

# **Men after Divorce**

## **A Guide for Surviving Life after Separation & Divorce**

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*“Divorce is a declaration of independence with only two signers.”*

*~ Gerald F. Lieberman*

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## 1.1 – Divorce and Men

There is no greater emotional pain that is inflicted upon a man when they hear those fateful words leave the lips of their lover, their partner, their closest most intimate person, their wife - “**I want a divorce.**”

Even if you have seen it coming for a long time, even if you knew it was inevitable, but especially if you were not expecting it, this revelation shatters a mans life in so many ways. This statement breaks those vows you once took. In sickness and in health – for better or for worse – good times and bad – honor and obey. The list goes on of promises broken as the realisation hits. The woman who has been in your heart and the centre of your world for so many years has rejected your love once and for all.

But what happens after this? We hear so much about a woman’s struggle to live a new life without a husband but what about the men? People assume that a mans earning potential and the fact they are a man, and are suppose to be able to cope, will simply have them coming out the other side without a scratch!

If you are reading this book looking for answers, you know this to be false. Men have so little support and often find it hard to ask for help during these times. Men are often seen as the reason for marriage breakdown no matter what the truth is. Men have huge difficulties dealing with the loss of their wife, their marriage, and the home they built through their hard work.

The blow to men’s ego, self esteem, and entire world view can be devastating. It is one of the most difficult things a man will have to deal with in his entire life. Some men never recover from this due to the lack of support and isolation. These men can end up miserable, depressed and lonely.

### **I do not want this to be you!**

This does not need to be your fate, and it **WILL** not be your fate if you take heed of the information within this book. This is because many men have been through this same experience and have come through older, wiser, and happier than before; and so can you.

This is a new beginning, but it will be painful. It will be heart wrenching. It will be like losing a part of yourself – but it is not the end. It is a *rebirth*.

### **I know because I have been through it.**

About six years ago, my wife left me after eight years of marriage. Eight years, two children and a bundle of happy memories - **then poof** - all gone. I will not go into details as this book is for **you**, not for me to reflect on what is past and gone. All you need to know is that I struggled for three years through this journey and experienced nearly every tragic and painful problem associated with divorce, until I found a way to come to grips with it all. Now I am happier and more fulfilled than I have ever been which is why I see divorce as a new beginning, and not a tragic end.

I want to be able to help you overcome these emotional hurts in less time and get your life back on track as soon as possible for your own sake, and if you have children, for their sake as well.

You deserve to come through this hell stronger and better than before. You **will** come through this a fuller and completely emotionally healed person!

## **1.2 – What You Will Learn**

I believe that there are two parts to recovering from a divorce. There are the big picture ideas of what life is, what happiness is and so forth, but there are also the smaller details on how to deal with individual emotions and situations.

This book will delve into both these aspects and tie them together into a guide that will usher you through the bad times, and bring you into a new way of thinking and living that will not be haunted by the divorce.

I hope that these ideas taken from my own experiences and comprehensive research into these issues will provide a step by step solution that has worked for me, and for many others.

It is however not the only way to deal with a divorce. Everyone is different and every relationship is different too. As such, some people will get different things out of this book than others. I cannot promise that everything I say will be applicable, but I know that much of it will. In the end, it is up to you to take the knowledge given, and apply it in the most positive way you can.

## **1.3 – How to Use This Book**

It is my hope that you read through this entire book once to start with and just let every idea sink in slowly. There are a lot of details, and a lot of ideas both big and small that are talked about so it will not all connect for you immediately. In fact, it may take some time and sometimes an experience in your daily life before something you read just ‘clicks’ and starts to make sense.

This is why a good, thorough read through will help to at least plant the seeds in your mind on how to survive a divorce.

After this, I suggest you look through the book and focus on just a few small details that worry you the most. Maybe it is the children, maybe it is being haunted by the memories you cannot let go, or maybe it is the self esteem issue, or just sheer loneliness.

Just like tackling a big project, you must break everything down into smaller more manageable chunks to be able to solve all the issues as a whole. As such, this book has been divided into manageable chapter and subchapter to help you in this task while still retaining a big picture outlook.

## 2.1 – Your First Steps

*“The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are.”*

*~Unknown*

Before we delve into the details, there are a few things that you must do immediately. The entire process of getting over your ex-wife and creating a new and happier life depends on taking the first step to leaving your old life behind.

This can be very hard, one of the hardest things you may ever do. It is like losing a limb or a part of your mind (*in fact it is like losing a part of your mind, we shall look into this later though*). However you can never be happy if you continually live in the ruins of your old life, your old habits and your old marriage.

You will never lose the memories or discount that entire period of your life, but in terms of realising it is over, you must make that first step and say to yourself that it is gone.

You may not be totally ready for this, but I urge you to do a few things that will help. Throw away the things that remind you of your wife and your marriage. Or at least put them into storage. A friend of mine who was going through a divorce said that when they packed away all their old pictures and wedding bits and pieces into a box, it was also like putting away the memories into a storage box in his own mind. They were there, but they were not sitting on the shelf staring back at him making him sad and longing for his old life.

You don't need to go overboard on this at this stage if it is all too new and raw, but I urge you to take the first step into the future, the first step away from an old life that cannot be brought back to life.

You will still have time to grieve, you will still have time to reflect, but without making this single first commitment, your actions that follow will be less forceful and be less effective if you have not been able to do just one thing now.

Go forth and clean out your mind and your living space of all the things you subconsciously leave that will bring intrusive thoughts of your old life back and then come back and read on.

The first steps are always the hardest but once done, there is no turning back, even if you don't know where the finish line is.

## 2.1 – What Is Going on in Your Mind

*“A man is but the product of his thoughts what he thinks, he becomes.”*

*~Mahatma Gandhi*

The mind is the one great mystery of the human body. It is a mystery that drives all of mankind's success and failures, all our emotions good and bad, all of the decisions that we make consciously and that we make without even realising it. The mind is so complex that we really cannot figure it out yet and the entire field of psychology, neuroscience and a thousands other disciplines including sales and politics all come back to the human mind as an individual, and as a group.

Luckily, we do know enough about the mind to be able to understand a great deal about ourself, and how we act in many situations including the pain of a divorce. This we know can affect many parts of our emotions, beliefs and memories.

I am no psychologist but I do believe that you can break down the ways your mind is in turmoil to a few parts that will help you understand and resolve your issues through this rough period.

Bear with me on this, as these big ideas will be used to deal with the smaller issues of your day to day life.

### **-Ego-**

We often sling this word around like we know what it means, but for many of us, a true understanding of ego is missing and what is left is misused.

Ego is our view of ourself that comes from others. It is the view we have of ourselves that society has placed upon us through our interactions with this society. Everyone has an ego of a sort and it is what we use to identify ourselves, our self worth and what we aspire too.

The psychologist Freud believed that this ego was what inhibited our base emotions so that we would conform to the laws and demands of society. The other more spiritual movements such as Buddhism believe that ego is a false sense of self that covers the real and true centre of our being.

I am not here to debate that, but only to show that this ego is a vital part of how we see ourselves and how others see us. It is important however to understand that there are three states of who we are

*How others see us – How we see ourselves – Who we really are*

This is important because we touch on the things that really matter in regards to a man's feelings during a divorce combined with the idea of *self worth* I briefly mentioned.

Your entire world seems to be shattering not because you are going through a divorce, but instead, because your ego, your sense of self worth, the way you see yourself, and how you believe others see you, have all been shaken to their core. This is scary. This is something everyone fears. This is also a chance to re-evaluate these things and so becomes *an opportunity*.

### **-Self Esteem-**

This is really a part of the ego, but is a vital part of becoming a full and happier person without being haunted by the memories of your marriage and ex-wife. We often hear a lot about self esteem. When people go through divorce we often hear how their self esteem has been damaged. How could it not! The person who was closest to us has now rejected us! How hurtful to your esteem is it that the person you devoted everything to has cast you aside?

Your self worth plummets. How you see yourself is that of someone not worth loving, someone who has failed, someone who has been abandoned, and someone who is hated even!

This is then reinforced by how others perceive you. They pity you, or try to help you, or blame you or are simply uncomfortable around you. All these things create a new form of ego within you that is a fragile and low thing. Your self esteem is low and wants to be fed.

Your wife used to be the one to feed this but now it is a hungry beast that can take control of your life and if not fed eats you alive from the inside. Even when self esteem is high it is always hungry looking for people to stroke its ego, to pay it compliments and to make us feel worthy. This is the danger of self esteem and why it needs to be replaced with *self respect*.

### **-Self Respect-**

This is a state of being where instead of being hungry to feed esteem; we instead accept things as they are. This is a way of respecting yourself despite failure or success.

Esteem is always boosted by success and lowered by failure leading to a life of evaluating ourselves constantly trying to find what happiness and success is. Marriage was a part of that beast for most men.

Self respect is liking yourself despite all this. In liking and respecting yourself you accept your shortcomings and your strengths. You also are more accepting of others shortfalls and are less judgemental. If you have strong self respect you will be free of the constant need to feed to ego and self esteem.

