

**“The Morelli Family Heritage Foundation”
Presents the Divorce Information Package**

**Divorce—Child Custody—Parenting
Child Care---Financing & Social Security**

Divorce and You

Divorce and Child Custody

Divorce and Parenting

Divorce and Child Care

Divorce, Finances and Social Security

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Divorce and You

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Divorce & You

How to Tell People You’re Getting a Divorce

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Staying Calm While Negotiating with Your Ex

9 Things No One Tells You About Getting a Divorce

Dealing with a Breakup or Divorce

Getting back into Life After A Divorce

How to Tell People You Are Getting Divorced

Letting your family and friends know that you're getting a divorce can be very painful, but it's best to get the news out in the open once your plans are definite. Telling your children is the most difficult of all. Once you accomplish that, it's time to decide who else needs to know and exactly how you'll break the news.

Telling Family Members You're Getting Divorced

After you tell your children about your plans to divorce, the rest of your family should be the next people to know what's happening. It's usually best to let your parents know first, and then move on to siblings and other family members next. It's not necessary to let distant relatives know if they're not part of your daily life. There will probably be opportunities to let them know later on if other family members haven't already passed the news on for you.

Your Parents

Telling your parents, as well as your spouse's parents, can cause a lot of emotional upheaval for everyone involved. Try to remain as collected as you can so you can deliver the message calmly, and try to avoid giving too many details or laying blame on anyone for the situation.

You might choose to say something like:

Mom and Dad, I want you to sit down because I have some sad news to share with you. Things haven't been good in my marriage for some time now, and we just don't seem to be able to fix our problems and move forward. After a lot of soul searching, we've decided we need to divorce.

I know this news is probably a shock, and I know you're going to need time to work through your own feelings about what's happening. I really love you, and I just hope I can count on your emotional support because I'm really going to need it.

Other Family Members

Telling the rest of your family may be slightly easier because they are usually a little less invested in your marriage, even if they are fond of your spouse.

You might choose to tell them:

I have some sad news, and I want you to hear it from me first. _____ and I are getting a divorce. We didn't decide to do this lightly and I don't want to shut you out, but I'm not ready to talk about the details right now. I just wanted to let you know myself before you heard it from my/our parents.

Telling Friends

Telling your friends can be almost as overwhelming as telling your family, especially if they are also good friends with your spouse. Try to be as diplomatic as possible so they don't automatically feel like they have to choose sides.

Closest Friends

Your closest friends deserve a little more information than do other friends you aren't as close to.

You might choose to say:

You know your friendship means the world to me, so I wanted to let you know about something very important that's happening in my life. _____ and I are getting a divorce. It's been a while in the making, but we really can't go on together any longer. I'm sure you have an idea about some of the reasons for the divorce since we're very close and I confide in you a lot, so I know you'll understand if I don't want to talk about the details right now. I'll

try to talk more about it later once I've had some time to get used to the idea myself.

Casual Friends

You may want to let other friends know what's happening so they don't accidentally ask how your spouse is doing and put you in the awkward position of having to explain the situation.

There's no need to offer details. Just be up front and say something simple like:

I just wanted to let you know that _____ and I are getting a divorce. I hope you'll respect our privacy and feel free to remain friends with both of us.

Telling Your Employer and Co-Workers

It's usually best to keep your personal life as personal as possible when it comes to the workplace. Only offer the minimal amount of details that you have to, and keep the rest to yourself to avoid office speculation and gossip that might affect your career.

Your Boss

This is one person who may need to know about your divorce because proceedings may affect your work schedule. You may also want to change your withholding information for tax purposes.

You might choose to say something like:

I just wanted you to be aware that I am getting a divorce. I'll try to make sure it affects my work as little as possible, but I may need some time off here and there to deal with the legalities. I'll do my best to work around my normal work schedule as much as I possibly can, and I hope we can keep this information just between us if that's at all possible.

Co-Workers

It may actually be in your best interest to tell your co-workers nothing, especially if you don't normally have contact with them in your personal life.

If word gets out and they inquire, simply say:

Yes, what you've heard is true. I hope I can count on you to respect my privacy and not gossip about my personal life with the rest of our co-workers.

Telling Other Important People in Your Child's Life

It's important to let other key adults in your child's life know what's happening so they understand if your child's behavior suddenly changes. Knowing about the divorce may help them deal with any problem behaviors in a more positive way that supports rather than punishes your child during this very difficult time.

Teachers

Getting a divorce can affect your child's classroom behavior, as well as his/her grades. It's wise to let each of your child's teachers know what's going on ahead of time.

Tell each teacher:

I have some important news to I need to pass on to you. My spouse and I are divorcing, so you may notice some changes in my child's behavior. Please try to be patient with him/her, and let me know as soon as possible if any problems arise. I'll do my best to help you address them and keep _____ on the right track.

Pediatricians and Counselors

Sometimes children have an especially difficult time adjusting to a divorce, and a trip to your pediatrician or a counselor may be in order. Keep that initial conversation to the point, and these

professionals will let you know if they truly need more details in order to help your child through the adjustment period.

Just tell the professional:

I'd like to make an appointment for you to see my child. My spouse and I are divorcing, and _____ is having difficulty adjusting to the situation. I just want to make sure he/she is going to be all right.

