

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.

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.

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](#).

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

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, andFamilyShare.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

for HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com. Follow her on Twitter @janeendiamond and www.facebook.com/janeendiamond.

A Hole in My Heart



By Patricia Bubash for [Hope After Divorce](http://HopeAfterDivorce.org)

A June wedding invite came in the mail for my husband and me this week. Ahhh, I think June is still the month for weddings, although I have read that October is quickly matching it for the month chosen by brides.

I met the groom-to-be a couple of years ago at a film festival where the documentary produced by him was being previewed. Dan

and the other two creators of the film *Give a Damn* had decided in their mid-twenties to travel to one of the poorest countries in Africa. This film was to bring awareness to the world, to encourage those who saw the film to be proactive, to become involved in whatever manner they chose to be involved.

The three filmmakers would make their way from the Midwest to Europe feeding themselves on only \$1.25 a day for each. When they could, they hitchhiked; flights to Europe and Africa came out of fundraising money. Once there, they shared lodging, food, living arrangements with the poorest of poor, constantly filming, telling a story for the world. I watched in amazement, awe, and great respect what they had documented, their immersion into extreme poverty.

At an age when most young adults are just beginning their careers, these three chose to live in uncomfortable, unpleasant, inconvenient, and even horrific circumstances and conditions. I wanted to hear more of their story, so I arranged to have breakfast with the two who were available. Dan arrived before David, and as we chatted, we discovered that he had attended a school where I had counseled part-time. He told me that he had also attended Rainbows, a divorce group for kids within the school. It was a program that all the counselors in the district utilized.

He went on to share that he was an only child, and in the fifth grade, his parents divorced. Not an unusual story, but what has transformed a first time meeting, a casual relationship, into an ongoing friendship, a wedding invite, is Dan's following words: "I was very close to my mother, and when she divorced my dad, she just left, went away. It left a hole in my heart."

Although Gwyneth Paltrow has been getting a lot of publicity with her "conscious uncoupling" approach to divorcing when children are involved, it does not take away the pain and

sadness that kids feel when their parents breakup. They have feelings too, and their feelings are often not considered nor are their voices heard.

Related Link: [The REAL Reason that Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin Split](#)

I have listened to many children's stories, wiped their tears, and reminded them that "things would get better" as they coped with their parents' divorce. Dan's words reached such an emotional cord with me. Before me sat a young man who had been part of an extraordinary project, was way past fifth grade, did not know me, and had shared something so personal.

I felt that I had been gifted with his openness. He went on to tell me that he had participated in counseling beyond the Rainbows into his adult years. He had found his niche through church and his church friends. They were his support and his family.

Finding a faith, friends, a church family, and a cause had been Dan's personal "hope after divorce." I have always been bothered by adults who express that kids are resilient, that they will be just fine with the divorce, remarriage, or blending families. No matter what age, children are emotionally affected by the end of family composition as they have known it. It shakes their sense of security and stability.

They often fear that one parent will no longer be in their life. They worry that they will have to move, lose their friends, will have to change schools, and like Dan, feel a hole in their heart.

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

I have often reflected back on our conversation, as a counselor and a divorced mother. I wondered if my kids were in

conversation with Dan, would they share the same feeling of loss at the time of my divorce from their dad? What I do know is that I am so grateful for my relationship with Dan and for the compliment of an invitation to his wedding. I think Dan is quickly – and effectively – filling the hole in his heart.

The sharing time I had with Dan really did touch my heart so deeply. He is marrying a young woman who has a child – and I think he will be good at filling her little boy's heart.

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To Move or Not to Move? Why This Decision Is Tough on Kids



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

Divorce is one of those life events that forces huge changes in your life, whether you like it or not. During a divorce, a decision will need to be made on living arrangements. Let the court decide who needs to move out and what will happen with the home. Sometimes, one spouse will offer to move out but wants their part of the equity in the house. The partner who stays put may have to put it up for sale in order to pay the other partner unless they can refinance, thus adding the amount of equity onto the mortgage.

Definitely get some legal advice before you make your choice. Leaving the home before the court date might have a detrimental effect on the outcome. Couples will want to communicate in a responsible manner to find a way to share the residence. If there's too much disagreement, then another solution may be necessary...but you still need a professional opinion before packing up those boxes.

Since they have just announced their desire to divorce, Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin are one such couple who will be considering the effect moving will have on their two young children. Hopefully, through their "consciously uncoupling," the transition will be as smooth as possible for their kids – as well as themselves.

Related Link: [Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin Separate](#)

There are times in each child's life when a change like moving to a new school, city, or state can be devastating. A young kid depends on the security of their home and school, while a teenager may simply want to finish high school with their friends. You need to take these situations into account when making your plans. The parent who has the children a majority of the time should do their best to stay put.

With divorce, the furnishings are often divided, which may leave the family home empty. Since it is your kids' house too, you should try to include them in the decorating decisions. This approach helps them to feel valued. Listen to the child's needs and tastes. It also provides opportunities for two important activities:

1. Education: You may know that it's an antique chair, but for your children, it's an old ugly chair until you teach them about the distinguishing signs and history.

2. Shopping: Head to local flea markets, auctions, or estate sales for old furniture. Refinish or repaint the old dresser. Your kids will feel like a part of the process and enjoy using

the item they helped refinish.

Once you're finished decorating, throw a party and show off the new look of your place. By celebrating, you are showing the children that you love and respect their help and that everyone can enjoy the newly decorated home.

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

If you must move, understand that a new place will not fix everything. Moving is traumatic and expensive, and when everyone has to move, someone will be upset. Yes, the new house may have clean paint and a fresh look, but those moving into it are still the same people. After the movers are gone, you may find yourselves standing around and looking at each other thinking, "What now?" Post-Move Syndrome Letdown (PMSL) is common.

Hang in there and try to enjoy setting up your new home. Make sure to include everyone. If you see your children having difficulty adjusting to a different home or community, address it immediately. Find someone for them to talk to. Be supportive and encouraging and let your children know that you'll be with them every step of the way.

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.

Hang Tough – You’ll Get Through It



By Janeen Diamond for Hope After Divorce

“When depression sets in, bring on the sugar! Right?”

I don't know about you, but for me, the winter months are often the hardest to get through. Sometimes, it feels like all I can do is grit my teeth and survive! The snow falls, which is great the first several times, but then it starts to get annoying. The sun rarely shines because of the inversion, and, no matter what I do, I'm freezing all the time.

Such is life. So many of the experiences we encounter remind me of the cold weather. And sometimes, we just have to hang in there and keep the faith that there's something better waiting

for us when it's all said and done.

Related Link: [Cupid's Weekly Round-Up: Fixing Your Relationship](#)

Maybe you're going through a divorce. Maybe you have financial pressures that are holding you back. Maybe your kids are giving you grief. But no matter what, just remember: This too shall pass. Here are a few ideas for hanging tough and coming out the other side in one piece:

Keep yourself healthy and hydrated. When depression sets in, bring on the sugar! Right? Well, try to practice moderation with the chocolate and eat more vegetables instead. You'll feel a whole lot better and may even beat the blues. I notice that, when I don't drink enough water, I start to feel run down and tired. Staying hydrated is an easy fix that we sometimes don't even think about.