### **-Memories-**

This can be a real killer to many men who cannot let go of the past. Some men have a knack of just moving on and forgetting the past. Some men simply shut it out. The

more enlightened ones learn to accept that the past is the past, but for most guys in the middle of a painful divorce this is no easy task.

Memories come back to haunt us at our weakest. Memories force us to face harsh realities but also take us into a fantasy world sometimes where we forget reality. Both can be dangerous to healing the hurt and being able to really move on and survive a divorce.

This is because memories are burned into our brain depending on the intensity of memories no matter if it is good or bad. They are also reinforced the more we remember them as the brain believes these events are important to keep in the forefront of your mind rather than passing away into a more distant memory.

This way, memories become a cyclical path of hurt as we relive the worst ones again and again making them stronger each time. However, good memories can also be burned into your brain and used to replace bad ones, it is just that it is easier to let the bad ones dominate.

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Hopefully, you can see how these four concepts apply to surviving a divorce. These ideas will come up again and again through this book and how to apply them to everyday life and situations will be explored further on. Even the most aware and spiritual man cannot change the way he thinks in an instant so don't worry if this does not seem life changing yet!

## **2.2 – Phases of Divorces**

So let's get down to what you are probably going through when dealing with this divorce, at least from an emotional aspect. Like any massive change in life, there is a process that the mind goes through to adjust to this new way of existing. When someone dies, we go through a process of grief. When our children are born even, we go through a process of adjustment.

When we go through a divorce, we also have a few stages that have to be experienced for us to move on. This is very similar to having a loved one pass away, but can be even harder because the person is still there in your life! With a death you have to face reality while with a divorce it can be more confusing.

Here is a rough guide of what to expect. You may have already gone through some of these steps in fact, but understanding why you did these things will still help you get to the end.

### **-1. Denial-**

This is the first part of the divorce and you have probably felt this keenly. The feeling that this is just not happening, that this is not right, that this is not real, and that she will come to her senses soon.

This is also usually a state of denial about the *problems in your marriage* as well. Denying that they exist, or are as bad as your wife is saying is common in this phase



as our mind tries to reconcile an existence of marriage, family and togetherness with this strange new idea of being alone.

You may now feel that divorce is simply not the solution, and are hoping that if you say the right thing, or do something correctly, this will just be another bump in a rocky part of your marriage; not the end of it.

This period can be short or long. Some men never leave this stage and are stuck in it for years too. They sit and wait and hope that their love will come back to them for years, even when their ex-wife has moved on a long time ago.

*- Dealing with Denial -*

It is essential you leave this stage quickly if you have not already. My comments in section 2.1 were aimed at this to take action so you can complete this task. You have to realise that this IS happening to you and it WILL happen to you. I am presuming that since you found this e-book you have at least partly accepted this but you must do more than this!

You must realise that the only way forward is to accept that this is now the way forward. You have to accept that there is no reverse to go back to what it was. You must accept that there must be action from yourself to move forward, even if you have no idea what that action must be!

To bring this back to what is happening in your mind, your **ego** is in a state of shock. Your worldview of how you see yourself has changed so drastically that your mind cannot yet comprehend it, and indeed rebels against it. If you are not a husband anymore, just what are you? Your ego must change and adapt to this new truth which can take some time, but is easier when you realise what is happening in your head.

## **-2. Anger-**

Rage and anger at your spouse and the world at large is typically the next step in the emotional process. Once we realise this is real and happening and that we cannot deny the truth of the divorce, we start to become upset which usually leads to our most primal instinct of anger and lashing out.

You are hurt, and the person who gave you this hurt will be the main focus of your anger because we are hard wired to take revenge against that which hurts us. You might become sullen, or start to yell, or perhaps you will be petty in ways to try and inflict some pain back on your wife.

In the end it is an attempt to make them hurt as much as we ourselves feel hurt. Trying to make them feel what **WE** feel. The problem is this never helps at all. All we do is make the process more painful for everyone and provoke retaliation from your ex who will see it as an attack and try to counter attack. This leads to bitterness and horrific divorces if not controlled. Children in particular are affected badly in this stage as their parents fight a hot or cold war around them.

Again, this leads back to what we talked about with ego and self esteem. Now that we have recovered somehow from the shock of the divorce, we have a wounded ego. A damaged ego is like a wounded beast, bucking out of control in an effort to assert its dominance and power. The ego does not want to change and so instead, it tries to make sense of everything by laying blame on the other person.

While the ego is trying to keep itself alive your self esteem has also been damaged as you feel a great sense of loss of worth. As we discussed, self esteem is a hungry beast always craving more attention. Anger serves a dual function here, not only does it try to hurt others to make itself feel better, but it often surfaces as a way to get others to pay attention to you.

Have you caught yourself complaining to a friend about how badly you have been treated in this divorce? Or have you hinted at this fact in anger? These are attempts conscious or subconsciously to get attention from others and have them say “You don’t deserve this”, “You are a good man” or “She is the one at fault”. These things may or may not be true, but the end result is that you are trying to build your self esteem while cutting down the one that hurt you.

*- Dealing with Anger -*

Now that you understand why you may get angry sometimes, you can begin to find ways to address the problem. The first is to realise that YOU will need to change (*and for the better*) during this process, so you must set aside your ego and hurt to be happy again. This can be difficult, but not impossible. The memories may haunt you, and your place in the world may seem shaken, but the key to changing this is to really cement in your mind that this is a **new beginning** for you on so many fronts.

You must also see that your attempts to garner support and sympathy comes from an unhealthy obsession with propping yourself up. This solution is the abandonment of self esteem and embracing of self respect. It will not happen overnight though, and is usually completed only towards the end of the cycle which is acceptance. Self respect is a level of acceptance within yourself and with the world at large.

However, these large concepts might seem hard to focus on when you are seething with rage and feeling abandoned and shunned. I know the feeling well. So, my recommendation is to release that rage. but do not point it at anyone and do not use it in any emotional context. Exercise is always a good way to sweat out the demons. Boxing and martial arts allow a physical outlet if done correctly. Even writing and art can allow you to harness rage into something that is not out there to hurt but simply release from the soul.

*You must pass this stage quickly or you will cause untold damage to your entire life.*

### **-3. Bargaining-**

Once the anger subsides, and you have realised it does no good, there is another phase that many men enter before they completely move on. This is the bargaining stage, where the ego throws one last ditch attempt to bring the world back in line with its own meaning.

This stage is similar to denial in fact. However, the key difference is that you truly realise now that you are about to lose your marriage, and that if you do not act to save it, the whole thing will be gone forever. Denial is gone and replaced by **FEAR**.

Fear drives this phase as the anger drains and your ego is begging and pleading not to have to adjust and change. Your self esteem is probably very low at this stage because you have been starved of the attention and validation your wife used to give you. It wants to feed and feel good again, but without that love and attention you are used to, it is like suffering a withdrawal of a drug that your ego craves.

What you end up trying to do here, is use every tool at your disposal to try to change the other person, your ex-wife. Your ego is trying to force others to change so it can keep its usual and comfortable state.

- *Dealing with Bargaining* -

If there was a hope of saving your marriage, by this stage it is over. Nothing you do or say will change their mind if you have come this far. Or if it does, that will not last long. Begging for reconciliation will not help and simply impedes your recovery further as you hold out hope of stopping the inevitable.

This is the ego again longing for the status quo and requires you to do three things.

**First**, as always you must realise that it is over and you must move on. In fact, the faster you move on in terms of your life and happiness (*not other women*) the better off you will be.

**Secondly**, you need to realise that you cannot change someone's mind or force them to your will. People will only change if they **want** to change, so your efforts at trying to make this happen will be wasted, and seem manipulative and not heartfelt.

**Thirdly** you need to finally wrestle with your ego and self esteem to convince yourself that **YOU** need to change in how you see yourself, how you fit into society, and how you feel about basically everything you do!

This, as has been said, is not a simple or easy process. Knowing it must be done however allows you to enter this confusing period with determination to change, even if you don't know what that will be.

#### **-4. Depression-**

If I were to hazard a guess, this is where most guys who read this book are probably at. Finally, the acceptance that the divorce is final and not going away has sunk in. This is not the chock of the initial stages, but the terrifying reality of the enormity of the situation slowly creeping into every part of your life.

This can be a dangerous time for men as you can feel a number of emotions that can cause more misery in your life such as: hopelessness, frustration, bitterness, self pity, mourning loss of your wife as well as the hopes, dreams and plans for the future. This lack of control and numbness sometimes leave some men also feeling suicidal!

The reason you feel this way is controllable because it again goes back to your mind and how it is functioning. Finally the ego has broken and is now in disarray while your self esteem has hit rock bottom. This is now a confusing time as you struggle with a dual problem of low self esteem and a fragile ego seeking to find a new form as the old one has been shattered.

So, as you can see this is not just a result of loneliness, or an uncertain financial future, or future of your life direction. This is part of that process but mostly this is about your own internal dialogue with how you see yourself in the context of society, and what you crave to keep your self esteem afloat.