Sitters

Your child's sitter deserves to know a major change is coming to your household, especially if there are any special custody arrangements.

Tell the sitter:

I think it's important for you to know that my spouse and I are getting a divorce. If you find that _____ misbehaves more or acts more needy than usual, that may be the reason why. I hope you'll be as patient as possible, and please let me know if you run into any difficulties. I'll let you know about any custody arrangements that might affect your employment with us.

Be Prepared for Questions

Many of the people you tell about your impending divorce will simply accept what you have to say and politely refrain from prying deeper. Others may try to get you to give more details about your marital problems, whether they're just concerned, curious, or wondering what they should or shouldn't do. It's up to you just how much information you want to give anyone, and close relatives and friends usually deserve more details than acquaintances and co-workers. Use some discretion, and try to show respect for your spouse in order to keep the divorce from becoming more difficult than it has to be.

8 Steps Involved in the Divorce Process

Do you know what to expect once the process begins

Are you considering divorce and wondering what the process will be like? Your state's divorce laws will determine what steps you go through during the divorce process. Below is a broad outline describing the sequence of events for most divorce cases. Keep in mind that every divorce is different so, along with these steps you will have issues come up that pertain to your individual divorce.

To begin the divorce process a document called "Original Petition for Divorce" is filed with your local court clerk.

The original petition will identify the parties to the divorce and any children they may have. The party filing for divorce will have to state a reason as part of the petition or letter. In most states, this will be "irreconcilable differences" or "incompatibility." The person filing for the divorce will be named the "petitioner" by the courts while the other party to the divorce is referred to as the "respondent" or, in some states, the "defendant."

The original petition or letter of complaint is then served on the respondent. Once the respondent has been served he/she has twenty one days to hire an attorney and respond to the original petition for divorce. It is at this time that either party may ask for restraining orders, protective orders or temporary orders pertaining to child support and alimony.

Temporary Divorce Orders The court can issue temporary orders that outline specific actions that must take place immediately and last until the final divorce hearing. Examples of things covered in temporary orders are child support, spousal support and child custody. These orders are legally binding and not following them will mean finding yourself in contempt of court. If found in contempt, you can be jailed or fined according to the discretion of the judge.

Divorce Discovery "Discovery" is a legal mechanism designed for gathering information about either party to the divorce. There are five steps to the discovery process. Although states and their laws may vary during the discovery process, the five steps below are common and will probably become a part of your divorce.

- **Disclosures:** Every state has rules of civil procedure and the way disclosure is conducted is determined by those rules. Attorneys for both parties request certain items from the other party. The list of items is sent to the other side and they must respond within thirty days.
- **Interrogatories:** This is a list of questions that the attorneys send to the opposing side. Most states set limits on how many questions and the response time is thirty days.
- **Admissions of Fact:** This is a written list of facts that is directed at the other party to the divorce. The party receiving the list of facts is asked to either admit to or deny each listed fact.
- **Request for Production:** This is a legal mechanism used to obtain documents such as bank statements, statements of income or any documents the attorney feels will benefit his client. The party receiving a request for production is supposed to respond with the documents within thirty days. This part of the process can become a major obstacle to a swift divorce. It seems to be human nature to not want to turn over personal information and many times delay tactics are used at this part of the process.

Depositions During depositions, attorneys will take sworn testimony from the opposing party and any witnesses involved. Anything said during a deposition can be used in court should an agreement not be met and you end up in divorce court.

Divorce Mediation If you are lucky, this is as far as you will get in the process. During mediation, both parties to the divorce and their attorneys meet to discuss any conflicts they may have and try to come to an agreement that meets the needs of both. The “mediator” is a court appointed attorney or arbitrator and is there to negotiate a settlement between the parties.

Divorce Court If mediation didn’t work and there are unresolved issues a trial date will be set. During the trial, both parties have the chance to argue their case before a judge. It’s imperative that you discuss, with your attorney, proper courtroom behavior so you can make a good impression on the judge. The judge will then examine all the evidence and make a decision based on what he feels would be a proper divorce settlement and outcome. Most judges hand down orders within 14 days of the court date.