Slow down a bit. Sleep a little more, and work a little less. We sometimes put a lot of pressure on ourselves to take care of things that really aren't all that important in the grand scheme of things. If you feel you need a nap, take one. If you want a day of doing nothing, do it.

Related Link: [How to Get Over the Relationship Blues](#)

Look for the positive. Winter may be rough, but the freshly fallen snow is beautiful. You may be in the throws of divorce, but soon, you'll be able to begin a new life. You may be feeling financial pressure, but you're always free to look for a new opportunity to help you rise above it. Your kids may be causing trouble, but it's all part of discovering who they are – and one day, they will make you proud.

One thing is certain. Winter will end, and spring will begin. And there is definitely nothing more beautiful than watching the grass become green and the flowers start to blossom. I've come to realize if the grass were always green and the flowers

were always in bloom, we wouldn't be nearly as grateful as we are when we can watch the transition happen right before our eyes. So hang in there. Things are about to change!

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



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What Now? Transitioning From Married to Single



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

“The marriage of Harold Ray Mann and Patricia Mann is now dissolved.” Hearing these words, I didn’t understand how this new status – single – would change my life, a life where I previously had checked “married” on all forms. So what was my future and the future of my daughters in our now one-parent household? “What now?” were the words in my mind that I never verbalized.

The process of our divorce had taken almost two years, and now, it was over. The time, emotions, and energy of finalizing the end of a fifteen-year union was also over, and all I could think was “what now?” What was the future to bring? Was I going to be able to continue living in my house? Would I be financially stable? Would my daughters emotionally survive their parents’ divorce? Who would continue to be my friends now that I wasn’t part of a twosome? Would my parents,

who married for life, be able to accept the divorce of their eldest child? And the big one: Would I ever find love again?

Paula Patton may be asking herself the same questions since recently separating from her longtime love and husband, Robin Thicke. Marriage is hard. Looking at the possibility of divorce is hard as well, especially when children are involved. The divorce process can take a long time from beginning to end, but maybe Patton and Thicke can work through their issues to rebuild their marriage and give their child the chance to live with them both together.

Related Link: [Robin Thicke Takes Son to Disneyland Before Split with Wife](#)

The possibility of divorce during the last three years of my own fifteen-year marriage had been a reality for me. I had collected several college hours, and a month before our divorce, I finished my program, receiving a diploma in education. No job, but a diploma, three wonderful daughters, and good friends. I was the only divorced person in our neighborhood, but luckily for me, my neighbors were very supportive of my single-parent status.

Social media and networking wasn't developed at the time. I was a desperate single mom needing work. But...there was the grapevine! Friends called friends and co-workers, and within a month, I had a job. Life flowed into a routine of working, driving kids to their events, attending church, shopping, and taking care of a house – all the normal activities, minus one adult. But it was okay. "What now?" had become a faded thought. I was living the "now," and it was going well.

Transitioning from married to single life can be stressful, difficult, frustrating, disappointing, and even exciting. Yes, all of these emotions are felt as you reinvent yourself and your family composition, making the changes that are necessary as you leave married status behind you.

Related Link: [Did Robin Thicke and Paula Patton's Body Language Indicate A Breakup Was Coming?](#)

Even exciting? How can that be? Because change of any kind, no matter how painful it might be, is also exciting – *you* are in charge of making this new life just as you want it to be. How you choose to acclimate to your new status, how you choose to view the experience of your previous married life is all your's to decide. You can look at those years as wasted, or you can look at them as time spent learning about love, how to love, what's really important in a relationship, and what you want out of the next relationship. And you are better equipped, more knowledgeable, and more mature for the next time love comes your way.

To those who are experiencing the end of a marriage and asking "What now?"...breathe, breathe, breathe. Live each day fully and notice all the positives around you. Focus on the now, enjoying the moment. Reach out and make new friends. Join Parents Without Partners, a singles group, or other positive support groups in your community. Be open to new friends or a new love. Open yourself to the possibilities of what's to come – the joy of life – as someone who has experienced love and will again, when the time is right.

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Learning to Compromise: My Way or the Highway!





By Monique Honaman for [Hope After Divorce](#)

“Marriage is about compromise; it’s about doing something for the other person, even when you don’t want to.” – Nicholas Sparks, The Wedding

I had a great conversation with two friends, both widowed, the other day. They’re dating each other, and it’s starting to get serious. While not pointedly addressed quite yet, it’s clear that the “we should spend the rest of our lives together” conversation is not that far off in the future. How wonderful for them! To have found love again – and all the joy, happiness, and elation that comes with new love – after both having lost spouses is wonderful and very sweet to see. Of course, they should spend the rest of their lives together. Thank goodness for second chances and the fact that they met each other.

Once example of a celebrity couple who will be tying the knot soon is Christina Aguilera and Matthew Rutler. This will be Christina’s second marriage; again, thank goodness for second chances! She has a young son, who Matthew will become a

stepparent to, yet another transition that will hopefully be smooth for everyone involved.

Related Link: [Christina Aguilera Dating 'Burlesque' Assistant Matthew Rutler](#)

Deciding they want to spend the rest of their lives together is the “easy” part. The more practical and more difficult part comes when the discussion turns to where to live. His house or hers? Her family room couches or his? His china or hers? His toaster or hers?

It's crazy, but *this* is where it can become overwhelming. The reality is that both people own their own beautiful homes, fully stocked with every practical item (the blender, ironing board, and beach towels) and also filled with all sorts of things that are meaningful (grandma's mirror, great-grandma's gravy boat, and the painting bought on vacation in Italy many years ago). Their styles may differ: His Victorian period furniture may clash with her Asian influence.

What to do? Of course, it's essentially no different than when two divorced people choose to marry and frankly no different from when two established single adults (never married, divorced, or widowed) but well on their way to being “real” adults (with more than a studio apartment outfitted with milk crates and a mattress on the floor) enter into marriage.

Often times, both partners come to the relationship with established “goods” as well as established habits, ideals, and traditions. Perhaps one likes to eat dinner by 6 p.m. each night, whereas the other enjoys eating much later. Maybe one likes to be up and out each Saturday morning by sunrise, whereas the other relishes the idea of lounging in bed reading the paper until lunchtime. Perhaps one likes to spend Christmas out of town surrounded by the chaos of dozens of family members, whereas the other likes to make the holiday a more quiet, intimate celebration.

Related Link: [Make Your Relationship Count This Year](#)

Younger and less-established couples certainly need to compromise as they begin their lives together, but it's often easier, as they don't generally have decades worth of "baggage" (both literally and figuratively) that they bring to the marriage. It gets tougher as we get older!

When I remarried several years ago, my husband and I brought together two households. As crazy as it sounds, we literally did have to decide to keep my silverware or his, my dinner plates or his, my toaster or his...and on and on! That was challenging in and of itself (actually, he had a lot of things that were "nicer" than mine, so it made for some easy decision-making). Some people might say that the best solution is to start new with everything, and as fun as that sounds, it's just not practical. Who has that kind of money to throw around, and why get rid of things that are meaningful to one person or the other?