*- Dealing With Depression -*

This can be a tricky subject. I am not talking about clinical depression which can be a much more ingrained problem that needs help from professionals. It is instead the general malaise that affects anyone going through a process of grief such as the loss of a loved one, including divorce.

To be free of this stage of divorce you must work towards acceptance of not only the divorce, but of life after divorce. You must work towards an acceptance that life is as it is and you cannot change or alter the past, **but that you can only shape the future.**

Physically and externally to your emotions, you must start living a new life, even if it feels forced. You must divest yourself of old habits that were a part of your old life and start making new habits that should be a part of your new life of independence!

You need to be around other people, be physically active, and you must force yourself to do this even if it feels unnatural. Just as you might try to coax someone out of hiding after a loved one dies because you know nothing will bring them back and they have to live their own life.

The same is true for you; you must begin to live a new life because a divorce IS like losing a loved one. You must accept that they are gone from your life as a partner at least, and as such you are now free to find a new path.

Internally, this means you need to find a new way to live and a new way to stop the feeding of your self esteem to make you feel good. You need to discover a new ego, a new way of seeing yourself and how you fit into this world because the old one of a loving husband is now gone. If that was a big part of your identity, this can be a large hole to fill.

We will go into this in more detail later on. The important thing to remember now, is that you must start a new life on every front. This is not just a small part of your life that is gone and you limp away. This is like losing a half of yourself so you must be completely reborn in many ways to find a new path as the old one is now closed.

## **-5. Acceptance and Recovery-**

This is the final stage and what we are working towards. However, this is not a moment of epiphany for most men. Instead this is a slow process that builds upon

your efforts in your life and your mental state of mind that you cultivate through your post divorce period.

Recovery really refers to a long period of time here. Some guys can take up to a year or two to really recover fully and reach the point of total acceptance. This is an important concept in the healing process that we need to look into a little further.

Acceptance is a state where you are not just over the divorce, but have reached a stage where it cannot hurt you anymore. This means you no longer see the divorce as a bad thing, or even a good thing, but instead as just a process you had to go through. It just **IS**, and that is all there is to it.

Some men never reach full acceptance, which is a shame. However most men reach some level of partial acceptance and good **recovery** which enables them to build a new life and get past all the pain and hurt of the divorce which is the minimum aim you need. I do not expect anyone to become a Zen master from this!

In terms of your mental state, this is what has happened inside your head:

Finally your ego has changed and readjusted to a new way of life. You have finally come to terms with how you see yourself in the world and what your place in it is. What has also probably happened is that you have stopped the constant need to feed your self esteem as well. A fully healed and recovered man will instead have gained **self respect**, which is quite different.

A healthy self respect is what brings final acceptance. This is where you don't crave attention any more from your ex, from friends and family, or from your children. You don't need others telling you how terrible it has been, or how good a guy you are, or how you deserve better, or any of that. You are capable of deciding, at this stage, that you like yourself for what you are and don't need reinforcement on this fact.

This change in how you react to the world, and how you see yourself, is an important turning point into making you a fuller person, with a greater identity, that will be more resilient against the problems the world throws at you. You will also be less prone to anxiety, sadness and being lost in life no matter what happens.

### **-Final Words-**

This is only a general overview of what to expect and how to deal with these stages. How to achieve the results you need to move from hurt to healed however is not covered in great detail in this section, but will be later on with more specific examples.

This was more to get you thinking about your own situation and your own mental state of mind. It is my firm belief, that all the hurt, pain and confusion is not from your wife leaving you (*or you being forced to leave her*), it instead comes from your own state of being and how you see yourself in comparison to society and the world.

This is often poorly understood as we try to lay blame everywhere rather than internalise what we are experiencing and come out with a "rebirth of the soul" as

some might say. I call it a drastic change in ego and the abandonment of self esteem to gain self respect.

I hope you let these ideas sink in and be a little introspective. Your situation will be unique compared to the next man, but all problems can be broken down to the same issues in your own mind.

### **-Mental Exercise-**

- One mental exercise to do now is to take a short break from reading this and close your eyes.
- Think about what you really crave and want in life at this point in time.
- Be honest and then ties those WANTS back to how they make you feel.
- Then think about how those feelings effect you and your self esteem.
- Gradually think about what life would be like if you could not feel like you need these things to make you feel better.
- Try to imagine you liking where you are, and who you are, despite the fact you are not receiving these things you want and feel you need.
- Try to see that your want of these things is not sustainable and do not bring you lasting peace or feeling of high regard for yourself.
- Sift these wants one by one and analyse why you feel you need to have them.
- After some time you may be able to identify some that can be discarded and you will feel more inclined to respect your own self worth without the need for this sort of attention.

## **2.3 – Immediate Issues You Must Deal With**

Now that we have an overview of the processes you are facing and what is going on inside your head that causes this hurt and emotional roller coaster, we can start working on specific issues that affect men greatly in a divorce.

While not every man will have the same problems, this is meant to be as comprehensive a guide as possible to helping you through the rough spots. This section contains practical advice, as well as emotional advice, to change your mental state to one that can cope, and thrive, during such a crisis as divorce.

### **-Money-**

While I try to keep the focus in this guide on the emotional side of things, you cannot deny the massive problems in your finances that come with divorce. In most western countries at least, the process of divorce also comes at a massive cost to the man.

This part is not on how to get a better deal from the courts or anything like that, but I did want to touch on this to explain how a change of finances and money can impact on your emotional situation, and your way forward with life.

As the old saying goes, the “*love of money is the root of all evil*”, and in a divorce it is true that money becomes something that turns ordinary people into seemingly greedy monsters. Ongoing issues of child support and alimony can then bring more bitterness

to the division of assets. All of this places massive stress on your life, and poisons your recovery from the divorce with a constant monetary reminder.

What helped me to overcome the massive financial problems that divorce landed me with came later in the process as I realised what money truly meant to me. It was when I realised that money, while important, was not a measure of my own success or happiness (*what success means to you will come later in chapter 4.2 – Redefining Success*). There is nothing you can do to lessen how much money you must pay, or redress the damage of division of assets, but how you view this in the context of what fulfilment you find in your life can help.

For me, this came as I was contemplating the loss of my previous lifestyle. No longer was I able to feel comfortable in buying what I wanted, when I wanted. Rent and child support and alimony had crippled that lifestyle. However, I soon came to realise that I was not dead and buried, that even though I had less money I could still do the things I loved, albeit on a more limited scale. Once I divested myself of my seeming NEED to have certain things but kept the central core of what I wanted out of life it became easier. You too can take an assessment of what you want and what you need that money can buy ... also, see a good financial planner if you are really lost in terms of your money matters.

### **-Property-**

Property is also a part of the money aspect, but for men this can be a bigger issue. They say a woman's home is her nest, and a man's home is his castle. I believe this is very true. If you owned a house and now, due to the divorce, the wife is keeping it, or you are forced to sell it, or you simply have moved out, this is like having your fortress against the world destroyed.

This can be a blow to your ego as many men define a lot about themselves by their home. When this taken away, it is like a part of you has been removed. There is nothing you can do to bring this back, however, and as you move closer to acceptance of the divorce the less it will matter to you.

There are a few traps that men fall into when they move from their house that you should avoid.

- Do not try to set everything up at your new place like your old house. It may seem familiar and comforting, but it brings many triggers for memories that will haunt you.
- Do not keep the same routines as you did in your old house for the same reasons. Keep doing what you need to do, but mix up how you do it and establish a new order of things.
- Do not immediately find a new place to make your castle. You will be in a transitional phase for some time most likely so keep things fluid until you are ready to "take root" again so to speak. It will also keep your options open in case you need to make big changes in your life. Renting is not a bad idea at this point I found so I could be comfortable in a place I could choose but I knew it was not my place to really call my castle, just my home for the time being.

## **-Children & Fatherhood-**

Divorce may seem tough on you, but for children it is a whole other hell as their entire concept of family, safety, love, and happiness are being wrenched back and forth in their mind. The younger they are, the worse it usually is as they cannot quite understand what is happening.

In the end, these are the most innocent victims of this whole tragedy and need the most love and attention. This can sometimes be difficult as your own emotional turmoil is hard enough to deal with.

To be a better father and help your children not be adversely affected by this divorce you must understand how they think and react at certain ages. The subject of kids after divorce is a huge one though, so I will only cover the basics here but there are many other good books which can detail it further should you be having more problems.

### ***Preschool - (2.5 to 6 years)***

At this age kids are much more likely to blame themselves for the divorce. They are also more likely to fear abandonment by the remaining parent as they don't understand why even one would leave. They may be confused, have fantasies about you reconciling with your ex-wife, and show difficulties in expressing their feelings.

Early studies showed that boys have more problems than girls, but later studies have not confirmed this; rather, boys and girls have different kinds of problems as a result of the divorce.

### ***Elementary School - (7 to 12 years)***

Children of this age tend to express feelings of sadness, fear, and anger. They are less likely to blame themselves for the divorce, but are more likely to feel divided loyalties. They are better able to use extra-familial support to help them cope. Some studies have shown that placing the child with the same sex parent has some benefits as well.

