

Expert Dating Advice For Finding Love After Divorce



By Amy Osmond Cook for [Divorce Support Center](#)

Fellow fictional vampires Nikki Reed and Ian Somerhalder just tied the knot in their celebrity wedding after a whirlwind romance. The famous couple began their relationship in the fall of 2014 when Reed announced she and her then-husband Paul McDonald were separating. By January 2015, the [celebrity divorce](#) was finalized and Somerhalder had popped the question. Now, the two are hitched and honeymooning in Brazil after dating for less than a year.

Expert Dating Advice for Finding Love

To some, tying the knot only four months after leaving a marriage may seem impulsive, but there are no rules set in stone when it comes to finding love after a divorce. “This wildly varies from person to person,” Judith Sills, Ph.D, psychologist and author of *Getting Naked Again: Dating, Romance, Sex, and Love When You’ve Been Divorced, Widowed, Dumped, or Distracted* told Web MD. “Everyone ends a relationship by grieving the emotional investment. For some people, that happens before they move out. Others are still emotionally married after the divorce is final.”

Based on the romantic photos that Daily Mail shared of the honeymoon, it looks like married life suits this famous couple. Reed seems confident about her relationship with Somerhalder, which is one of the most important signs of a healthy union, especially when her celebrity divorce from Paul McDonald was so public.

What are some ways you can tell if you are ready to dedicate yourself to a committed relationship after a divorce? Here’s some expert [dating advice](#) to determine if you’re ready to begin again:

Related Link: [Dating Advice: Create The Person You Want To Be](#)

1. Feel it out: Stay true to your feelings. Allow yourself “a little time to think, a little time to grieve, a little opportunity to find someone else,” Sills says. Sure, Reed was ready to seriously date almost immediately after leaving her previous marriage, but that doesn’t mean you have to be, too. Do what feels good. If dating makes you uncomfortable, embrace that fact, and use that time to treat yourself. Eventually, your emotions will let you know when you’re really ready.

2. No, really, feel it out: Dating after divorce has shown

potential to prevent depression in a surprising way. Dr. Karen Finn stresses the importance of human touch when it comes to maintaining good mental health. However, if the idea of becoming physically close with a new person isn't appealing, Dr. Finn recommends to, "get a massage, become known by your friends as a hugger, get a mani and/or pedi, and hug yourself."

3. Do it for the right reasons: It can be tempting to jump back into dating after a divorce so that you can claim yourself as "the winner," the one who finds happiness with another person first. Unfortunately, that's not the kind of motivation that will necessarily lead to a lasting new relationship. You wouldn't want to get involved with someone who is invested in hurting their ex's feelings, so don't put anyone else in that position.

Related Link: [How to Be Mindful When It Comes to Relationships and Love](#)

There is no schedule in terms of finding love post-divorce. Most importantly, this is a time to rekindle the love you have for yourself! *Then* you can start hunting vampires like Reed, if you know what I mean.

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Expert Love Advice: Is Your Partner Lying? Use These CIA

Tricks to Find Out!



By Amy Osmond Cook for [Divorce Support Center](#)

Ever feel like your partner isn't telling you the whole truth? From Bill Clinton's "I did not have sexual relations with that woman" to [Brad Pitt](#) and [Angelina Jolie](#) swearing that no funny business was going down on the set of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, single celebrities and famous couples alike are infamous for stretching the truth. Everyday pairs struggle with lying as well. In a *Reader's Digest* poll, 96 percent of Americans admitted lying to those close to them. But it's also worth noting that 50 percent of lies are told by only 5.3 percent of the people. Consider this expert love and dating advice below!

Dating Advice to Help You Determine if Your Partner is Lying

A recent *Huffington Post* article identified four ways to tell whether someone is lying:

1. Look for nasal engorgement and itching: When a person lies, specific tissues in the nose usually engorge, says Dr. Alan Hirsch of The Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago. This nasal engorgement, which Hirsch calls the “Pinocchio Sign,” causes cells to release histamine, which in turn causes the nose to itch.

Related Link: [Find Out What Kristen Stewart’s Body Language Reveals About Her Cheating Guilt](#)

2. Notice negation and aversion cues: Look for negation cues, such as covering or blocking the mouth and covering or rubbing the eyes, nose or ears, and aversion clues, such as turning the head or body away when making a crucial statement.

3. Beware of religious rhetoric: Religious phrases like “I swear on my mother’s grave,” “God, no,” or “as God is my witness” are ironic red flags.

4. Call out the denial phrases: Denial phrases including “trust me,” “honestly,” and “to be perfectly honest” are evasive. Evasion is about trying to change a perception, and these phrases repeated over and over again are typical clues to lying.

Expert Love Advice From a Former CIA Officer

Phil Houston, former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer and CEO of QVerity, takes it one step further in his recently published book *Get the Truth: Former CIA Officers Teach You*

How to Persuade Anyone to Tell All. In it, he explains how you can persuade people – even a partner with something to hide – to tell you anything. Here are four steps to take to follow his expert love advice:

Related Link: [5 Red Flags to be Aware of In Your Relationship](#)

1. Make a transition statement: First, let them know that the lie isn't working. For example, we might say, "Honey, listen, I've got to tell you. I've got some problems with what you were saying about our credit card statement." Deliver it in a low-key manner without making it adversarial to help keep them calm.

2. Stop them from talking: Behaviorists explain to us that, every time you verbalize the lie, you become more psychologically entrenched in it. So step two is to start talking and give them reasons to tell you what's really going on.

3. Lower their defenses: Rationalize or minimize the problem so the risks of telling the truth seem smaller. "Hey, listen," we might say. "Everybody has trouble with their credit card statements." We can do it by monologuing as well, which means we are basically trying to tell the person lying that they can still win.

4. Switch to a presumptive question: After we lower their defenses, we should switch into a presumptive question, like, "What did you really do with the credit card?"

If you want to find out even more about Houston's method, check out the book on Amazon. I'm going to try the technique out on my teenagers and see what really happened to my last pair of work shoes!

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Dating Advice: Create The Person You Want To Be



By Janeen Diamond for [Hope After Divorce](#)

“There is a difference between loving, helping and accepting others, and actually letting them be a part of your precious life.”

These days, we all seem to talk a lot about our kids or our friends or our spouses going off to “find themselves” when things aren’t going quite right for them. But the truth of the matter is, it isn’t really possible to “find” ourselves. If we are going to be successful in our relationship and love life,

we must “make” ourselves into the person we want to be. Consider these two pieces of [dating advice](#): First, remember to have realistic expectations, and second, know that you can *choose* to be happy with yourself. I love the following quote by psychiatrist Thomas Szasz: “People often say that this or that person has not yet found himself. But the self is not something one finds. It is something one creates.”

Related Link: [Kindness No Matter What](#)

I have had experiences with a few loved ones who seem to bounce around, waiting for life to suddenly make them happy or turn into something that will completely surprise them. But, in my opinion, they will wait a lifetime. If we want certain things in our lives, we have to go after them. We can't expect something magic to happen or believe that, if we wish for something to happen, it will eventually just appear. This is especially true when it comes to dating.

Expert Love Advice About Realistic Expectations

Along those same lines, getting married and expecting the other person to turn your life around for you is completely unrealistic. My expert love advice is to remember that marriage is about two healthy people bringing their best selves into an important relationship and love with the plan to contribute in every way possible. I am of the mindset that we are each responsible for our own happiness and for the things we accomplish in this life. If you are friends with or married to a person who drains you and drags you down, only you can do something about it. Here's some dating advice for how to decide what that something is going to be:

- Give as much as you can to the other person; it will facilitate your own happiness and help you enjoy life on

a higher level.

- Keep a positive attitude and try to encourage your partner or friend to get outside themselves.
- Keep working on the person *you* want to be – your own happiness and security will make all the difference in the world.
- If nothing changes and you are still feeling drained, consider letting go.

Related Link: [Is Your Life Working?](#)

How to Have Positive Relationships and Love in Your Life

I have reached a point in my life where I am willing and able to move on from relationships that are negative. I once told a friend that I could no longer be her friend because it was simply too difficult. It was an amazing experience to be able to kindly release myself from something that wasn't right for me. I became a stronger person at that point and someone who has been able to be more selective about the people I let into my life.

There is a difference between loving, helping and accepting others, and actually letting them be a part of your precious life. I believe we can help those who need guidance without letting them influence us in a negative way. If you have relationships in your life you need to reconsider, take some time and think through what needs to change. Part of creating the person we want to be is surrounding ourselves with like-minded people who can influence us in the way we want to be influenced. Don't be afraid to do a little housecleaning!

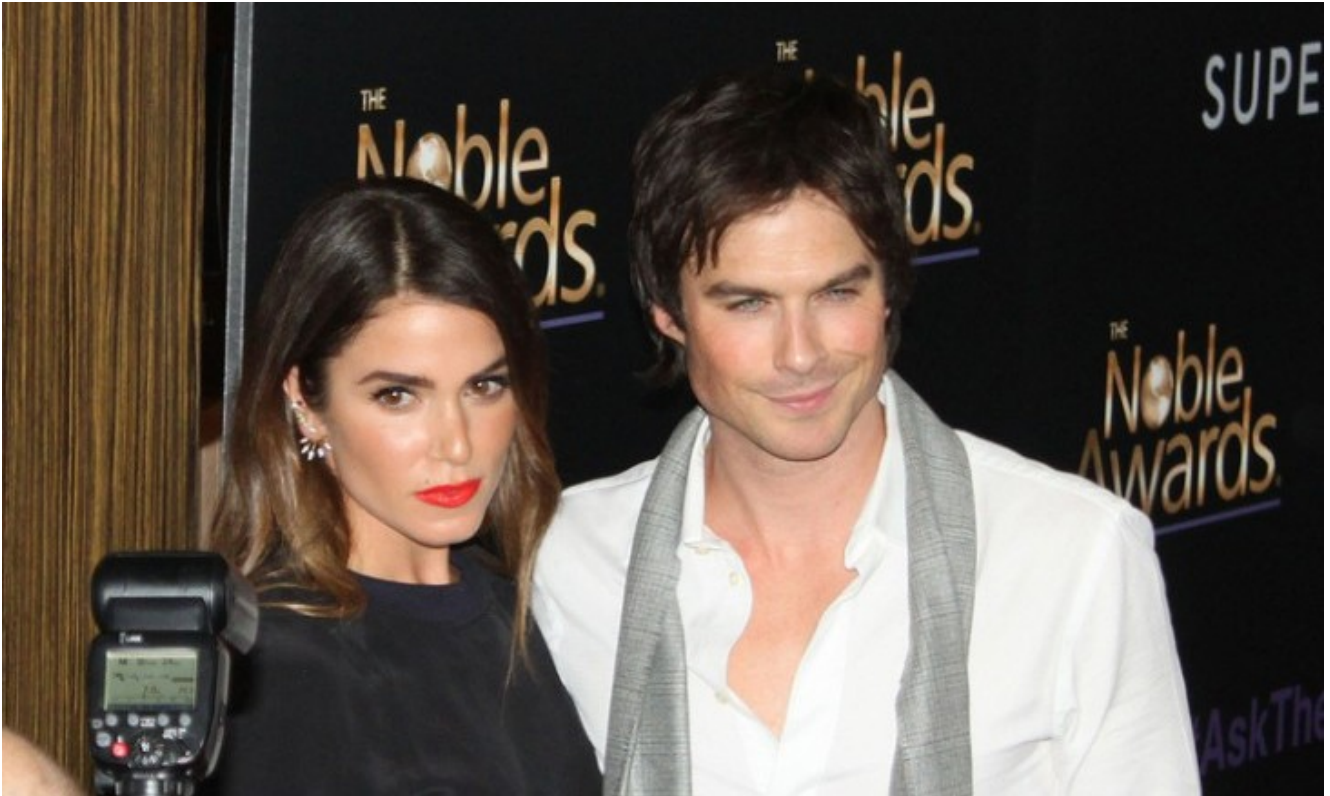
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Janeen Diamond, author of Save Your Marriage in 30, was a newscaster for KUTV News until 2001. Since that time, she has been actively producing commercials and special programming through her company, Your TV Spot. She has hosted several television and internet productions and has been a spokesperson for several products and companies. She is a leader over the youth in her church and takes a special interest in helping kids stay on track with their lives. Janeen is currently co-creating "Teen Impact TV," a website for high school students to give them a creative and emotional outlet. She is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com. Follow her on Twitter @janeendiamond and www.facebook.com/janeen.diamond.

