

DIVORCE – COPING WITH DIVORCE

Article by: Cheryl Sol

The central element that makes divorce difficult is the enormous amount of loss and change. This can be chaotic and disorientating. You can't go back but you don't know what is ahead for you.

Each divorce is different but it generally evokes very strong feelings of anger, disillusionment and frequently depression, especially for the person who has not chosen it. Dealing with divorce is a process which involves time.

However there are things you can do to try and aid the process of healing and transformation.

1. Accept that you will feel like a victim for a while, especially if you did not want this divorce. Taking an active part in your reconstructing your life helps you recognize that you still have choices.
2. Expect good and bad days. In the beginning they will be mostly bad. Over time the balance can change.
3. It may feel as if you will never get over this. That is okay but you probably will. It will still matter over time but will live differently within you.
4. Make it your long term goal to heal even if it feels that it can never happen.
5. Allow yourself to grieve for what you have lost and to be anxious about the future.
6. Understand that life crises can leave you feeling fragmented and on an emotional rollercoaster for quite a while. It is okay to feel a bit crazy but it not okay to damage yourself, others, or their possessions. When the dust settles there are consequences.
7. Look after yourself physically and emotionally during this time.
8. Recognize guilt and e and work with them. Sometimes they are important to acknowledge for progress and sometimes they are irrational and useless to you.
9. For a while you need quite a lot of support. Identify where you have sources of support among family, friends and professionals. Do not try and do it alone.
10. Slowly over time create a new social life. Make friends with people who are in a similar situation and keep your existing friends who care about you.
11. Take risks. You may have to take up new activities, sometimes go out alone or make more effort than you are used to.
12. Don't look to your ex for support during this time. You are not on the same side anymore. You also need to separate out emotionally however difficult it is.
13. While you may be lonely, you can still be discerning. Be wary of committing to new relationships for a while.
14. Don't self medicate with alcohol and drugs if you are struggling emotionally. They increase depression and impulsive acting out behaviour, which you will regret. If your emotions are chaotic and you need medication visit your GP.
15. While your divorce may feel like a failure that does not make YOU a failure.
16. Don't rush into a settlement but also do not drag it out needlessly to punish the other person. Don't be intimidated into accepting something you are unhappy with. Get good advice. Be guided by strong legal and ethical guidelines. A legal divorce is important to work towards closure.
17. Do not make any big life decisions or changes, especially those involving finances unless you have to. Your judgment is poor in an emotional crisis.
18. Expect to go through all the phases of grief. Read up on it.
19. Do not involve your children. They should be allowed to have a relationship with the person who has hurt you. If they are dangerous this is different.
20. Do things that will improve your self esteem
21. Remember you will get through this even though you might think at times that you won't.
22. You have an identity besides being the wife of the person you are no longer with. It is important to find that again.

Cheryl Sol
Clinical Psychologist
M.A. (Clin. Psych.)

23. What you thought was certain has been taken away. While this in between space may be very uncomfortable, it is also your NOW and you have to live in each moment of each day. Grieve the past, plan for the future but also appreciate what is happening in this moment.
24. A respectful relationship with your ex helps to release your energy for your own healing. This may take time or never be possible. However it is worth working towards over time if you can.
25. Finally respect yourself in all choices you make during your healing.