In addition to compromising on the things, we also had to learn how to merge our family traditions and our expectations for everything from how to save, how to spend a Sunday morning, what temperature to keep the house at, how many blankets to put on the bed, etc. This can be much tougher. After all, we were established in our routines. We had our "normal," and defining a "new normal" isn't always easy.

You know what, though? Defining a "new normal" can be fun if approached with the right attitude. If you aren't open to compromise when dating, how in the heck are you going to compromise if you get married? Open yourself up to learning something new or even just experiencing something with a new lens. You might surprise yourself at how much you enjoy the change. After all, change keeps us vibrant and alive. Don't become too set in your ways. Be open to new experiences, new traditions...even new toasters and new beach towels!

Does compromise become tougher as we get older? Are we more set in our ways? What do you think?

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

✘ Monique A. Honaman, JD, MLIR, wrote “The High Road Has Less Traffic: honest advice on the path through love and divorce” in response to a need for a book providing honest, real, and raw advice about how to survive and thrive through one of life’s toughest journeys. The book is available at HighRoadLessTraffic.com and Amazon.com. Monique writes for HopeAfterDivorce.org, FamilyShare.com, LAFamily.com and CupidPulse.com. She can be reached at Monique@HighRoadLessTraffic.com. Follow Monique on Facebook and Twitter.

**Making the Most Of
Valentine’s Day Even If
You’re Unhappy**





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

unhappy valentine's day? it doesn't have to be

After a divorce, many holidays can be depressing, and Valentine's Day can be the most depressing of all. The media promotes this day for lovers, and those not in a relationship – or just getting out of one – may feel left out. The holiday can also leave you feeling as if something's wrong with you because you don't have someone special to share it with. But don't worry – you can still have a happy Valentine's Day!

Related Link: [Surviving Holidays as a Stepparent](#)

If you have children, celebrate your holidays with them. After all, they're a special part of your life. If you don't have visitation that day, then pick another day and celebrate. Children love special celebrations, especially when you tell them that *they* are the reason for the celebration. If you don't have children, why not plan a special outing just for yourself?

It is time to adjust how we feel about our holidays. We

shouldn't feel pressured to have a significant other in our life. We should love ourselves and celebrate that love every day, not just on holidays.

Look at celebrity couple Hilary Duff and Mike Comrie, who recently announced their separation. They have a one-year-old son and are both very dedicated to co-parenting, loving, and raising Luca as a team. The exes still spend a lot of time together with their son. For example, on New Year's Eve, Duff shared an Instagram of the three of them at Disneyland the week before. I wouldn't be surprised if they spent Valentine's Day as a family as well!

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

Here are some great ideas for your special celebration:

- Call a close friend or a family member and go to a movie, get a manicure and pedicure, or bake a sweet treat.
- Turn off all of your electronic devices and read that book or magazine that's been sitting on your nightstand for months.
- Take your children on a nature walk or to a local park. Don't just send them off to play; go play with them!
- Make yourself a fancy dinner. Use your best dishes and make sure to put fresh cut flowers in the center of the table as a present to yourself.
- Take a warm bath with essential oils. Don't forget the candles! Just totally unplug during this time. Read that book or magazine I mentioned earlier.
- Share your time with someone in need. Volunteer at a local shelter or serve dinner at a soup kitchen.
- Turn on the tunes and dance!

– Set the evening aside to look at old photos, especially those that bring back great memories.

Celebrations don't have to be expensive, but it is important to acknowledge the holidays. Valentine's Day is what you make of it. It is a day to celebrate love. No matter if you are alone or part of a couple, celebrate yourself and the power you have to make others feel valued. Remember: The most important thing you can do to bring true love into your life is to love *yourself*.

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.

New Years: Changing Your Life in Those Quiet Moments





By Sharon M. Rivkin, M.A., M.F.T. for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Enjoying the fire blazing with my cup of coffee on New Year's morning, I took a big sip and a deep breath and thought to myself..."I need more moments like this." Then, I realized that if more of us, including myself, paid closer attention to those particular moments in our lives, we might hear the quiet message that alone time brings.

Related Link: ['Get Some Headspace' Author Andy Puddicombe Shares Ingredients for Perfect Relationship](#)

What did I conclude from how I felt on New Year's morning? That I needed to slow down and take more time for myself. That was a powerful moment because it made me realize that, by doing those two things, I would be a more balanced and less stressed person. Plus, those around me would also benefit from this change.

This experience made me reflect on the whole concept of creating New Year's resolutions and how most resolutions are task-oriented rather than internally driven. For example, resolutions often include losing weight, lowering blood

pressure, exercising more, and quitting smoking or drinking. These are all tasks that don't cause you to think or reflect; you just do. But internally driven goals come from a more quiet state where important messages come out of the stillness. And these are the messages that are full of information about you and quite possibly about what you should be doing to have a better life. And, if you think about it, having a better life will create more peace within yourself.

So here are five ways to create stillness among the madness and busyness of our daily lives:

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

1. Walking to reflect. Most of us walk to lose weight and get our heart rate up. But did you ever think to walk mindfully? This means noticing the flowers, the trees, the sound of water, the beautiful architecture, and the birds. By experiencing the beauty and feeling of the outdoors, you'll glide into a more reflective state where your problems take a back seat and out-of-the-blue thoughts come to the forefront.

2. Journaling. The purpose of journaling is to write about your inner thoughts, uncensored, which help you uncover and release feelings that you may have not let surface because you've been so busy. Once you write down what you're feeling, you may acknowledge what's *really* going on under the surface. It'll grab your attention, leading you to make changes in your life, whatever they might be.

3. Meditating. The point of meditation is to quiet your mind from its constant chatter. The chatter makes things bigger and insurmountable, which causes more stress and anxiety. By quieting your mind on a consistent basis, it creates a cumulative, calming effect in your daily life which, in turn, gives you more opportunities to reflect. And it's in those moments of reflection where you gain clarity and perspective.

Related Link: [Four Tips for Stress-Free Dating](#)

4. Listening to music. Music that touches the heart instantaneously calms you and smoothes out the daily turmoil. In fact, you almost forget that you have any problems when beautiful music touches your soul. We've all experienced the power of music, so we need to make listening to it more of a priority in our daily lives.

5. Sharing with your partner. Sharing is different than talking. It's part of that reflective process where you feel safe enough to reveal your thoughts and dreams to your partner. By doing so, communication gets more intimate, and you feel closer with one another. In contrast to quieting your mind, this mutual feedback reflects the information back to you in a different way.

Just as I experienced a message in the stillness of my New Year's morning, by using these five ways to create calm and quiet within, you, too, have the ability to hear your inner voice above the daily noise and make significant changes in your life.