Dating Advice: Three Ways Your Relationships and Love Could Be Killing You





By Amy Cook for [Hope After Divorce](#)

When is it okay to end a relationship and love? People differ in their reasons for staying or leaving, but most agree that partnerships should be over when they damage your physical and/or emotional well-being. While we don't know the reasons behind the surprising [celebrity divorces](#) of Patrick Dempsey, Hilary Duff, and Mandy Moore, we do know that there were longstanding issues that required these famous couples to make a change. If your relationship is giving you stress, depression, or a weakened immune system, it might be time to evaluate whether your love is toxic and needs a change too.

How to Know When to End a Relationship and Love

Stress: Trying to maintain a relationship in a “fight or flight” state of being will surely break down your body's ability to function normally. Anxiety, high blood pressure, and added stress to your heart compromise your health.

Related Link: [Mandy Moore and Ryan Adams File for Celebrity](#)

[Divorce After Six Years of Marriage](#)

In a June 2013 article titled “How Relationships Can Make You Sick” and published on Healthgram.com, the author references a study conducted at Ohio State University where researchers discovered married men and women who struggled with ongoing concerns about the stability of their relationships and love had higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol. The study also found lower levels of T-cells, which help fight infections.

The research concludes, “Those who were the most anxious about their marriages had 11 percent more cortisol and 11 to 22 percent lower T-cell levels than those who were less anxious. The lead researcher said the results are most likely linked since increased cortisol can reduce T-cell production.” Partnerships plagued with poor communication, jealousy, deceit, fear, anxiety, and conflicting goals all run the risk of creating a chronically stressful environment.

Depression: He may be “killing you softly with his song,” but he is doing some pretty serious damage with his words and actions too. A relationship clouded with mistrust or emotional abuse takes a toll on the partner’s emotional and physical well-being. When negativity leaves cracks in a person’s spirit, depression fills those empty spaces.

Related Link: [Hilary Duff and Mike Comrie Announce Their Separation](#)

In her article “5 Ways a Bad Relationship Can Make You Sick,” relationship expert Marcelina Hardy writes, “When you are arguing with your boyfriend and feeling sick, you don’t love your life. Your love should be something that enriches you. It should make you smile in the morning and feel grateful at night. It should be what lowers stress rather than create it. For these reasons, take steps to improve your relationship, so it doesn’t make you sick. If you’ve tried to solve the

problems and it's just not working, it may be time to consider how much you really need this person in your life."

If you are sustaining a relationship and love with a partner who is overly critical, constantly suspicious, possessive, or physically violent, it could be making you sick. An unhealthy relationship invites feelings of hopelessness, a fear of abandonment, and a feeling of loss for unfulfilled goals or any hope for happiness.

Dating Advice: It's Time to Break Up

Weakened immune system: One of the advantages of being in a healthy relationship is a euphoric energy that fuels your day. When depression invades your enthusiasm for life, it affects your lifestyle choices. Exercise becomes a burden, and healthy eating becomes a distraction. Before you know it, you are facing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, weight gain, and a compromised immune system that is unable to ward off infections and disease.

"Unhealthy relationships can be like that," writes licensed professional counselor and registered nurse Suzanne Jones in her article "Is Your Relationship Making You Sick." She elaborates on this dating advice: "Sometimes, in an effort to be supportive and helpful, we find ourselves drowning in unrealistic and endless demands. We can't bear the thought of hurting this person or letting him down, so we try and try to make adjustments to salvage the relationship. We go to extraordinary lengths to keep this person happy. We sacrifice our peace and happiness for theirs."

Related Link: [How to Be Mindful When It Comes to Relationships and Love](#)

"In an effort to be patient and helpful, we may be putting

ourselves in harm's way," she adds. "Like the rescue of a drowning person, we are at risk when we get too close and tangled up in an unhealthy person's problems and issues. These relationships can turn us into a physical and emotional mess."

Throughout the years, love has been blamed for a number of things. Sometimes, it stinks, hurts, and even bites. At times, people have been accused of giving it a bad name. However, a healthy, strong, solid, and positive relationship isn't like that. It enhances your life and improves health. If the love you have in your life contributes to stress, depression, or a weakened immune system, it's time to reevaluate and consider whether you need to make a change.

For more information about and articles by our Hope After Divorce relationship experts, click [here](#).

Expert Relationship Advice: What's In a Name?





By Toni Coleman, LCSW, CMC for [Hope After Divorce](#)

I recently received the letter below and offered my expert relationship advice in my response.

Expert Relationship Advice from Hope After Divorce

Dear Toni,

I have a problem that many people might feel is one of my own making and something I should be able to deal with myself. However, I haven't been successful so far, and it's causing a real disconnect between me and my fiancé.

This will be my second marriage; I was married many years ago for about twelve years and have been divorced for over five. When I married the first time, I took my husband's name. Many women did that back then, and since it was important to my ex, it was an easy decision for me to make. Following our divorce, I kept the name because it had become my identity; it was my children's last name; and more importantly, it was how I was

known professionally.

Related Link: [Can Love Be Better the Second Time Around?](#)

Now, my fiancé wants me to drop my last name and take his. He has said that my reluctance to do so points to my lack of commitment and to our future relationship and love together. I have explained my reasons for wanting to keep it, primarily my professional identity and recognition, which is very important, especially in the virtual world where I have a strong presence. My identity is also wrapped up in my name, as I have been this person for 17 years. Not changing it would change nothing else about who I am, who we are together, and how strong my commitment to him is.

I have presented my case in detail and, at times, have grown so weary of the resulting power struggle that I have thought about just giving in or calling off the engagement to see if he will relent. Our relationship is truly good on so many levels, and I don't want to lose him over this issue. We are at a dead end here. I would love your thoughts and any expert relationship advice you might have on how to go about resolving this stalemate.

– Identity Challenged

How To Compromise In Your Relationship And Love Life

Dear Identity Challenged,

What's in a name? Apparently, much more than many of us give any real thought to until we are put in a position like the one you now find yourself in. Our names contribute to our identity: where we come from, our history and experiences, who we are connected to by blood or choice, and how others get to know and define us. In other words, our name is significant to our sense of self and is therefore something we don't easily

relinquish. This is why you are not able to easily “deal with this” yourself.

Ironically, your fiancé appears to share your strong name attachment, so much so that he is willing to risk your relationship and love rather than have you be called by another man’s name. Yet while you have “presented your case in detail,” he hasn’t been able to acknowledge your feelings, even though he clearly hears and understands them. Therefore, I have to wonder what else might be going on here.

Related Link: [Learning to Compromise: My Way or the Highway!](#)

You have shared that the relationship is good on many levels, but I feel I must play the Devil’s Advocate here. What makes it so good? How well do you discuss and come to compromises on other issues? Do you find that you often give in because a problem just doesn’t feel important enough to get into conflict over? Are you generally a “pick your battles” kind of person who can let things go and let the other person win more often than not?

The reason I ask these questions is because I have to wonder if the relationship works because he is dominant and you are submissive, because your yin works well with his yang. If so, this dynamic could work very well until you encounter an issue that is a potential deal breaker, as this one may be. You shared that you have considered calling it quits even though you don’t want to lose him, and he has expressed concerns that you are not really into him and the relationship. This definitely brings you at least close to deal breaker territory!

If I am even slightly warm, challenging your status quo could help you move towards an answer. Sit down again for another talk, but this time, talk about your relationship and love in general, how you often discuss and resolve issues together, and how it feels for him when he is asked to compromise on

something that's important. If he gets defensive, gently point this out and remind him that you are on the same side and really want to understand how he feels and what he needs from you.

That brings me to a key issue here: what he is looking for in a partnership. Have you been the easy and compliant woman he prefers until recently? It's also possible that the whole name issue is a loaded one for him and that he isn't even completely tuned in to why. So exploring what his name means to him and what the significance of a woman taking her spouse's name is for him should yield some useful information.

Related Link: [Hang Tough – You'll Get Through It](#)

It might be hard to have this discussion without an objective third party. Premarital counseling is widely accepted and often recommended to couples of all ages and marital histories. Finding an experienced therapist to help you work through this issue is certainly a middle-step to consider before walking away. In addressing it together, you will inevitably wander into discussions about your different personality styles and how you generally discuss and negotiate issues together. The answer you're looking for will be found in the overall way you communicate your wants and needs to one another and whether or not you both have a willingness to be there and compromise for one another.

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Expert Relationship Advice: I'm Divorced, But He's Married



By Toni Coleman, LCSW, CMC for [Hope After Divorce](#)

I recently received the letter below and offered my expert relationship advice in my response.

Expert Relationship Advice from Hope After Divorce

Dear Toni,

Somehow, I have fallen in love with a married man. I know what

you must be thinking: that if I knew he was married, and I walked into it anyway, I did this to myself and need to just accept the consequences. If so, you would be right, but I honestly didn't have the intent to go down this path. It more or less evolved from us being co-workers and friends. Ironically, he was the one who I leaned on a lot through my ex's infidelity and subsequent divorce. It was a time of great vulnerability for me, and he was just so great; in fact, he was everything my ex had never been. After hours of talking, long lunches, drinks after work and an increased frequency in texting, we shared a kiss. From there, it was too easy.

Related Link: [How to Be Mindful When It Comes to Relationships and Love](#)

He is a good man, the father of three children and spouse to a nice woman. I know they have had their issues and problems, but he has never been unfaithful to her in the past because he is not that kind of guy. He has told me that he did not intend this either and feels guilty and torn about continuing, even though I know he values our relationship and love. He loves his family, is concerned about his children, and knows he would take a terrible financial hit if he were to divorce.

I'm hoping you can help us figure out what we should do next. Speaking for myself, I would love it if he could be free and we could have a life together. I know this is very selfish, but it's the truth. However, I am not exactly sure how he feels. He has told me he cares about me and has demonstrated this in many ways, but I know he is devoted to his family. I have considered just breaking it off, asking him to go to counseling with me, and telling him I can't remain in limbo while giving him a period of time to tell his wife and begin a separation or else. The last one is a bit of an ultimatum, but at least I could be sure of where he really stands. Any insights, suggestions or wisdom gained from your experience working with situations like this would be greatly appreciated.

– In Love's Limbo

Related Link: [Your Soul Needs Nourishment](#)

What's Next For This Relationship and Love

Dear In Love's Limbo,

Wow, your ex did this to you, yet you have let yourself be a part of doing this to another wife. You mention the irony, but I don't sense much remorse on your part, and that is a bit troubling. You also say "he" is married to a nice woman and that he has never done this before because he is a nice guy. What does that make you?

My intent is not to dump a lot of guilt or criticism on you; I am instead asking hard questions in order to get you to step beyond your present perspective and take a larger and more brutally honest view of the situation in which you now find yourself. This did not just happen – it is the result of a series of steps taken over time, each of which could have been different if either of you had made a different choice. Seeing this as a choice is very important, as you are not a helpless victim here, and that means you can make choices that will help you to work towards what is best for all involved.

I get the sense from several things you have written that your lover has been expressing ambivalence and has suggested that he does not want to continue. It also seems apparent that you do not share these feelings and would have no hesitation to move this relationship and love forward once his marriage is out of the way. The reason these impressions are important is that, if I am correct, your letter might be motivated by a desire to find a way to convince him to remain involved with you and end his marriage because his reluctance to do so is becoming very apparent to you. If this is the case, any

suggestions I might offer would not be addressing the real issues and dynamics and would not help either of you in the long run.

Related Link: [Love Advice: Is Your Life Working?](#)

Therefore, I recommend that you begin with an honest discussion about what both of you want. This will require that you create the right environment and give him the space to share his feelings honestly and without fear of backlash. After all, would you want to be with a man who feels ambivalent or pressured to be with you? If his heart is with his family, what of any real value would be left for you? There is also all the collateral damage that would result if he were to break up his marriage and family life. Would it be worth it to him if he only has a half-hearted desire to be with you? Do you really want a future with someone who isn't fully committed to you and the relationship?

The truth may be very painful to accept, and you would be left to grieve if a decision is made to end your affair. I suspect you are feeling a bit desperate to avoid this pain, and that is understandable. But weigh that against a possible lifetime of resentment on the part of your partner and continued grief over never having the relationship and love you had hoped for. Somehow, a quick and clean cut seems like the better option. However, you will need to really listen to what he has to say before you will know what you need to do.

For more information about expert relationship advice from Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).

How to Be Mindful When It Comes to Relationships and Love



By Lisa LaBelle for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Relationships and love begin at a young age for many of us, long before we are adults. Luckily, there are words of dating advice, guidance, and wisdom we can share to help each other through these sometimes murky waters. After all, we are all navigating our way through relationships – whether they be family, romantic, or platonic – in one way or another.

