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[00:00:06] **Samantha Baines:** Hello TDSs! In this episode I spoke to journalist Stacey Duigud. And I've been very excited to talk to her cause I followed her on Instagram for a long time, and she speaks very openly about her divorce, which is still ongoing on Instagram, start some really interesting conversations. And she also writes about it as well for the Telegraph newspaper. And it was really great to talk to her about the, financial side of things, custody battles, having lawyers getting involved. And we also touched on the new "no fault divorce" which is coming into play at the beginning of April, 2022. And it's also important to note because we have a little discussion about it in the episode, and we're not sure, but I've looked it up and under the new, no fault divorce, you can no longer pick adultery as a reason for your divorce. [00:01:00] There's no blame. So you just say that you want to get divorced and that's enough. You don't give a reason as you have before. And I know that that's good for a lot of people and some people feel like that's problematic because they want to associate blame, if they feel it's someone else's fault. So we talk a little bit about that as well as having a world crushed down around you. Stacy lost her job, she moved out the family home. Talk about all of that and then doing the work and delving into yourself as well as dating, um, and coming out the other side better for it. So enjoy,

[00:01:43] I am joined by Stacey Duigud, journalists. Welcome to The Divorce Social!

[00:01:50] **Stacey Duigud:** Thank you so much for having me.

[00:01:51] **Samantha Baines:** You're so welcome! Because I've been stalking you on social media for such a long time in your divorce recovery. So I'm really [00:02:00] excited to talk to you about it now.

[00:02:02] **Stacey Duigud:** I'm happy you've been stalking me. That's really, made me smile this morning.

[00:02:06] It's interesting because that. So many women have shared their stories with me and have been really honest with me directly. And I was actually thinking about this last night, sort of two, almost two years on actually my first reveal post, I suppose, was September two years ago. Oh, my goodness, 2020. Hello. And back in those early days, I remember messaging people back at 2:00 AM and they were up as well.

[00:02:34] So this platform has provided a safe space for women to discuss divorce openly. A subject that is still fairly taboo for them. To talk about the shame attached to it and guilt.

[00:02:47] **Samantha Baines:** I agree. And you know, that's why I set up this podcast and that's why I get so excited when I find people like you on social media, talking openly about things, because I guess I'm the same with the podcast. I get a lot of [00:03:00] messages from people going through divorce or, or a breakup, or even just thinking about it and having a really hard time making that decision. And I think it is such a taboo area and something we're still not talking about enough. What have you found from sharing your story? Because that must have been, I mean, I've read some articles and you say you found it difficult to tell family and friends. But you then just told everyone on social media, what is it like sharing that with 25,000 people on Instagram?

[00:03:36] **Stacey Duigud:** I had two choices, really. It was either to tell the truth or come off social media completely. I was busy working for a fashion corporate. At the time I was traveling to Milan and Paris. I was living a so-called hashtag a glamorous life. I had all, you know, I was posting about my travel and my outfits and this, that, and the other. But it [00:04:00] felt so alien to me to be posting about a sort of surface view of my life. That just wasn't the reality. And I knew that it either I had to be my authentic self across social media, or just pack it in altogether. So actually. The first post did cause a ripple. It caused ripple for people I know, people I love, people who love me, who were kind of in denial. The hoot also lived the journey with me for much longer than that for us post in September, 2020, they were of the opinion that actually I should not share the information. But to be very, very clear, I'm only sharing a part of my story.

[00:04:43] The full picture, isn't there for open broadcast. You know, I never mentioned my ex I don't discuss why we broke up and I'm very clear with any editor who commissions me. But by opening up on social media, I found it [00:05:00] was almost like, 'Ah, oh my goodness. I'm not alone. Other women are going through the, you know, the same experience as me.'

[00:05:09] And in a funny way, I almost gave myself permission, when I turned up to the office, looking pale faced. Um, having not eaten or slept for five days straight, I gave myself permission to be an absolute wreck because I was a wreck and it was horrendous. And even though we'd been in couples therapy for quite a long time, when the decision was made to split.

[00:05:32] It was as if we'd just decided the day before, it was such a brutal, brutal feeling inside. And by sharing my story I suppose it was a way of

connecting to other women going through the same thing. Not all women have friends who are getting divorced at the same time as them.

[00:05:49] **Samantha Baines:** Exactly. I mean, that's why I set up the podcast.

[00:05:51] I always say I set this up quite selfishly, because I just wanted to talk to other people who were going through the same thing. And I didn't know anyone, but having a [00:06:00] podcast is quite a good excuse. So it's interesting that you say about sharing on social media. And of course not sharing the whole, you don't have to share everything that's happened to you, but you can be honest.

[00:06:12] And I did a Facebook post quite early on, and I think some people in my divorce, some people were quite shocked and like, 'I can't believe you're sharing that on social media!' But for me it was almost like a quicker way of telling everyone because telling everyone and breaking it to them. It can be its own trauma and itself and you have to go through it, you know, one after the other.

