

# A WOMAN'S GUIDE TO SURVIVE A DIVORCE

There is no greater emotional pain that can be inflicted upon a woman than the announcement by her husband that he wants a divorce. Even if both parties have "seen it coming" for some time, and the announcement really comes as no big surprise, the actual announcement is quite similar to a bomb exploding in your face.

Such an announcement is "out-in-the-open" admission that the person you held hands with so many years ago, and promised to love - honor - and obey - to be supportive of, to stand beside in good times and bad - through sickness and health - for richer or poorer - no longer wants you or your love. You have been rejected, and such a blow to a woman's emotional equilibrium is just about the most damaging illness you'll ever have to face in your lifetime.

Be that as it may, it is of the utmost importance that when such a pain descends upon you, you realize that you can recover - that you will recover - and that this is in reality, an opportunity for you to attain real and total happiness according to your own standards.

It will be hard, in fact, it will probably be just about the most difficult thing you've ever done in your life, but you must immediately and absolutely turn the page on that chapter of your life. You must quickly and absolutely sever all ties with that person - the one that has inflicted this pain upon you.

Get them out of your house. Get rid of all things that remind you of them. Change your phone number. If necessary, move into a new home or apartment. You must put an immediate end to your marriage. Once a man has announced to you that he no longer wants you for a wife, you have to start thinking about your own survival.

It's going to be similar to losing a vital part of your body, but you must let go, and the sooner you do let go - completely end that chapter of your life - the sooner you'll be able to set about rebuilding your life and ultimately finding the happiness you want.

Between the time that your husband announces the end of the marriage, and the time when you'll find new happiness, you're going to hurt like you've never dreamed possible. You're going to go through a number of mental and emotional phases - all of which are perfectly normal and necessary in order for you to "heal yourself" of this great hurt. You'll never be able to

enjoy love or attain true happiness until you have discharged the past from your system, and healed yourself.

Think of all you're going through as a wound similar to a gash on your arm or leg. It's going to hurt, and you're going to bleed, but with the proper care and time, you will recover. You must understand that divorce is quite common - you're not alone nor going through anything that a lot of other people haven't experienced - and that in order to "get well," you must understand the nature of the wound, what to do in order to heal it, and as much about the pre-requisites to total recovery as possible.

At first, you'll probably deny that this is happening to you. You may pretend that it's just a bad dream or some sort of bad joke he's pulling on you. This type of thinking is normal, but it only prolongs the agony of your hurt. You must face the reality of the situation - accept the fact that your marriage is over - and get on with the task of finding happiness for yourself, immediately.

You'll probably lay awake in bed at night and review "every minute" of your marriage - thinking that in this or that circumstance, you could've been a better wife, and from there beg for another chance. You'll want to accept full responsibility - at least a big share of the guilt - for the problems that caused the break-up of your marriage. These thoughts are only natural, but they cannot put your marriage back together, and any attempts to "try one more time," at this stage will only cause you greater pain. You must accept the fact that your marriage is over, and busy your mind and yourself, with activities that don't allow you time to "rehash" the events of the past. Don't allow yourself to dwell upon guilt feelings. It takes two people to make a marriage, and marriages come apart because of the differences in the two people involved. No one is perfect, and happiness in life is a matter of learning from our mistakes. Accept your own short-comings; vow that you will profit from what you've experienced; and then get on with your life. You'll never be comfortable with yourself, nor find real happiness so long as you're dragging "guilt feelings" from your past around with you.

Somewhere along the way, you'll become so angry with your ex-husband - the world - and even God, that you'll be beyond yourself in your ability to express it all. It will be necessary that you express this anger - to get it all out of your system - before you'll be able to "feel good" around men again.

Anger is the process of projecting onto another person, your own sense of hurt and frustration. It's such a volatile and all-consuming emotion that unless you give it an outlet, it will literally eat you alive. The thing to do is to understand your

anger, and manage it in a manner that will benefit you - in such a way that your expression of it is constructive to your regaining your emotional health.

A few things you might think about doing: Write out for your kids, the complete story of your marriage; how you met, your dreams and hopes, the good and the bad, the sacrifices each of you made, and how - beyond either of your capabilities to control - the marriage just came to an end... Write out in precise detail exactly what is making you angry, and why. Put it in letter form to your ex-husband and really tell him everything that has been, and is bothering you. Let him know that you are a person with wants and needs too... Stand in front of a mirror and "rehearse" an angry confrontation with your ex-husband and/or anyone else involved. Make an appointment with your priest or minister; or find a friend who'll listen as you explain the frustration, hurt and futility you feel.

Regardless of how you do it, it is an absolute necessity that you let it all out. This anger and bitterness you feel is like a poison that you must cleanse from your soul. The sooner you get rid of it, the sooner you'll be able to get on with your life - regain your mental health and position yourself for happiness.

Finally, there'll come a day when you'll no longer be bothered by thoughts of your ex-husband. It won't even bother you when you see him with another woman, and that'll be the day when you've finally accepted the fact that your marriage to him is over. You will have truly let go of him, and will be ready for a new try at happiness.

Your progress from being rejected by your husband to acceptance of the fact that you don't want him if he doesn't want you, and positioning yourself for a second chance, won't come easily. In fact, it will take you about two and a half to three years. You must understand the damage you've sustained, the healing that's required, and the time it's going to take to get well. Too often, women still in the recovery stages of a divorce, jump into a new marriage before they're ready. And when the "bomb explodes" the second time, the trauma is more painful and the recovery even harder than the first time.