The Importance of Mindfulness in Relationships and Love

One specific word I find essential, helpful, and a miracle worker when it comes to relationships and love is “mindfulness.” Why? Here’s a broad definition that will hopefully answer this question:

Mindfulness means to consciously paying attention to what you are experiencing (feeling and thinking) as it’s happening. You must be in the present moment within your mind. It means to be fully anchored in the moment, leaving what has happened in the past or what’s lying ahead in the future. To be mindful means to be aware of your thoughts and emotions and then to choose how to behave and respond through your words, actions, body language, etc. It means to recognize others around you as they are without judgment.

Related Link: [Changing Your Life in Those Quiet Moments](#)

A positive consequence of being mindful is feeling peaceful rather than overwhelmed by your thoughts, memories, emotions, worries, concerns, fears, or distractions. In addition, mindfulness gives you the authentic feeling that you are the captain of your own ship; you are responsible for your own life and the choices you make. You gain your own power, which is essential to living an authentic life. This includes making positive decisions when dating, whether you’re playing the field or in a romantic, committed relationship.

Celebrity Exes Nick Cannon and Mariah Carey

Unfortunately, Nick Cannon and Mariah Carey weren’t able to practice mindfulness in order to rebuild their marriage. After a lot of ups and downs, the comedian filed for divorce. Now,

the celebrity exes will begin a new and significant journey of co-parenting. Hopefully, they will realize the importance of working together, supporting one another, and doing their individual parts to raise their children peacefully. It will be essential for them to be mindful of their own thoughts, actions, behaviors, responses, decisions, and choices for their own well-being and that of their beautiful children.

Mindfulness is naturally becoming a common practice among health and wellness professionals, counselors, relationship experts, and life coaches. You can clearly see why in the description above. If you wish to have a healthy relationship and love, choosing to be mindful of your own thoughts, actions, and feelings each day will be a significant benefit for you and your partner. Remember, you are 50 percent of a relationship. Your other half must also do their part to mirror your practice of being mindful. When we are mindful of what is going on around us and how we are choosing to respond, feel, think, and behave ourselves, we are likely to feel more connected. We engage in healthier and happier patterns of behavior. These positive patterns will serve us well if we will do our part to practice mindfulness, so make it a daily choice.

Related Link: [5 Ways to Turn “Me” to “We”](#)

Our brains are powerful. It is up to us to guide them in a positive direction. We each have the innate power to literally change the way we think. Hopefully, celebrity exes Cannon and Carey will choose to be mindful as they become co-parents for years to come. Begin to be more mindful, and see how your own relationships and love life will evolve and change for the better. It starts with YOU!

For more information about our Hope After Divorce relationship experts, click [here](#).



Lisa LaBelle is co-founder and co-executive director of Hope After Divorce and DivorceSupportCenter.com. She holds a B.S. degree in Education, and is completing her master's degree in clinical mental health counseling with an emphasis in marriage, child, and family therapy. Lisa is a family and child advocate. She is co-author and co-editor of Hope After Divorce and Divorce Experts Weigh In. Lisa is the co-host of the Life After Divorce CL3 Agency blogtalk radio show. She is a contributing expert for DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, CupidsPulse.com, and Newport Lifestyle Magazine. You can contact Lisa by visiting www.divorcesupportcenter.com.

Kindness No Matter What





By Janeen Diamond for [Hope After Divorce](#)

“It seems that, whenever I allow myself to react without thinking, someone is watching from nearby who knows me. Can you relate?”

I was in a fast food restaurant with my family the other night, and everything seemed to be going wrong for me. The tomato basil soup I ordered wasn't quite ready, so I was told it would be just a few minutes before it was brought out to me. Well, 20 minutes later – after my family had nearly finished their chicken noodle soup – mine finally arrived...cold!

Now, I was already annoyed about the wait, and, oh yeah, a pita bread incident, and I really didn't want to have to send my soup back, but I did! Cold soup just doesn't hit the spot when it's 28 degrees outside. And, silly me, I actually expected it to be hot after waiting 20 minutes, right?

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Healthy Everything!"

When the waitress finally brought my heated-up soup back to my table, she sat it down in front of me, looked me in the eye, and said without hesitation, "Let me know if that's good enough for you." Yikes! My daughter had pointed out to me earlier that I was making the waitress scared... but now, it was me who was scared. I would have eaten the soup had it been frozen at this point. Luckily, it was just right.

Relationship Advice for the New Year

As I pondered what had happened that night, I realized both the waitress and I could have been a little more kind to each other. I don't like myself much when I allow my emotions to get the best of me and I wind up taking it out on other people. But here I was letting it happen. And she struck back. It made me think about how we can be unkind in all of our relationships, even with the people we love. Wouldn't you agree that our relationships with everyone – even those we don't know or even like – deserve our respect? After all, respect is one of the only things that keeps our world from crumbling into complete and utter chaos.

I decided right then and there that I'm going to work harder during this new year to be more kind to everyone I meet. So, as some general relationship advice, here are my rules to myself. You can borrow them if you'd like:

- I will smile at every person I encounter;
- I will offer an acknowledgement to let them know they are important;
- If someone is less than kind to me, I will try to brighten their day with a kind word;
- And if a person annoys me in some way, I will ask them cheerfully how their day is going.

I kept these rules quite simple for a reason: so I could remember them and have only a few small things that I require of myself. That way, it's more likely I will actually stick to them.

Related Link: [Single Traits to Lose So You Can Move Forward in a Relationship](#)

I consider myself a generally happy, kind person. But I am here to tell you that stress and pressure can get the best of any of us. We are all capable of acting annoyed, put out, angry, and unkind. It seems that whenever I allow myself to react without thinking, someone is watching from nearby who knows me. Can you relate? Maybe next time, I'll tell you about the time I said something thoughtless about my husband's ex-wife only to discover she was sitting at the table behind me. Yep, it actually happened!

What We Can Learn from Celebrity Divorce

Celebrity and well-known chef Giada De Laurentiis recently announced that she and her husband are divorcing. They have been married for 11 years and have a young daughter. They have stated that their divorce comes with much sadness. However, they are committed to focusing on the future with a desire for their family to heal and be happy. They say this is giving them the much-needed strength to move ahead. This celebrity divorce is a great example of how couples can choose to move through a split. It is a choice to be respectful, kind, and mindful of others, even during a tough breakup.

My best relationship advice is to remember to be kind. We live in a stressful world. Let's cut each other some slack and work on helping each other feel like we matter. When I'm feeling stressed or overwhelmed, all it takes for me is a smile and a kind word from someone, and it changes my entire day. Keep in

mind that, when someone is rude or impatient with you, it's not about you. That person is most likely in need of some love or simply some appreciation. See if you can be the one to help them get it.

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).



Janeen Diamond, author of Save Your Marriage in 30, was a newscaster for KUTV News until 2001. Since that time, she has been actively producing commercials and special programming through her company, Your TV Spot. She has hosted several television and internet productions and has been a spokesperson for several products and companies. She is a leader over the youth in her church and takes a special interest in helping kids stay on track with their lives. Janeen is currently co-creating "Teen Impact TV," a website for high school students to give them a creative and emotional outlet. She is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com. Follow her on Twitter @janeendiamond and www.facebook.com/janeen.diamond.

Solo Parenting: New Year, New You!





By Cynthia MacGregor for [Hope After Divorce](#)

If you didn't make any New Year's resolutions, don't feel bad. Many people don't. In fact, I happen to be one of them. But just because you didn't make any resolutions, that doesn't mean you can't make any changes.

Most resolutions get broken anyhow – and pretty quickly at that. But you don't need to make a resolution in order to make a change. Think about your life as it is currently or as it has been for the past 12 months. Are you satisfied with it? If not, what would you like to change about it?

What's stopping you?

Related Link: [Cupid's Weekly Round-Up: Find True Love in the New Year](#)

Of course, if you'd like to be living in a mansion with servants and what's stopping you is that you only make so many dollars (fill in the blank) a week/month/year, then you're dreaming impractically. Instead think of the things you'd like to change that are *feasible*. Plausible. Possible. And then

I'll ask you the same question: What's stopping you?

Would you like a better relationship with your kids? Do you think it's impossible as long as they maintain their attitudes and there's nothing *you* can do? Think again.

Yes, they're the ones with the attitudes, the ones with all the eye-rolling, the ones who are being smart-mouthed or bratty or just plain obnoxious. But have you sat them down and had a talk? A non-judgmental, non-accusatory talk? Have you elicited from them the specific reasons they behave and talk the way they do? If they can't come up with a single one, maybe they'll realize that they're wrong. Maybe they'll change. It's not impossible. And if they do come up with some reason and it reflects on you, maybe there's something *you* can do that's different. (Hey, if you can ask them to change, isn't it reasonable to ask yourself to change too?)

What about having a better relationship with your ex in the year ahead? Is that something you'd like? I don't mean for you to get back together or anything of the sort. I just mean for you to normalize the way you relate to each other, so every request to change visiting days doesn't escalate into a skirmish.

Leaving aside your relationship with your kids and your ex, what about the way you feel about *yourself*? What do you like about yourself? Focus on it. Expand on it. What *don't* you like about yourself? Work on changing it. Do you want to be a less cynical person? A more forgiving person? A more accepting person? Give yourself an attitude makeover.

You're a single mom with kids, and you're not likely to change that in the New Year unless you get married or move in with someone—which is not a change that can come from within so isn't under discussion here. But what you *can* change about yourself is your *attitude* toward that status. If you've been desperately looking for a new husband, you can work to become

comfortable in your own skin, a self-sufficient person, a person who's happy with herself and her life. And if you've been in I-hate-men, men-all-stink mode, maybe it's time to let it go and realize that one bad marriage doesn't mean the whole barrel of apples is rotten.

Related Link: [Celebrity Relationships in Need of a New Year's Resolution](#)

What else would you like to change about your life? Which of those things *can* you change?

Well, what's stopping you?

It's a new year. How about a new you for the New Year?

Get started!

For more information on Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).



Cynthia MacGregor is a multi-published author. She has over 100 books to her credit. They include "After Your Divorce," "Divorce Helpbook for Kids," "Divorce Helpbook for Teens," "Solo Parenting," "'Step' This Way," and others. Forthcoming books include "The One-Parent Family," "Why Are Mommy and Daddy Getting Divorced," and "Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore." She hosted and produced the TV show "Solo Parenting," which was broadcast in South

Florida over WHDT. Cynthia writes for [HopeAfterDivorce.org](#), [FamilyShare.com](#) and [LAFamily.com](#).

P.A.C.E. For New Holiday Traditions



By Amie Greenberg, JD, MBA for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Here is a four-step process to help divorced families handle traditions and changes during the holidays.

P: Planning and Positive New Traditions

- Planning the holiday schedule in advance reduces the chances for miscommunication and gives parents time to iron out any conflicts.
- Plan something special for the children over the holidays, so they have something to look forward to with each parent.
- Take some “me” time for you to rest, relax and

recuperate.

- Focus on the positive aspects of these changes. Your children have two parents who love them and want to spend holiday time with them. Involve your children in planning and experiencing new activities and holiday traditions.

Related Link: [Readying Your Single Self for the Holidays](#)

A : Acknowledge Sadness and Differences

- Anytime there is a life-changing event, such as a divorce, family traditions and routines are affected. Children see the family unit as broken. Recognize and acknowledge that it's sad that you won't be together over the holidays.
- The disruption of holiday and family traditions is difficult. Children generally want to be with both parents during this special time of year. Help your children deal with these emotions by talking about the changes.

C: Cooperation and Communication

- Try to cooperate with scheduling and have added flexibility which reduces conflict. If you can't work it out, let it go.
- If possible, do something special with the children for the other parent. A simple card or dinner during the holidays sends a positive message to your kids.
- Allow the other parent to easily communicate by phone or Skype with the children over the holidays. A lack of communication during the holidays can lead to conflict. This is an easy way of co-parenting.

Related Link: [How to Get Over a Broken Heart During the Holidays](#)

E: Encourage and Empower

- Children often feel divided and torn in a divorce, so give your children permission to enjoy holiday time with the other parent. This way, children can look forward to spending time with each parent without feeling guilty.
- Encourage your children to talk about their feelings and give them say in what they want over the holidays.

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).



Amie Greenberg, JD, MBA has a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Pitzer College. She has a JD from the University of La Verne, College of Law and an MBA from the University of La Verne College of Business and Public Management. She now practices family law in Beverly Hills, California. Amie and her mother Barbara Greenberg, MD, authored I Am Divorced ... But I'm Still Me books after personally and professionally experiencing the impact of divorce. They recognized a need to acknowledge how children viewed their world before, during, and after divorce. Their hope is to help other families who are going through the pain of divorce. You can contact Amie for legal services at amiegreenberglaw.com. Follow her on Twitter @4childofdivorce. Amie is a contributing expert at Divorce Support Center and their Director of Community Outreach with her blog Divorce Corner™. Amie also contributes as an advisory board member of Divorce Support Center. More information about the authors, their books, and their blog is available at <http://www.AChildsViewofDivorce.com>.