[00:06:34] And I was like, right, I've done the sort of really close people. Now I'm going to do a blanket, Facebook posts. Did you feel like that? Were you using social media to tell some of the people in your life or were you just using social media to connect with other people going through what you

[00:06:49] **Stacey Duigud:** were? That's a really good question, actually. And I think probably your talking about old school friends and people you went to university with and old work colleagues like you, you know, you might speak to once every [00:07:00] couple of years I came off Facebook around the time of the Brexit vote. I just couldn't bear it. But with Instagram, no, I was actually telling complete strangers about my story. Also quite provocatively knowing that as a writer and as a journalist that someone might commission me to write about it. And they did. And I've written about it extensively. I mean, I've read it when the Adele piece came out and full and a collegial who is one of the chief editors at the times rang me that morning. She said, 'We've been up all night. We have a transcript of the interview with her and Oprah. Can you write something and file it in the next hour?' I was like, 'Yes, I can!' And the story is always the same, right? It's the same story as my experience, my press experience of the divorce. But I think. We don't hear these stories.

[00:07:48] I mean, we do more and more now. Thank goodness. But you know, when people like Adele speak out and say, 'I've dismantled my child's life in pursuit of my own happiness.' That is like the [00:08:00] biggest taboo. So

you've dismantled your family. You've left the family unit. And now you have to explain it to your child. Okay. She gets to write a number, one, hit song, being the person who's breaking up a family, which is, you know, I left and I left the family home, which is another major area of, you know, no women, mothers don't do that. Mum, mothers don't leave the family home. And I set up home in a, in a rental around the corner, back to your original question, which is about sharing on social media. I knew on Instagram, I was sharing with total strangers. These weren't school friends, these weren't university contacts. These were not old colleagues. It was actually, 'Here's my story. And this is, I'm sharing this with you A because I want you to know that you're not alone, but also more selfishly B I don't want to be alone because I can't bear it.'

[00:08:54] **Samantha Baines:** Sometimes it is easier though to share with strangers, because I think when I came [00:09:00] out as bisexual after my divorce, I put that on my social media. And I told, and obviously people really close to me knew, but actually a lot of people I know I hadn't sort of broken the news, but it sort of felt easier to break it to people who maybe don't know me. I almost didn't think anyone would be bothered I thought they'd be like, 'Oh, all right!' But then that went viral and then I was commissioned to sort of write an article about it. And it's an interesting one. Why is it easier to tell strangers? Because in some respects, strangers will judge you more than your friends might judge you.

[00:09:38] **Stacey Duigud:** Oh, I don't know. I think it's 50 50, certainly with what happened with us, it was very painful and they lived through that experience for several years. And I think when it came to. Sort of, I suppose, almost skirting over so many issues. Cause I don't want to talk about them cause it's not my place [00:10:00] to they're like, 'Okay, well I don't understand.' But eventually do you know something? This is really interesting. Eventually they did get it. They pick when I was trending on apple news one day, one of my girlfriends who I was just like, 'Why are you doing this? I don't get it!' One day she said, 'Okay, I get it now. I get it. I do understand.' I was like, 'Is that because Adele has just come out and discussed it?' And she was like, 'No, no, no, it's not because of that.' She said 'I understand why you're doing it. You're building a community of women around you and you need them. I get it. You know, I stand corrected.' Why is it easier to tell, you know, the person who serves you coffee in the morning that you've just split up with someone? Like, I don't know. It's just easier. Isn't it? I do think. Listen, if someone is going to judge you, first of all, I'm an absolute coward. Where, where did you come out with your bisexual announcement? Was that Twitter?

[00:10:50] **Samantha Baines:** Twitter and Instagram.

[00:10:51] **Stacey Duigud:** Okay. So Twitter, I'm an absolute coward because I'm in a right stropy half a few weeks ago, I deactivated my account. I [00:11:00] was so pissed off. I write a dating column in the sassy Telegraph and it's a version of events because the real truth is I'm unprintable my dating life is unprintable frankly, but anyway.

[00:11:17] **Samantha Baines:** What do you mean by that? In a sexual way?

[00:11:21] **Stacey Duigud:** Any woman who goes through divorce has a year of, I don't know, how should we headline it?

[00:11:27] **Samantha Baines:** I call mine my sexual explosion.

[00:11:29] **Stacey Duigud:** Explosion!

[00:11:30] **Samantha Baines:** What were you going to call yours?

[00:11:31] **Stacey Duigud:** I've wrote it down the other day and I just call it. It's just been like outer space. You know, I've tried, I've dabbled in a lot of different things. Let's put it that way and it's been very interesting, but I also think that in the aftermath of divorce you do actually, you're so vulnerable and there's a sort of period where I'm a straight woman and I date men.

[00:11:53] But there is a period of online dating where you're just sort of trying to replace what you've lost. I mean, sorry, [00:12:00] my case, you know, which was going to lots of dates with people thinking shit, I feel so vulnerable and so alone. I must get it in the new husband immediately. I'm going to go on hinge in a circle, Bumble Tinder, and I'm just going to date everyone.

[00:12:15] And then you come out of that phase.