### ***Adolescence - (13 to 18 years)***

An adolescent tends to show difficulty coping with anger, outrage, shame, and sadness following a divorce. They are more likely to re-examine their own values, and may disengage from the family to do this.

## **-What to do-**

There are things that you can do at all ages to help children cope, which in turn will make your life easier now, and into the future. Here are some very important things you must do to ensure that your children do not suffer the misery of a terrible divorce.



### ***Control Conflict***

Children are very aware when their parents are fighting. They are not fooled by any barriers you put in the way. When you are fighting with your ex-wife you make your children anxious, angry, and they often feel they are the reason for the conflict making them feel even worse!

Now the simple thing to do is of course to end the conflict. We know however, that sometimes it may not be possible to keep every conversation totally civil. In this case you should be aware that a resolution to conflict can be just as important as not having conflict in the first place.

A change in your language to be less confrontational and more aimed at achieving a direct goal is essential not only for the child but also for your own relations with your ex-wife because continuing the fight does not help anyone.

### ***Give Stability***

Children crave stability in their lives, the children who have the most problems in life come from homes with unstable situations. Divorce is of course not ideal for a child and provides a huge amount of instability as their entire lifestyle must now change because mummy and daddy don't live together any more.

There are things you can do to help with this though. Maintaining a stable routine of when you see the children and how you interact with them and their mother is essential for their mental stability. It will also help you to maintain better relationships with them as they will look to you as the giver of that stability and fatherhood despite the problems of divorce.

Wherever possible make sure that your children know exactly how this new life of theirs and yours will run. In some ways this is really for you as well, if you are on your way to living a new life with them still included you will help both parties cope.

### ***Communicate & Listen***

One problem children always complain about is that their parents do not really listen and communicate with them properly. Often we are so worn out from dealing with divorce issues and our own emotional turmoil it can be hard to understand a child's reactions and feelings towards the whole situation.

How to react to this depends on the child's age and maturity of course. A pre-schooler does not have the cognitive capabilities to really understand what is going on at all, however you can communicate the fact it is not their fault and that they still have their parents love. An older child may be able to understand the situation better but may still be confused and have a lot of unanswered questions about relationships and love and family. Adolescents will be much more aware but might find it hard to communicate properly at this age so need a way to open up about their feelings which may require a third party even.

In any case, one of the best things you can do is to **listen** and **acknowledge** their feelings even if you cannot understand them completely, or even if you think they are silly or god forbid ... *childish*. Really listen and tell them that you do understand they feel this way and take steps to comfort them in this regard. Never simply brush off their feelings or belittle them as these are hugely important items to your child if not to you.

### ***Children are not Pawns***

This is probably the most important part of being a better father, having better children, and living your post divorce life in a better way. Children often become the unwitting playthings of parents who use them in a tit for tat battle to win their loyalty or hurt the other spouse.

This is plain wrong, wrong for the child, and wrong for your own personal development to overcome the turmoil of divorce. While we all know this on some level it can be hard sometimes not to fall into that trap, especially if your spouse is also doing this with the children.

The advantages for your children and your own mental health are tremendous. Children who feel guilty about which parent they are with, or whose house they are at, or are forced to establish loyalties to one parent or the other end up with many problems that will only make the divorce harder on your child and yourself having to deal with these problems.

Make sure you do what is best for the child and the rewards for moving on in life and having a closer and better connection with your children will follow.

### **-Dating & Sex-**

This issue is a real bugbear, and surprisingly, is one that is not talked about all that often. Amidst the emotional turmoil of the divorce that glue that once bound even the most turbulent of relationship together suddenly disappears completely.

While sex may not have been plentiful before the divorce, as is often the case with failing relationships, sexual intimacy usually still happens on some levels, even if it is just sleeping in the same bed. Suddenly all this is gone with the knowledge that you will never be with that person again in such an intimate fashion. While it is not brought up very often, deep down, on so many levels, this is a core issue in a divorce that need to be dealt with. Here are some good guidelines that have helped many men find their place with love and sexuality after divorce

#### ***When to Date***

When you leave a long term relationship like your marriage, there are so many issues towards sex and relationships in your mind that are confused and unresolved; Issues of trust, love, sexuality, and what you desire in women and a relationship in general. This dictates when you are mentally ready to start dating again, which is once these issues can largely be put to bed. The other issue in the discussion about when to date

is the appropriateness of dating in relation to your divorce as well as the issue of children.

As a general rule, you should only start dating and looking for love when you are in the recovery phase, maybe not a whole and completely healed person, but one who is moving on from the divorce and knows it. Anything before this will be viewed in a bad light by others and more importantly is not a good way to start a relationship when you are really looking for a replacement for your wife ... not a new beginning.

It is not good to start dating or having sexual encounters while the divorce is not finalised. This is inconsiderate of yourself and your ex-wife, and reeks of revenge, not a genuine search for intimacy. Sex for the sake of sex is just as bad even if you try to fool yourself into thinking there is no emotional engagement. Not only this, should the courts find out about your sexual encounters before the divorce is finalised this can lead to very bad outcomes for the man.

It is also not good to start dating when you are still regularly seeing your ex for various reasons. Too many men try to use sex or romance with other women as a way to bolster their self esteem so they can feel in control and powerful again so they can face their ex-wife. This is a shallow and fragile band aid measure that needs to be culled while you work on gaining self respect and independence.

The right time to date really is when you have got a hold of your self esteem issues and your ego and are working towards a more healthy level or self respect. This will help you avoid bad choices in new relationships because there are many that divorced guys make. This will be covered in more detail in section **4.4 – Forging New Relationships**.

### ***Who to Date***

Who you date will make an enormous impact on your mental health and your future at this point in time. Once you can pull yourself through the hardest parts of divorce and have accepted that your ex-wife is no longer your lover any more, then your world opens up to the great variety of women in the world.

There are so many wonderful women out there that will suit your tastes and new life that it is easier to simply tell you who to *avoid* in this phase.

- **Women who look like your ex-wife.** Often we are drawn back to the familiar look and feel of the one we loved for so long. This is your ego trying to reassert the status quo as something new and different threatens it still.
- **Women who behave like your ex-wife.** This is the same problem as above, except with how this new woman's acts. She might be like your wife when you started dating or she might be like she was during the marriage. This does not mean she is a bad person, but it does mean that you are being subconsciously drawn back to the familiar which can only damage the relationship if you have any ill feelings towards your ex. These feelings will resurface and may be directed negatively to this new woman.

- **Women who are the exact opposite of your ex-wife.** The other extreme end of the spectrum is to deliberately target women who are the opposite of your ex. This is a mental escape technique to hopefully be involved with someone who will not evoke any negative memories. Instead you need to deal with those memories not use some poor woman as your tool
- **Women who are looking for an immediate relationship.** These women may be in the same situation as yourself or desperate for a man who has been in a long term relationship before. Again, they may not be terrible people but you should not jump into a new relationship straight away. You need time to be in the independent zone to make the right choices without seeking out the comfort of a relationship straight away as you bring too much baggage to this immediately. It would not be fair on yourself or on this woman.
- **The hot much younger girl who has shown interest in you.** There is nothing wrong with dating much younger women per say, but in the time following the divorce this can pose dangers. You need to ask yourself are you doing this to hurt your wife by choosing someone younger? Are you doing this because you want to make yourself feel better and more attractive? Many men, especially if they are a little more mature and have some money and power attract girls who like this maturity but are incapable of truly bringing you any satisfaction. Later, when you have full control of your emotions and life these women may be just what you need but not right away.

While I cannot tell you what your heart truly desires, the women above may not be good for you to start with. Instead, once you feel comfortable dating again make sure to really have fun and look around at all the options in this bright new future rather than focusing on getting sex or into a relationship.

### *How to Date*

This will be covered in more detail in section **4.4 – Forging New Relationships**.

### **-Family Pressure-**

Families can be a great help to you after a divorce, but they can also be a hindrance in many cases as well. Your own parents, brothers and sisters and your wife's family as well may try to interfere with the divorce and your life.

While they may mean well (*or in some cases mean harm*), this is something that they really have very little knowledge on unless they have been through the same experience. Even if they have, they might be trying to tell you the wrong things to do which might have left them bitter and angry; which is what you don't want to be!

Always remember that while talking to family and accepting their help can be useful, your own internal emotional issues are more complex and more personal than they can hope to help with. Take advice only when they fit into understanding you have taken about your own emotional landscape from this guide. Your own perception of yourself is more important than the perceptions being pushed on you from all angles.

## **-Boredom & Loneliness-**

One often overlooked part of dealing with divorce is boredom. When you are married, your social life and activities are intertwined with your partners. Whenever you have nothing to do, your partner was always there as company. Now you have huge gaps in your life; lots of time to fill, but what with?

The first step is of course to be as active as possible. This is essential, but **HOW** you do this is just as important as doing it. Some men throw themselves into work, other party hard like they did when they were younger; others shut themselves inside away from the world and take up hobbies that focus their mind on minute detail. These might be acceptable in moderation but they are shallow and do not bring long term fulfilment.