Staying Calm WHILE NEGOTIATING WITH YOUR EX

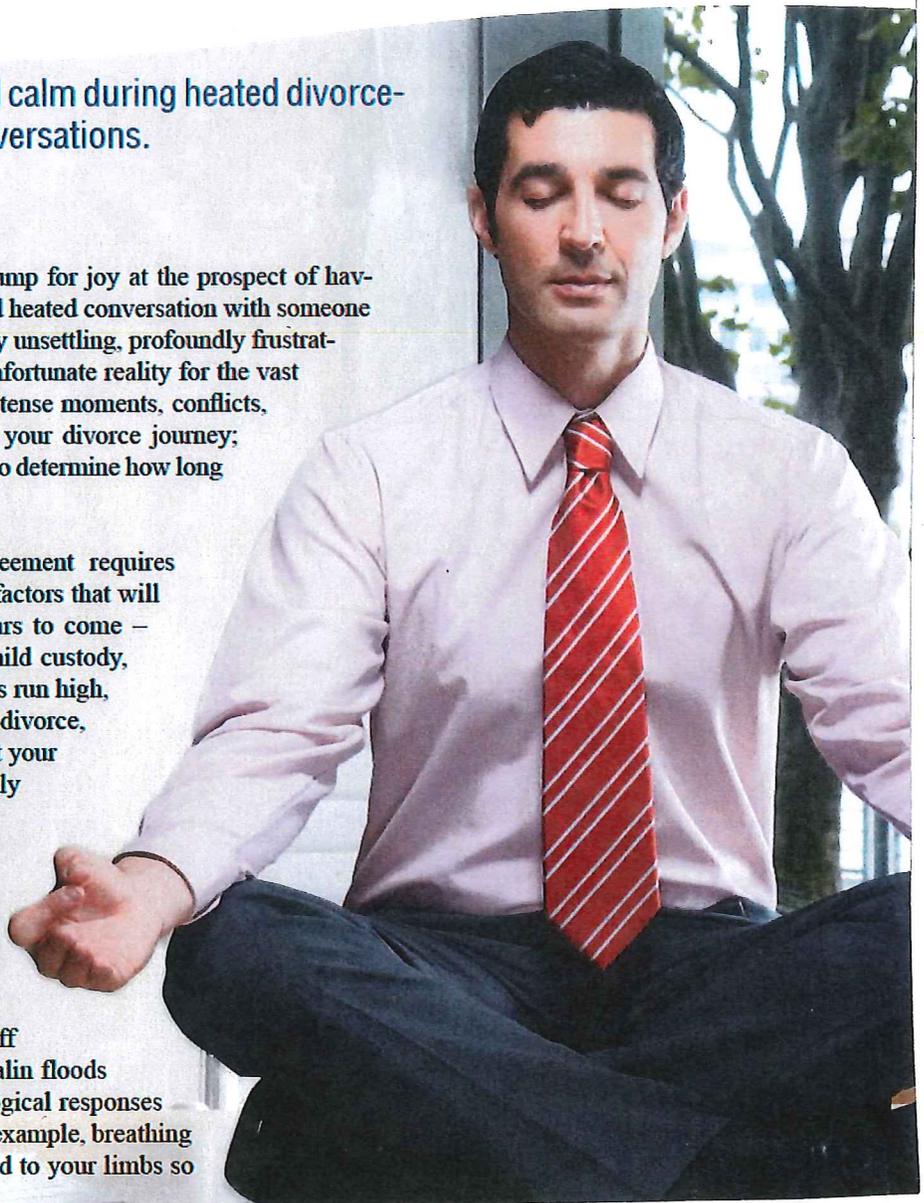
Ten tips for staying cool and calm during heated divorce-related negotiations or conversations.

By Carolyn Ellis

There aren't many people who jump for joy at the prospect of having a potentially contentious and heated conversation with someone they are divorcing. It can be very unsettling, profoundly frustrating, and deeply disappointing. The unfortunate reality for the vast majority of divorcing couples is that tense moments, conflicts, and arguments are inevitable during your divorce journey; how you handle the conflict will help to determine how long and how difficult the process will be.

Negotiating your separation agreement requires you to make decisions about crucial factors that will impact you and your family for years to come — such as division of marital assets, child custody, and financial support. When emotions run high, intelligence tends to run low. During divorce, you're asked to make decisions about your life when you're least emotionally equipped to do so.

Brain science helps to explain why it's so hard to make complex and challenging decisions when you're in a place of emotional upset. When faced with situations that create fear or insecurity, the brain sets off the "fight or flight" response. Adrenalin floods through your body, creating physiological responses to ensure your physical survival. For example, breathing and heart rates increase sending blood to your limbs so you can run or go into battle.



Use these ten simple tips to help you keep your cool when the conversations get heated.

1 Take a Deep Breath

To help you stop spiraling into emotional reactivity, nothing beats taking a few deep breaths. This strategy is free, easy, and something you can do anywhere and anytime.

Studies show that taking deep, conscious breaths for even one minute can help you feel more grounded immediately. Breathing like this helps to dial down the amygdala response that triggers the “fight or flight” response so you can better access the part of your brain that governs rational thought.

Most of us tend to breathe shallowly, using primarily the chest cavity. It can take a bit of adjustment to learn how to breathe more deeply, using your full lung capacity. To help you get the deep breaths going, place your hand on your navel and breathe deeply right down into your diaphragm. When you inhale, imagine you’re sending your breath right down to your hand. You’re on the right track when you see your hand moving outwards with your inhale, and then back in towards your body on the exhale.

2 Release Negative Emotions

Before you sit down to negotiate, let go of negative thoughts and emotions. Past upsets and grievances, unexpressed emotions, worries about the future, or feelings of anger, sadness, guilt, or fear create static that can make it harder to get your point across effectively.

If you’re feeling angry, write an angry letter (don’t send it, however!), write about your feelings in a journal, take your dog for a walk, or work up a sweat at the gym. If you’re feeling sad, spend time with people you love or do some yoga. To get a fresh perspective, take a nature walk or get creative in the kitchen or with a hobby. Finding ways to move and release pent-up emotions before you have your tough conversations makes it easier to speak your truth when it really counts.

