

Coping After a Divorce

U T S W E M P L O Y E E A S S I S T A N C E P R O G R A M

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- Letting go of anger
- Supportive friends and family
- Federal Trade Commission's advice on Divorce
- Personal well being through divorce
- How to communicate and get results

HOW TO STOP BEING ANGRY... NOW!

by Jane Nahirny, provided by Divorce Magazine

Anger is a familiar emotion for all of us. And in healthy relationships, it can be an overwhelmingly positive force in our lives. "Anger is a very healthy emotion," says Chet Mirman, Ph.D., a licensed clinical psychologist and director of The Center for Divorce Recovery. "Healthy anger can tell us if there's something wrong -- something painful and threatening that we need to take care of. It helps us protect ourselves, and to know when people are crossing our boundaries."

But for couples who are going through separation or divorce, anger is often anything but healthy. In her informative book *The Good Divorce*, Dr. Constance

Ahrons defines divorce-related anger as "an extreme rage, vindictiveness, and over-powering bitterness that is felt when a love relationship is ending. It is a special kind of anger that usually hasn't been experienced before."

When anger is coupled with divorce, it's often used as a misguided means of hanging on to a failed marriage. After all, for many people, a bad relationship is better than no relationship at all. Divorce anger allows people to punish their ex as often as possible, all while maintaining an ongoing (bitter) relationship with him/her. It's a situation that leaves both partners in divorce limbo -- a perilous situation that obstructs

growth and self-awareness.

Some people hold onto their anger so tightly -- stoking the fires on a daily basis -- that their rage takes over their whole lives, coloring and informing all their thoughts and actions. They weigh every action to see how much emotional or physical harm it will inflict on their ex-spouse -- even simply being a nuisance will do in a pinch -- without seeing the injuries they may be inflicting on innocent victims.

**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:**

How Family & Friends Can Help	2
Moving Forward	2
If You Divorce	3
Surviving Divorce & Separation	3
Coping With Divorce & Separation	4

**TIPS TO COPE DURING THE
HOLIDAYS BY SHERI & BOB STRITOF**

- Share your thoughts and feelings about the holidays with family and friends.
- Be realistic in what you can afford to do, both time wise and financially.
- Accept an invitation to spend time with friends who care about you.
- Begin some new traditions.
- Help others - do some volunteering at a shelter or assist someone less fortunate than you.
- Accept your feelings of loss and sadness, but remember to make a decision to get on with your life.

UTSW EAP
1-800-386-9156 or 214-648-5330.
Visit us at www2.utsouthwestern.edu/eap

HOW FAMILY AND FRIENDS CAN HELP EQUALITY IN MARRIAGE INSTITUTE

Ending a marriage is like a death in the family. It's important to have the support of friends and family during the grieving period, which is likely to last beyond the awarding of the divorce decree. Even in the smoothest of divorces, this will be a time of stress. Don't go through it alone.

Yet many put off telling the people closest to them that the marriage is in trouble or that a divorce is in progress. It's just too hard to bring up the subject. You may feel embarrassed or fear how friends and family will react. Yet you'll probably find that they were just waiting to lend a hand -- or an ear. They

may have hesitated "to intrude" or were embarrassed themselves to bring up the subject.

Give them a chance to help you.

(www.equalityinmarriage.org/wdfriend.html)



MOVING FORWARD AFTER DIVORCE EQUALITY IN MARRIAGE INSTITUTE

*"A divorce is like
an amputation:
you survive it,
but there's less of
you"*

*Margaret
Atwood 1939*

Divorce is a process that doesn't stop with the final court decree. You have ended one phase of your life, but now you have an opportunity to enter one of your choosing.

We agree with Dr. Bruce Fisher, a Colorado divorce therapist, that you can turn stumbling blocks like fear, loneliness and denial into rebuilding blocks that will give you the freedom to be yourself as a single person or in another love relationship. Just as you managed your divorce by educating yourself and being pro-active, manage your transition post divorce.

Essential Things To Do:

1. Look both for closure and new beginnings in your transition.
2. Realize you'll have your ups and downs.
3. Don't pretend you're doing fine when you're not. Resolve your feelings and keep moving forward.
4. Give yourself time to heal and grow before committing to another relationship.
5. Keep yourself busy socially and intellectually.

Maintain and update a file containing documents, receipts and

other information related to your divorce.

(www.equalityinmarriage.org/ad.html)



IF YOU DIVORCE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

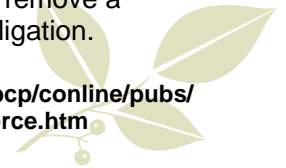
If you're considering divorce or separation, pay special attention to the status of your credit accounts. If you maintain joint accounts during this time, it's important to make regular payments so your credit record won't suffer. As long as there's an outstanding balance on a joint account, you and your spouse are responsible for it.

If you divorce, you may want to close joint accounts or accounts in which your former spouse was an authorized user. Or ask the creditor to convert these accounts to individual accounts.

By law, a creditor cannot close a joint account because of a change in marital status, but can do so at the request of ei-

ther spouse. A creditor, however, does not have to change joint accounts to individual accounts. The creditor can require you to reapply for credit on an individual basis and then, based on your new application, extend or deny you credit. In the case of a mortgage or home equity loan, a lender is likely to require refinancing to remove a spouse from the obligation.

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/divorce.htm>



SURVIVING DIVORCE AND SEPARATION DIVORCESOURCE.COM

Personal Well-being Through the Divorce Process:

Developing your self-esteem is an important step in living through separation and divorce. You should focus on your personal strengths and not be distracted by situations that decrease your confidence.