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



Also known as the "last ditch effort therapist," Sharon M. Rivkin, therapist and conflict resolution/affairs expert, is the author of Breaking the Argument Cycle: How to Stop Fighting Without Therapy and developer of the First Argument Technique, a 3-step system that helps couples fix their relationships and understand why they fight. Her work has been featured in O Magazine, O Newsletter, Redbook, Reader's Digest, Time.com, CNN.com, Prevention.com, and WebMD.com. Sharon's appeared on Martha Stewart Whole Living Radio and makes regular radio appearances nationwide. Sharon is also a contributing expert at HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and

Going Solo Again: Bold New Beginnings



By Cynthia MacGregor for Hope After Divorce

Ah...we're moving into a new year, and don't we all love new beginnings? It feels like a fresh start, a new chance, a do-over. It feels like an opportunity to "get it right this time." The reality is that we can make a new beginning, a fresh start, *any* time. We don't need a special date marked in red on the calendar or a month that we know is at the head of

a whole fresh year.

I've never believed in New Year's resolutions, but that doesn't mean I'm against making a fresh start. I just don't confine such activities to the first month of the calendar year. For instance, the beginning of spring is a time of rebirth. Your birthday is always a good day to re-evaluate your life and see what needs re-calibrating. In truth, *any* time is a good time to begin anew.

Related Link: [Finding Yourself Again](#)

The point of this column, then, is to advise you *not* to limit your new beginnings to the start of the new year. Now, I am not telling you not to make a fresh start now. I am just telling you that, if your life is not satisfactory or it feels like things have grown stale, *any* time is a good time to take matters in your own hands and *do something about it*.

You did that when you got divorced, assuming you were the one who initiated the split. Your marriage was – for whatever reason – not what you wanted it to be. And instead of “putting up with it,” you did something about it. You got divorced – a bold step, especially if it also meant that you would be raising your kids pretty much single-handedly from here on out.

Josh Brolin and Diane Lane are one A-list couple who recently broke up. They were introduced in 2002 by Brolin's stepmother, Barbra Streisand, and the two married in 2004. After being married for eight years, they announced their split last February. Sources reported them stating, “This was a hard decision for both of them to make; the relationship just ran its course.”

Related Link: [Josh Brolin and Diane Lane Are Officially Divorced](#)

Maybe now you're finding that being a solo, like Brolin and Lane, is a tougher gig than you anticipated. What you shouldn't do is find the first available unmarried male and hitch up with him just so you'll have help with the kids. Does the phrase "out of the frying pan and into the fire" resonate with you?

The same is true in other areas of your life too. Don't assume that any change is automatically a change for the better. Sometimes it is; sometimes it isn't. Maybe the change resolves one problem or set of problems but dumps a whole different problem or set into your lap and your life instead.

What are you unhappy with in your life right now? Is your income too low even with the child support money? What can you do about it? Can you switch jobs? Do you want to go back to school and study for a whole new career that pays better? Or do you want to approach your employer about a raise?

Do you see too little of your kids because you work eight hours a day and also have to figure in commuting time? Is it time to think of a job at which you can telecommute from home? Maybe it's time to be really bold and start a business of your own from home.

Is your home unsatisfactory for whatever reason: too small, too difficult to maintain, dicey neighborhood, inconvenient location, or simply too many memories of when you lived there with your former husband? It may be time to move to a different place – even a rental house or apartment where the landlord or building super is responsible for repairs and upkeep and all that falls on your shoulders is housecleaning. Or a large house you can share with another single mom who can help you with childcare, cooking, housecleaning, and expenses. Don't assume that, just because you're living now in a single-family dwelling that you own, you should confine your search for a new home only to another single-family dwelling you own. Be bold! What other arrangement would work better for you?

Related Link: [Maintaining a Positive Image During Divorce](#)

Are you dating a man you know you have no future with, just so you have “someone” in your life? Sure, that type of situation offers you companionship and perhaps other advantages as well. (Does he help with the kids? Fix things around the house for you? Make himself useful in other ways?) But if you don’t love him – or even if you do, but you realize he’s not your best choice in a life partner – now’s as good a time as any to end the relationship. If you don’t, it will be harder to meet your Mr. Right.

It’s the start of a new year and a good time for new beginnings – but remember, as 2014 unfolds for you, that *any* time is a good time for new beginnings. Whenever you aren’t happy with the status quo, stop and consider just what you could do to improve the situation at hand. Think creatively. Think outside the box. Be bold. And make the best of this year all through the year!

For more information about 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](#). Contact Cynthia at Cynthia@cynthiamacgregor.com, and visit her website.

Keep Talking to Your Kids After Divorce



By Rosalind Sedacca, CCT for [Hope After Divorce](#)

It can be tough – but necessary!

As a divorced parent, you can never pay too much attention to your communication skills with your children. It keeps the doors open for a healthier, more positive relationship with them. It makes you more sensitive to issues of concern early on, so you can nip them in the bud. It also encourages your children to talk about what they are feeling, questions they have, and situations that are creating conflict for them.

Related Link: [Solo Parenting: Reconsidering Your Ex](#)

Don't sit down and say, "Let's talk." Instead, find a comfortable time and place where conversation can flow naturally and easily. Then, bring up related subjects in a casual way. Watching television or movies at home can often be a catalyst for valuable conversation. Driving in the car together is another great time for discussion, questions, and sharing feelings.

Consider Bruce Willis and Demi Moore. Despite being divorced for over a decade, they're often seen at red carpet events with their three daughters, Rumer, Scout, and Tallulah. By maintaining a friendly connection with each other, these exes ensure that they both have a positive relationship with their kids and that their family unit stays intact.

Here are some tips that can help you ease into more productive communication with your kids.

– Asking *why* can be intimidating and close off your conversation. Instead ask *what happened* questions, which keep the dialogue open. Then, move into talking about *feelings* which provide insights into what's *really* going on with your child. Validate their right to their feelings, even if you're uncomfortable hearing about them. When they feel safe in expressing their emotions, you'll get real clues as to how your divorce is affecting them – and whether there are changes taking place worthy of your special attention.

– Be patient. Don't react or respond until you get the full message. Sometimes, it takes some meandering for your child to reach the crucial point of what they want to say. Don't coax – or shut them off too soon!

– Remember that preaching, moralizing, or "parenting" comments can put up barriers to clear communication. Listening is your most valuable skill and tool. Paraphrase back what you're hearing to make sure you're getting it right. "So you were

annoyed at dad for forgetting to call you last night” is far different from saying “I don’t blame you for being angry at dad. He’s so undependable.”

– Watch your judgments and put-downs, even with upsetting information. Don’t belittle your children, call them names, or insult their behaviors. Talk *to* them – not *at* them. The difference is felt as respect. Be careful never to put down or disrespect your child’s other parent in your conversations...as tempting as that may be at times. Keep your kids out of the divorce drama as much as possible. That’s when real emotional damage is done.

Related Link: [How to Cooperatively Co-Parent After Separation or Divorce](#)

– Acknowledge your children for coming to you or sharing with you. Praise their braveness. If you were at fault, apologize honestly and discuss how you can make changes for the future. Sometimes, post-divorce parent-child communication can be a very slow process as you rebuild trust and a sense of security.