3 Create the Big Picture

When you’re deep in the trenches of negotiating your divorce settlement, it’s so easy to lose perspective: everything feels urgent and high-stakes. You must take the time to create the big picture.

One of the most effective ways to do this is to look out into the future: imagine what you want your life to look and feel like 20 years from now. Do you want to be upset and still resentful about your ex, or do you want to have more peace and clarity in your life from all the wisdom you’re getting from this divorce experience? If you have children, what do

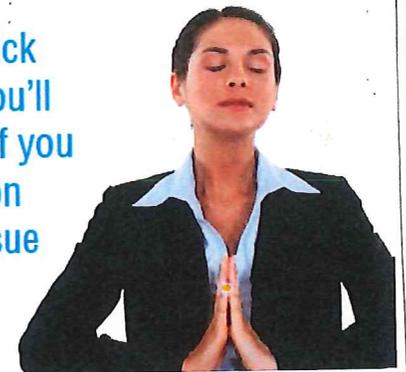
you want the day when they graduate college or get married to be like? Keep the big picture in mind and do your best to let it pull you through the stress and conflict you might feel today.

* 4 Don’t Give Away your Power

When it comes to a divorce, everyone has an opinion for you. We hire lawyers; we talk with therapists or coaches; we poll friends, family, and neighbors for their experiences and suggestions. We devour self-help books and attend workshops to try and find our way through the divorce maze. But at the end of the day, you are the world’s best expert on you and what’s right for your life.

When you decide to take responsibility for your choices, you put yourself in the driver’s seat of your life. When the heat is on and the conversation gets tough, it’s tempting to give your power away to others in order to avoid conflict. Your lawyer may be an expert on the law, but you and your family are the ones who will have to live with the consequences of your legal decisions. Your ex-partner will know what buttons to push to upset you. During your marriage, you may have backed down when he/she pushed those buttons; today, don’t take the bait. You have both the power and the responsibility to give input on decisions that will affect the rest of your life.

It’s crucial to pick your battles. You’ll get exhausted if you go to the wall on every single issue that arises.



5 Pick Your Battles

Most people are surprised at how grueling it is to actually implement the decision to end your marriage. Especially if you have children, there are a lot of major issues that need to be negotiated, such as child support and custody, spousal support, and division of assets and debts.

It’s crucial to pick your battles. You’ll get exhausted if you go to the wall on every single issue that arises. Brainstorm a list of all the issues that you can think of – holiday schedules, education choices for the kids, what happens when one of you loses a job or when a new partner comes on the scene, and how to handle it when your teenager wants to get tattoos and a few piercings. What’s negotiable for you? What’s a deal-breaker for you?

Get clear on your core issues and set some priorities. You'll need to have some give and take in your relationship with your ex-partner, particularly if you are co-parents. Learn to become strategic and identify where you're willing to get creative or compromise in order to build good-will for the long run.

6 It's Not Personal

One big trap that's so easy to fall into is taking interactions and choices made by your ex-spouse personally. Especially in situations of conflict, people will inevitably have different opinions and strong emotional reactions. Doing your own emotional homework with a therapist or coach can help you defuse some of those "hot buttons" that ex-partners are so skilled at pushing.

Realize that what your ex-partner thinks of you is no longer any of your business. The degree to which you continue to respond and react to what your ex thinks, says, or does is the degree to which you help create your own suffering. In the words of spiritual teacher Matt Kahn, "What others think of you is their journey. What you think of yourself is yours."

7 Own Your Part

We are human beings, not saints. Particularly when under stress, we're likely to do or say things that we'll regret later. Keep your negotiations moving in the right direction by taking responsibility for your actions and how you may have contributed to the conflicts you're trying to resolve.

In negotiations, take ownership for your feelings when you speak. Avoid blaming statements such as: "You're being unfair!" Instead, take responsibility for your feelings by using "I" statements, such as: "I feel upset when XYZ happens."

When you find yourself making a misstep or losing your cool, show yourself compassion. See these "mistakes" as enormous learning opportunities. To really own your part, you should acknowledge the mistake and apologize to your ex if necessary. You'll be surprised at how a genuine apology can transform an angry conversation into a cooperative one.

8 Get Support

Einstein said that problems cannot be solved at the level of thinking that created them in the first place. Learn to ask for help and support; if you don't ask, there won't be any help or support. If you do ask, chances are that you'll be able to resolve whatever problem is keeping you stuck.

If you reach an impasse with your ex-spouse, get help; you may need to enlist a third party (counselor, mediator, lawyer, etc.) to help you resolve difficult issues. It's critical you find effective support in your social network during your divorce

process. Find a trusted friend or divorce "buddy," a divorce coach, therapist, or a community support group.

9 Talk It Out

When you have big stakes on the line, don't just "wing it" and hope it all turns out the way you want. Taking time to prepare yourself in advance helps give you confidence and clarity that can make all the difference.

One way to do this is to write down all the key points you want to make. Get some of those nervous jitters and hesitations out of the way before the meeting even starts by practicing out loud. You can even do this in front of a mirror to take your "talk it out" strategy to an even deeper level.

10 Surrender and Center

Anyone who has ever tried to swim upstream can confirm that going against the current can be exhausting. When you make the choice to surrender, you let go of needing to know or control everything all the time. Surrendering complete control isn't a sign of weakness: it doesn't mean you're giving up your position or your beliefs.