Best Friends and the Search for Love



By Patricia Bubash, Ed.S., LPC for [Hope After Divorce](#)

“He is my best friend.” These words came from the lips of a wife. It isn’t the first time I have heard a wife say this about her other half, but it is the first time that I really thought about the impact of a “best friend” relationship in a marriage – and even more impacting, in a remarriage.

Statistics show that most divorced men and women are still desirous of finding a lifelong partner. More than half of

first-time divorced spouses choose to walk down the aisle again. We really don't need to read the statistics; observation is enough. The overwhelming number of dating sites, divorce support groups, and friends trying to "set" single friends up easily convinces us.

Research will show we indeed live in a couples' society. Most people feel the need to have a partner, a companion, a person to share interests, socialization, and good and bad situations – a soul mate. Finding that someone special is a desire shared among the single. We are inundated via all modes of communication – television, radio, written word, and personal conversations – with the necessity of "being in love." Unhappily for the love-seeker, many of their hopes for the real thing are relationships founded "in lust" rather than "in love."

Related Link: [Daniel Radcliffe Says Girlfriend Erin Darke Is "Definitely" His Best Friend](#)

An author friend, Pam Evans, is an expert on finding love. Her problem wasn't finding love but *keeping* it! As a self-proclaimed "multiple marrier," she is familiar with the search for a soul mate, a replacement for a previous spouse. In her book *Ring ExChange*, she shares her misdirected view of what was important in a relationship. It was this perception that led to her four failed marriages. A good thing for the readers of her book, she didn't give up easily.

A lesson from her book coincides with my premise to find a best friend first. If the new love meets her criteria, then chances are high that a soul mate will follow. She provides these words of wisdom: "When two individuals approach a relationship first in the spirit of friendship, then true bonding leading to the deepest unconditional love, where affection, respect, compassion, sensuality, and kindness join together, can develop." I reread this lengthy quote several times to really "get" the depth of it. But, once I did, I

heartedly agreed with her “friendship first” suggestion.

We know, typically, a physical attraction is usually the “first” connector for two people looking for a serious, long-term relationship with the end result being marriage. Through our own personal experiences or those of friends, we know that physical attraction is short-lived. No matter how gorgeous or how handsome, if our choice is based on exterior qualities rather than best friend qualities, our relationship will soon end, and a new search will begin again.

Related Link: [Can Love Be Better the Second Time Around?](#)

A close friend who has a PhD in counseling with many years of private practice and is also one of the divorced who is “searching” shared some personal and professional insights: “In the past, I found myself trying to be who my date wanted me to be. I found myself trying to please, to make him happy. In doing that, I wasn’t making me happy, and I was being dishonest.”

I think in our anticipation of making up for the loss of our marriage, our need for finding love again, a replacement for that lost love, we aren’t always true to “me.” First, I believe it is essential to be a best friend to yourself. Then, find that “best friend” who will be a true love.

Returning to this “best friend first then love” theory, ask yourself this question: “What qualities or virtues do I need in deciding that someone has achieved best friend status with me?” For me, it is the following:

1. Be supportive and honest. I don’t want someone to agree with me just because disagreeing might hurt my feelings.
2. Be willing to listen to me *without* giving advice. My view of advice: “Fools never heed it, and wise men don’t need it.” So skip the advice, just listen.

3. Let me know about the spinach between my teeth!

4. Encourage me in my goals.

When you find that someone who fills these four (my best friend) criteria, I believe you have found someone worthy of being your partner. Also worth thinking about: Don't rush it! Best friends tend to evolve over time, but once in place, they last forever. One day, you will be repeating the words of the woman whom I interviewed: "He is my best friend."

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).



Patricia Bubash received her M.Ed. in Counseling from the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Working with students and families has been her true calling for over thirty years. For more than twenty years she has presented workshops at the community college on a variety of topics relating to parenting issues, self-esteem and issues relative to divorce. Patricia is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Missouri and, a Stephen Minister. She

submits a variety of articles related to relationships, marriage and divorce to several internet sites, and, frequently, is interviewed on internet radio stations. Volunteerism, writing and family are most significant in her life. Patricia writes for DivorceSupportCenter.com, HopeAfterDivorce.org, CupidPulse.com, andFamilyShare.com. She can be reached at patriciathecounselor@successfulsecondmarriages.com.

Making Special Occasions Comfortable for Children After Divorce



By Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN for [Hope After Divorce](#)

It's very important to make special occasions comfortable for children after a divorce. You may find it's better to have birthday parties or Christmas morning at both homes, and most children will love the extra attention. However, there will be some events that can't be divided, and that's where communication between the parents is essential.

Children don't get a say as to what's going to happen due to a divorce, so it's up to the parents to always keep their best

interests in mind. When your child has a dance recital, a school play, sporting events, dances, and even graduation, they will want both parents to be in attendance. You don't want everyone to be tense due to who will be attending the event either.

Related Link: [Brandi Glanville Talks About Dating as a Single Parent](#)

There are many children from divorced families with sad stories to share. They will tell you how their parents were fighting during a certain gathering. Some children will stop being involved in various activities just so they can avoid the conflict that will arise when their parents show up at the same event for them.

Other children have stories of one parent refusing to attend a special occasion due to the other parent planning to be there. A child should never be placed into such a difficult situation where they have to choose one parent over the other! It can backfire on the demanding parent too because their children may end up resenting them for acting in such a manner.

It doesn't matter how old the children are either – it will still affect them. I have seen women cry on their wedding day because their mother wouldn't attend the ceremony if their father was walking her down the aisle. Young children are deeply affected by this type of conflict. Don't assume that they don't know what's going on, as children tend to pick up on many issues that parents don't give them credit for.

For many newly divorced couples, this can be very hard to do. They may still be struggling with their own emotions from the divorce. It can be difficult to see the ex-spouse at events. It's okay to feel this way, but you need to be honest about your feelings. You may express to your child that it's difficult to see their other parent at the event but that you're willing to give it a try for their sake. They will

appreciate both your honesty and your effort.

Related Link: [Ryan Phillippe Says He's 'Proud' of How He and Reese Co-Parent](#)

It's the parents who really want their children to be happy who will work to make special occasions comfortable for everyone after a divorce. They may not want to sit together at the event or hang out afterwards, but they can be respectful of each other. They can also set a very good example for other people on how to always put the needs of your children first.

For most couples, this will get easier as time goes by. The wounds from the divorce will start to heal. They may even become somewhat of friends as they are able to focus on the good things about each other again. This is a process that is going to take some work though. It won't just happen, so a conscious effort by both of the parents has to be there. Don't let your own foolish pride prevent your children from being able to shine at their special occasions.

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).

Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN, is a Registered Nurse, Life Skills Expert, Speaker and Award Winning Author. She is the owner of Open Pages Publishing, which includes her series of "The 4-1-1" books on Life Skills, Step Parenting, and Surviving Teenhood. Michele is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com.

Your Soul Needs Nourishment



By Janeen Diamond for [Hope After Divorce](#)

“Stay in bed a few extra minutes in the morning and listen to the birds chirping outside your window...”

Fall is my favorite time of the year. Besides the cooler temperatures and beautiful colors in the mountains, I love what it represents. The holidays are coming, and family time is more prevalent. I get to make soup for dinner more often than not, and it's time to turn the fireplaces on and bring out the blankets. Plus, it's by far the best time of the year for driving around in my convertible PT Cruiser with the top down. I tell myself it is good for my soul; it makes me feel happy and alive. And if it's too cold for the top to be down, I put it down anyway and blast the heater. I know that there are others out there who do the very same thing!

I believe whatever it is that makes us happy – the small pleasures, in particular – is what we should do on a regular basis. Life can be full of challenges and trials, heartache and sadness, hard work and stress. We have to take control of our own happiness and involve ourselves in things that bring us joy. We need to feed our own souls and look for those little things that make us tick. And while we're at it, I think we should help our family members do the same.

Related Link: [Clear the Clutter](#)

Make a list right now of the things you would do more often if you had time – and then make the time and start doing them *now*. Here is a short list to get you started:

- Do something creative. Attack a difficult recipe or make some clever Christmas ornaments.
- Play with your pets! Put on a warm sweater and take them for a walk or to a dog park.
- Get in your cozy robe and sit by the fire and paint your toenails.
- Stay in bed a few extra minutes in the morning and listen to the birds chirping outside your window.
- Plan a pie-making party with some of your friends.

I decided a few years ago to begin making the holiday season less stressful and more meaningful. I stopped giving such expensive gifts and started focusing more on enjoying this time of the year and helping others enjoy it as well. I would rather spend time eating lunch with my friends, having parties with my family, and attending events that instill the Spirit into my soul rather than spend my time shopping, paying bills, and worrying about what to buy for everyone.

Related Link: [Date Idea: "Fall" in Love](#)

Take this special time to begin making a change. Focus on becoming healthier and happier...whatever that means for you personally. Those around you will benefit greatly too. And

once the New Year hits, you'll be prepared to continue moving forward with more ideas that will help you nourish your soul. Make it an ongoing activity. Always be searching for new experiences in life and ways to enjoy being alive. When you feel nourished – body *and* soul – you will be available for yourself and others to love, to serve, and to make life better. So get going on your list!

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Solo Parenting: Divorce with Children



By Cynthia MacGregor for Hope After Divorce

Celebrity moms Tori Spelling and Kendra Wilkinson are both contemplating divorce due to their unfaithful husbands Dean McDermott and Hank Baskett. They have a lot to consider and process before making the life-changing decision to divorce. Not only will it change their own lives, but it will change their children's lives. They say divorce changes who children are – and that's a very serious reality we parents must not take lightly. A second chance is certainly worth the effort when kids are concerned, as long as there is no abuse happening (physical, emotional, or mental) in the home.

If Spelling and Wilkinson do end up divorcing their husbands, here is a reality check of what they will be facing as divorced parents with young children. Learning to respectfully co-parent together is essential for the well-being of their kids.

Now that you're divorced – or perhaps you're still going through the legalities of the divorce process, but at any rate, you and your husband no longer share a roof or a bed – the dynamics of your family have changed. Whether you have one child or more, it's just you and your child or children, and you've likely become aware that they're interacting with you in different ways than before.

Related Link: [Keep Talking to Your Kids After Divorce](#)

How? Well, actually there are several possibilities, but they mainly fall into two categories. One is that they seem to be clingy and staying closer to you than ever before. The other is that they are distancing themselves from you. How can two opposite reactions result from the same circumstances? Easy! Different personalities perceive the divorce with different sets of eyes...and, accordingly, react differently.

Clingy: Kids who fall into this group are afraid that you'll leave him too. Being self-centered, a child will perceive the divorce in terms of Daddy having left him rather than this being between Dad and you. The child will cling tightly to you to avoid this fear.

Distancing: Again, the child perceives the divorce in terms of Daddy having left him and is afraid you'll leave him next, but this child, having a different personality, distances himself from you rather than clings to you. His methodology is to get used to losing you before it happens, so that when you leave him, it won't catch him by surprise and hurt as badly as when Daddy left.

Then, there is the child – typically a little older – who comprehends that the divorce was between you and Daddy but blames you for making Daddy leave. This child will distance himself from you out of anger.

The child may also act out as well as being cold and distant because he is testing you. He is trying to see if you will

leave if he does his best to push you away. He doesn't really *want* you to leave; he's just testing you to see if you will.

Related Link: [Source Says Kendra Wilkinson Is Going 'Back and Forth' About Divorce Decision](#)

Togetherness: A few visits to a good therapist who specializes in children or families may be in order, but there are things you can do on your own as well.

- Have another talk with the child. Kids don't always "get" the concept of divorce the first time it's explained to them. Your child needs to understand that Daddy didn't "leave him" and that, even if you were the one who asked for the divorce, it's not as cut-and-dry as "it's your fault." And above all, he needs to understand that you're not going to leave him – ever.
- Get involved in a project with the child. Any kind of project will do: scrapbooking, redecorating his room, a knitting or crocheting project, or a gardening project – anything that will have you two working closely together.
- Be yourself, unchanged and unchanging. Show the child through your actions that you are still Mom. You are still loving; you have not changed; and you are not going anywhere – no matter what happens and no matter how the child behaves.

Time will help heal the situation. You can do your part to make it better too. As with so much else in parenting, patience is called for, but by now, you should be an old hand at that.



Cynthia MacGregor is a multi-published author. She has over 100 books to her credit. They include "After Your Divorce," "Divorce Helpbook for Kids," "Divorce Helpbook for Teens," "Solo Parenting," "'Step This Way," and others. Forthcoming books include "The One-Parent Family," "Why Are Mommy and Daddy Getting Divorced," and "Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore." She hosted and produced the TV show "Solo Parenting," which was broadcasted in South Florida over WHDT.