– Show that you accept and love them – even when their behaviors are not acceptable. Help them come up with some acceptable solutions they can understand and feel good about. Support and positive role modeling go a long way toward influencing your children in the right direction.

Put yourself in your child’s place, and you will likely make wiser decisions when it comes to talking about sensitive areas in their life. Afraid to talk about touchy subjects? Get some help from a counselor. Good parents know it’s essential to talk to your children and be there for them when they need you – especially when they’re reluctant to start the conversation. Don’t let them down!

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

✘ Rosalind Sedacca, CCT is a Divorce and Parenting Coach and author of the ebook, *How Do I Tell the Kids about the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children – with Love!* Acclaimed by divorce professionals, the book provides fill-in-the-blank templates that guide parents in creating a family storybook with personal photographs as an ideal way to break the news. Rosalind is a contributing expert at HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com. For her free ebook on *Post-Divorce Parenting: Success Strategies for Getting It Right!*, her free ezine, articles, coaching services, and other valuable resources, visit Rosalind's [site](#).

Surviving Holidays as a Stepparent





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

It doesn't have to be difficult.

A stepparent who has different holiday traditions from the rest of the family, especially a stepparent with no child of their own, can feel left out of the celebration. *All* family traditions matter, and it's vital for everyone to be considered when planning holidays.

Actress Megan Fox is stepmom to hubby Brian Austin Green's son, Kassius. Word has it that she is a stepmother to the fullest extent. She has happily looked after Kassius since he was three years old. Fox is a good example of a stepparent who most definitely includes her stepchild in all holiday celebrations as well as every aspect of their family's life. It should be this way for all children in blended families.

As a stepparent, here are a few things you should consider when planning holidays:

Related Link: [Reinventing Home for the Holidays](#)

Who is going to spend the holiday where? Holiday plans can be predetermined by custody or shared parental agreements. If you have the flexibility of options, discuss them with the children and keep their desires in mind. Some families split up the holidays each year: "I'll take Halloween and you take Thanksgiving." Or some try to do both: "I'll take Christmas Eve" (Mom) and "I'll take Christmas Day" (Dad). Several people celebrate twice, once with each parent.

Where will the gifts be opened? Parents who purchase presents for their children like to see their reactions when the child is opening the gift. How would you feel if you didn't get to see their surprise? Make sure you think of all parties involved when making plans.

Watch out for trouble on the stepsibling front when the kids have other plans. Stepchildren can feel left out if there are "whole" kids in the picture. Try to keep the presents even and have the major festivities take place when all the children are present.

Don't expect holidays to be as you had in the past. Be aware the loss of the old ways of doing things is a disappointment for the kids *and* for you. Discuss how holidays were for each of you and have each person define which rituals are most important to them. This can be hard to hear, but it's important. Incorporate a few of these old rituals into your new holiday.

Create new holidays. If all the holidays seem to be taken up with stress and other people's claims ("But Thanksgiving is mine!"), you can always select another day (Cinco de Mayo, Arbor Day, Stepparents Day) to become an annual blow-out holiday. Acknowledge you are starting from scratch. There is a new excitement about having the opportunity to create holidays as you would like them to be. Aim for creating your own holiday spirit (with additions) and welcoming kids into it.

If you won't have the children for the holiday, create an alternate festivity for yourselves. Don't stay home and mope. Don't force false cheer. Make new memories. Get creative. Plan ahead and don't let yourself feel lonely or disappointed.

Related Link: [How to Cooperatively Co-Parent After Separation or Divorce](#)

Here are a few more simple tips to keep in mind as well:

- The first few years, try to lower your expectations.
- Don't assume holidays will be calm and peaceful if daily life is full of conflict. There is no holiday from mixed feelings, and you cannot force fun, laughter, and family spirit.
- The winter holidays are traditionally a time of family togetherness. You and your partner can have private time too, but always take the children and stepchildren into consideration.
- Take into account the religions of those involved. It's important to keep family traditions alive with certain cultures.
- Be flexible and encourage flexibility.
- If things are tense, do not force get-togethers or minimize the amount of time spent together.

No matter the holiday, remember to celebrate. You are a real family!

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.

Attitude is Key



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

“...laughing is one of my absolute favorite things.”

My husband and I have gone through about a half dozen extremely stressful events this past year. Looking back, it seems amazing we still find the energy to laugh on occasion. But that's the way life is! And the older we get, the more responsibility we take on, the more children we have, the more

complicated our lives become – the more stress we are going to have to deal with.

My kids and I have always tried to find something to laugh about when serious things happen. It's not always easy, but at least we feel relief a lot more of the time. And hopefully, that's affecting our health in a positive way.

One of the biggest stressors in our society is the breakup of families. We live in a world where divorce has become the norm, and it's refreshing when I notice couples getting along after a divorce. I was thrilled to see that Ashlee Simpson and Pete Wentz reunited (along with their new love interests) to celebrate their son's fifth birthday. I can tell you from experience that keeping a friendship with your ex post-divorce is the only way to go. Everyone involved will be happier in the long run.

Related Link: [Exes Ashlee Simpson and Pete Wentz Reunite for Son Bronx's Birthday](#)

And, just a side note, if your new significant other doesn't agree with that logic, it may be time to get a new significant other!

I think we all believe our trials make us better. They build our character; they solidify who we are as individuals; and they give us perspective. We can all learn to be grateful for those tough times. The key to me is allowing our heartache to strengthen us rather than overtake us and beat us down. Ashlee and Pete seem to have this figured out.

Keep these three little tricks in mind the next time you've lost all hope:

Do one thing you love to do every single day. This doesn't have to be extravagant or complicated. Sure, I'd love to go out and buy a new outfit everyday, but that's simply not going

to happen. Simple things that we love make us happy. I might bake chocolate chip cookies one day, or sit by the fire and read a book the next. Sitting in the hot tub before bed makes me happy, and it helps me sleep better. Call a good friend and chat, or meet up with your daughter for lunch. Figure out what you love and do just one of those things every single day.

Make a list of all the things that are creating the stress and see if you can do something to change it. This is a brilliant plan! When we write things down, it's easier to tackle what we're dealing with. We will be able to see what we can't change, and hopefully, we'll be able to accept those challenges for what they are at that point. Making a list of possible solutions could change your life. Just don't overwhelm yourself with trying to do everything at once.

Call the one person who makes you laugh every time you talk to them. For me, this is my big brother. No matter what either one of us is going through at the time, it is absolutely certain that, before we hang up the phone, we will both be rolling in laughter, sometimes with tears streaming down our cheeks. We share a similar sense of humor, and laughing is one of my absolute favorite things. Just writing this paragraph is reminding me to find more opportunity to laugh every day from here on out!

Related Link: [Lessons from Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck: Don't Take Things Too Seriously](#)

Attitude is everything. I tell my kids that all the time, but sometimes, I have to remind myself as well. How we choose to deal with the stressful times in our lives is up to us. We have to decide how much happiness we want to experience amongst all the grief and upset we sometimes are forced to live with.

Life should be joyful. Make your list right now, and find one thing you can do today that will make a difference in the way

you are feeling about your stress. I know I'm going to.