Before you head in to your next tough conversation, take a moment to close your eyes and get centered. Create an intention to center yourself that you can come back to when you feel challenged or unsettled, such as: "Let this be resolved in the best interests of all involved" or "Let me speak my truth powerfully and clearly today." You can even anchor this intention by holding a small object, such as a small crystal or stone, in your hand. Bring this object with you to your meeting to help you stay centered and remind you of your intention to surrender your desire to control every aspect of the negotiation. ■



*Carolyn Ellis is an award-winning coach, transformational expert, and author of the award-winning books *The 7 Pitfalls of Single Parenting* and *The Divorce Resource Kit*. Combining her intuitive abilities with her Harvard-trained brain, Carolyn specializes in helping individuals navigate change by tapping into their own inner brilliance. www.thriveafterdivorce.com*

Related Article

Managing Anger

Divorce-related anger can literally make you crazy – causing you to say and do things you'd never dream of if you were thinking clearly. Here's how to cope.

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9 Things No One Tells You about getting a Divorce

Even when ending your marriage is the right choice, it's still hard — and not always in the way that you expect it to be. None of us ever thinks it will happen to us — which is why it can feel all the more unreal and heartbreaking when it does. In those early days, especially, it's easy to feel like you won't get through the next hour — let alone the whole day. Here's what divorcees wish they would have known.

1. **You're Braver than You Know**

It takes a huge amount of courage to stand up and demand a better life for yourself, your kids, and, yes, even you ex. Making a change is always harder than sticking with the status quo, so be proud of yourself. As for the kids: They deserve to have happy parents who can actually be present for them — and they deserve the chance to see what a healthy relationship looks like so they have a shot at having one someday, too.

2. **Telling the Kids Will be one of the Hardest Moments in Your Life...and You'll Have to Explain It More Than Once**

When it's time to tell the kids, share the news together. Try not to demean or blame each other. And if it's within your means, get advice ahead of time from a therapist. How the children react will, of course, depend on their age and temperament, but be prepared for anger, tears, screaming or even silence. They may blame one of you outright (rightly or wrongly). They may blame themselves (the hardest). And if they're older toddlers or young preschoolers, there's a good chance they're not going to get it right away. Which means you'll have some version of this conversation again and again.

3. **Once News is Out, People Will Tell You They've Had a Bad Feeling About your ex-spouse for Eons**

You'll ask them why they never said anything before. They'll say, "Oh, you know, I didn't feel like it was my place," or "I didn't

think it would change anything...you were so in love with you ex.
" Both may be perfectly true, but having this information now isn't helpful or supportive. Feel free to say as much.

4. Friends Will Disappear and/or Take Sides

Obviously, you enter every relationship with your friends and your spouse's friends, and when you split, your people go with you. What's harder is dealing with friendships you genuinely shared. For a while, you may still see each other solo, but as time goes on, some of those relationships will fade. Divorce makes people uncomfortable, and sometimes, it's easier for them not to be around it. As unfair as that is and as hard as it may be to let go, it may be for the best. Surround yourself with people can see you for you — divorce and all.

5. You May Cry Spontaneously (And That's Okay)

The trigger could be anything: A family walking down the street. A pregnant woman. A co-worker announcing their engagement. Or the fact that the dumb cable people are three hours late and why can't something just go right?! Go ahead and let it out. You'll feel better. And look, there are some things you might just not feel like doing for a while, especially if it involves celebrating someone's marriage or baby. Try to go anyway. Yes, you'll need to put your game face on but your friends, who've been there for you, still need you there for them.

6. You Must Find Ways to Be Kind to Yourself

Divorce comes with a tremendous amount of guilt, and it's going to be very, very easy to blame yourself for, well, pretty much everything. Number one: It's not all your fault. Nobody chooses to end a marriage unless they've wrung their heart dry with trying. So as you move forward and try to take care of everything and everyone else, remember to take care of yourself. Spend time with friends. Go for walks. Splurge on a spa day. And if you're really struggling, don't hesitate to see a therapist. Getting a totally objective point of view can be incredibly validating and reassuring.

7. Seeing Your Kids on a Schedule Will Feel Completely Wrong

And then you'll all get used to the new normal. Whether you opt for 50/50 custody or a more traditional see-Dad-on-the-weekend schedule, there are going to be days in your week when you don't get to put your child to bed or be there to wake him up. (Some clueless people will say, "Oh, but at least you get a built-in break!" Once again, ignore them. This is not the way you hoped to get a break from your kids.) You'll miss them and the house will feel empty, but after a while the schedule simply becomes life.

8. You Will Eventually Want to Date. And It Will Be Weird, But Insanely Fun

Without even realizing it, your vibe is going to change. You may be out with a few friends and suddenly find yourself talking with a someone. And flirting. And depending on how many drinks you've had, perhaps making out like a couple of college kids. Yes, you of the two kids and minivan and "broken marriage." And why not?! Be a kissing bandit for while. Go out on lots of dates. Be responsible and safe, but have tons of fun and enjoy the attention.