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Child Expenses After Divorce





By Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN for [Hope After Divorce](#)

The expenses for caring for children continue to rise, and that doesn't make it any easier for divorced parents. Each parent attempts to keep their own household going, and at the same time, they often try to share expenses for their children. This may be court ordered or due to a mutual agreement between the parents.

Whether the divorcing couple is a celebrity couple in the public eye or a private couple, the children's needs and welfare should be the number one priority. You must accept and embrace the reality that your children's expenses to live will not change. They are our greatest responsibility and deserve the best care and protection we can give them, whether married or divorced. Some divorced celebrity couples, like Demi Moore and Bruce Willis and Reese Witherspoon and Ryan Phillippe, seem to put their children's best interest ahead of their own as they co-parent together.

Related Link: [Ryan Phillippe Says He's 'Proud' of How He and Reese Co-Parent](#)

Routine check-ups at both the doctor's office and the dentist are essential for your children. One of the parents should have both medical and dental coverage on the children, as the cost of this type of preventative care out of pocket is very high. If one of your children have an emergency for either place, it can be a bill you have to pay for a very long time.

Childcare is another expense that can add up when a divorce takes place. Perhaps one of the parents was the caregiver, and now both are in the workforce. The parents should decide on a childcare provider together. It may be a licensed facility, a nanny, or even a family member. The cost of childcare should be second to the quality of care that your children are receiving.

Inevitably, there will be additional expenses for your children. Who is going to pay for school clothing and supplies? Many parents who pay child support assume that they pay enough for such items with that monthly check. Yet it may be just enough to help the family with food and shelter. You don't want your children to go without due to lack of money.

Many children love to be involved in extracurricular activities as well. It can be sports, dance, or clubs. There will be expenses involved, including special clothing and shoes needed and even enrollment fees. Parents need to be willing to share these expenses so that their children can take part in such events.

Related Link: [Helping Your Child Through Divorce](#)

Summer is also a time when there are more expenses for children. They may want to go to swimming lessons, camping, or even to a summer camp. All of these things cost money, and someone has to pay it! Some feel the parent who makes more money should cover the cost. This is up to the parents though, as many want to do everything 50/50. Problems could arise when one parent can't afford their share.

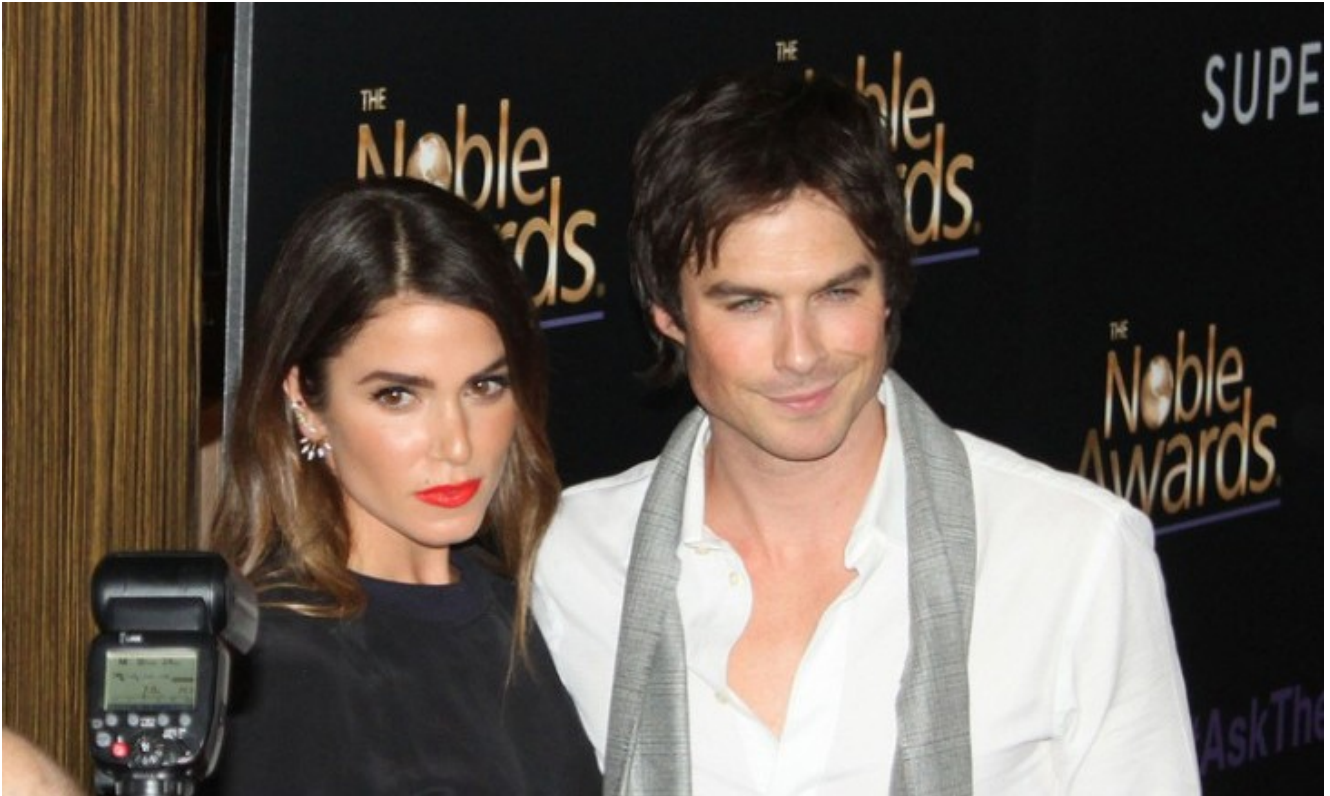
As you can see, there are plenty of additional expenses to consider for your children when you are divorced. Make sure you are willing to discuss these expenses with the other parent. You always want to do what's in the best interest of your children. Bottom line: Get as much in writing as you can when it comes to who will cover expenses. This way, everyone involved knows what to plan for.

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).

Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN, is a Registered Nurse, Life Skills Expert, Speaker and Award Winning Author. She is the owner of Open Pages Publishing, which includes her series of "The 4-1-1" books on Life Skills, Step Parenting, and Surviving Teenhood. Michele is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com.

Is Your Life Working?





By Janeen Diamond for [Hope After Divorce](#)

...it's impossible to have genuine, solid, meaningful relationships with other people if we don't think much of ourselves.

During an interview this week, I found myself talking about how important the relationships we have in our lives are. And as we talked, we brought up the fact that the relationship we have with ourselves is, by far, one of the most important ones we can have. Why? Because it's impossible to have genuine, solid, meaningful relationships with other people if we don't think much of ourselves.

Sisters Jessica and Ashlee Simpson are two good examples of celebrities who have both experienced divorce. What is inspiring about these two well-known siblings is that they each took time out for themselves afterwards. They took time for self-care to heal from the inside out, becoming the best they could be. Jessica and AshLee offer us hope that we can love ourselves even after a great loss. Then, we can find true love all over again.



Jessica Simpson and daughter Maxwell at sister Ashlee's wedding. Photo courtesy of Ashlee Simpson's Instagram.

If we can't trust ourselves, how are others going to trust us? If we don't like who we are, how are other people going to care for us? If we don't enjoy being alone with ourselves, how will others find it enjoyable to spend time with us? If we feel we have nothing to offer, why would we think anyone else believes we have value?

Related Link: [Don't Let the Good Guys Finish Last](#)

Consider the life you lead right now. Is it what you want? Are you doing the things that fulfill you and bring you joy? Do you wake up in the morning and look forward to the work you have to do? Do you plan to talk with friends today? Do you

have something fun planned for yourself? Will you offer service to someone today?

There are a lot of things we have control over in our lives. If something isn't working or if there are ways you could improve, decide right now to make a change and begin working toward it. I always like to start with small goals. Perhaps you want to feel more energetic and you just don't know what you're doing wrong, or maybe you have a habit of watching too much television and you want to start reading more.

So decide on one thing you would like to change in yourself, like "I want to have more energy!" And set three goals toward accomplishing it: I will have a set bedtime and get a full eight hours of sleep; I will begin a diet overhaul, but this week, I will simply eat two more servings of veggies every day; and I will begin exercising, but maybe this week, I will just start slow by walking twenty minutes each day.

Related Link: [Clear the Clutter](#)

Or if you want to stop watching so much TV, turn it off for just one hour a day and spend that time reading a book you've been interested in.

These are simple examples, but you get the idea. Simple fixes are usually the most far reaching and impactful in the long run because you have a greater chance of actually sticking with the changes. You might have physical, emotional, spiritual, or mental things you want to change. Think about what those desired changes are, and set up a plan to start improving a few things in your life. You may find your relationship with others will begin to improve drastically. You will begin to like yourself more – and that will lead to positive vibes towards family, friends, and co-workers.

Just remember that loving yourself will have a positive impact on everyone you know – especially you!

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).



Janeen Diamond, author of Save Your Marriage in 30, was a newscaster for KUTV News until 2001. Since that time, she has been actively producing commercials and special programming through her company, Your TV Spot. She has hosted several television and internet productions and has been a spokesperson for several products and companies. She is a leader over the youth in her church and takes a special interest in helping kids stay on track with their lives. Janeen is currently co-creating "Teen Impact TV," a website for high school students to give them a creative and emotional outlet. She is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com. Follow her on Twitter @janeendiamond and www.facebook.com/janeen.diamond.

**Don't Let the Good Guys
Finish Last**





By Janeen Diamond for [Hope After Divorce](#)

...we see a few redeeming qualities and think we've found The One. Well, let me tell you – some of us have found The One more than once!

What is it about us humans that we believe in order to be truly happy we need a significant other in our lives at all times? I think more of us need to work on being okay with being alone – at least until we know we're ready for the kind of relationship that will truly add to our own individual happiness. Now, you know me: I always try to keep a dose of positive attitude in everything I write. So today's message may come across as a bit of a downer, but I believe it is too important, so I'm going to go for it.

The divorce rate continues to climb, and I'm convinced it's because people – and particularly we women – get in such a rush to marry or re-marry, that we see a few redeeming qualities and think we've found The One. Well, let me tell you – some of us have found The One more than once!

We wind up telling ourselves things like, “He’s completely different than my last husband” or “He’s just so wonderful with my kids.” Maybe it’s more like, “Who cares if he drinks a little too much? He’s just so amazing” or “So what if his ex-wife hates him – he’s just misunderstood.” There’s also, “He’s irresponsible, but he’s so generous with his money,” “I don’t know that much about his past, but that’s just because he’s a very private person,” and “Yeah, I know he’s got a temper, but he has so much stress in his life. I can make everything all better.”

Related Link: [How To Behave Like a Gentleman](#)

Let me just say... Yes, of course, there are good men out there. I know many. But there are a lot of bad ones too, and the world of divorce seems to make them surface in droves.

I don’t make it a habit of recommending books, but I came across one that I actually want my youngest daughter to read before she even starts dating. That means I think every woman, married or dating, should read it too before she overlooks the warning signs or so she can finally realize why she’s been beating her head against the wall trying to make the relationship work. It’s called *How to Spot a Dangerous Man Before You Get Involved*. And boy, is it an eye-opener!

Now, to all you ladies reading who are looking for a new relationship, let’s give this a positive spin because I won’t be able to live with myself otherwise... Let’s be the woman who is so happy with herself and her life that she doesn’t need a man to fulfill her. Let’s be the woman who spots a good man when he does come along and attracts him into her life because she is stable and independent and happy. Let’s be the woman who is able to step back and examine the facts before jumping feet first into a relationship that may leave you heartbroken at best. Let’s be the woman who takes a pass on all the drama and looks for a grown-up to be a lifelong partner, who brings joy and stability and lasting love into the relationship.

The task of finding a genuine man who will appreciate you, love you, take care of you, and allow you to be who you are and who is also loving, kind, secure, and stable (funny would be an added bonus!) doesn't need to be as hard as we make it. Be the kind of woman who will attract this kind of man, and don't settle for anything less than what you want and what you deserve.