[00:12:16] **Samantha Baines:** That's funny though. Cause I didn't want to replace my ex-husband I wanted anything but.

[00:12:24] **Stacey Duigud:** I do now I'm talking in the six months aftermath where, you know, for me, I was living in a rental. Lots of things happened in that period. So I was diagnosed ADHD. I wa I moved into a shit rental for two months, and then I moved out again into a nice rental, which is where I am, in the background here today, and I'm in the process of buying a house I lost, uh, or couldn't cope with a very well-paid job in a fashion corporate. So my world came [00:13:00] crashing down in and amongst all of that car crash, you know that my entire world was shattered unrecognizable because you know, actually

when you have a job, like the kind of jobs I've done in my career, getting dressed and getting up, putting your, you know, your nice clothes on and putting on your armour, which is your kind of your blazer and getting on the tube and getting to work and having a purpose really gives a structure to your day. And especially if you're an ADHD Neurodivergent brain woman, like I am, you need that kind of structure. And I didn't have any of it. And so do you know what? The dating apps became an obsession. And I was like, yeah, I'm just, it's going to be fine because someone's going to save me. And then you wake up one day and you're like, 'Oh shit, no, one's going to save me, but me!' And two years down the line, you realize that, I mean, it sounds so cheesy. It's so cliched, but you have to really journey inwards hard. Therapy, whatever you have to do. [00:14:00] And, and that's what I've been doing and I'm single not dating anybody. Uh, so I'm writing this. I was, I was actually about to say something about the comments on my Telegraph. Cause we were talking about strangers and, and their opinion on social media. They are. I mean apparently horrific and I've never read them, mostly men. And that's fine. I'm not hurt by them because they don't know me. With Instagram, I feel like I've built a really tight community of women. And I think if someone were to start having a go at me on there, I'd feel really, really hurt and let down Twitter, I don't even bother with anymore Facebookis done.

[00:14:44] **Samantha Baines:** Well, the people who write comments on articles, I feel like are always the people who are going to find something wrong. I don't know if I've ever seen a lovely comment at the bottom of an article. So let's just go back for a minute to, you mentioned a car [00:15:00] crash that your life was unrecognizable. So in the midst of all that, and you're obsessed with the dating apps, how were you coping day-to-day or would you say that you weren't.

[00:15:12] **Stacey Duigud:** I wasn't. It was awful. I wasn't eating, I channeled every ounce of my being into my children. And I knew that if I could make sure that they're okay, that just makes me cry, because I knew that they would have to be okay. Even if I wasn't and I was far from okay. And I look back and I do regret leaving my family home. You know, I do regret the financial fallout that's happened to me.

[00:15:45] I do regret not knowing. What a shame I didn't know I was ADHD and had no capacity to, well, not know, but limited capacity when it comes to organization and [00:16:00] planning and, you know, diarizing things and making a financial plan and all of that stuff, I just thought. I was disorganised and chaotic and yeah, highly functioning, disorganized and chaotic.

[00:16:16] So it the ADHD was a horrific layer on top of an already terrible situation. And the only thing that got me through as my children, because I don't think I'd be here without them.

[00:16:27] **Samantha Baines:** Well, I'm glad you have your children. Do you think getting that ADHD diagnosis has helped you now? And has helped you understand things from your past and maybe your relationship? I'm the breakup?

[00:16:42] **Stacey Duigud:** My mother was a single mother. She left my father when I was three. There is a strong genetic, I don't want to drop anyone in it, on that side of the family, but let's just say I inherited it from my father. Uh, he was an absent father. I always made a pact to myself. I'm never going to be a [00:17:00] single parent. I'm going to get married. I'm going to get married for life. But you know, I look back our marriage and the things know I was unable to discuss. Money, huge, planning holidays. In ADHD there's a thing called in Gabor Maté's book, uh, Scattered Minds. He talks about time blindness. I've written about this with the Sunday Times. It does make me laugh because it makes me, it does make complete sense of, you know, the early years trying to get to a toddler, in a baby toddler group. I'd be like, what? When is it? Did I pay for it? I can't find it. I'd be lost. And then I wouldn't go. So I had no. You know, new mum mates. Cause I just couldn't get the groups, but with my marriage and the ADHD diagnosis, I do wonder had I be medicated like I am now, I take a stimulant every day, 30 milligrams of Elvanse, which helps me focus. My therapy we are able to sort of not [00:18:00] dissect it. That's the wrong word. I acknowledge it. It's in the room with us when we're talking about life and my reactions and my sort of, you know, emotional outbursts, et cetera. I do look back when I was diagnosed ADHD in April, 2021, I did look back on how I left my family home. Hi disorganized. There was a financial planning and the marriage itself and thought, 'Oh my God! What if I just had I known would my marriage have worked?' And then I had to really bed into a period of grief, but who knows? this is the honest truth, who knows? And yes, we could look back at our whole lives because my entire life now makes sense with this diagnosis.