Confidence does not come automatically. It requires a repetition of well-done tasks. Just as a series of failures can destroy your confidence, a series of small successes will build it. Do not view your divorce as a failure, view it as a learning experience. One success leads to another, and the positive effect on your self-image is cumulative and unique to you. Embrace your uniqueness and build your self-confidence with each of these steps:

- Like yourself - You are the most important factor in your own happiness.
- Do not put yourself down - You will end up believing the negative.
- Stop comparing (and despairing) yourself to others - If every female singer compared herself to Barbra Streisand, why would they bother to sing?
- Start viewing your mistakes as a way of learning -The only way to learn is to have made mistakes!
- Start taking action rather than eter-

nally planning for it - At some point, planning must end or it becomes avoidance. There is no perfect plan. With self-confidence, you can build self-esteem: make a list, set objectives, and your goals will be reached.

- Don't get comfortable if others put you down - Challenge them or walk away.
- Judge yourself by the content of your character - You will be treated by other people the way you treat yourself.
- Treat yourself as your best friend - Do not be afraid to talk things out with yourself.
- Forgive yourself - What's done is done. You cannot look back.

Typically, one spouse seems to become trapped by perpetuating their low self-esteem. The result is that they are treated the way they allow themselves to be treated, based on how they feel about themselves.

A healthy dose of assertiveness will cure that syndrome. Assertiveness is not aggressiveness. Assertiveness means standing on your own two feet and being your own best advocate. Assertiveness contributes to optimum mental health.

A so-called "wimp" gets into a cycle of low esteem (non assertiveness = low esteem). The following definitions may help you understand this self, take these 10 steps toward sharpening and maintaining your mental fitness:

- 1)Prioritize your needs. Put yourself as a top priority.
- 2)Assert yourself. Present your feelings without attacking others.
- 3)Demonstrate your self-esteem by your behavior. Body language and attitude will be a key reflection. Be alert and interested.

- 4)Work to improve yourself by: a. learning - b.challenges - do something new and different. c.physical, health and appearance - . d.spiritual - spend time with optimistic people.

5)Eliminate negative value judgments of yourself and others.

6)Allow yourself to succeed by planning to succeed and acting on your plan.

7)Think positively, and give yourself credit when it's due.

8)Learn to escape everyday schedules.

9)Find ways to help others.

10) Seek help when you need it. Professionals are available.



DIVORCE

Coping with Separation and Divorce

There is no standard format for marriage breakup. Until recently, most couples separated in years 6, 7, or 8. The average couple is turning 30 then -- a watershed age for most people, a time for decisions about the "rest of our lives." This stage has been immortalized as "the 7-year itch" -- a desire to "do some living before it is too late." Recently, two new kinds of separation have been rapidly increasing:

Marriages that are over before the first anniversary: The couple is quickly disillusioned with marriage itself. Expectations are romantic, but life is realistic. The routines and obligations of married life soon lead to frustration and disappointment (especially where two demanding jobs are involved). Our lenience toward divorce allows today's young couples to consider it an easy "out."

Separations after 20, 30 years or longer. Life changes, quite separate from the relationship, (mid-life crisis, menopause, loss of grownup children, career dissatisfactions) are the culprits. Mid-life is a time for taking stock, an uncomfortable process which can strain the strongest marriage. Panic reactions -- to unmet goals, unfulfilled dreams, old age "just around the corner" -- can cause one partner to break away abruptly, leaving their spouse in shock. People whose grownup children leave home may find they are out of practice at "being a couple." Most couples who reach this stage continue to drift slowly apart.

There is a common misconception that "The Other Man/Woman" is the Number One cause of broken marriages. Not so. Marriages break up because people aren't ready for its demands, they grow and change at different rates, their lives take them in different directions or they are dissatisfied and think they deserve better. Another lover is often involved in a breakup, but the person usually represents the symptom of a problem, not the problem itself. Our automatic reaction to a troubled relationship is to change partners. It saves us from recognizing how much of the problem is within ourselves. It is revealing, however, that most "new loves" break up within a few months of the marital split.

Communicate. Good communication is difficult at the best of times. But without it, none of the problems of separation will be resolved. If you and your partner cannot discuss your situation without tears or anger, seek out family counseling. Don't yell, scream and fight dirty. You may feel better temporarily, but your problems will still be around.

Consider the children. Their future is at stake, too, and their opinions should be heard. Include them in family counseling.

Don't be a friend to children -- they need a parent. Don't overprotect them, make them a sounding board for your problems or use them to "get even" with a spouse. Be honest about the breakup and your feelings.

Establish family ground rules. Avoid the artificiality of visiting privileges. Assign each child a share of household duties. If you're having trouble coping alone, try a single parent education course or a self-help group.

Reestablish a routine. Develop a new one. Don't cling to former customs and habits. Be somewhere new and different on your anniversary.

Don't try to be Superman/woman. Marital separation is a serious emotional setback. It will affect your job and your everyday life. You can minimize its impact. You cannot wish it away.

Be realistic about new relationships. Everyone needs affection, companionship and sex. e -- while we wait and see -- many of us will find ourselves struggling to cope better with the emotional impact of separation and divorce.

The key is effective coping. Then, when we are ready to start over, we can do so with new strength, maturity and understanding. Coping . . . putting your life back in your own hands.

Source: "Coping With Separation And Divorce," National Mental Health Association, Brochure, August 1997.