Related Link: ['Love Sick: A Memoir of Searching for Mr. Good Enough' Recalls the Humorous and Insightful Journey of Looking For Love](#)

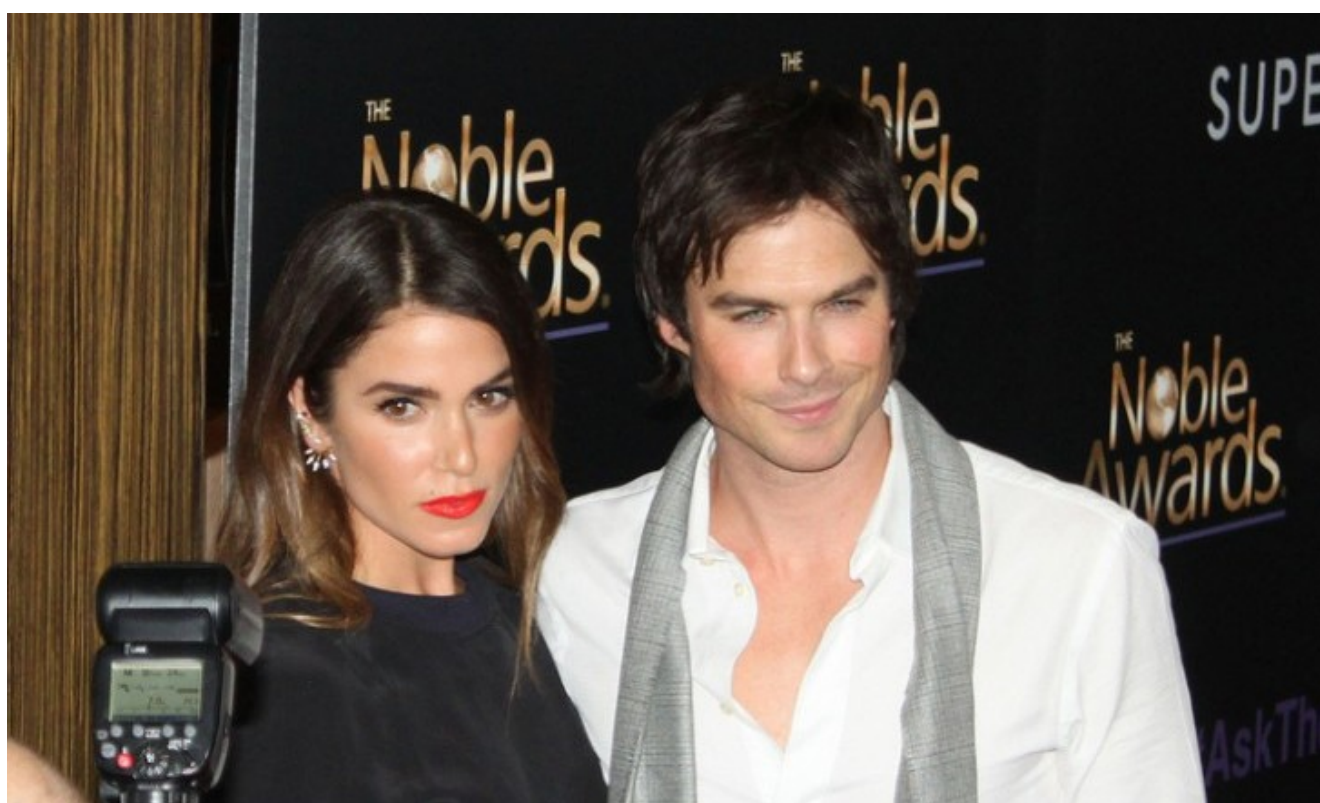
If you're currently on the market for a new relationship, just remember to be careful, be watchful, and be open to dating and marrying good, solid men. They may not be as exciting in the beginning, but they will make your dreams come true in the end.

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Four Ways to Stay Connected to Your Spouse



By Tammy Greene for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Let's face it: Life is crazy! Trying to keep up with the hustle and bustle of each day is overwhelming: work, family commitments, school, soccer, dance classes, friends, health, birthday parties, holidays, babies, and so on. Sometimes, we look back on the week and wonder where it went. One of the challenges you might face, as a result of this stress, is staying connected to your spouse. Putting your relationship on the back burner can quickly breed cracks in the foundation of marriage – and a cracked foundation can often be difficult to

repair.

We've heard of several celebrity couples separating as of late, including Chris Martin and Gwyneth Paltrow. Recently, the Coldplay frontman has been rumored to be dating Jennifer Lawrence. It may be too late to rekindle his marriage to the goop founder – or maybe it's not. Time will tell!

Related Link: [Divorce with Dignity](#)

To prevent a complete disconnect from happening, it's important to make your marriage a priority despite all of the challenges that every day throws at you. Here are a few ideas to help you stay connected to your spouse:

1. Affirm your love each morning: Start the day off with a connection. Before work, children, headaches, and fatigue set in, make sure that your spouse feels your love. Begin the day with a really great kiss, a sweet hug, or at the very least a sincere "I love you." It may sound simple, but it's often the simple things that can make the biggest difference in a relationship. Something as small as a steamy kiss can leave your spouse thinking about you all day.

2. Say thank you: We all desire to feel appreciated, but often times, we forget the power of those two words: "Thank you." Take advantage of the opportunities to say them to your spouse. Show your appreciation for the little things like taking out the trash as well as the big things like going to work everyday so that you can have a better life. Don't let gratitude go unspoken! Make sure that your spouse knows that you appreciate all that they do.

Related Link: [Lessons from Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck](#)

3. Schedule date nights: Regular date nights are an absolute must for a healthy marriage – and they don't have to be complicated. The purpose of a date night is to reconnect with

each other. That could mean doing something as easy as asking Grandma to watch the kids at her house and going back home for pizza on the living room floor. If a sitter is too hard to come by, plan something special at home after the kids go to bed. Stay unplugged, play a game, have dessert, and focus on each other.

4. Plan a vacation: Looking back on your relationship, when did you feel most passionate and happy? It was probably in the early days when you were dating. One reason for this is because, in the beginning, you spend a tremendous amount of time alone together. Then, as marriage and life sets in, that alone time starts to dwindle, often dwindling down to nothing. But maintaining a healthy marriage requires couples to continually take time to be alone. Stay connected with your spouse by getting away for a couple of days. If funds are tight, send the kids to a friend's house and just stay at home. You'll be amazed at how far that small amount of time, reconnecting and loving each other, can carry your relationship.

Related Link: [Five Secrets Truly Happy Couples Know](#)

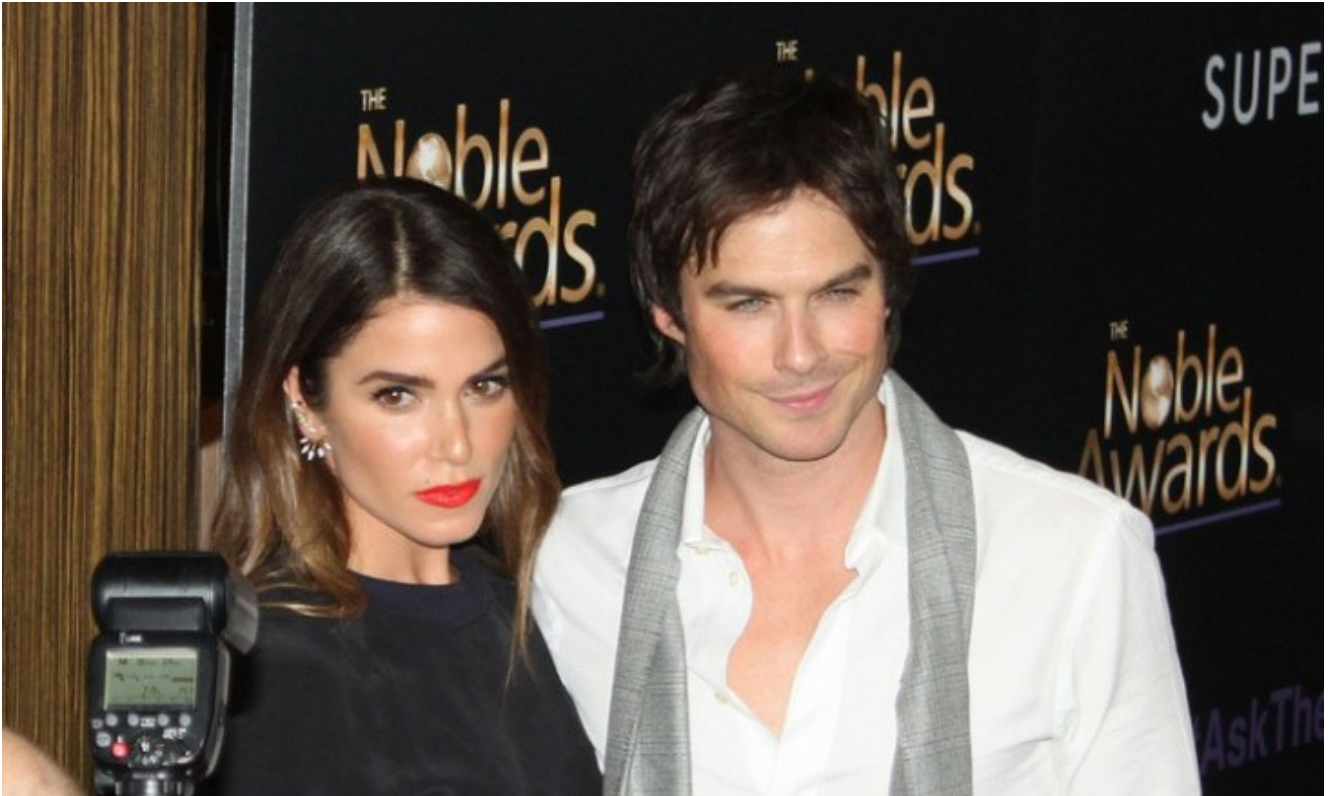
It is easy to get disconnected from our spouses. We each have so much on our plates – so many things to do and so many places to be. But putting everything else before our marriages can lead to some serious and sometimes irreparable damage. By making a conscious effort to stay connected, you are giving your marriage all of the nutrients it needs to be healthy and thrive.



Tammy Greene is a graduate of the University of La Verne. She has worked as a Child Life Specialist and social worker assisting families who have children with illness or mental disabilities. Tammy is a producer of the national PBS children's television show, Curiosity Quest. She has a blog, Married and Naked, where she shares personal lessons learned from her own life, offering helpful ways to navigate through the challenges of marriage. Tammy is a contributing expert at HopeAfterDivorce.org, FamilyShare.com, LAFamily.com and CupidsPulse.com. She is happily married to her high school sweetheart and is the mother of two. See Tammy's Curiosity Quest website and follow her blog, MarriedandNaked.

Can Love Be Better the Second Time Around?





By Patricia Bubash for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Yes, it can! This answer is according to the couples that I interviewed for my book, *Successful Second Marriages*. What prompted a book about second marriages? The failure of my own second marriage and my admiration for remarrieds who found success in this second chance love – success in spite of the negative numbers for second marriages. Statistics approximate that half of first marriages end in divorce. For second timers, the odds for staying together get even tougher: Two-thirds of those taking the plunge a second time don't make it. With odds like these, it is surprising that more than half of those first-time exes remarry...but they do! We are a nation in love with love.

Related Link: [A Hole in My Heart](#)

So yes, love *can* be better the second time around if we do some self-introspection, a little homework. When we're met with failure while attempting a new project, a recipe, school work, or a job, we question what we did wrong. We don't want to repeat our mistake and fail again. This mindset should

also be true for a marriage. Whatever happened in our first union, we did make some contribution to the demise of that marriage. Maybe not to the extent of our ex-spouse, but we were half of the doomed duo.

Love can even be better the second time around with the same former spouse if needed relationship work is done by both parties together as a team. Take two celebrity couples in the news for possibly getting back together again: Hilary Duff and Mike Comrie as well as Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin. Good for them! There truly is hope for couples to work together to strengthen their relationship and be happier and better than they ever imagined they could be. Owning up to the individual part we play in the relationships we are in is what matters most. We can only be fully responsible for ourselves and how we choose to participate in our marriages.

Family/marriage therapist Mary Duparri has observed a certain pattern with clients who have found love again. Their comments relay their total lack of responsibility for their failed first marriage. They say, "Now, I have found the right person. I choose the wrong person before. I shouldn't have married him (or her) in the first place, but this time, I have the right one!" The therapist expressed her dismay that her clients do not accept any personal liability for the previous marriage and do not look into what went wrong so mistakes would not be repeated. Instead, they conclude it was simply the *wrong* person. Now, this new love is the *right* person – a perfect match. Problem solved.

A pleasant change for DuParri would have been to have the couples I interviewed as her clients. These nine pairs had done their homework before committing to another relationship. As much as they all agreed that after their divorce they hoped for another relationship, they also, very vehemently, stated, "I never want to go through another divorce!" They were going to do everything in their power to make number two a success. The tagline on my book reads "Inspiring, Encouraging, and

Hopeful” – words descriptive of the couples interviewed. Every time I left a home, I felt humbled and gratified for our conversations. I knew that I needed to be more attentive to my own marriage (yes, I’ve been in a third-time-is-charm marriage for the past 24 years). I found myself aspiring to have a relationship similar to that of the couples I was talking with.