[00:18:46] And I could say I would have finished University. I would have been able to maintain friendships better than I have been able to. I would have been able to make career decisions, not based [00:19:00] on a whim, because I have read something in Vogue or whatever. I'm, you know, I'm, I'm making light of it. But ADHD has created a lot of chaos in my life. But as my therapist said to me, last Thursday, it's also a gift that has provided me with, you know, a huge sort of creative drive and vision for my work. So that's also a great thing. I'm trying to tap into tap into almost a year, since my diagnosis, I'm trying to tap into the

positives of it and leave the sense of grief behind and enter into the period of relief.

[00:19:33] But you know, I do look back at my marriage and wonder if it could have been saved.

[00:19:36] **Samantha Baines:** That must be a kind of big weight on you looking back. And also it sounds like you're putting it all on you. Like if you knew that this ADHD diagnosis, it could have been saved, when did you start the process of getting that diagnosis? Was it in the midst of everything crushing around? And why was that the turning point?

[00:19:59] **Stacey Duigud:** I've been in therapy [00:20:00] therapy with the same therapist for almost four years now. In April, 2020 when I no longer had this big fashion corporate job. And I had no longer had Microsoft teams pinging away at me all day long, telling me exactly where I needed to be and who I needed to talk to and what was next, what was coming next. And when I needed to eat and when I could leave the house, none of that structure was there. And then when I finished working full time, I suddenly found myself just, it was as if time didn't exist. And I was completely oblivious to everything I'd wake up the day would stretch ahead of me, I don't know, like a cloud, you know, you can't touch it. You go to touch it, but it's not really there. You know, it's there. Can't see it. Oh, that's gone. Okay, fine. I'll get on with my day. It was chaos. And eventually my therapist said, 'I think something bigger is going on here. I suggest that you see a psychiatrist.' She suggested a [00:21:00] doctor works at the Portobello clinic who specialises in adult ADHD and bipolar disorder. And I sat down with him. And after about 30 minutes, we're both. Yup. Yeah. High ranking, both adulthood and childhood, and then the penny dropped. And I thought, I, so really thanks to my therapist, who I trusted and who knew me very well and who had, hadn't held me emotionally through a very, very difficult period of leaving a marriage.

[00:21:33] **Samantha Baines:** Well, thank God for therapists. It's all I can say. Cause mine is great also I've had quite a few though.

[00:21:39] **Stacey Duigud:** Have you?

[00:21:40] **Samantha Baines:** I feel like I had a sexual explosion and I'm having a therapy explosion throughout my life where I'm just like 'One year here, two years there. New relationships, enjoy it!

[00:21:52] **Ad:** It's the Ad Break. So it's a perfect time to remind you to hit subscribe, to be notified about more episodes. You can also leave us a lovely review because honestly it makes a difference to the chart positions. And one time I was in the charts next to Michelle Obama. I was really thrilled about it. So it'd be nice to do that again. Uh, you could also join in the conversation on social media. We're on Twitter and Instagram at divorce pod. We have a website thedivorcesocial.com and you can also join us for our like 90 style divorced chatroom experience over on Patrion. So just go to patrion.com forward slash Samantha Baines, B A I N E S and it starts at two pounds a month and we all have lovely and awful and amazing chats. See you there.

[00:22:46] **Samantha Baines:** So moving into this time, so you've had your diagnosis. You don't have your regular job anymore. You're a freelancer, you're in a new space. How do you go about [00:23:00] recovering from this divorce time? Like what helped you during that time?

[00:23:04] **Stacey Duigud:** I remember at one point I had three lawyers. I remember this is like the, I'm going to answer the question. It's like the opposite. How did you, how did you cope? I didn't, it was a nightmare. I didn't sleep. I, I remember lying in bed all morning at 4:00 AM. Having not slept at all. Just thinking. 'Alright, this may kill me, actually, the stress of this'. It's so physical it, my body and it's, and it entangles dizzy, scratchy, itchy, you know, tangled, ADHD brain, as well as the kind of physical heart and tummy. The not, the anxiety. I was absolutely drowning. And I look back and I think 'My God, I don't know how I got through it'. But during this period, when I no longer had the income. And, by the way still, [00:24:00] almost a year later, I barely have an income. I mean, I'm barely working because I've had to sort of rebuild. I'm ready just to get back out there now, but I've, I mean, I've had to beg, borrow and steal money or friends. And, you know, I work in a business where it's all tits and teeth and you'll be fabulous and some days I'm so not feeling fabulous. And that's why splurging my shit on Instagram is really fucking helpful.

[00:24:26] But what happened last summer when I could no longer pay the legal bills is that I started to represent myself. And representing myself was a real turning point for me. I really had to look properly inwards and say, you have to find the strength to do this. And so I did with a very, very close girlfriend who is an opposite brain to me. I mean, she's so sharp in her response to, so she would help me with my response to the legal letters. And [00:25:00] I was alone when we had a zoom showdown about a financial assessment that went really badly wrong. I got off a phone and I went round to her house at two o'clock in the afternoon, I lay on the floor. I was wearing a fabulous outfit, of course. I lay on the floor. She opened a bottle of beer and I just lay there crying. That was last September. But each time you lie down crying, you have to get back up and you

have to answer the lawyers letters, and it's still going on. But I'm representing myself and I, it's nothing, you know, I have a huge respect for the legal system and lawyers who do, you know, do their amazing jobs, but divorce isn't absolute financial racket. It's a disgrace. It's a disgrace. What happens to women. You know, I am a women who I can't, I I'm not eligible for benefits. I'm not eligible for legal aid. I am in a rented apartment that I can't afford to pay the rent on. So my ex's having to pay my rent. I can't afford to pay my legal bills. [00:26:00] But I can't get legal aid.