9. Divorce Is a Thousand Little Goodbyes

You'll get through all the big stuff — telling the kids, someone moving out, taking off your rings, packing away the wedding pictures, signing the papers (each their own kind of hell) — and think, "Okay, it's finally over." But then you miss the first family event with your former in-laws or your child spends his first holiday without you. You'll have to catch your breath all over again. When you marry someone, you can't help but imagine decades of events and moments that you'll share together and as a family. So it's only natural that you'll mourn them when they're gone. Give yourself a little space to take it in and then let it go. You're already creating new memories and new traditions — and this new branch of your family history will be just as rich and full as you'd hoped.

Dealing with a Breakup or Divorce

Grieving and Moving on After a Relationship Ends

A breakup or divorce can be one of the most stressful and emotional experiences in life. Whatever the reason for the split—and whether you wanted it or not—the breakup of a relationship can turn your whole world upside down and trigger all sorts of painful and unsettling emotions. As well as grieving the loss of your relationship, you may feel confused, isolated, and fearful about the future. But there are plenty of things you can do to cope with the pain, get through this difficult time, and even move on with a renewed sense of hope and optimism.

Why are breakups so painful?

Even when a relationship is no longer good, a divorce or breakup can be extremely painful because it represents the loss, not just of the partnership, but also of the dreams and commitments you shared. Romantic relationships begin on a high note of excitement and hopes for the future. When a relationship fails, we experience profound disappointment, stress, and grief.

A breakup or divorce launches you into uncharted territory. Everything is disrupted: your routine and responsibilities, your home, your relationships with extended family and friends, and even your identity. A breakup also brings uncertainty about the future. What will life be like without your partner? Will you find someone else? Will you end up alone? These unknowns can often seem worse than being in an unhappy relationship.

This pain, disruption, and uncertainty means that recovering from a breakup or divorce can be difficult and take time. However, it's important to keep reminding yourself that you *can* and *will* get through this difficult experience and move on with your life as a stronger and wiser person.

Coping with a breakup or divorce

- **Recognize that it's OK to have different feelings.** It's normal to feel sad, angry, exhausted, frustrated, and confused—and these feelings can be intense. You may also feel anxious about the future. Accept that reactions like these will lessen over time. Even if the relationship was unhealthy, venturing into the unknown is frightening.
- **Give yourself a break.** Give yourself permission to feel and to function at a less than optimal level for a period of time. You may not be able to be quite as productive on the job or care for others in exactly the way you're accustomed to for a little while. No one is superman or superwoman; take time to heal, regroup, and re-energize.
- **Don't go through this alone.** Sharing your feelings with friends and family can help you get through this period. Consider joining a support group where you can talk to others in similar situations. Isolating yourself can raise your stress levels, reduce your

concentration, and get in the way of your work, other relationships, and overall health. Don't be afraid to get outside help if you need it.

Allow yourself to grieve the loss of the relationship

Grief is a natural reaction to loss, and the breakup or divorce of a love relationship involves multiple losses:

- Loss of companionship and shared experiences (which may or may not have been consistently pleasurable)
- Loss of support, be it financial, intellectual, social, or emotional
- Loss of hopes, plans, and dreams (which can be even more painful than practical losses)

Allowing yourself to feel the pain of these losses may be scary. You may fear that your emotions will be too intense to bear, or that you'll be stuck in a dark place forever. Just remember that grieving is essential to the healing process. The pain of grief is precisely what helps you let go of the old relationship and move on. And no matter how strong your

grief, it won't last forever.

Tips for grieving after a breakup or divorce:

Don't fight your feelings – It's normal to have lots of ups and downs, and feel many conflicting emotions, including anger, resentment, sadness, relief, fear, and confusion. It's important to identify and acknowledge these feelings. While these emotions will often be painful, trying to suppress or ignore them will only prolong the grieving process.

Talk about how you're feeling – Even if it is difficult for you to talk about your feelings with other people, it is very important to find a way to do so when you are grieving. Knowing that others are aware of your feelings will make you feel less alone with your pain and will help you heal. Writing in a journal can also be a helpful outlet for your feelings.

Remember that moving on is the end goal – Expressing your feelings will liberate you in a way, but it is important not to dwell on the negative feelings or to over-analyze the situation. Getting stuck in hurtful feelings like blame, anger, and resentment will rob you of valuable energy and prevent you from healing and moving forward.

Remind yourself that you still have a future – When you commit to another person, you create many hopes and dreams for a life together. After a breakup, it's hard to let these aspirations go. As you grieve the loss of the future you once envisioned, be encouraged by the fact that new hopes and dreams will eventually replace your old ones.

Know the difference between a normal reaction to a breakup and depression – Grief can be paralyzing after a breakup, but after a while, the sadness begins to lift. Day by day, and little by little, you start moving on. However, if you don't feel any forward momentum, you may be suffering from depression.

grief, it won't last forever.

Reach out to others for support

Support from others is critical to healing after a breakup or divorce. You might feel like being alone, but isolating yourself will only make this time more difficult. Don't try to get through this on your own.

Connect face-to-face with trusted friends and family members. People who have been through painful breakups or divorces can be especially helpful. They know what it is like and they can assure you that there is hope for healing and new relationships. Frequent face-to-face contact is also a great way to relieve the stress of a breakup and regain balance in your life.