Getting out there and mingling with other people is the best way to really help you in this regard. Not in the sense of going to outrageous parties every week, but simply being open to new activities and regular things to meet and talk with other people. You may gain new friends, but what you will gain is a sense of perspective on life while you are filling in that lonely time.

It is our relationships in life that really define us, bring us happiness, abundance, and fulfilment. Even when you are at home and have nothing to do, if you have a wide social connection (*not just the same guys down at the pub for instance*) then you will find these times will be more bearable because you will feel more accepted, and even loved, so these periods of downtime will not fill up with nothingness and bad memories.

## **-Reputation-**

As a man, our standing in society is judged very differently than with women. A divorced woman, be it by her own hand or by her ex-husband, has only a small amount of damage to her reputation as a woman, a mother, a lover or a career woman.

Men on the other hand are judged more harshly, and also judge themselves more harshly too. Traditionally marriage breakdowns have always been cause for people to blame the man for all of the ills *no matter what the real situation was*.

This divorce can turn a man with an excellent reputation into a man with a questionable reputation as people immediately fall into the comfortable way of thinking about a divorced man as lazy, an abuser, a drunk or a general lout. It is unfair, but this is the way humans are hard wired to work.

This is damaging to a man's ego as most men derive a certain amount of their self esteem by knowing they are held in high esteem by their fellows at work and in their social life.

There is no easy solution to this problem however because reputation is something that exists in **OTHER** people's mind not your own. It is the image of yourself others see and not the image of yourself that **YOU** see. As such you cannot change other people's minds; they will simply need to change their based on your actions alone.

I say **actions**, and not **words**, because trying to defend yourself verbally or trying to convince others of your innocence of any wrong-doing, always sounds desperate. This causes more problems than it solves. How you carry yourself and what you do from now on will be the only thing to affect your reputation in other people's eyes.

How you deal with this feeling of loss of status and respect however is something you can do. Again it comes down to looking at how you value yourself. If you are reliant on others to give you respect then you have no **self respect**, you are only a vessel of **self esteem** that needs to be boosted by the words and actions others rather than your own sense of self worth.

### **-Bitterness & Anger-**

This will be covered in more detail in later chapters, but for the moment it is important to understand how to deal with the bitterness and anger that surface time and time again.

The root cause of this resentment is your inability to forgive and accept the divorce. Even if it feels like you have been totally shafted in every way possible ... hanging onto the anger and bitterness does nothing to change your situation and it does nothing to alter your ex-wife's either.

The most immediate thing you can do when you start feeling the bite of anger and bitterness is to think of the future and not the past, or anything in the present that is affected by the past.

Read more on dealing with this in section **3.3 – Forgiveness** and also **3.2 – Forgetting your Ex**

## 3.1 – Forgetting Your Ex

One thing that has not been covered in detail yet is moving on from the **memories** of your ex-wife. I put this in here as a separate section because this is one of the hardest things that I had to face, and from talking to other men, one of the hardest parts of their post divorce life as well.

No matter how much you understand about your own mind, self esteem, self respect, ego and all of that stuff you sometimes become totally disarmed by a flood of memories. This could be of your wife and marriage from bad times, or from the happier times as well. These memories are not welcome when you are trying to forget your former attachment to your wife and move on with your life!

First though, again a quick lesson about your mind and how memories work to make you happy, sad, angry, or any other state of mind.

### **-States of Mind-**

We have all heard the phrase **state of mind** before, but do we really know what this means in a real, neurological sense? It has a lot to do with our memories and how they influence our mood, our decision making abilities, and our outlook on life at each point in time.

You see, when we experience something our brain creates memories. These memories are not always visual, but can be a combination of senses and emotions that we experience at the time. These memories are stored as a kind of pattern in our brains as cells connect in certain ways to store this memory.

Now the more powerful a memory and the more it is repeated, the stronger these connections are. This can be seen in how we learn things as well. The more you do an action the better you become at it as your mind is making those cell connections and patterns stronger and stronger.

Not only this, but our state of mind also colors how we view people, objects, and events in our lives too. If you are in a good mood when you meet someone for instance you will probably remember them more fondly than if you met them in a bad mood. Or you might associate good or bad memories with a gift, a car, or any object. Our state of mind colors these things and the more we interact with people, or place, or things in certain moods the more that becomes ingrained.

Now you may be wondering what this has to do with forgetting your ex-wife. The reason you need to know about these patterns is that they create a state of mind that affects how you feel and what decisions you make.

The patterns that are created from the memories of your ex can be very damaging to your future. Often when we are alone, or when something that that reminds us of our ex-wife happens, it triggers those memories. Sometimes they are good memories of happy times, other times bad ones of the break up or other miserable times in your married life.

As soon as those memories surface, your brain achieves a new state. The happy memories will make you feel happy because that is the state of your brain. The bad memories will create states of anger, sadness, hopelessness, and other negative emotional states.

This might seem obvious to some and a revelation to others. The point is that these things are hard wired into our brain chemistry. Luckily, we can take action to change how powerful these memories and states of mind can be in our lives AND replace them with better, more positive states of mind.

The next chapter will list some mental exercises that can help to break this cycle of distress by stopping the states of mind you don't want when it comes to your memories and replacing them with newer better ones.

## **3.2 – Mental Exercises**

Some of these exercises will work better than other for you, try them all and find what gives you more comfort and energy. These are useful to get over the mental anguish you suffer on a day to day basis. They will also help you overcome them permanently over time.

### **-Exercise 1 – Live in the Now-**

Sometimes we feel assaulted by the memories of our ex-wife and we start living our lives in the past, constantly remembering and being in the same space as we were during our darkest periods of marriage. This inhibits you from living your life right now, which is what you need to do to be happy and move on.

Living in the now is a core component of happiness and just getting things *done* as well. Being able to shake off the memories and focus on the moment is a very helpful tool in your psychological toolbox. To do this, try these mental techniques and actions.

- When you feel yourself wallowing in the memories of past you will feel bad because you felt bad then and it affects your mood now.
- When this happens, concentrate on just your physical sensations right now.
- Try to feel the exact sensations that are in each part of your body.
- Start from the top of your head, move down to your face, then to the neck, shoulder, arms, hands, fingers, chest and so forth right down to your toes.
- Are they cold? Warm? Tingly? How do the clothes feel against your skin at that point? Take everything in.
- Concentrate then on your senses. What can you smell, hear, taste, see?
- Close your eyes now and try to feel all of this at once.
- You should have brought your consciousness into the present.



## **-Exercise 2 – Letting Go-**

Sometimes there are just so many memories and issues that seem to overwhelm you. It feels like you are just wrapped in them almost physically. These memories pile up one on top of each other and can cripple even the most stoic man.

One tip that worked well for me was a visualisation exercise that helped when I needed to let go of a pile of bad thoughts that were sticking to me and bringing me down. It works like this:

- Imagine that you are hot and sweaty and dirty. This sweat, dirt and heat are actually your bad memories and feelings of your divorce.
- Now imagine a nice hot shower that you are about to get into.
- As you step into this imaginary shower feel the warm water coursing down your body and washing away that dirt and sweat off your body then down the drain.
- Now really associate this dirt washing away with memories and bad feelings washing away. See an image of your ex-wife washing down from your heart off your body and down the drain.
- Now feel that clean sensation of being clean after having a shower with this mental state. All the bad feelings washed away and a new clean you left in its place ... refreshed and ready to go!

## **-Exercise 3 – Push Away-**

Another struggle can be getting over a particularly vivid and intense memory. Loud arguments and issues caused by rage and anger often leave these impressions. Recurring negativity because of these memories can be problematic because they are so vivid and intrude very harshly into your reality. One way to reduce how much influence these have over you is the following mental trick.

- Imagine a picture of this situation or event in your mind. This should not be too hard.
- Now we need to reduce the intensity of this memory not by just trying to block it out but by reducing the “volume”.
- First imagine you are turning a volume knob and the sound level starts going down. Slowly turn this and listen as the sounds become dimmer and dimmer til there is total silence.
- Now imagine the image is like a physical thing you can push or pull. Raise your hand and give a real physical push and imagine the image slowly fading as it goes away from you and fades into a tiny point of nothingness.
- You can even say something to the effect of “go away and don’t bother me again” in your own words.
- You might need to repeat this a few times as it comes back but the association with lowering the intensity of the image will make it less problematic for you.

## **-Exercise 4 – Affirmations-**

Affirmations are an interesting mental exercise. They have a bad name for some people and seen as new age quackery, but the science of the mind behind them is quite strong.

Affirmations are short statements that you repeat out loud to yourself to basically retrain your brain from bad habits, to good ones. This works because the brain learns by repetition of actions and thoughts which is why bad thoughts that you relive over and over get stuck in there.

By consistent affirmations on a daily basis you can actually short cut through bad thoughts to good and positive ones. This has to be done in the right way however, as the way you structure these statements are crucial to their effects.

You must make these statements come from the first person. Always say “**I**” so it is highly personalised. So instead of saying “*Things will get better*” say something like “*I am over this divorce*” for example.

You must also make sure to create a sense of urgency and reality in your affirmations. If you say “*I will be free of all negativity*” you might not have a real timeframe or a true belief in such a statement initially. Replacing that with “*I am allowing myself to be positive every day*” for instance has immediacy to it.