[00:26:03] Honestly, it has been an absolute nightmare. And I think if anyone who hasn't got my strengths, I don't even know if I'm particularly strong, but they'd be homeless and women end up homeless all the time. And women end up, alright people okay, people end up, but let's talk about women. Women end up in the family courts and the family court system is brutal too. I happen to through Instagram. Thank God. Contact, make contact with some incredible divorce coaches. I suppose you could call them that. One of whom is a lawyer and ended up homeless herself with three children. Fundamentally, if you can't afford to pay for a lawyer, you don't have a job. Where'd you go? What do you do? I didn't know. I didn't have the answers.

[00:26:52] **Samantha Baines:** It's such an interesting one. Isn't it? Because looking at your social media and your career before, you had never [00:27:00] imagined that through divorce, you'd find yourself here now. And I think a lot of people can relate to that. A lot of people who've been like, you know, I had a high flying job. I was happily, you know, middle class and now I can't afford you know to live and divorce can do that to people and also the whole paperwork and legal system. And obviously they're bringing in now no fault divorce, which is going to be practice from

[00:27:28] **Stacey Duigud:** 6th of April, is it?

[00:27:30] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah from the 6th of April. Do you think that would have made life easier for you? If there was a no fault divorce option so that you didn't have to, you know, initially place blame or give a reason even for the divorce.

[00:27:47] **Stacey Duigud:** No, I don't care about being divorced. I could be married for the next 30 years. It's a financial settlement and the logistics that have been hellish and all hell is for so many women. [00:28:00] I mean, listen, I haven't even touched on custody, but I, having grown up without a father until my mother met my stepfather when I was seven. And seeing my mom really struggle as a single parent, et cetera, I come at this with a slightly different opinion about that the children need to be with their mother more than they do

with their father. I believe a child really needs both parents. As long as both parents are properly, either able to parent them are involved, uh, et cetera. So my ex is a brilliant father. And so I agreed on 50 50 custody. Now what 50 50 custody means there is no maintenance to be paid on either side. So that's no child maintenance and no spousal support. I think so many women have end up in like terrible battles over custody and in very complex situations with, you know, abusive exes, et cetera, and exes who just, you know, don't want to [00:29:00] pay their maintenance. And so go for 50 50, but with the no fault divorce, I think it's really irrelevant for me because the divorce thing, okay, see what you have to write something mean about your ex in order to get divorced yet it's a bit old fashioned. It's terribly Victorian. This idea that how many reasons could you cite for divorce? I think there were five. Yes. Oh, fashioned that you have to say, oh, you know, unreasonable behavior. What does that mean?

[00:29:28] Yes. Okay. But, so what? It's just paperwork. Adultery remains, you know, you can still file for adultery. Have I got that right? That's what I read this morning, that adultery is?

[00:29:39] **Samantha Baines:** I think it's a real gray area because I spoke to a lawyer and they said it wasn't. So it's literally just, you can't place the blame on either party at all.

[00:29:51] So all the options are going and it's literally just so one party can want a divorce, even if the other party doesn't want one and [00:30:00] you can still get a divorce, which obviously will help a lot of people in that respect. But I don't think. adultery, I mean, we need find this out, don't me? But I don't think adultery still counts because a lot of, I've been reading articles recently by divorced women and Helen Thorne who's a previous guest on the podcast. wrote one.

[00:30:19] **Stacey Duigud:** She's great.

[00:30:20] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah. About the fat that she she actually wanted to place blame. She wanted there to be a record of whose fault it was. Um, which is a really interesting perspective on it, that I hadn't thought about before, because to me, I was just like, oh great. You know, with the no fault divorce, you don't have to start things off in a, in a blame game. And in a, you know, coming up with reasons why you should get divorced, you can just want to divorce and get one, which should be the way. And lot of people have been against no fault divorce. Because they thought it would make getting divorced too easy. And to that, I laugh and say, listen to any [00:31:00] episode of my podcast.

[00:31:02] There's very little easy about getting divorced, but it's interesting. You talk about the financials and custody and things like that. And I think a lot of discussions I've had with my guests have been about this, and I know. The financial stage for me was the most stressful part of things. Even if things weren't all full, they were fairly amicable. I mean, obviously, you know, it very rarely stays amicable throughout the whole process, but you know, things weren't awful, but things got really tough and a bit mean. For me during the financials stage. And I think great if no fault divorce is going to help a lot of people, but we kind of need an overhaul of the whole divorce procedure, because it's all really old fashioned.