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](https://twitter.com/janeendiamond) and www.facebook.com/janeen.diamond.

Reinventing Home for the Holidays





By Joanne Pittman for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Home for the holidays for a divorced family doesn't often fit into the Norman Rockwell picture-perfect moment mold. I recall my first Christmas as a divorced parent. First, there was the Christmas card photos – do we or don't we? Then, there was seeing the photos and knowing that the smiles just don't look the same, fumbling for what “tidings of joy” I could muster up to include while writing the annual Christmas card “catch-everyone-up-who-we-don't-see-very-often” letter.

One unexpectedly – or perhaps reluctantly – finds themselves embarking on an entire reinvention of what home for the holidays will look like, feel like, and be like. Regardless of whether you have the most optimal circumstances or the messiest of divorces, the reality that some things will never be the same was, in my experience, the most poignant and tangible during this special time of the year. In years past, Bruce Willis and Demi Moore have been a good example of a divorced couple who have still been able to keep life consistent and peaceful for their children, even during the holiday season.

Related Link: [Celebrity Couples Who Function as Families After Divorce](#)

Here are a few simple ideas that may help bring some cheer and light to the holidays and begin the process of building new memories, embracing old traditions, and setting the stage for a beautiful season.

1. Sit down and write a positive message of what the holiday spirit means to you. What is so special about the holiday season, and why does this matter to you and your family?
2. Create something visual to display in your home that reflects this true meaning. Involve your children. Keep your focus on the present, positive opportunities. Make or purchase something cheerful that exemplifies hope for a bright future.
3. Begin a new tradition, something that is visual and incorporates your holiday spirit message. It could be a new take on Christmas pajamas or a holiday sweater, how you present your holiday dinner, or an inspired way to decorate your home.
4. Take care of your personal image. Be sure to treat yourself to a nice haircut, holiday bobble, anything festive that reminds you of your positive holiday spirit message. You need not spend a lot of money.
5. Remove things from the "holiday bin" that may hold unpleasant memories and replace them with things that offer new hope.
6. Allow yourself to let go of the sadness and be grateful for what was good. Look forward to what will be even better in your future. Keeping a positive outlook and a soul filled with gratitude will allow your true self to shine. Nothing warms the heart and builds happy memories more than seeing someone's eyes sparkling with happiness during the holidays.

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

Reinvention of hope is the basis for reinvention of one's image. My occupation as an image consultant and stylist is often viewed by the outside world as materialistic and shallow. However, if one begins to build their image on the foundation of hope, character, and integrity with the objective to present the authentic self in order to live a more congruent life, the building of one's personal image and self-esteem becomes a powerful and deeply meaningful tool.

What a glorious time to start to understand, reinvent, and rebuild who you are! My truest wishes to you for the most joyous and beautiful of holiday seasons.

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



As founder of Pittman, Lamitie & Associates, Joanne has developed their proprietary IMAGE Authenticity™ Training Programs which address the multifaceted work and lifestyle demands on employees and executives in the corporate world today. Her innovative approach has evolved over the past twenty three years in the fashion, fitness, luxury retail and image consulting industries. Joanne has been writing training curriculum and presenting developmental workshops to large and small audiences for over eighteen years. She is known for raising new questions and expectations which successfully foster authentic corporate and personal brand presence.

How to Cooperatively Co-Parent After Separation or Divorce



By Rosalind Sedacca, CCT for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Since they're parents of a two-year-old son, Orlando Bloom and Miranda Kerr's separation is more than just celebrity news. They have become role models for how to handle divorce. At the Child-Centered Divorce Network, we watch celebrity divorces carefully, honoring them when they do things right – and admonishing them if they're doing things wrong.

So far, we're hearing the right messages that every couple facing separation or divorce should heed. I value what Bloom

said recently on a TV interview: “We love each other. We’re a family. We’re going to be in each other’s lives for the rest of our lives.” That, in essence, is the reality divorcing parents face. Why not approach it cooperatively for the well-being of your children? Bloom added, “For the sake of our son and everything else, we’re going to support one another and love each other as parents to Flynn. Life sometimes doesn’t work out exactly as we plan or hope for. But fortunately, we’re both adults, and we love and care about each other. And we, most of all, love our son.”

Related Link: [Can You Really Be Friends With Your Ex?](#)

I love this response and am delighted to share it with others. No doubt, life for parents after divorce can be enormously complex and challenging for several reasons.

- Both parents are bringing the raw emotions resulting from the divorce into a new stage in their lives.
- Mom and Dad are also bringing previous baggage from the marriage – ongoing conflicts, major disputes, differing styles of communication, unresolved issues, and continual frustrations – into the mix as they negotiate a co-parenting plan.
- Both parents are vying for the respect and love of the children – and are easily tempted to slant their parenting decisions in the direction that wins them popularity with the kids.
- Anger and resentment resulting from the divorce settlement can impact and influence levels of cooperation in the years to come.
- Parents may disagree about major issues ahead that weren’t part of the parenting dynamic in the past, including visits and sleepovers with friends, scheduling after-school activities, handling curfews, new behavior problems,

consequences for smoking, drinking and drug use, dating parameters, using the car, and scheduling vacation time.

– Parents may not share values and visions for the children as they grow and may also not agree on the plan of action required to honor those values.

When these types of differences appear, parents might find themselves struggling to find ways of coping. Agreement on how to co-parent effectively in the present and the future is not a one-time discussion. It takes on-going communication, both verbal and written, as well as regular meetings via phone or in person. And it takes a commitment to make co-parenting work – because you both want it to.

Related Link: [Must We Remain Friends with Our Ex-Husband?](#)

The consequences, when it doesn't work, can be considerable. Your children are very likely to exploit any lack of parental agreement or unity, pitting Mom and Dad against one another while they eagerly take advantage of the situation. This is a danger sign that can result in major family turmoil fueled by behavior problems that neither parent can handle.

When Mom and Dad are on the same page, so to speak, they can parent as a team regardless of how far apart they live. These parents agree about behavioral rules, consequences, schedules, and shared intentions regarding their children. They discuss areas of disagreement and find solutions they can both live with – or agree to disagree and not make those differences an area of contention.

Keep in mind that when you're more open and receptive to your co-parent, you are more likely to get what you really want in the end. Good listening skills, flexibility, and the commitment to do what's best on behalf of your children are part of a smart co-parenting mindset. Remember that co-parenting will be a life-long process for the two of you. Why not do it in a way that will garner your children's respect

and appreciation? It looks like Bloom and Kerr recognize the importance of that. I hope other co-parents do as well.

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

Rosalind Sedacca, CCT is a Divorce and Parenting Coach and author of the ebook, How Do I Tell the Kids about the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children – with Love! Acclaimed by divorce professionals, the book provides fill-in-the-blank templates that guide parents in creating a family storybook with personal photographs as an ideal way to break the news. Rosalind is a contributing expert at HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com. For her free ebook on Post-Divorce Parenting: Success Strategies for Getting It Right!, her free ezine, articles, coaching services, and other valuable resources, visit Rosalind's personal website, www.childcenterreddivorce.com/ or follow her on www.facebook.com/ChildCenteredDivorce/ and Twitter @RosalindSedacca.