It's imperative that you "cut yourself off" from your husband as quickly as possible. It's just as imperative that you immediately set about analyzing what it is you want out of life, what you need to do in order to get what it is you want, and then take the necessary steps towards achieving whatever it is you want.

First, you have to KNOW what it is you want. Then, you have to know what you HAVE TO DO in order to get what it is you want. And finally, you have to START MOVING in the necessary direction

to end up with what you want. In other words, if you don't know what you want, nor how to get it, you'll be without purpose or direction in life.

This is "goal-setting," and unless you set goals for yourself, you'll just be allowing yourself to be pushed through life by whatever happens next. Use this "terrible time in your life" as a time for introspection and a new start. Think about yourself, and start taking the "baby-steps" necessary to making you proud of yourself. Stop mourning the loss of your marriage; pick yourself up, and determine within yourself that you're on your way to bigger and better things - total happiness and love!

Rebuilding your self-esteem - your ego and how good you feel about yourself - is one of the first steps you must take. There are many ways to move in this direction...

You might get a new hair-do; rearrange the furniture the way you want it; take a trip to someplace you always wanted to visit; go to see a special movie or any number of other things. The important thing is that you do something that makes you feel good.

From there, comes the introspection of where you are, and what you're going to have to do in order to survive. Plan it all out on paper, and then do what you have to do in order to make it come out as you've planned.

Most important - don't be afraid of making mistakes or of 'falling down" once or twice along the way. It's just as if you were seventeen years old again, and just beginning a life of your own. It's like when a baby learns to walk - he's going to stumble or fall a couple of times, but by continuing to try, he eventually not only walks but finds he can run as well. So it is in rebuilding your life after a divorce.

It'll be hard, but the sooner you start dating, the easier it'll be for you to regain your emotional well being. At first, even though you have to force yourself, you should just go out and associate with other people. See for yourself that other people don't "immediately recognize you" as a divorced woman - a loser, or a failure.

In the course of recovering from a painful divorce, it's not unusual for a woman to go through a number of brief sexual affairs. With some, there's a flurry of sexual activity - followed by periods of celibacy - and maybe a "special steady" for a while. This kind of activity is really sometimes necessary, and definitely a part of the healing process as some women rebuild their self-esteem.

Almost all people who have gone through a divorce, go through at

least one transitional partner during their healing process. This is a person that seems to be the answer to all your dreams - they're the "special boyfriends" that ease a divorced woman through the trauma - they're good to them; they listen to them; they're sensitive to their needs but never demanding; and they fulfill their sexual hunger. It 's great to "find and use" such a transitional partner, but be aware of your own situation and their usefulness to you, and don't allow yourself to end up marrying them. You may care about them a great deal, and feel sure that they're the answer to all your dreams - that they have all the love you could ever ask for - but don't marry them - what you're feeling is only the peace of an oasis in the middle of a desert. And don't feel badly when eventually you break off such a relationship. Some people are born to nurture others back to good health, and seeing you on your feet again, and on your way to real happiness is the only reward these people really want. Then too, who's to say that you won't someday be a transitional partner for someone who's hurting just as you once did...

Finally, there's the problems of boredom and loneliness. In order to eliminate boredom and loneliness from your life, you must first understand that both of these problems are self-induced. That is, if you are bored or lonely, it's because you are allowing yourself to be...

Boredom is generally a form of emotional anesthesia brought about by the person who is bored, because she doesn't want to experience her own feelings. It 's also a form of mental laziness which keeps people from changing and growing.

The bottom line is simply that people are accountable for their own boredom, and if you feel bored, then you had better remember that boredom breeds even more boredom.

Whenever you think of yourself as being bored, get involved in something. Don't allow yourself to sit and do nothing. Write letters to relatives or friends. Bake a pie and visit a neighbor. Get out and spruce up your yard or take a bus ride and see what changes have taken place in and around the area in which you live. Join up with a singles social club and attend some of their functions; enroll in a self-improvement course or two; visit a trade show and find out about some of the new products being offered for sale.

To alleviate boredom, you have to do something that might stimulate your interest. Thus, if you don't want to do anything other than what you've been doing - if you're waiting for a bolt of lightning to spark your interest in something - you'll continue to be bored.

Loneliness is basically a different form of boredom. A person

feels lonely when they "can't think of anything they want to do," and thus, they begin feel sorry for themselves "because no one cares about them."

In order not to be lonely, you have to start thinking of things you might enjoy doing with other people, and then invite other people to join you in doing those kinds of things. Really, it's just as simple as that - take a trip to one of your shopping malls with a friend and do some window shopping; meet a friend for lunch or dinner at a new restaurant; or invite a friend to join you to see a movie, a play, or even a concert.

So long as you shut yourself away from other people, and do not get out into the world amongst people, you will be lonely. To be happy, enjoy life, and know love, you have to make yourself available to other people.

To recover from the trauma of divorce, you have to understand the injury - apply the proper medicine - allow enough time for the healing process to be completed - and all the while, be positive that tomorrow will be a happier day for you. It's a kind of recovery therapy that only you can apply and control - the results are up to you.