[00:31:50] **Stacey Duigud:** It is old fashioned. I mean, so the, the divorce coaches that I've met via Instagram, and by the way, there are several, but the two that I've worked with [00:32:00] have actually one has a course. I think it's about six weeks and she essentially saves you thousands and thousands of pounds, simply by cutting out quite a lot of the paperwork, that solicitors do. I've also find that when I did have a lawyer that they, oh my gosh, the first lawyer I met was so bloodthirsty. I left her office and I couldn't feel my arms. I was literally like, I mean the blood drained from my face. And she was like, 'So when we go to court, when we go to court.' I'm like, 'What? I don't want to go to court. I've never wanted to go to court ever.' I've just wanted a fair settlement and I want to get on with my life. We both want to get on with our lives to be fair. The second lawyer I saw. Insisted on having a junior in the room. Of course I didn't realise I was paying for the junior. So you're paying for the solicitor and her junior in the room. I was getting a five grand bill and getting absolutely nowhere fast at all. The third [00:33:00] lawyer I saw, gosh, I mean, I sound like an absolute lunatic here because I'm not, I'm genuinely not the type of person who goes into a coffee shop saying, 'I want an extra dry, skinny, you know, decaf.' I'm not, I'm not a fussy spot.

[00:33:13] **Samantha Baines:** I mean, I am, I am that person about coffee but it's fine.

[00:33:16] **Stacey Duigud:** Because I'm not, I'm really quite casual, but when it came to lawyers, I was like, I can't I don't know what it was, but each and every one of them, the third one really took the biscuit. There's third one was genius. The third one, I sit in his office and he says, right, well, I don't know why I have to do this posh voice, but I'm going to do it. 'Well, this is a really tricky situation. So, um, there's only one thing for it. It's a hundred thousand pound litigation loan.' And I sat there and I thought, 'What? A hundred!' I've already spent 20 K at this point and got absolutely nowhere. You want me to spend a hundred thousand? And get a loan for it?. [00:34:00] I mean at that point, I was like, you know what? 'Fuck this. I have to do it alone.'

[00:34:04] **Samantha Baines:** That's a house.

[00:34:06] **Stacey Duigud:** It's a house. 20 grand is a major, and you know, I don't have money. I'm not a rich woman. I'm a journalist. Everyone knows journalists get paid very badly. It's just, you know, I don't want to call it a racket because it's doing a disservice to people who have been through law school and to have integrity. And there are some amazing organisations out there. So I don't mean to bad mouth, the industry. It's just that, it's just not very clear what you have to do. And that's the bit I really struggled with. You're being told various different version of the same process. Right? So the first one is when we go to court, the second one is I was like very adamant. I don't want to go to court. I've just spent 8,000 pounds telling someone I don't want to go to court and I've got absolutely nowhere. And in the end actually realised that the legal, the lawyers letters between the lawyers, [00:35:00] um, with your ex can really stir up the situation to a point of, you know, actually boiling point where you get absolutely nowhere and you end up just falling out. So what happened to be quite friendly situation has now become completely toxic.

[00:35:15] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah. I've definitely found that as well. And there are some great lawyers out there and I got advice from one of them, which was, if you could just have the conversations with your ex to decide the end point and you can both agree and just do it between yourselves and then just tell your lawyer what it's going to be, it will save you a lot of time and money and stress. But, um, I think that's so right. It's almost like we need like a co you know, when you go for a manicure and you get, and there's a list and it's like, 'If you have gels, it's this much. If you have just normal now varnish is this much. If you have fake nails, it's this much. 'We need that for lawyers, because I didn't realise, you know, they give you a, 'It'll probably cost this'. And then if [00:36:00] they email you a form and they are like, 'Fill it out' and you go, 'Yeah, but can you advise me?', like, what should I be filling out with?' You then have to pay extra for the advice. Even if it's in an email and every phone call you have with them for advice or just talking, you have to pay for. And every meeting that you have, and I feel like they need a manicure list of lawyer. Like this is extra. This will cost you this much extra because it is like lots of hidden costs. And they can really rack up.

[00:36:32] And then you're like, well, I can't ask my lawyer for advice, which is what they're there for, because it's going to cost me extra money.

[00:36:39] **Stacey Duigud:** They down tools if you don't pay the bill immediately. I mean, I have said on my Instagram several times that actually we need a crib sheet of, you know, if you've got X amount of money to spend on it, if it's cost what? £500 to log your divorce petition? And with your local council,

it certainly does with Brent, actually, there's some amazing [00:37:00] things, you know, for example, I watched a very slow and methodical video on how to fill out form E on YouTube done by this really patient woman. And she literally box by box and I did it via that. It took an hour watching her and then do the thing and pausing it and watching her. And that would have cost, I don't know, several thousands if I'd done that through a lawyer. Because they want to fill out your form E for you. They want to fill out all the paperwork for you. Cause if they can rack up the hours and I get it, it's a business, but actually when you don't have money to spend, and there is an assumption that your ex or the other party is going to pay and that party decides they don't want to pay. You're stuck in the middle. And that's what kept happening to me. I kept getting so far with lawyers getting a bill and then them downing tools, because I couldn't afford to pay.

