8 Ways Divorce Makes You a Better Person

WomansDay **Natasha Burton**
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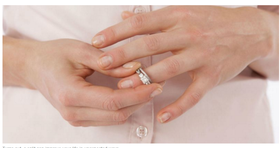
Turns out, a split can improve your life in unexpected ways.

From Woman's Day

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger" couldn't apply more in this case. Here are the eight areas in which divorced women excel because of their experience.

1. With finances. Both going through the divorce process and being single again force you to address everything from balancing your budget to planning for retirement, says psychiatrist Scott Carroll, MD. If you relied on your former husband for those things, taking ownership of your financial future can be a huge accomplishment, says Shelly, 33. "I was married by age 17 and divorced by 26. For the first time in my life I was responsible for rent, bills and purchasing a car and life insurance. It was the scariest time of my life, but also the most liberating."

2. With relationships. "After divorce, you're more confident about the type of partner you want and don't want," says relationship expert Lori Bizzoco, executive editor of CupidsPulse.com.Stephanie, 36, adds that her divorce taught her how to be a better partner. "While I thought I was keeping the peace in my marriage, I was actually creating a hostile environment by not speaking up enough. I learned to not be afraid of my voice."

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3. With home improvement. Typically, the man of the house plays the role of Mr. Fix-it-but after a split, you're the handyman. "A huge dresser I ordered arrived the week my husband left," says Magalie, 38. "I pulled out my dad's odd tools and decided no matter how long it took I was going to assemble that dresser. It took forever, but I did it! That dresser was a metaphor for my life at the time: I could build it on my own."

4. With your career. "Perhaps a career shift out of a 'safe job' can finally be explored," says licensed clinical psychologist Ramani Durvasula, PhD.Adds relationship expert April Masini, just look at *Harry Potter* author JK Rowling!OrLori, 48, who wasn't using her law degree while married: "Before my divorce, I had been a stay-at-home mom for 10 years," she explains. "I now own a business, and am a certified divorce financial analyst and divorce mediator, as well as an attorney."

5. With parenting. No longer entrenched in an unhealthy relationship with your spouse, "you're now able to give your kids the focus they need," says Dr. Durvasula. "Post-divorce I became a better parent because I was less emotionally strung out," says JC, 38. "If my daughter was acting out, I was able to take the time to ask myself, 'What was going on for me at that age?' and respond with compassion."

6. With your health. Various studies have shown that married people live longer. But high levels of stress, like those you have in a failing marriage, can have the opposite effect. "You will be healthier and stronger without the unhappiness from your marriage," says Bizzoco.Dr. Durvasula explains that no longer having someone to remind you to take your medication, go to the doctor or notice a change in you forces you to take ownership of your health. "As you get older you may become better at doing preventive maintenance."

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7. With your friendships. "Divorce has a nasty way of letting you know who your real friends are," Masini says. "Many times, people you thought had your back 'go with' your ex." While this may sound discouraging, "they weren't your real friends to begin with, and now you don't have to waste time with them," she adds. For Magalie, "I released the obligation I felt to socialize with negative friends and now have a circle of supportive friends," she says.

8. With travel. Exploring the world may not have been high on your ex-spouse's priority list and, if you have children, traveling may have been impossible. After divorce, "travel is suddenly possible during free time from joint custody," Masini says. Nicole, 49, "decided after the divorce that I would travel as much as possible and not wait for someone to go with me or be afraid to go alone if need be," she says. "I now have been to many places, including Europe, the Caribbean, Canada and Russia."

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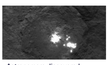
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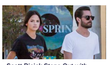
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