This also brings us to the idea of **sincere belief**. Without truly believing what you are saying can happen, you will not get any benefits from affirmations as you will feel hollow repeating these statements. So make sure you structure them to something *believable* but still *aspirational*.

Another part of affirmations is individualisation. I cannot tell you what or who you want to be and how you want to feel. You must create your own affirmations that link to your state of being you desire. This might be very similar from person to person, but don't just take someone else's and use them ... create them yourself.

Some affirmations I used, to give you some examples to use to create your own, were:

*“I am a complete and full person.”*  
*“I am a good father who takes care of my family”*  
*“I am worthy of love and love myself”*  
*“I will find new a new love in my own time”*  
*“I can be the person who I want to be”*

How to use this is the next part. Once you structure your chosen affirmations, write them down and have them on hand so you remember them. Now make sure to use them!

During the day, whenever you have a spare moment, repeat these statements to yourself either out loud or in your own mind. You can do this a good 20 times or more to really sink into your subconscious the importance of these statements. I preferred to

say them for 20 minutes every morning before I went out for the day then continued to focus on them every few hours.

Over time these thoughts will manifest themselves in your mind and in your own reality as you subconsciously do the things you need to do, to achieve the results you are wishing for!

### **-Exercise 5 – Anchoring-**

Anchoring is the process of having a touchstone, a point of reference to bring you a certain state of mind. This can be an image, a sound, a touch, or a whole host of items or events. You create many unintentional anchors in your life that summon up a certain state of mind, some negative, and some positive. This is another case of repetition of learning. If this anchor is constantly linked to a state of mind again and again it becomes an anchor. This about phobias for instance, if you hate spider like I do because many bad experiences with them, then even the sight of one of those creepy crawlies at a distance summons horrible thoughts of spider webs, poison and crawling sensations on my skin.

This exercise will help you to create your own intentional anchors that you can use to create the state of mind you want when you need it.

- When you are in a positive state of mind or a state of mind you want to be in make sure you have something to anchor it to.
- This should be something easy to use. One of the simplest ones is touching a point on your body such as your elbow, or an action like clapping your hands.
- Do this every time you laugh, or smile, or have a positive thought. Over time this action you do will be associated in your mind with positivity.

## **3.3 – Forgiveness**

*“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”*

*~ Lewis B. Smedes*

Hopefully, using these exercises and understanding how to deal with the day to day pressures of being divorced will bring you some measure of peace. However there is a final phase before you can move on fully and forge a new life for yourself. This is **forgiveness** and **acceptance**.

To truly be free of the negative impact of your divorce emotionally you must accept that this part of your life is over. That nothing will bring it back and that it is neither a good nor a bad thing. ***It just is.***

We have covered this briefly, but to make this acceptance long lasting and real you need to do two things: Forgive your ex-wife for the divorce and forgive yourself for whatever role you played in it also.

Too many men live with the bitterness of the divorce running through their lives even if they have moved on in every other regard. The divorcee who slanders his wife at every opportunity for a laugh or to make a point even though he looks happy enough is an example. The divorcee who cannot commit to another relationship because he is scared of making the same mistakes again is another. You may never be able to forget, but forgiveness is possible and will help you put your life back together much faster.

In fact, it has been proven that forgiving people are happier, healthier and more stable too by a Dr. Robert Enright from the University of Wisconsin. Dr Enright's studies showed that across a large range of people, those who forgave were less prone to illness, neurosis, anger and self hurt. This is partly because NOT forgiving consumes a **HUGE** amount of mental energy. Who needs that burden in their life?

### **What is forgiveness?**

This is probably where most people first get unstuck. This is such a devil of a word that is overused, but also not practiced enough. Perhaps it is easier to start with what forgiveness is NOT.

- Forgiveness is **NOT** about forgetting the problems, actions or insults. Whatever happened, happened and must serve as a reminder.
- Forgiveness is **NOT** about excusing the actions of your wife or yourself and making them okay in any way.
- Forgiveness is **NOT** about giving permission for continuance of these issues by yourself or by your wife.
- Forgiveness is **NOT** about reconciliation. Just because you forgive someone does not mean you need to enter into a relationship again with them. That is a separate issue and should not be taken in this case because we are trying to make a *new* life not rebuild the ashes of the *old* one.
- Forgiveness is **NOT** about religion and spirituality, unless you want it to be. Religion has its own interpretation which helps many people understand, but if you are not religious then this is a purely a mental process, and an important one too.

So what IS forgiveness then? Simply put, forgiveness is the process of releasing the need for revenge, bitter thoughts, resentment and all negative thoughts associated with your divorce, your ex-wife and your own actions within this. I say process because it is not an instantaneous thing. It takes time and effort and follows a path til finally you reach a state of proper forgiveness.

This process is different for everyone, but if you are unsure of how to start because the pain is too fresh, or too ingrained, there are a few things you can do to really help it along giving you the best chance to achieve a healthy forgiveness of the divorce.

## **Stop Telling the Story**

Some men are better at this than others. Some guys will not speak a word about a divorce (*which is damaging in some ways too*), while others will tell everyone who will listen.

While we do need to release our emotions and talk about things with friends and family, there is a point where this can be hurtful. Remember how your state of mind is influenced by your memories and how the more we do something the stronger those states of mind become? Well, going over the details again and again eventually loses its cathartic nature and starts to embed negative states of mind whenever you open your mouth and utter a word about the divorce.

It also stirs up anger and resentment. This can often start to develop an unhealthy victim mentality within yourself which will inhibit your chances of forgiveness, acceptance, and moving on with life.

## **Empathic Thinking**

As much as you might not be able to understand it, try to think about the divorce from your ex-wife's point of view. Again, this is not about making what they did or said ok, it is simply a way of being compassionate. Being right or wrong has nothing to do with it.

Replay some key events in the divorce from her point of view as best you can and try to experience what her emotions and reasons might have been. The more we do this empathic thinking the easier it is to forgive people and understand them. It makes us a better people as well as helping us to achieve a more peaceful state of mind.

## **Realise You May Never Understand**

This may sound odd after suggesting that you be more empathic and understanding of your ex-spouse. However, being empathic does not mean you ever truly understand their exact emotions and decisions.

Trying to understand everything is a fool's game and has destroyed relationships and lives in a quest for something unachievable. Acceptance and forgiveness converge when we give up this search and simply say "*I can never know fully*". When you realise this and that it will not bother you, your mind will be more at peace than before.

## **Hatred Does Not Hurt Them**

This gets to the crux of the issue really. Why do we continue to feel bitter and hate our ex wives? What does it really do? Does it really make them feel the way we feel? Does it really hurt them in any way to make ourselves feel better?

No. It does not, and never will. Holding a grudge does not help you and it does not hinder them, the only person who loses is **YOU**. As Nelson Mandela once said - "*Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for it to kill your enemy.*"

## **Write it Down**

Writing is not just an invention for communication, though that is its primary purpose. It serves as a way for us to unpack our minds in an expressive way. When we perhaps have no one we can speak to about our darkest, inner most thoughts, writing can be a way to express and acknowledge the hurt in our life.

Write a letter to yourself and also write a letter to your ex-wife that details the hurt and the anger. Re-read them once and absorb and accept those things. This is not to cause pain, but to simply accept the hurt and anguish from a third party; words on a page, not emotions mixed in your mind.

Now, burn those letters or tear them up. This is a ritual of letting go, much like the mental exercises earlier in the book. With each page you destroy, think about those things you wrote and watch them be destroyed and burned along with the words.

Now, write two more letters once you feel more at peace. Write a letter to yourself detailing all the positive things that can come from this. Write down what you want from the future that does not include your wife anymore. Dare to dream, dare to be over the top and ultra positive if you like. Put that letter somewhere where you can reread it again to remind yourself of what is to come.

Write another letter to your ex-wife. This should be a letter acknowledging your forgiveness of the whole divorce and your acceptance of it. This may be the hardest one to write and you should only do it once you feel at peace with the process. You do not even need to give this to her if you do not want, it is for your benefit before all others.

## 4.1 – Your New Life

Before we move on to the next section I want to make sure you have read and understood the previous sections. This information you needed to understand and overcome the initial emotional hurt and turmoil of a divorce. You need to be able to move on and build a new life, but understanding the reasons behind the divorce and your emotions.

Moving on requires you to be able to have gone through the stages of divorce and ended up with an acceptance and forgiveness of the whole thing. You cannot begin to make the real changes necessary in your life until you have been through this roller coaster ride and come out with a newfound sense of self respect.

This does not mean that you are completely over the hurt. No one expects you to be a Zen master of recovery. You can however get past the most damaging stages and not be dominated by low self esteem and a raging hurt ego. Once you feel more confident about your place in the world and your mental state you can start looking forward a lot more.

That is what we will discuss next ...

## 4.2 – Planning for the Future

You may be a meticulous planner already, or you might be the kind of guy that flies by the seat of his pants on a daily basis. In either case, you need to look at **how** you are planning, **what** you are planning and **where** you are really going in life now that you are divorced.