Facing a Divorce? Don't Take the Adversarial Approach





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

In any divorce situation, the ideal way to settle disputes is by finding solutions together. Keeping a semi-friendly, amicable relationship with your soon-to-be ex-partner is definitely the wiser choice. With that being said, both spouses must be willing to work together on their divorce settlement; otherwise, the adversarial approach will play out. Unfortunately, much of the advice given in our society today concerning divorce is oppositional. Dissolving a marriage by force and “winning” is far more common than showing mutual respect and making decisions as a team.

Related Link: [Must We Remain Friends With Our Ex-Husband?](#)

What Will You Choose?

If rebuilding your marriage is not an option, will you choose to work out your divorce settlement peacefully, or will you choose to take the adversarial approach? Bruce and Kris Jenner, who recently announced their separation, are a good example of a celebrity couple facing this question. The estimated \$125 million net worth of the Kardashian empire is

serious business, and they have **NO PRENUP!** California is a community property state, meaning they'll have to split that net worth 50-50. Hopefully, neither of them will choose to take the adversarial, "fight to win" approach if they indeed divorce. In a perfect world, the best solution for this couple is to rebuild their marriage. However, if they do choose to divorce, working through their financial settlement respectfully will be in their overall best interest.

When Divorce Is Unavoidable

When divorce is unavoidable, issues to be aware of are: temporary support, custody and visitation (if you have children), financial worth and combined income, property division, spousal support, child support, retirement, assets, debts, insurance, and everything acquired as a married couple. Be transparent; otherwise, you'll need to hire a forensic accountant, which will further drain your financial reservoir. Costly attorney fees take a financial toll on divorcing couples if they take the adversarial approach. Staying on friendly terms with a peaceful exit strategy is always the best choice.

Taking the Adversarial Approach

Choosing to take the adversarial approach puts an emphasis on "winning the fight." Our society has taught us to take sides. If you and your spouse choose to battle as a way of protecting yourselves, you end up spending negative energy and money fighting for survival instead of finding solutions. No one wins! Actually, the only ones who win are your attorneys and legal and financial teams. Years down the road, you will most likely find that this approach wasn't worth it financially, emotionally, physically, or mentally.

Related Link: [Maintaining a Positive Image While Going Through Divorce](#)

When you are facing divorce, do your part to be a peacemaker.

If your partner is leaning towards being adversarial, encourage him or her to not go there. It's up to you both to take the high road, which will allow you to move on and rebuild your lives in a much healthier, more positive manner. Someday, you will thank each other and so will your family!



Lisa LaBelle is Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of Hope After Divorce and DivorceSupportCenter.com. She is co-author and co-editor of the book, Hope After Divorce. Lisa is a family and child advocate, having worked as a consultant with divorced women across the country. She was lead advocate for the reforming of family law child support guidelines, which were successfully signed into law. Lisa is a publicist at Osmond Marketing. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in counseling, marriage and family therapy, and mediation. Lisa is a special guest host on numerous radio shows and a contributing expert at HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, LAFamily.com, and CupidsPulse.com. You can follow her on Facebook and Twitter. Lisa is the mother of two grown sons who continue to be her greatest joy.

Finding Reconciliation Through Separation





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

Marriage is full of extreme ups and downs. Every marriage goes through hard times, but some certainly more than others. As recent news of the separation between the Oscar-winning duo Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas came to light, we can see the toll that these hard times can take. These past few years, they have experienced a series of insurmountable challenges. Douglas was diagnosed with throat cancer in 2010, and he had to endure chemotherapy and radiation, which took a tremendous toll on his body. As if that wasn't enough to put stress on a relationship, his wife of 13 years surprised fans in 2011 when she voluntarily admitted herself to a facility for bipolar disorder treatment. She underwent treatment again earlier this year.

Related Link: [Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones Separate](#)

This type of stress and worry is enough to put any relationship on the brink of divorce, and this power couple is no exception. According to *People* magazine, a representative

of the couple stated that the couple is separated and “taking some time apart to evaluate and work on their marriage.” A separation is exactly that. It’s a time to step back from the daily arguing and frustration to re-evaluate your partnership. It’s a time to figure out if you want to get your relationship back on track.

Here are some ideas to help you turn a separation into reconciliation:

Seek Professional Help

If both you and your spouse are committed to working things out, your first step is to find a third party that can help you. Talk to friends, relatives, and strangers, and search the Internet for referrals. Putting your trust and your relationship in the hands of someone you don’t know can be terrifying, so look for recommendations from people who have had good experiences. Don’t be afraid to tell people you are working on your marriage. Many people see counselors on a regular basis and just don’t talk about it. There is no shame in admitting that you need help and are looking to others for guidance. Rebuilding your marriage is worth the work required.

No Dating

If you are separated but committed to trying again, dating has to be off-limits. You cannot have an attitude of “the grass is greener on the other side” if you are trying to rebuild your marriage with your spouse. The point is to remember how green the grass can be in your *own* backyard – with the word “can” being the key.

Immerse Yourself

A couple who recently resolved their separation said the best advice they ever got was to *not* fill the empty space the separation left behind. In other words, immerse yourself in the separation. Don’t try to fill the quiet space with

shopping, friends, alcohol, online video games, or any other possible distraction or addiction. Take the newfound alone time to think. Sit on the beach, take a drive without music, or write in your journal.

This is a time to find your way back to yourself and your partner with clarity and thoughtfulness. It's a time to remember what you loved about them in the first place and focus on what took you off track. There is no way you can devote the time necessary to rebuilding your marriage if you fill the space with distractions. It may be uncomfortable, but you need to start getting used to the silence in order to hear the quiet voices within, which will lead you towards healing.

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

Do the Work

If you are at the point of separation there are only two directions to go: the path of divorce or the path of reconciliation. The choice is yours. If the path of reconciliation is the one you choose, then you must commit to giving everything you have to put your marriage back together. Do what your therapist tells you. Strip down the layers and lose the pride. Let go of your ego. Partial effort won't be enough. This may be the hardest thing you've ever done. If it's ever going to work out, you must give 100 percent.

There was a time, not too long ago, when you stood at the altar and you believed beyond all odds that you would make your marriage work. Well, here you are: facing those odds that now seem too big to bear. A separation can be a blessing in disguise. If the right steps are taken, it can lead you to renewed hope and new beginnings with the person who you committed to for better or worse.

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*.

Finding Yourself Again



By Molly Reynolds for [Hope After Divorce](http://HopeAfterDivorce.org)

Months after my very messy divorce, I found myself sitting in a greasy diner with my friend Christi, and I was at a total stand still. I was staring across the table at her, trying not to cry into my grilled cheese sandwich as a million thoughts ran through my mind.

Christi had never been married before. In fact, she had been single since I'd known her. She is beautiful, funny, smart, a great friend – and one of the happiest people I know.

Related Link: [Why So Many Women Couldn't Care Less About Getting Married](#)

I finally opened my mouth.

“How do you do it?” I asked her.