[00:37:51] **Samantha Baines:** Just to offer the other side of things. I think my divorce, they told me it was going to cost about 1500 pounds. I think it ended up costing about [00:38:00] three grand, but that was me not asking them any advice ever and just trying to do everything. So that is like the basic paperwork, but we have had someone on the podcast who got the book, a dummy's guide to divorce, whatever it's called and literally sat down at a table with their ex and did it all via the book without any solicitors or anything. And then it was minimal costs. So there are ways it's just, we don't know about them.

[00:38:29] **Stacey Duigud:** Okay. That's really interesting. I mean, that, that's brilliant actually, if you have the time and the wherewithal to do that, get as much done and talk to your ex as much as possible. But sometimes things break down don't they? And it's not possible to talk to your ex and there are many different complex situations, but, uh, we are two years on still struggling and, you know, the actual divorce doesn't I don't care about it anymore. I just, I need to be able to, sorry, it's a point of privilege, I need to be [00:39:00] able to buy a house. I've always owned my own house. So I don't feel safe in a rental that I can't afford the rent, you know? So I, I, I feel very unsafe. I want the financial settlement sorted and I want to be able to move on with my life.

[00:39:12] **Samantha Baines:** And so for you, the divorce is ongoing, so you're not officially divorced yet. Is that right?

[00:39:18] **Stacey Duigud:** No. We're nowhere near it.

[00:39:19] **Samantha Baines:** And it's funny. I mean, cause I've had the paperwork now for a couple of years, I have to tell you, it's funny when you get the paperwork. Cause it's such a long slog. And then I just got the paperwork as an attachment in an email from the solicitor and it didn't even say like, 'Yeah!'

With emojis, ' You're divorced!' It was like, 'Please see attached' and then I had to like read it twice to be like, 'Oh my God, this is the certificate I'm officially divorced'. And I expected there to be like a fanfare. And like, I don't know, some celebrity turns up at my door and there's a confetti cannon and there was none of that. And I was like, 'Oh, like all of this time and [00:40:00] stress and effort. and it's just an attachment to an email that I'll have to print myself.' Like have you ever considered having a divorce party or if you had any sort of divorce celebration?

[00:40:11] **Stacey Duigud:** No. I haven't been in a place to sort of celebrate, but I am going to take myself away for a week when the financial assessment is done and dusted, but I just don't feel like celebrating it. I mean, I don't feel ashamed of it. Like I used to feel ashamed of it. Like the idea that, you know, the three year old who was born, you know, with my mother with it being a single mother and me sort of having this romantic vision that I would be a unit of four for the rest of my life. That's all gone, the kind of romance and the dreams and the kind of that's that's gone, but I don't feel like celebrating. I feel, I still feel incredibly sad about it.

[00:40:48] I feel sad for my children. Who are actually now really coming round. It's taken two years. I couldn't work for long because I had to really invest proper [00:41:00] time with them. Really emotionally support them. And actually we're so much closer because of it. So that for me is worth celebrating, but I'm just not in the mood for a big party.

[00:41:10] **Samantha Baines:** Well, maybe, maybe you'll get there.

[00:41:12] **Stacey Duigud:** Did you?

[00:41:13] **Samantha Baines:** I didn't have a divorce party cause it was in the middle of all the lockdowns . But I did feel like celebrating when I got the certificate and I've put on a fancy outfit and some sequence and put my makeup on and then I made a celebration video for social media. And then I sort of like, you know, had a little Prosecco. My sister came round cause we were allowed then, and it was bubbles and we had some Prosecco and sort of had a mini celebration. But I think now I'm on the other side of it. I sort of do feel like celebrating it and I feel like I do celebrate it a lot because it changed my life. That divorce in a lot of ways, not least I now have a podcast about it. But it makes you reevaluate. And as you say, [00:42:00] dig deep into yourself and I feel so much better off now from it. So I hope you'll feel celebratory when the time comes. And I hope I get an invite to your party.

[00:42:10] **Stacey Duigud:** Well, of course I'm just between husbands at the moment, you know, so there might be a next wedding. This is the other thing, you know, I was wondering about, you know, the kind of decree, absolutely the decree DC or whichever one comes first, that will now be obsolete as well with the new divorce bill on the, what's it called? The no blame divorce? Is it called the no blame?

[00:42:28] **Samantha Baines:** No fault divorce,

[00:42:29] **Stacey Duigud:** No fault, No fault.

[00:42:30] **Samantha Baines:** So they are changing, you still have a thing, but they've changed the name of it. So it's No Decree Nisi. Which is better because it's confusing. When I got the Decree Nisi, I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm divorced!' And then I realised I wasn't cause you need the decree absolute.

[00:42:44] **Stacey Duigud:** Of course, absolutely.

[00:42:45] **Samantha Baines:** You are meant to have a vodka shot at the end with the absolute. It's like Absolute vodka.