Spend time with people who support, value, and energize you. As you consider who to reach out to, choose wisely. Surround yourself with people who are positive and who truly listen to you. It's important that you feel free to be honest about what you're going through, without worrying about being judged, criticized, or told what to do.

Get outside help if you need it. If reaching out to others doesn't come naturally, consider seeing a counselor or joining a support group (see the Resources section below). The most important thing is that you have at least one place where you feel comfortable opening up.

Cultivate new friendships. If you feel like you have lost your social network along with the divorce or breakup, make an effort to meet new people. Join a networking group or special interest club, take a class, get involved in community activities, or volunteer at a school, place of worship, or other community organization

Taking care of yourself after a breakup

A divorce is a highly stressful, life-changing event. When you're going through the emotional wringer and dealing with major life changes, it's more important than ever to take care of yourself. The strain and upset of a major breakup can leave you psychologically and physically vulnerable.

Treat yourself like you're getting over the flu. Get plenty of rest, minimize other sources of stress in your life, and reduce your workload if possible. Learning to take care of yourself can be one of the most valuable lessons you learn following a breakup. As you feel the emotions of your loss and begin learning from your experience, you can resolve to take better care of yourself and make positive choices going forward.

Self-care tips:

Make time each day to nurture yourself. Help yourself heal by scheduling daily time for activities you find calming and soothing. Spend time with good friends, go for a walk in nature, listen to music, enjoy a hot bath, get a massage, read a favorite book, take a yoga class, or savor a warm cup of tea.

Pay attention to what you need in any given moment and speak up to express your needs. Honor what you believe to be right and best for you even though it may be different from what your ex or others want. Say "no" without guilt or angst as a way of honoring what is right for you.

Stick to a routine. A divorce or relationship breakup can disrupt almost every area of your life, amplifying feelings of stress, uncertainty, and chaos. Getting back to a regular routine can provide a comforting sense of structure and normalcy.

Take a time out. Try not to make any major decisions in the first few months after a separation or divorce, such as starting a new job or moving to a new city. If you can, wait until you're feeling less emotional so that you can make decisions with a clearer head. **Avoid using alcohol, drugs, or food to cope.** When you're in the middle of a breakup, you may be tempted to do anything to relieve your feelings of pain and loneliness. But using alcohol, drugs, or food as an escape is unhealthy and destructive in the long run. It's essential to find healthier ways of coping with painful feelings.

Explore new interests. A divorce or breakup is a beginning as well as an end. Take the opportunity to explore new interests and activities. Pursuing fun, new activities gives you a chance to enjoy life in the here-and-now, rather than dwelling on the past.

Learning important lessons from a breakup or divorce

It can be difficult to see it when you're going through a painful breakup, but in times of emotional crisis, there are opportunities to grow and learn. You may be feeling nothing but emptiness and sadness in your life right now, but that doesn't mean that things will never change. Try to consider this period in your life a time-out, a time for sowing the seeds for new growth. You can emerge from this experience knowing yourself better and feeling stronger and wiser.

Some questions to ask yourself:

1. Step back and look at the big picture. How did you contribute to the problems of the relationship?
2. Do you tend to repeat the same mistakes or choose the wrong person in relationship after relationship?
3. Think about how you react to stress and deal with conflict and insecurities. Could you act in a more constructive way?
4. Consider whether or not you accept other people the way they are, not the way they could or "should" be.
5. Examine your negative feelings as a starting point for change. Are you in control of your feelings, or are they in control of you?

You'll need to be honest with yourself during this part of the healing process. Try not to dwell on who is to blame or beat yourself up over your mistakes. As you look back on the relationship, you have an opportunity to learn more about yourself, how you relate to others, and the problems you need to work on. If you are able to objectively examine your own choices and behavior, including the reasons why you chose your former partner, you'll be able to see where you went wrong and make better choices next time.

Avoid using alcohol, drugs, or food to cope. When you're in the middle of a breakup, you may be tempted to do anything to relieve your feelings of pain and loneliness. But using alcohol, drugs, or food as an escape is unhealthy and destructive in the long run. It's essential to find healthier ways of coping with painful feelings.

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Getting Back Into Life After Divorce

Getting back into life after divorce can seem like an overwhelming task. After all, it's a lot easier to stay inside and not have to worry about making any changes in your life. But, by making the effort to move forward, you get the chance to experience so much more in your life. If you're striving to get started on rebuilding your life, the following article can give you some steps to gently ease outside of your comfort zone.

Escaping the Fog to Make a Change



Are you trying to make sense of your current situation? Are you trying to find direction in your life? Are you unsure what to do next? With divorce, comes a life change and this change can feel overwhelming when you don't know where to start or what to expect.

Change is a process though, and like any process, it can be broken down into stages and activities. Yes, there are emotional and mental affects with this change and I don't want to minimize their impact. Here in this article though, we will focus on taking actions that can help you work yourself towards feeling in control and to where things can again make sense for you.

Knowing the different environments of change and how to navigate them can greatly enhance your ability to move on to the next and more enjoyable stage in your life. Depending on where you are in your process of change will determine what course of action to take. Change is a journey. Where are you in yours?

Do You Need Change?