“How do I do what?”

“How do you be single?”

She smiled. “You just do.”

I wanted to take notes. “No, tell me. What do you DO? Like, what does your typical day look like?”

I got married when I was twenty and was now pushing thirty. It didn't seem like an odd question to me at the time; I had never been single as an adult. My marriage was isolating and highly emotionally abusive. My days were wrapped up working, spending time with my husband, cooking, cleaning, paying the bills, helping him with whatever he needed. I had so much free time now and didn't know what to do with myself. More honestly, I didn't know who I was as a single person.

Thank God for good friends. “You do whatever you want!” she said with a laugh. “If you want to stay out all night, you do it. If you want to spend the weekend watching *Desperate Housewives* on Netflix, you do it. If you want to eat a jar of

olives for dinner, you do it. It's actually pretty awesome."

The thought of this absolutely terrified me. Battle lost. Soggy grilled cheese.

This story illustrates co-dependency at its finest. Unfortunately, co-dependent women often find themselves with a narcissistic husband. Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise are a prime example. A narcissist systematically makes his partner give up who she is in order to serve his own ideals and needs. If you are fortunate enough to break free from the abuse of a narcissist – as Katie was – you're going to have to take a lot of time to rebuild yourself.

I hate labels, but a lot of us are co-dependent. If we're partnered with the wrong person, the effects can be devastating. We think giving absolutely everything over to our marriage and forgetting ourselves makes us a better partner. It doesn't. It doesn't even make us a better person. Luckily for us, it's a bad habit and *not* a life-threatening disease.

One of the hardest things about any kind of breakup (even if your spouse was a total loser) is that you have to learn how to relate to the world differently. There's no partner to call and check-in with when you have to make a decision or if something good happens. You find yourself with a lot more alone time, and if you're not careful, your mind can go to a very dark place...which is why it is imperative that you find yourself again – or find yourself period, whatever the case may be.

Related Link: [Are You Dating Someone with Narcissistic Personality Disorder?](#)

Fill those empty moments in your life with people and things that you [love](#). And if you don't know what you love, find out! A fun, cheap way to do that is sites like Groupon or Living Social. Maybe you've always wanted to take belly dancing class – do it! Or if you've always loved cooking or boxing, find a

Meetup in your area. This is also a great way to make new friends and remind yourself that this tough time in your life will absolutely pass.

Learn how to do you. Habits are tough to break but fight against co-dependency as hard as you can. You are a whole, perfect person on your own. You don't need anyone else to be complete. Later on, if you choose to have another relationship, do it because you want to, not because you need to.

Be happy with who you are because life is too good to waste. Live as hard as you can.

Following her work as an actress, Molly Reynolds began her writing career covering scripts for film producers and working in commercials at Tombo Films, a boutique production company that created spots for the likes of Apple, Petco, and Coca Cola. Since then, she has written anything from ads to children's books to musical theatre, with a special emphasis on socially conscious material. Her latest musical, Benny (book and lyrics), has been performed in Los Angeles and New York (most recently at the Fingerlakes Musical Theatre Festival). Molly is a contributing expert at HopeAfterDivorce.org, CupidsPulse.com, and LAFamily.com. She is currently the Director of Development at LUCID and a strong advocate for empowering women and minorities. The Gingerbread Pimp, Molly's fearless new musical that takes a bite out of domestic abuse, was performed at the New York Musical Theatre Festival on July 18, 2013.

Lessons From Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck



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

There are few other couples that have amassed more attention in 2013 than celebrity power couple Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck. It has been a memorable year for them with Affleck's huge success and Oscar for his brilliant movie *Argo*. In the coming months, Garner will step back into the spotlight with the film adaptation of the popular book, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. With their stellar careers, three beautiful children and easy affection with each other, it seems like this Hollywood pair has it all.

But let's not forget the bumpy path these two heavyweights

took before they found each other. No one can ignore Affleck's relationship with Jennifer Lopez, a love that the media referred to as "Bennifer." The couple called off their engagement after only 18 months of dating. And Garner isn't without her own, though certainly less notorious, relationship history: She married fellow actor Scott Foley in 2000 and found herself divorced in 2004. Though celebrity couples seem to live a fairytale, these two prove that happily ever after does not come easily.

We often find ourselves looking to celebrities to guide us in our lives – from how to dress, what to eat and where to shop. Similarly, we look to them to guide us in our relationships. Here are three lessons that we can learn from this fan-favorite power couple.

Related Link: [Celeb Couples: More Like Us Than We Want to Admit?](#)

Keep your personal life personal.

It is hard to say exactly why, but the media bombed hard on Bennifer. Whether it was because of their rather embarrassing nickname or possibly their highly-criticized movie *Gigli*, this couple could do nothing to escape the jokes or harsh criticisms. What might have topped it all off was the music video that the pair filmed together for Lopez's song, "Jenny from the Block." The couple openly displayed their affection for each other in a way that many felt was unnecessary, leaving themselves open to severe criticism by critics and fans alike. It was no surprise, then, that they soon broke up.

There is something to be said for keeping your personal life personal. Publicly displaying arguments or overtly sexual displays of affection leave you open to criticism and opinions from third parties. Thanks to social media, many feel it's okay to air their dirty and sometimes very inappropriate

laundry for the world to see. In truth, nobody really wants to hear all about how angry you are at your husband or know what your “dirty talk” sounds like. Keep the details of your relationship personal. Being in a relationship is hard enough; there is no need to invite the unnecessary opinions or criticisms of others.

Admit that marriage is work and work on it daily.

Upon winning the Oscar for Best Picture for *Argo*, Ben Affleck gave an acceptance speech that caught people’s attention. He said to his wife, “I want to thank you for working on our marriage for ten Christmases. It’s good. It is work but the best kind of work, and there’s no one I’d rather work with.” The actor was criticized for possibly alluding to the fact that his marriage was in trouble. According to the happily-married duo, though, his speech was totally misunderstood.

Why is it that our society struggles to admit that marriage is work? Anyone in a good and happy marriage knows that daily effort is required for a successful relationship. It seems that people would rather hear that all is rosy and perfect in the land of Hollywood. Affleck should be commended for reminding all of us that what you love is worth the work.

Related Link: [What We Can Learn From “the Work” Celeb Couples Do](#)

Don’t take things too seriously.

As a result of the media criticism for his acceptance speech, Affleck found himself having to clarify what he meant and took the opportunity to do so while hosting an episode of *Saturday Night Live*. During his monologue, with the help of his lovely wife, they showed fans that they were still in love and happy and could laugh and joke about the way the acceptance speech was construed.

Being able to laugh in a relationship is a vital part of

happiness. It is important not to take things too seriously and to always try to find the humor in situations. There are endless factors that add stress to a relationship and can work cracks into any strong foundation. Laughter can often be the glue that keeps those cracks from splitting in half. There is something admirable about a couple who doesn't take themselves too seriously.

Garner and Affleck are a power couple who seem to have it all together, but they remind us that the path to a happy ending can often be blocked with bumps and turns. Still, it is undoubtedly a path worth taking.

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