[00:42:53] **Stacey Duigud:** I just wonder with this sort of shift in the kind of wider culture of [00:43:00] how we view divorce the divorce process becoming easier finally, after so many years. Whether or not eventually, I don't think in one or two generations, but whether or not people even bother to get married, you know? I just, is it such an old fashioned idea, maybe laws will change that will protect you know, people who are unmarried and in relationships, for example, if I had been unmarried and regardless of my status as a mother, and regardless of how long I've been living with my partner, I wouldn't have had any rights to half of the things I have rights to and things like that. I wonder if the legislation around cohabiting and what it means to be a partnership will change.

[00:43:42] **Samantha Baines:** I mean, if you've lived in the same house with a person for a certain amount of time, you do have some rights, but yeah, you have more rights when you're married and, and you're right. It is quite an outdated thing. But saying that I think I'd get married [00:44:00] again

[00:44:00] **Stacey Duigud:** Oh my God. I think I would too I'm so glad you said that.

[00:44:04] **Samantha Baines:** Why is that?

[00:44:04] **Stacey Duigud:** I don't know. Was it like all the princess books we read when we were kids? What is it?

[00:44:08] **Samantha Baines:** Also , it's just, it's love, isn't it? And like making a lovely commitment to each other is. Nice. And also my wedding day was great.

[00:44:21] **Stacey Duigud:** So I posted on Instagram obviously, cause it hasn't happened unless it's on Instagram. Um, a picture of me, my wedding dress and the wedding dresses made for me by friends of mine who have a label called Preen and just Cynthia made this dress for me. And it's so beautiful. It's long. It's fabulous. Anyway, so we are in the middle. I've got a fitting next week. And we are going to chop it short and I'm going to write about it for Sunday Times style. And I thought, 'Gosh, that's actually a really cool kind of new, 'how do you wear your wedding dress these days?' I just love this idea that you can have really enjoyed your [00:45:00] wedding day. I've really enjoyed mine too.

[00:45:01] And I loved wearing that dress. But then sort of, you know, revisit that amazing dress and have it re-imagined into something else. So it is celebratory and yes, I am quite sad about what's happened. But I have two beautiful children. And eventually I know that we will be friends one day and we did have a good wedding day and you're right. Love it's too, to, to feel sad and beyond the floor and feel all the emotions is to be human and that's, that was sort of, I suppose, that's, that's how we're built. It's who we are. And what we're on this planet for is not to be alone. Although everybody keeps saying to me, enjoy your time alone. I'm like, 'Yeah, yeah, sure. I'm really enjoying this time alone'. Because I am alone a lot with 50 50 custody, but I don't want to be alone forever. And I have this romantic idea that if I met somebody and they also had children, we'd have this kind of big, noisy, messy family together. But, um, or I might just move to Shetland with my [00:46:00] dog and be a writer on my own, who knows. But it is about love and I haven't given up on love.

[00:46:06] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah. And I think, I think that's the nice thing as well is you can go through all this heartache and still not you know, that person wasn't right. And that situation wasn't right. But yet we still haven't given up on love. I think it's about getting to a place for me where I feel comfortable on my own. And I think I'm there now. And I enjoy being on my own, but I'm still not ruling and I'm not necessarily looking for my next husband right now, or wife. But I'm definitely, that's hopefully going to be an option in the future. And I think that's exciting. And, and also I know that when I was in the midst of everything, I didn't fail that it was going to be an option in the future.

[00:46:50] And I think that's a hard thing.

[00:46:52] **Stacey Duigud:** Yeah. I think, I think actually what we've been talking about with just a slight cheesy idea of journey inwards, it's really actually, it's absolutely [00:47:00] fucking crucial because if you don't do that, you have to rebuild. And you almost have to build a new, you, it's not even a rebuilt, it's like a, it's just building a new view and I've done that through, uh, all manner of things.

[00:47:13] Uh, getting incredibly drunk, lots of therapy, lots of time or friends. A renewed, uh, relationship kind of more, a deeper relationship with my children and ultimately with myself. And actually gosh, I talked about early, like going back to that sort of idea that I was quite crazy the first six months after divorce dating, dating such randoms. Jeez. And, and now I'm like, 'I could take it or leave it'. Really. I could take it or leave it. I could go on a date. I could not go on a date. I don't really mind. Um, That's because I know this year, I've got a house to buy, a house to decorate children to look after, nights out to have. And I'm definitely going to go away on a little retreat for myself. [00:48:00] So rebuilding and building up a different, a stronger version of yourself. And then who knows? Life's there. They know life doesn't end. It doesn't stop. I just said earlier that I actually wouldn't be here had it not been for my children. Um, That's really how it felt in the moment, because I was, I was so down, I was so low. I was so broken, but I think if anyone is listening and it feels that way right now, then just know that even if you are at rock bottom you can, you can get back up again. It's possible.

[00:48:36] **Samantha Baines:** Absolutely. Well, that seems like a perfect place to finish. Thank you so much. It's been lovely to chat.

[00:48:43] **Stacey Duigud:** Thank you. Thanks for having me.