After a divorce you must basically reinvent yourself. In psychological terms this is a radical change in your ego to fit in with society in a new way. It is a perfect opportunity to reassess where you stand and where you want to go with a fresh view of yourself, and what you believe your own personal meaning of life is.

There are a few items you need to consider very thoughtfully before you start making these plans.

### **-Assess Your Talents-**

While you were a husband, and possibly a father, of a complete household, your dreams and plans focused on your marriage to such a core level that you bent every talent you had to the task I am sure. However, along the way we often had to ignore or discard important talents we had to try to improve other ones to best fit in with your role in your household and marriage.

Now this has gone. You are single again, you may still be a father but you are not bound to the set of plans you once had with your ex-wife. You have also probably gained many new skills and talents from this relationship and your work life within it. This is the time to assess what you truly **CAN** do and what you truly **WANT** to do.

Sit down and really think about where your talents lie. What you are good at and what you really enjoy. If you are having troubling analysing yourself like this, check out Tom Rath's [Strength Finder](#) which is a very useful tool to see just what you really do excel at!

Once you have a list you are happy with, you will have a better idea of what direction you should take your life in.

### **-Start Taking Risks-**

Marriage is a very low risk environment. Stability and the status quo usually take a hold very quickly because taking risks with a shared set of finances and such interconnected living can cause problems. Most people realise that, and once they are married the less risk they take in our lives and their careers.

Again, the burden of keeping a marriage on an even keel is well gone. You are free to take those risks that once may have caused extreme marital disharmony, especially if they do not work.

This could be very different depending on your circumstances ranging from a change of career, starting a business, taking up an interesting hobby or sport, or just acting in a very different way that you have always secretly wanted to. This breaks your ties with your old life even more and will allow you to experience a fuller life.

The great thing is that you no longer have the one person in your life that you always must be accountable for. You can do it just for you and your own happiness.

### **-Set a Project Goal-**

Direction is of great importance to a man after divorce. As has been mentioned, most men's direction in life had been dictated by marriage and shared goals with your ex-wife. Without this familiar direction, many men feel helpless and lost like a boat without a steering wheel just drifting with the tides.

One way to take back control is to set yourself a set of projects or a goals that you need to achieve. This should not just be one monolithic task however, it is best to have something large and a bit audacious to really drive you, but your goals need to be small milestones on the way to that destination.

#### *For Example:*

Your great dream might be to run your own business rather than work for someone else. You might set a goal for the next month to research five franchise opportunities. You then set another to talk to the bank about how you might get a loan for this. After this you might have another goal a month later to talk to the franchise managers of these opportunities. Make these goals measurable and achievable and give yourself enough time to do them.



### **-Plan for Obstacles-**

A lot of what I write may seem overly optimistic or idealistic, however I am not suggesting that all of this will be easy. Far from it, major life changes are always hard, that's how you know you are doing what needs to be done as you are reaching *out of your comfort zone*.

When you are out of your comfort zone however, you will face challenges you are not used to dealing with which can trip you up! Some of these obstacles you will never see coming and you cannot have any plans for except your own wits and sense of self confidence. Other obstacles you can either see, or can imagine and therefore – you can plan for them.

When you are writing out your strengths and weaknesses, as well as your goals and risks you want to take in your post-divorce life, be mindful of the potential problems along the way. Write these down next to your goals and dreams not as a negative reminder of how hard it will be, but as a reality check on what you truly need to do to achieve what you really desire.

Do not stop there though, write down potential **solutions** to these obstacles to solidify in your mind and on paper how you should handle them should they occur. As I have stated before, the act of writing these things down is crucial as it makes the turbulent thoughts in your mind solid, real, and less changeable. Sometimes the wisdom of what you initially write can bring you back to reality further down the track when things get hard ... it is like a note to your future self.

## **4.3 – Redefining Success**

Success is a funny word, a changeable and adaptable word, a word that can crush you when it feels unachievable, and a word that can bring you elation and meaning in life if you identify with it strongly.

The reason I wanted to discuss this in its own section is that success is at the core of human existence. It is what drives us to excel at many things which give us our sense of self worth in the face of all other of life's challenges.

If you have been following the theme of this guide, you may have now seen the comparison I am drawing here to your ego, self esteem and self respect. Success (*however you define it at this point*) bolsters your self esteem and is a core value of your own ego.

*Example 1:*

If you defined **measurable** success as earning a six figure salary then if you achieved this your self esteem would sky rocket and being able to earn this amount of money would be an integral part of your ego. On the flip side, if you fail to reach this goal then your self esteem can become deflated and your ego takes a hit.

*Example 2:*

**Unmeasurable** success is another factor, such as being a good father for instance. If you believe that you are doing a good job and other people tell you that you are, you will feel proud. However if your child gets angry at you or someone makes a comment about your parenting style this can make you feel less successful and therefore lowers your self esteem.

Now that you have gone through a life changing event; your divorce, your priorities have most likely changed or are going to change based on this new reality and new way of living. This means it is likely what your measurable goals for success might change and your unmeasurable success goals almost definitely have to change.

Now this is not redefining success though, this is just redefining the goals of success but not what the meaning of success is to you at a core level. A lot of this comes down to how people view not achieving their goals and class that, as the opposite of success – **Failure**. This is important because even if you do not consciously acknowledge it, you may be feeling that you have failed at your marriage which was probably one of the things you imagined you were succeeding at, until the divorce.

### **-How to Eliminate Failure & Change What Success Means-**

You cannot live the rest of your life with the shadow of a perceived marriage failure in your mind. This will haunt your every waking hour and interfere with further relationships. Even if you did a lot of damage to your marriage, you must remember that you cannot accept this burden.

What you need to do instead is change how you view things that might seem like failures at first. This can be done just like changing your **state of mind** and its association with this event. Once you change the *color* of the divorce in your mind you will easily be able to apply this to other parts of your life.

Hopefully with the exercises in **Section 3.2** and reaching the acceptance and forgiveness stage of the divorce cycle, you will be largely at the point where this will become easy. The following tips will help you redefine your ideas of success and failure.

There are however two different measures of success in most men's life and each needs to be treated a little differently.

#### *Unmeasurable Success*

Success that is dependant on an ongoing continuum or by a set of behaviours you should exhibit all the time is not as measurable as things like money. How you identify yourself as a person is usually what these measures of success are based on. As such, here are some steps to redefine how they effect your mental balance and how you can still keep those goals but with a different slant.

- You must be the judge of unmeasurable success and only you. Do not let other define what should be a personal decision on what makes YOU feel successful.

- Write down these goals (*Hint: Some of these will be found in your affirmations if you are using them*). While they might be vague and unfocused, writing down those ambiguous emotions helps solidify them and helps you judge if you have been successful or not.
- When you do critically look to see if you are successful at these goals and you find yourself lacking, never think you have failed. Not being successful does not mean you have failed unless there is a hard deadline and with these sorts of goals it is an ongoing thing. Take each perceived failure instead as a review card, a learning experience. You now have what you need to become a better person in your OWN eyes and can apply a strategy to gain that success!

### *Measurable Success*

Success that is measurable can only be on things that have definite outcomes. When quantity is involved more than quality, a goal's success is mostly likely something you can measure. These sorts of goals can be highly motivating but can also give you the most sense of failure if you do not achieve them. When you set down some goals you want to succeed at that you will be able to measure take into account these few things:

- Be realistic but ambitious. Often we fall into the bad habit of setting our sights too high or too low. Men need something to drive them but it has to be achievable.
- Choose goals that give real VALUE to your life and not just goals that will stoke your ego and self esteem.
- Makes plans to review your goals regularly to make sure you stay on track.
- Remember that if you do not achieve your goal of measurable success then this is not a failure. It is a chance to review and change your approach so that you refocus on what you need to do. Not achieving a goal is a learning experience. It is only failure if you insert that word and association with the event.

## **4.5 – Fulfilment & Happiness**

So, we can see how to overcome the negative emotions of a divorce, we can see that we need to plan for the future and what future success will look and feel like, but does all this mean that we are now happy? Does this mean that we feel fulfilled with our life and where it is headed?

Sometimes we accidentally stumble upon happiness and fulfilment during the process of divorce and recovery. You have a much better chance now, knowing what you do of your own mind and emotions to have this happen. However, many more men fall into a false sense of security believing they have found a new happiness but quickly find it is a shallow and fragile one at best.

This is usually because we have made it through the divorce by redefining our ego and bolstering our self esteem but without bolstering out **self respect**. We delved into self respect at the beginning of this book in some detail, but now that you have seen

how your ego and self esteem are so tied in with problems after divorce you have a much better idea of how self respect will truly bring you happiness.

This concept can be succinctly defined as follows:

*Self Esteem is happiness given to you and taken away from you by others.*

*Self Respect is the happiness that you define and give to yourself.*

Your ultimate quest in life to be happy lies in self respect and not in self esteem because other people have the ability to pull the rug out from under your feet and destroy your self esteem; and at a moments notice sometimes! Giving **OTHER** people the power over your happiness and fulfilment in life is a dangerous thing, but if this is the case ... *why do we do it so often?*

I have no great answer to that question. It may be simply the times in which we live, it may be that we **NEED** to go through a period of critical change before we understand what real self respect is, or it might be that it is a product of relationships with unrealistic expectations of intimacy and empathy.

