering experience in a professional setting. Divorce statistics can be sliced in numerous ways, whether it be looking at divorce rates by occupation, income, gender, age, you name it. But no matter how you slice the aspects, to say there's a lot of pain and emotion involved is an understatement. And so today, rather than dive deep into the numbers around divorce, we thought it would be interesting and hopefully beneficial to listeners to hear from two attorneys who have experienced divorce in different ways and how they navigated it while working in big law. Let's start with you, Megan. So, can you tell us about your experience?
- Megan Monson:** As I said, I'm a partner at Lowenstein. I've been here for almost 11 years now. And over the past year, I went through a very challenging and painful divorce. I was married for almost 12 years, and I had been with

my partner at the time for 18 years. Couple that with having a young child navigating this job and just other life issues, it was a very trying time for me, and in the workplace setting, very few people knew what I was going through. Certainly, nobody in my practice group. Only a few close friends at the firm... and I kept it really tight to the chest. As somebody who tends to keep personal things personal, it's very hard for me to open up, and I did not want to give the appearance that it was impacting my work, or to have people view me differently, even if there's no basis for that, but that was something going through my head that I was concerned about.

So, I continued to show up even when it was really hard, and I think part of the reason being is that for me, work was really a grounding force when a lot of other aspects of my life were changing. It was one place I knew what I was doing. And so, it really helped me, again, when other pieces of my life felt like they were falling apart, I had this one piece that I knew I was good at and that I can continue to do.

Now, that's not to say I didn't have other challenges along the way. And I know in reflecting on it, some of the additional stuff that I like to do, maybe I was not as present or as involved with for a period of time, just because I didn't have the partner support at home. So, it was sometimes challenging to go the extra mile, but it was also very reassuring that now being on the other side of the road, telling people, "Okay, that I am recently divorced..." that nobody noticed, they didn't think I skipped a beat. And so even again, sometimes where I thought maybe I was a little bit taking my foot off the gas, it wasn't perceived that way. So I, again, really found using work as a tool for me was really helpful, but I know everyone's experience can be really different, and so what about you, Kathryn?

Kathryn Daniel:

Yeah. My story is a bit different in that I was a first-year associate when my divorce took place. I was 34 years old at the time, and I had been married to my then partner for nearly 11 years, and we had been together for about 15. And so, our breakup, it was very unexpected to me, as well as to family and friends, and with us having just moved to D.C. for my job, I had not yet established a tight-knit local group of friends in the area. So, I relied heavily on my family support system back home, which is based in North Carolina.

Megan Monson:

And I think that's really great that you had shared that, because in particular, it's not going to be the same for everybody, and everyone's going to navigate things very differently, and you were comfortable enough to be transparent and point you were in your career as well. And so, I think that's very amazing and commendable. And I know divorce

itself can be very life-altering, as I think both you and I and many others who've been in the same situation can attest to.

In terms of navigating it in a professional setting, especially one as fast-paced and demanding as big law, I think one of the benefits that I found is also the ability to be in this hybrid work environment. And so, if there were days that I knew were going to be more emotionally charged or challenging based upon where I was in the process, or if I had calls with my attorney, things like that, I often scheduled those for the days I knew I'd be working from home. And so, it was a lot easier for me to compartmentalize the emotional aspects and separating it from the work aspects by being able to do it in an environment where I felt more comfortable. So, if I did have a breakdown and felt the need to cry or anything like that, I didn't have, again, my personal concerns about doing it in the office. Do I think there would be an issue in the office? Certainly not. But again, just as somebody who tries to be more emotionally reserved and keep their personal life more personal, I was just more strategic in when I was scheduling things related to my divorce or if I knew it was, again, a particularly hard day or if I had mediation scheduled, I might not schedule a client call for right after that.

And there were a handful of times where I felt the need, based on how I was feeling that day and I was not able to make a call, and I explained to the partners or whoever I was working with why, then they were very understanding. And so, I used sharing what I was going through as an opportunity on limited basis if I needed to, again, lean on my partners or my other colleagues to ask for somebody to pitch in, but while trying to, again, still preserve not letting a lot of people into the fold until I was ready. And I think that part of that for me was because I was a very type A overachiever. In some ways I may have viewed it as, "Okay, now I'm viewed as a failure. What does this mean?" And until I had processed it myself, I couldn't figure out how I could view myself in the work setting in that lens. What about you, Kathryn?

Kathryn Daniel:

Yeah. I too found transparency to be my friend in this regard. So given certain circumstances around my divorce and how abrupt it was, I had to take a couple of weeks off from work. One, just to wrap my head around what was going on and frankly for my mental health and emotional wellbeing. And so, as a junior associate who was and is somewhat still relatively new to the firm and trying to build my professional brand and credibility among my team and practice group and the people whom I interact with on a daily basis, I felt it was necessary to tell the leaders in my practice group. And I also just wanted to tell my other colleagues who I was working with on projects. I knew from, let's say, an HR

perspective, of course, I did not have to disclose the information. I intentionally chose to do so.

And similar to you, Megan, everyone to whom I disclosed my situation to at work was incredibly empathetic and understanding, which made me feel very grateful to be a part of not only my practice group, but also to be practicing law at a firm like Lowenstein. It showed me that this is a very human-centric place to be. And most people responded by telling me that they would've had no idea I was currently going through such a life-altering experience given how I presented myself at work. And that was helpful to hear. I heard that regularly, and it helped me because I was trying very hard to continue to be my optimistic, extroverted self. And so, while I always take my reputation and how I present myself seriously, in a time of such personal uncertainty, I found that to be an anchoring force because it was something that I could control, which was liberating at the time. I told myself that while I may not have been able to control what happened to my marriage, I could control my future, including the career I aspire to forge for myself.