Related Link: [Second \(and Third\) Marriages: Destined for Divorce?](#)

Their stories were the catalyst, a personal goal to write the book. In terms of my own personal understanding of what went wrong with my second marriage, how had I contributed to the failure of it? And what was the formula for success the second time around?

1. Know yourself. Before you say “I do” again, know what you really want in a marriage. Are you looking for companionship, security, credibility, a family? What are you willing to contribute? Do some introspection. I was impressed with the number of individuals I interviewed who did just this – spent some time alone, getting to know themselves better versus rushing to become a twosome again. Taking time out for a little constructive self-awareness leads to a better relationship when that true love comes along.

2. Discuss finances. I know this was a problem in my second marriage. I owned the home we shared, earned more money, and had job security. This is especially important when each person has children. Decide who is responsible for what expenses and have this clearly determined before you become a married couple.

3. Don’t expect love and acceptance from their kids! Many a troubled, disappointed parent has come to my office to bemoan, “I have found the love of my life, and my children are being horrible” or “I don’t know what is the matter with them. I

have finally found my soulmate.” Well, you may be in love, but your children are not. They have another parent, so give them time. Don’t rush them to acceptance of this “wonderful” new husband or wife.

Related Link: [Maggie Scarf Breaks Down Unique Family Dynamics in “The Remarriage Blueprint”](#)

These two celebrity couples – Duff and Comrie and Paltrow and Martin – show us that there is hope and promise for the possibility of working harder together to build a stronger foundation for our relationship, marriage, and family. Good for them – we are cheering them both on!

I learned much more than these three tips from my wonderful second timers. Love can be better the second time around when we don’t rush to action (marry again too quickly), do some introspection, clarify financial responsibility, give kids time to adjust to the new person, and read *Successful Second Marriages!*

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).



Patricia Bubash received her M.Ed. in Counseling from the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Working with students and families has been her true calling for over thirty years. For more than twenty years she has presented workshops at the community college on a variety of topics relating to parenting issues, self-esteem and issues relative to divorce. Patricia is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Missouri and, a Stephen Minister. She submits a variety of articles related to relationships, marriage and divorce to several internet sites, and, frequently, is interviewed on internet radio stations.

Volunteerism, writing and family are most significant in her life. Patricia writes for DivorceSupportCenter.com, HopeAfterDivorce.org, CupidPulse.com, and FamilyShare.com. She can be reached at patriciathecounselor@successfulsecondmarriages.com.

Simple Survival Tips for Single Parents



By Lisa LaBelle for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Being a divorced, single parent can be overwhelming. If you are the primary custodial parent, you have a great

responsibility to teach and raise your children in a positive, well-structured, healthy environment. You set the example; you set the tone in your home for your children to exemplify and follow. Giving your children the attention and support they need is not for the faint of heart. The reality is you are doing the job of two parents, and most of the time, it's by yourself.

In light of recent cheating accusations, Kendra Wilkinson and Hank Baskett are possibly considering divorce, which means they would be looking at many years of co-parenting their two young children as a divorced couple. Hopefully, these rumors aren't true. If they are, implementing simple survival tips for single, divorced parents would be essential for this couple to refer to and follow.

Here are some helpful tips when facing the challenges of parenting and co-parenting after divorce:

Let go and accept your new reality: It's important to let go of the need to be a perfect parent, especially being single and divorced. You're fulfilling the responsibilities of two parents for your children, so give yourself a break and be willing to accept your new reality. It's okay to "let go." You will hopefully be co-parenting with your ex-spouse, but still, the day-to-day responsibilities of parenting will be a heavy load to carry.

Related Link: [How to Date When You're a Single Parent](#)

Develop a support system: Be sure your support system is a high priority for you and your children. Your family, true friends, your children's teachers, etc. will be a great help to you. Let them be there for you as you move through the healing process and rebuild your life. You need others, and they also need you. Remember that you're never alone!

Everything will be okay: Be kind to yourself and trust that

everything will be okay. You can and will get through it and heal. Look for and focus on the good things in your life. Think positive thoughts and trust yourself as you begin making new decisions as a divorced, single parent. You are stronger than you realize!

Take time out for you and your kids: Once a week, get a babysitter to come over and give you a break. Go out alone or with friends to a good movie, a concert, or a favorite restaurant. The time you spend with your pals will be good for your emotional and mental wellbeing. Having an hour alone to exercise each day is also important for your overall health as you carry out your responsibilities of being a single, divorced parent.

Along with taking time out for yourself, make sure to spend time playing and relaxing with your children each day. Keep building your relationship with them, nurture them and listen to what they have to say. Encourage them to use their voices. You are all in this together!

Related Link: [Best Dating Tips for Single Moms](#)

Make your home a peaceful place: Make it comfortable and happy, keep it clean, and make it a reflection of you. For example, paint each of your rooms a new color and go to a flea market where you can find “cool stuff” for decorating. Have house rules that you and your children agree on and follow together. Choose chores for your kids to do. It will give them increased self-confidence and appreciation for your home, and they will learn the importance of working together to make your house your sanctuary. Keep your own room neat and comfortable. You also need a retreat, a quiet place where you can rest, meditate, and be rejuvenated.

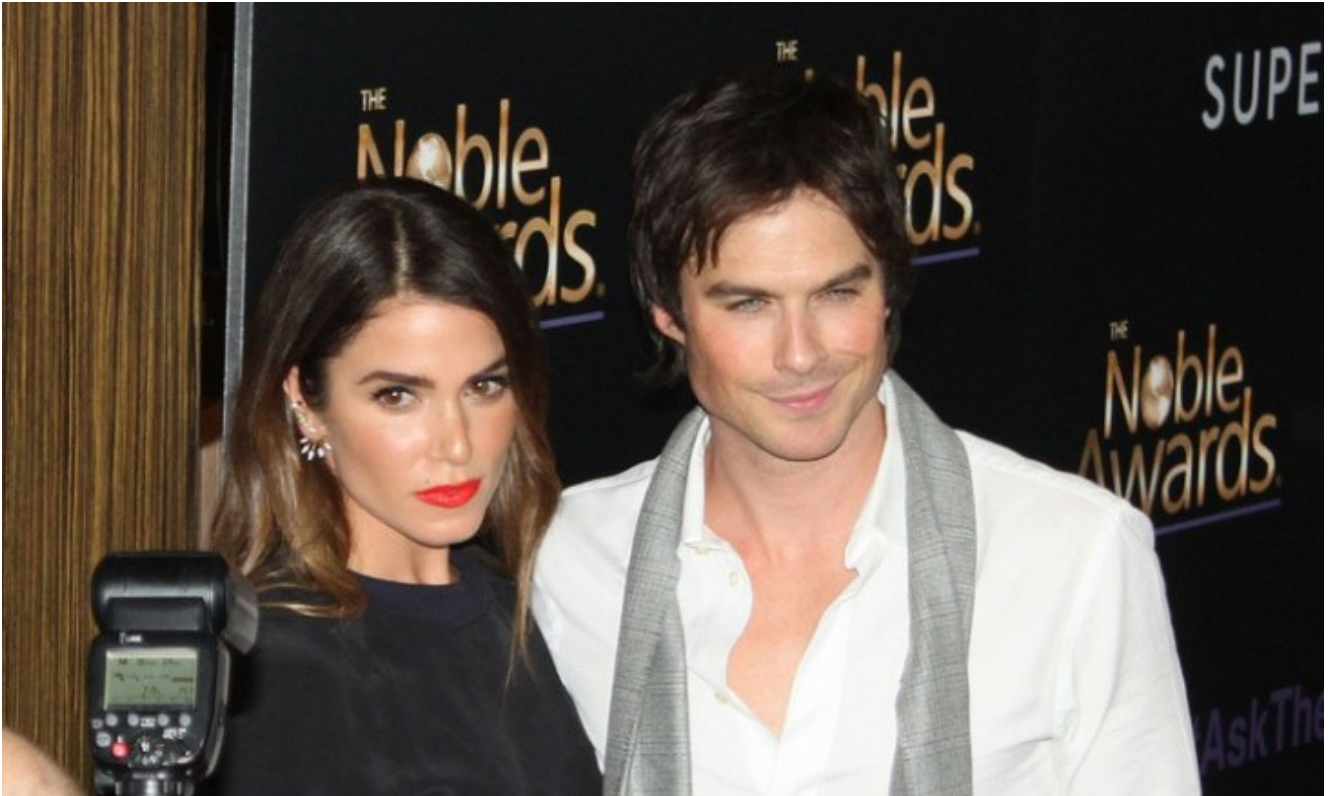
For more information about our Hope After Divorce relationship experts, click [here](#).



Lisa LaBelle is co-founder and co-executive director of Hope After Divorce and Divorce SupportCenter.com. She holds a B.S. degree in Education, and is completing her master's degree in clinical mental health counseling with an emphasis in marriage, child, and family therapy. Lisa is a family and child advocate. She is co-author and co-editor of Hope After Divorce and Divorce Experts Weigh In. Lisa is the co-host of the Life After Divorce CL3 Agency blogtalk radio show. She is a contributing expert for DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, CupidsPulse.com, and Newport Lifestyle Magazine. You can contact Lisa by visiting www.divorcesupportcenter.com.

Clear the Clutter





By Janeen Diamond for [Hope After Divorce](#)

“Sometimes, life is about just being here and feeling gratitude and enjoying all we are blessed with.”

I have been spending a great deal of time lately with a good friend who is deep into self healing, meditation, de-stressing, clearing buried emotions, and other ideas that go along with living a healthier, happier life.

I love feeling good, and I’m very open-minded about new ways to improve my health in every sense. When we go through a great deal of stress in our lives – and who doesn’t? – it affects us in ways we sometimes don’t notice until it’s too late, and our health suffers. I never want this to happen, so I try to stay ahead of the game.

One of the things my friend has had me do is ten minutes of meditation twice a day. The first time I tried it, I was opening my eyes and looking at the clock before even two minutes had passed. He explained this is because of all the chatter we have going on in our heads. It’s difficult to shut

off our minds and just “be.” Just try to sit still for ten minutes and totally clear your thoughts, and you’ll see what I mean!

Related Link: [Changing Your Life in Those Quiet Moments](#)

I had another friend tell me a few years ago, “Janeen, you are too busy! Sometimes, life is about just being here and feeling gratitude and enjoying all we are blessed with.” She really made an impression on me and had me working to simplify and clear the clutter out of my life. I have realized recently that family, church, service and work – the things that are most important to me – take up the bulk of my time. The things that are important to you may be slightly different, but I believe each of us has to be really choosy about the other things we let come into our lives.

It’s so easy to:

- get busy with things that don’t matter;
- let toxic people stay in our lives because it’s more difficult to do something about it;
- let Internet shopping and social media fill our down time;
- and ignore our responsibilities because mindless activities are more fun.

It can be really easy to get off track and start spending our time doing unimportant things. I know someone who fills his life with so much noise, and I have to ask myself why. He can’t be in the car or working without the radio blasting. He can’t sit still long enough to have a conversation, so he’s always fixing things, moving things, turning things on and off. In my observations, I have come to realize that there are things he would rather not have to think about. When we allow ourselves to just be quiet, we are forced to think about our lives and dwell on the things we have done and on the things

we need to do going forward.

I want to inspire you to become the kind of person who can work to clear the clutter, so you can get rid of the anxiety, the stress, and the unhappiness. Begin with these suggestions:

Decide what's causing you distress and write those things down. Maybe there are some little annoying things you need to deal with, and maybe there are some big, life-changing things that need to be faced head on. Start making a plan. And remember: Sometimes, the plan can take months or even years to achieve. Patience is going to play a vital role.

Take these things one at a time and begin putting them out of your life. Start with something small so you can have success quickly and gain some confidence. You have to ask yourself: Do I want to live with this for the rest of my life, or am I willing to make changes now so I can look forward to a better life?

Set goals and decide when each item will no longer be a part of your day. Having a date in mind and on the calendar will help you do what it takes to get where you need to be.

Related Link: [The Most Powerful Tool to Help You Find Your Soulmate](#)

Stress is a part of life. We all have to deal with it from time to time. But we don't have to let it take us over or ruin the enjoyment we get from family, friends, and meaningful work. Make sure you do the basics everyday: exercise, eat well, meditate, do things that bring you pleasure, and laugh.

Do what it takes to stay healthy and full of life. Get rid of as much stress and anxiety as you possibly can. And be grateful for something every day.

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).