In any case, the golden rule of happiness is:

**You can never be responsible for anyone else's happiness;  
You can only be responsible for your own.**

You must escape the trap that self esteem places on you and learn to respect and be happy with yourself, your decisions and where you are in life no matter what the circumstances are. This is where fulfilment enters the picture.

Fulfilment is the product of being happy, fulfilment follows finding happiness in everyday life from self respect and a new branding of what you feel success is. So this is your challenge to truly feel happy, fulfilled and successful.

**What can you do in life that makes you feel good without needing others to reinforce and bolster that opinion?**

This is not an easy question to answer so don't be afraid if I you cannot immediately think of what this is. In fact, it can be very hard to find something that is like this. Even if you do something completely selfless and go help underprivileged kids or something similar, most people still get a kick when other people praise them for their actions.

This does not mean you should give up trying to find this fulfilment, but it does mean you should always be aware that your core happiness, your core sense of well being and fulfilment should come from how you are living your life because that is what makes you content. You need to really **LIKE** yourself and not have anyone be able to influence that because you are comfortable with exactly who you are.

This might be sounding very complicated to you right now. Luckily it can be boiled down to a simple goal and a process to get there. The simple goal is that you have a **CHOICE** to be happy and fulfilled. Only **YOU** can make this choice and only you

know how to do the things that do make you feel content and fulfilled. It doesn't mean it is easy, but it is inspiring and the only way to get there is a gradual process of living your life better each day and striving to be happy through choice ... *not through circumstance.*

The good news, is that this process gets easier as it goes on as happiness breeds success and fulfilment which in turn, breeds more happiness! As you start to shrug off the negative feelings you have carried around for so long, and you know where you are going due to your planning for your future, you will find each day easier and happier than before as long as you **CHOOSE** not to dwell on past events and negative emotions.

Think about it; are successful people happy because they are successful and rich? Or are happy people the ones who become successful? To add another dimension to this, why are some poor people so happy and other miserable? Why are some rich people so miserable when it seems they have everything

This of course depends on their definition of success and their choice to be or not to be happy. Those that end up miserable have their happiness controlled by circumstance and focusing on those problems, so therefore never fight their way out of where they are to be where they **WANT** to be. The miserable ones are slaves to other people's expectations and their low self esteem and not their own self respect.

## **4.4 – Forging New Relationships**

Relationships come last in this book for a very good reason. You are usually not ready for a real new relationship until you have at least embarked upon the journey to becoming a complete and happy person.

This is because it can be dangerous to jump into a new relationship too soon when you carry the baggage of a divorce cluttering your mind and expectations. As discussed earlier in the book there are some women you want to stay away from because of this, but now I want to discuss what you should be doing once you feel you are recovering well from the divorce.

### **-Dating-**

Going back to the dating scene can be very difficult, especially if you have been married for a long time. The rules you may have known may have changed, and **YOU** have certainly changed from what you once were physically, mentally, and socially.

Men do have a certain advantage however in that there is a certain amount of desirability to a man who has experienced marriage and commitment. There is also the fact that men as they age usually have better careers than women. This combination of power and commitment can go in your favour.

How to meet new potential partners is probably the first hurdle men must jump to get back into the dating game. If you have been following the advice in this guide you

may have started to try new things and new activities. This is probably the most natural way that you will start to find women worth dating.

However sometimes it just does not seem to happen that way. For various reasons, feeling around and hoping for that chemical spark from the people you know does not happen. In such cases I do recommend online dating sites. While the butt of many jokes year ago, now huge amounts of people use online dating sites to find love and are successful at it too! When your social circle becomes too small this is a good way to reach further afield without exhausting yourself trying to be everywhere at once.

If you start to organise dates with new women there are a few things that a divorced man should be doing and a lot of things he should NOT be doing. Here a few guidelines:

### ***Don't***

- Bring up your divorce in the first few dates. Even if she presses you to talk about it it's best to deflect.
- Expect anything more than friendship at first. You may be wanting more and if you feel something your instinct to get back to a relationship may be high, but they have a very different view.
- Talk about your children. While women may love kids, other peoples kids are a different story.
- Talk just about yourself. Sometimes divorced men can get into a habit of spilling out the frustrations of many of their problems to what might seem to be an attentive ear.
- End up in bed with them on the first date. Even if it seems to be going that way it is often simply a bad idea born of the habit of easy sex with your ex (well, for some men anyway). Give it just a bit of time before jumping in the sexual deep end and assess it to make sure you feel right.

### ***Do***

- Make the date just about both of you. Don't let all the other emotional distractions get in the way.
- Be well groomed, attentive and romantic. This is a date, not a night out with your wife. Things should be exciting and different.
- Be positive. Leave your baggage at the door if you still have any.
- Listen to your date and ask her lots of questions about herself. You do not know this woman anything like you did your wife. You need to start making those connections and getting to know them.

Another tip is to not focus on one woman. This is your chance to date and meet *many* women to find out what you really want and need in a potential partner. Play the field, but don't be sneaky or underhanded, be honest about this with your dates if they ask. Remember, do not commit to a relationship until you are certain it is worth a shot.

## **-Sex-**

Assuming you have dated and have found that chemistry with someone and you fall in lust once again there are also problems in the bedroom many married men take with them from a divorce. As such, here are a few issues that are common in divorced men that you should be aware of.

- **Routine** – Often in a long term relationship such as a marriage, sex becomes routine. You touch there, kiss here, stimulate this, and so on. This has been developed because that is what your ex-wife liked, or at least was comfortable with. This however is not perhaps what this new woman likes. Do not simply go straight for the routine moves. Instead, pay close attention to what our partner likes and be free to experiment a little.
- **Unsafe Sex** – While you may have know that you and your partner were clean and she may have been on the pill, you cannot afford to be this comfortable with a new woman who you don't know all that well. STIs are very common and you do not want to let this new sexual freedom be destroyed because you did not use a condom and gained a disease. You also don't know if this women really is on the pill as she claims. Some women are quite happy to get pregnant then chase you down for child support. I am not saying most do, most women would never think about that ... but you should make sure you are safe and use a condom every single time!
- **Fear** – Not all men get this but many do, a fear and anxiety about sex with a new woman. Fear of performance, fear of intimacy, fear of commitment further down the track. These are reasonable things to think about but for some guys it can become a source of serious anxiety. If this is the case it is best to simply hold off on sex and take it slowly. Simply letting your new lover know is often enough for them to understand and help ease the tension.

## **-Transitional Partners-**

After your first new relationship you may find that you may go through a phase where you have a number of short term partners. These are what I call *transitional partners* because you are going through a transitional stage of your life where your worldview is changing as is your attitude towards relationships.

A transitional partner is often there to help you recover, to satisfy your needs, and to bolster your self esteem (*which is something you should try to avoid but is quite natural to do so*). These can be healing and adapting relationships if you approach them in the right way, so should not be seen in a bad light. You should also not plan to make these relationships transitional, they will happen and possibly end more naturally then you think they might.

Some men get caught in this cycle however and end up with a string of relationships behind them without gaining anything, or having long since gone through the healing necessary. This is usually a fear of commitment from your divorce experience, or it might be that you get caught in a cycle of self esteem building that needs a renewed love interest constantly to feel desired again.

Either way, this is when things have gone too far and you need to reassess your goals and views on relationships and your own happiness.

### **-New Relationship Tips-**

- Do not expect new relationships to be just like your marriage was before.
- Do not slip straight into relationship mode and become too comfortable. This is trying to create your security of marriage which is false.
- Do not compare your new partner with your ex-wife, ever!
- Do not feel the need to introduce new partners to all of your friends and family immediately.
- Do not expect your children to accept these partners.
- Do not use new relationships as some sort of a weapon against you ex to let them know you have moved on. They are for YOU and have nothing to do with your former lover.

### **-Committed Relationships-**

Now of course comes the true test of your recovery, the full and proper committed relationship. This could be a marriage, or it could just be deep commitment to a new partner, akin to a marriage. In the end, this is the direction you may want to go as it is for most (*but not all*) men,

I was going to write something more comprehensive here, but the fact is that if you follow the advice from all the previous chapters, and you are not jumping into this too early, you should have all the tools you need to make this work!

At this stage you should be heading toward a committed relationship as a whole person, one with a great deal of self respect who is free of the slavery of his old ego and the burning desire to pump his self esteem.

Maybe at the time of reading this you do not feel this way, and the thought of a new relationship is not even in your mind. This is ok, but remember as you travel this new road that the healing will come as you re-evaluate your life, your choices and how you feel about yourself and the world around you. THIS is what will help you to create a new life AND new love.

This time it could be forever. This time you know yourself, and you know how to be independent and complete before joining again with a new love.

Some of you may choose not to travel this path and that is fine too. The important thing is to make sure that you are happy with yourself and your life and that you travel the path of fulfilment.



**Good Luck!**