So, by being vulnerable and opening up to others, I also had several colleagues open up to me about their own life-altering events, and I appreciate the trust that they placed in me by sharing their stories. It's illustrative of the fact that at the end of the day, most of us, if not all, have had to endure many unexpected tragic losses, which come in various shapes and forms. And a partner whom I view as a mentor, she told me that some of what she perceived to be great disasters in her life ended up being some of her greatest opportunities. So, at the end of the day, I'm choosing to lean into that philosophy. Some days were easier to do that than others, which is another reason I'm appreciative to have a wide support system throughout this last year, both personally and professionally. So, for me, talking about my experience was therapeutic, and so I hope to be a listening ear for others if and whenever needed.

Megan Monson:

So, I really like everything that you just said, Kathryn. And actually, as I was going through my own divorce, I was thinking of you, because you had shared your experience with me and it made me feel less isolated and alone. And so, I think that's one of the goals that I had in doing this podcast with you and just some of our programming more generally, is just issues that professionals encounter, trying to take the stigma away from it. Because if there are others in the room who face things, whether now or years from now, again, if they have heard our stories and stories from others, whether it's from divorce or other types of losses, it really helps to take away that nagging feeling that, "oh, why does this happen to me? No, this doesn't happen to anybody else." And so really to make these type of discussions more mainstream, certainly similar to you,

once I told people, they were very, very supportive, but I had to overcome my own insecurities to get to that place.

And I, in some ways, wish that I felt more comfortable doing that sooner. And so, by us having these type of real discussions about these really raw, painful things that we experienced, hopefully we can make a difference for at least one other person who finds listening to them helpful or feels more seen if they are going through their own personal challenges. So, Kathryn, do you have any other advice for our professional women out there in trying to navigate these issues in a professional setting?

Kathryn Daniel: Yeah. You mentioned at the beginning of this that every situation is so personal. And for me, transparency was key to helping me get through this. I don't want to say at a greater speed, but just being able to accept what life had thrown my way and how to forge ahead, and so I just think the more transparent and vulnerable you feel... that you're comfortable with being in the setting that you find yourself, I encourage people to lean in to that feeling because most likely there is someone else who can relate, not necessarily with your exact circumstances, but there can be a connecting force there.

Megan Monson: I think another thing that I would add is think about what type of resources that you can utilize, and that can mean a variety of things. It can mean utilizing resources that your employer offers, whether it's seeking therapy, navigating HR-related issues related to a divorce or other life challenge. But also, then I would say your resources can also be people. And those are people in your personal network, people in your professional network, and leaning on the ones that you feel comfortable for doing that, because we do have a lot of different tools. And sometimes it could be as women perceive that we need to be strong and power through things, but there are a lot of support we can have and utilize in a variety of different ways. So really being open to that and embracing that, because again, I think it can make the experience feel less lonely and less isolating.

Kathryn Daniel: And liberating, like you're taking back the reins of control.

Megan Monson: For sure. And I think that can really make a big difference when you're dealing with some kind of unexpected curveball that life throws your way. Any final words of wisdom that you would say of things that we haven't already touched on for women who are encountering these type of issues?

Kathryn Daniel: I would say... And I don't want this to sound cliché, but that it does get better. When I reflect back on what life threw my way last year, one, it's hard to grasp that it's already been a year, but at the same time, I'm very

proud in just reflecting on how much I've been able to grow personally and emotionally, and even professionally. I like to just funnel that up to resiliency. No matter what other people are going through, I want other women to know that it will be better. You just have to keep moving forward. And this is going to sound a little random, but as part of the journey that I found myself going through, I wanted to have this long-term goal to work toward. And for me, that was summiting Mount Kilimanjaro, which I did at the beginning of this year. And I remember a mantra that our group, fellow hikers kept saying, our guide kept reminding us "pulley, pulley." And that means "slow, slow," one foot in front of the other. And so, some days it may feel the pace of life that you're finding yourself going, moving, even if it's snail pace, you're still moving forward. And slowly, slowly, those footsteps start to amount to the larger journey that you're on. So just continuing to put that one foot in front of the other.

Megan Monson:

I love that. And I would say plus one to all of that. I think the only final pieces of wisdom that I'll add is that don't let the divorce or other personal challenges define you. They cannot take away your career accomplishments. They cannot take away any other aspect of you. So, try to keep that in check, especially when that little voice inside our heads can make it harder to see that. And I think to echo what Kathryn said, where you end up at the end of your journey is not maybe where you expected or wanted to be, but it can be beautiful. It can be great. And so really just trying to know that things will get easier and better and just rely upon and focus on all of the good things that you have.

So, I just want to thank Kathryn. One, you coming up with this idea of being willing to share your personal experiences. I know this is very raw and very personal, but I do think having, again, these type of real talk discussions can be really helpful for our other female professionals out there. So, thanks for joining us for another episode of the Women's Initiative Network: Real Talk. We hope you found this conversation enriching. We'll see you next time.

Rachel Dikovics:

Thank you for listening to today's episode. Please subscribe to our podcast series at lowenstein.com/podcast, or find us on iTunes, Spotify, Pandora, or SoundCloud. Lowenstein Sandler podcast series are presented by Lowenstein Sandler and cannot be copied or rebroadcast without consent. The information provided is intended for a general audience. It is not legal advice or substitute for the advice of counsel. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome. The content reflects the personal views and opinions of the participants. No attorney-client relationship is being created by this podcast, and all rights are reserved.