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[newscaster for KUTV News until 2001. Since that time, she has been actively producing commercials and special programming through her company, Your TV Spot. She has hosted several television and internet productions and has been a spokesperson for several products and companies. She is a leader over the youth in her church and takes a special interest in helping kids stay on track with their lives. Janeen is currently co-creating "Teen Impact TV," a website for high school students to give them a creative and emotional outlet. She is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com. Follow her on Twitter @janeendiamond and www.facebook.com/janeen.diamond](#)

Helping Your Child Through a Divorce





By Patricia Bubash, M.ed, LPC for [Hope After Divorce](#)

In spite of the naysayers who were telling me to not bother spending money to see *Jersey Boys*, I decided to go see the matinee (it was cheaper, of course). And I was glad that I ignored the unfavorable critics. I thought it was an excellent movie: good acting, touching story of poor boys making it big, and music that had everyone clapping, tapping their feet, and enjoying songs from their youth. I anticipate seeing it at least another two times and even buying the DVD when it comes out.

So where does my delight with *Jersey Boys* fit into a site devoted to helping those who are divorced or contemplating the end of their marriage? Not to give away any of the story, but I need to explain how my movie going experience and divorce corresponds.

Growing up, Frankie Valli lived in a low social economic neighborhood, the tough streets of New Jersey. Through determination, grit, drive, and connections, he achieves success and recognition in the entertainment world. And, not

so different from the regular guy who must make a living by working overtime and traveling, his career takes over his family time. From the all too common divorce stories, we know the toll that work takes on a marriage. The mother of his three daughters, his first true love, throws Frankie out.

Related Link: [6 Things Women Should Never Do in a Divorce](#)

Just before he packs his two suitcases and departs the family home, Frankie puts his youngest daughter to bed. She asks him to sing to her (oh, how special would that be – a dad who sounded like Frankie Valli to sing you to sleep!). As he is singing, she interrupts him to ask, “Do you like me?”

Watching this scene, I felt a tug in my chest. I experienced flashbacks from conversations with former counseling clients, students, and my own daughters, who all shared similar deep feelings to me as I listened to their familiar, anguished words. Like my students and my kids, there was genuine confusion and puzzlement over *why* dad would no longer be living with them. Did he really have to go? And did they do something to cause him to be mad – mad enough to leave?

Young children often internalize that they are the reason for mom and dad divorcing – you know, the failed math grade, the disciplinary action for talking in class, squabbling with another student, or fighting too much with a sibling. It’s this idea that, “Had I been a better kid, they wouldn’t be divorcing.” The adults are so involved in their own dynamics, focusing on the logistics of getting out of the marriage, that the children’s interpretation of the why goes overlooked.

International star and actress Jennifer Lopez and her husband, singer Marc Anthony, went through a divorce with young twins. They have seemed to be amicable and respectful in their new co-parenting roles, keeping their focus on their beautiful children. You may become divorced from one another, but you

will always be your children's parents together. These ex-spouses set a good example for all divorced parents on how to be respectful in the essential role each parent plays in the lives of their children, both equally important. Lopez recently ended her relationship with longtime boyfriend and dancer Casper Smart. Hopefully, she was able to gently communicate and share this decision with her son and daughter, as it would have been a loss of another relationship for them as well.

When this beautiful child in *Jersey Boys* asked her dad if he liked her, I knew the why of that question. Could it be that her dad really didn't like her and that she was the cause of it? Of course, Frankie assured his beautiful daughter that he loved her. And then he was gone. For many dads and moms who become so involved with work, after divorce, it is often said, "Not only did they divorce their ex but the children as well." It's an adult decision, but it's the kids who struggle most with a new family composition. They are commonly not ever asked what they want, which is the real tragedy in parents divorcing. Why shouldn't our children be asked what they want and what they think? They should at least be heard so parents can take into account knowing how their very own children feel about them dissolving their family.

Related Link: [To Move or Not to Move? Why This Decision is Tough on Kids](#)

As a former educator, school counselor, family advocate, and, most credible of all, a divorced parent, I feel comfortable offering the following suggestions:

- Together, assure your children, "We may no longer want to be together, but we will always love you." You can never remind them of this truth enough. Your children need to feel secure in the continued love of both parents.
- Be honest. If divorce is imminent, then don't give your

children the false hope that you might be together again. Explain the changes: visitation, sharing of holidays, and any possible moves into a new home or school.

– Encourage them to talk with you and truthfully answer their questions.

– Let the school know the situation. Many times, a teacher has come to me with a student acting out, and we discover that the family is going through divorce. Knowing this helps the school in helping the child – thus, the reason for school counselors.

– Don't talk negatively about your ex-spouse in front of your children or even to others when your children might hear your conversation. Speaking despairingly of the other parent (even if it is true!) is like shooting an arrow in your child's heart.

Related Link: [What Now? Transitioning From Married to Single](#)

Divorce changes our lives and that of our children. It is one of the most difficult and emotional situations for a family to experience. Fortunately, we have resources like Hope After Divorce and Divorce Support Center. And through these resources, we find hope for the future. Our children also need to have hope for better times ahead, and as their parents, we are responsible for providing this hope.

(And go see *Jersey Boys* – it's definitely worth the money and your time!)

To find out more about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).



Patricia Bubash received her M.Ed. in Counseling from the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Working with students and families has been her true calling for over thirty years. For more than twenty years she has presented workshops at the community college on a variety of topics relating to parenting issues, self-esteem and issues relative to divorce. Patricia is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Missouri and, a Stephen Minister. She submits a variety of articles related to relationships, marriage and divorce to several internet sites, and, frequently, is interviewed on internet radio stations. Volunteerism, writing and family are most significant in her life. Patricia writes for DivorceSupportCenter.com, HopeAfterDivorce.org, CupidPulse.com, and FamilyShare.com. She can be reached at patriciathecounselor@successfulsecondmarriages.com. Follow Patricia on www.facebook.com/patriciathecounselor.

Considering Divorce? Ask Yourself Three Questions





By Janeen Diamond for [Hope After Divorce](#)

“...great marriages are born when two people decide to come to the party!”

It's common knowledge that most of us, at one time or another, will consider divorce as an alternative to a difficult marriage. The truth is ALL marriages are difficult to some degree, and those of us who long for the fairy tale will be sorely disappointed. I have often said that great marriages are born when two people decide to come to the party! Marriages fail because someone decides the party isn't all that fun.

Sadly, Melanie Griffith and Antonio Banderas are divorcing after 18 years of marriage. Their news comes after living separate lives due to their conflicting work schedules. They may be saying their split is amicable and ending in a loving manner, but the reality is that they no longer choose to be a couple. They will now have to face dividing their combined fortune, rumored to be worth 50 million dollars.

Related Link: [Going Solo Again: Bold New Beginnings](#)

In talking with many divorced individuals, I've learned that expectations about sex, money, care taking, adoration, housekeeping, ways to spend leisure time, and a whole bunch of other individual traits are often born out of selfishness, immaturity, and insecurity and sometimes even based on a lack of experience with reality. I hope that doesn't sound negative, but the fact is we all bring our own stuff into our marriages, and often, our stuff doesn't exactly mesh with our spouse's stuff.

I met a couple several weeks ago who, between them, had experienced several divorces. The husband lamented that his first wife had cheated on him, his second wife just wouldn't give him enough attention, his third wife couldn't accept his children, and so on...

And this is the reason I try and focus on helping people stay in their marriages if at all possible! Because the cycle doesn't end. Issues will keep popping up no matter how many times you get married, because it isn't about the issues themselves – it's about the people in the marriage who are creating the issues. And until we fix the people...the issues will remain. In my opinion, a good counselor could absolutely help a couple facing infidelity, attention deficits, blending families, or any other problem that exists by focusing on the real issues we just talked about – selfishness, immaturity, insecurity, etc.

If you are seriously considering divorce, I want you to spend the next week asking yourself these three questions over and over until you have the answers solidified.

– **Will I be better off?** Will you be better off emotionally? Will you be better off or at least be able to sustain yourself financially? Will you be happier in the long run? Think of these questions in every possible scenario.

– **Am I okay with the thought of a new life?** If you are forced

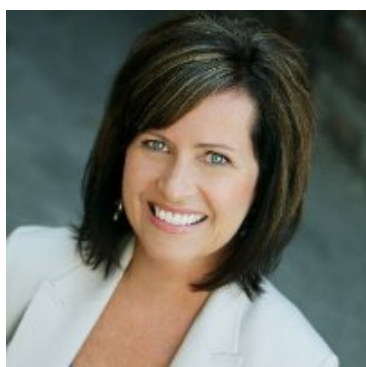
to move from your home, will your kids be okay with a new school and new friends? Will you be able to handle all the added responsibility? Think about all of the changes that will take place for you personally and figure out if, for you, these changes are manageable.

– **Have circumstances made it necessary for me to end this marriage – affairs or abuse?** If the affairs or abuse has stopped, is it possible to put things back together? The roadblock often comes when one partner doesn't want to put in the work or seek counseling and do what it takes in order to gain back the violated spouse's trust. These are serious problems, and you need to determine for yourself if indeed you will be better off leaving the marriage.

Related Link: [Attitude is Key](#)

Divorce is a big decision. Don't move forward with it until you have exhausted every attempt to fix things in your marriage. Once you are comfortable with your decision, whatever it is, move forward with conviction. I will root for you to go for the save!

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).



Janeen Diamond, author of Save Your Marriage in 30, was a newscaster for KUTV News until 2001. Since that time, she has been actively producing commercials and special programming through her company, Your TV Spot. She has hosted several television and internet productions and has been a spokesperson for several products and companies. She is a leader over the youth in her church and takes a special interest in helping kids stay on track with their lives. Janeen is currently co-creating "Teen Impact TV," a website for high school students to give them a creative and emotional outlet. She is a contributing expert

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Taking on the Role of Stepmother



By Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN for [Hope After Divorce](http://HopeAfterDivorce.org)

Relationships alone are difficult. When you add his kids, her kids, his ex, her ex, and both sets of in-laws, most people cannot handle the pressure. Stepfamilies require more effort and understanding because more people are involved, and this

often includes young ones who didn't ask to be put into the situation to begin with.

Long ago, the term "stepmother" was used to describe the "new" parent who stepped in after the "real" parent's death. Today, the stepmom is less often a substitute than she is an added parent. We all know the story of *Cinderella*. Fortunately, there was a happy ending, but it did bring to light the "wicked stepmother." Most everything you read about stepparenting has to do with evil stepmothers, obnoxious children, responsibility with no control, resentful ex-partners, and lack of worth or appreciation.

Related Link: [How to Prevent Yourself from Rushing into a Relationship](#)

Being a parent triggers memories and emotions from one's own childhood, whether conscious or unconscious. This may or may not bring fear to those thinking about raising another person's child. Parents may raise children similar to their own upbringing – or the opposite. Parents may strive to give their children an entirely different upbringing.

Being a mom can be one of the most rewarding things we do in our lives. It can also be one of the most difficult undertakings, and parental responsibility is not something we can take lightly. Taking on the role of stepmother can perhaps be the most difficult undertaking of all.

As mothers, we are programmed to love and nurture children. We were raised with the understanding that it is our "job" to take care of them. So we would naturally expect a loving response in return – or should we? When Mother's Day or your birthday comes around, this opens opportunities for feeling down about being a stepmother. But don't give in! An attitude will get you nothing but grief. Moping around because no one remembers your birthday is not the answer. You have to tell people, "Hey, my birthday is on Friday, and I want us to go

out to dinner together.” Tell your partner birthdays are important to you and strongly suggest your partner talk to the kids about acknowledging it.

Related Link: [How to Date when You’re a Single Parent](#)

Before special events or days that matter to you, take the initiative to:

- 1. Be clear about your plans.** Anticipate problems and discuss them with the children.
- 2. Tell them your expectations.** People are not mind readers. Talk with your partner.
- 3. Do not expect a major deal about Mother’s Day.** The kids feel conflicted enough as it is. Acknowledging it is important, but celebrating it may be too painful. Yes, of course, it hurts to be ignored or snubbed. Try to understand the positive intent behind it. It is not meant to hurt you. It is about guilt and loyalty to the other biological parent.

The manner in which you approach the role of mother or stepmother and the attitude you put forth will differ from those around you. You must pay particular attention to your actions so as to not alienate yourself from your partner or the children. Getting into a stepfamily can be rewarding and will make for new adventures. As with every new adventure, hold on tight because there will be bumps along the way, but the ride will be spectacular!

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).

Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN, is a Registered Nurse, Life Skills Expert, Speaker and Award Winning Author. She is the owner of Open Pages Publishing, which includes her series of “The 4-1-1” books on Life Skills, Step Parenting, and Surviving Teenhood. Michele is a contributing expert for [HopeAfterDivorce.org](#), [DivorceSupportCenter.com](#),

FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com.