If you feel like you are walking in the fog, you may be unaware that you are in need of a change. Or maybe you know it is time for a change, but you are resisting it and avoiding taking that first step. At this time in the journey, it is possible that family members, friends, or work mates are trying to send you a message. They may be saying things like, 'Forget about your ex!', 'It's time to move on', or asking 'Have you gotten out much yet?' While these well-meaning comments may make you feel anxious, angry, or irritated, it is worth being open to the underlying message that it may be time for a change.

If you are feeling fear or denying the need for a change, then just recognizing that you are in this stage is

the first step. Use this feeling to help identify actions that can help motivate you towards a change. Examples may be feeling and looking good again, spending quality time with the ones you love, spending time doing the things you enjoy, or thinking about the future when you are not feeling unsure or overwhelmed.

Contemplating the Possibilities

The next stage, contemplation can feel like a dark forest when you do start thinking about making a change. Your confidence may be a bit shaken as you become aware of your need or desire for a change.

It is at this moment your reality hits home. It may mean feeling uncomfortable, anxious, fearful, and sometimes happiness in the knowledge that something is going to change. You start thinking more and more about the change. At this point, it is important that you take good care of yourself and try avoiding slipping back into the fog of denying that you want to change at all.

Give yourself this time to explore what the changes are that you want to make. Also note why you want to make them. Are the changes you are thinking about consistent with what you value in your life? Discuss the possibilities with people you trust, maybe people who have been through it and you can see have come out stronger. Is this the time for you to get back some normality or is the chance for you to start living out your dreams? You do not have to commit to anything at this point. Just allow yourself the opportunity to explore your options and match those to your needs and desires in your life.

Some questions to ask yourself during the contemplation stage:

- What do I value in my life?
- What are the costs and benefits of making this change?
- What are the costs and benefits of not making this change?
- Are these changes in line with my values and beliefs?

Preparing For Change

OK, you have now got through the fog of denial. You have trekked through the deep forest of contemplation. Now it is time to choose your path of preparation and commit to your change. During your preparations, focus on your motivation for the change. Write them down and post them where they will remind you to move forward each day. Explore your different options, set your goals, and gather all your resources.

Creating an Action Plan

Ensure that your goals are realistic and achievable. Avoid setting yourself up to fail. One way to do this is to create an action plan for your goals that is broken down into manageable 'bite-sized' chunks that are achievable. Taking small daily steps will keep you moving and help you avoid the overwhelming feeling from setting in. It will amaze you how these small steps quickly turn into huge achievements. In your

action plans, think about any potential or likely obstacles you may face. How will you overcome them? What will be your fallback plan should they occur?

In gathering your resources, think both about support as well as any skills or resources you will need to obtain to achieve your goal. Let people know that you are making a change. Join a support group, confide in your best friend or family, or hire a coach to help keep you on track. Having support helps keep you accountable to making the change, can give you a sounding board to bounce ideas off of and gives you someone to celebrate achievements with.

Tips to progress through the preparation stage:

- Have a goal that is realistic and achievable
- Create an action plan and break it down into small, achievable steps
- Plan for overcoming potential obstacles
- Stay clear on your motivation for the change
- Get support - let others know of your commitment to the change
- Identify any skills or resources you need to achieve your goal

Taking Action

Now that you have done your preparation, it is time to take action and climb your mountain to successful change. It is at this point you will begin to put your plans into action. Your confidence will increase with each small step you make. You begin to see your plans come to fruition and with the help of your support structure you can begin celebrating your successes. You may even learn new skills, meet new people, and find out some exciting things about yourself that you had never known before. It is important that during your action stage, that you keep the momentum going. Take those small steps and treat any mistakes as an opportunity for learning how to do something better.

In many cases, if you are obtaining new skills, you should be proud of them and make sure you are demonstrating them to others. Doing this, will further enhance your skill and make it become more engrained in your processes. You will also find during this stage, that your fear, guilt, depression, and hostility will gradually turn into acceptance. It is also worth noting that for many, it often takes 3-6 months to modify behaviors, so stick with it and you will find that it becomes easier and eventually second nature in your life.

Some tips to progress during the action stage:

- Review plans and modify as needed
- Keep support structures in place and active
- Identify new behaviors to substitute for old unwanted behaviors
- Reward yourself for small accomplishments

- Treat mistakes as learning opportunities, not as set backs

Keep It Going

It is the final stage that makes it all worthwhile. You have climbed your mountain and now you are able to sail on a smooth sea of maintenance. At this point in time, you will have worked through your plans, achieved your goals, gained confidence and possibly even become an expert in your newly acquired skills. Is this the end of your change process? Possibly not, it may be just the beginning of something new.

Tips to progress during the maintenance stage:

- Pay attention to what works for you and continue doing it
- Recognize your achievements
- If there is risk that you will get bored with a routine, find ways to vary it
- If you find the challenge was your initial motivation, set new goals and start again

Finally, it should be noted that the steps to change will not always flow in a perfect sequence. You may find that you have to go back and revisit your preparation stage, or that something knocks you back into denial of making the change at all, or you may find you move quickly through to the maintenance of a life that you are back in control of. Use the model to help yourself successfully work through the changes that are causing you fear or anxiety and know that while a change may feel difficult now, it is a door open for you to move through and progress to the next stage in your life.