

# Solo Parenting: Reconsidering Your Ex



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

You've been divorced a while—maybe six months, maybe more than two years—and nobody better has shown up to tempt you. What's more, parenting as a solo act has proven to be a heavy burden. And on top of that, the kids haven't given up pestering you about getting their dad to move “back home.” You'd think by now they'd be used to the new order of things, but no, they're relentless about wanting Daddy to return. And you're tired of hearing them “singing the same old song.”

The last time he came to pick them up, you looked him over and started remembering all of his good points—and forgetting all

of the bad ones. You remembered how funny he could be, how good he was with the kids, how kind he was to your mother... and you saw how happy the kids were to see him.

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You remembered the night before, when you'd gotten home from work exhausted and still had to make dinner, supervise homework, get on the kids' cases about room-cleaning, nag Jeffrey about walking the dog and Jennifer about changing the cat's litter box. You had to hassle them about bedtime, and once they were finally tucked in, you had to wash up the dinner dishes and start the first of two loads of laundry. By the time you fell into bed, you were too exhausted to fall asleep and had done *nothing* for pleasure or relaxation all evening.

Oh, how different it would be, you think, if you had a spouse, a partner, a man in your life to help shoulder the burden. (And what a heavy burden it seems at the moment to be.) What about your ex? He had his faults, but he was a good father. There's no taking that away from him, whatever else there is to say...

Stop right there! "Whatever else there is to say?" What else is there to say? Plenty, I'll bet, if you think back and give the marriage an honest appraisal! Why did you call it quits in the first place? Not on a whim, I'm sure. You had your reasons, and they were most likely valid ones. Remember?

Now, fast-forward in your mind. Imagine you've gotten back together with the man. Imagine how overjoyed the kids are. Imagine how relieved you are—at first—to have help with the kids and in general. Then remember all his faults or flaws, all the reasons you gave up on the marriage in the first place. What has changed? Probably nothing. Now picture yourself asking him to leave—again. Finally, picture the kids' reaction when Daddy leaves for the *second* time. Not a happy

picture, is it?

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So, is remarrying your ex the answer to your problems? In all probability, no. Is remarrying your ex going to make your kids happy? In the short term, sure, but in the long term, when he leaves again, definitely not! And thinking that “this time, things will be different” is almost certainly a fantasy.

Reconsidering your ex? Better think twice—not just for your own sake but for the kids’ sake too.



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## The Four Biggest Myths About Men



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

**“Some men are actually very afraid of roller coasters.”**

We women think we have men all figured out. Many of us believe they only care about three things: sex, food and sports. But the reality is, they are human beings who experience human emotions, and the sooner we accept that fact, the sooner we will begin to experience true joy in our relationships.

Let's consider Billy Ray Cyrus for a moment. After 19 years of marriage, his wife Tish has filed for divorce, citing irreconcilable differences. Billy seems like a pretty good guy. I'm sure he has his issues, but then so does Tish. He and his wife have five kids, and he seems supportive of his family – that's no small thing. It's apparent that the two of them have difficulty getting along at times, but who doesn't?

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My advice to Tish would be to step back for a moment, stop talking to your girlfriends about your marital problems and talk to Billy instead. Consider the good that exists in your relationship, and remember that no one can ever take his place as a father to your children. Think ahead to the grandchildren. How nice it would be to have your family intact at that stage of your life so you can enjoy each other in the most intimate way? No deciding where the kids go for weekends and holidays; instead, everybody is together always. Now why didn't I think of that years ago?

My experience has led me to the conclusion that sometimes the things we tell our girlfriends about our husbands are often based on our own fears and are not always reality. There are four myths about men that we've all been holding onto for way too long. Let's discuss:

**Men don't really care – about anything.** Most men actually do care. They care about their wife and family very deeply. They care about making you happy, and they even care about the way they look. The reason women believe men don't care is because we think they don't listen. The truth is, they just listen differently than we do.

**Men have no fears.** When your teenager wants to go on the roller coaster you refuse to ride, you ask your husband to take her because he couldn't possibly be afraid of a roller coaster. Some men are actually very afraid of roller coasters. Men worry about a lot of things. They worry about finances; they worry about what's going on at work; and they feel a lot of pressure to make sure you're happy. They actually spend more time worrying than we do because they carry a lot of responsibility on their shoulders.

**Men are emotionally detached.** Men have emotions. They may not always show them because they are expected to hide the fact that they are sad or scared. They're supposed to be our rock. Share in their emotions, and they will connect with you on a

higher level.

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**Men are confrontational and demanding.** A good, responsible man will communicate with you effectively. If you're doing the same, there will be no demands and no confrontations.

Ask yourself if you are doing everything you can to bring out the best in your husband. Decent, hard-working, responsible, loving men are wonderful human beings who want a meaningful relationship with their wife. They want to care for you on every level, so let them. And then return the favor.

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

*Janeen Diamond was a newscaster for KUTV News until 2001. Since then, 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 many products and companies. She authored her first book, "Save Your Marriage in 30," hoping to help families have greater success and live happier lives. She is co-creator of "Teen Impact TV," a website for high school students to give them a creative and emotional outlet. Janeen is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, FamilyShare.com and LAFamily.com. Visit Janeen's websites [saveyourmarriagein30.com/](http://saveyourmarriagein30.com/) and [teenimpact.org/](http://teenimpact.org/) or follow her blog [saveyourmarriagein30.blogspot.com/](http://saveyourmarriagein30.blogspot.com/)*

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## Relationship

## Advice:



# Maintaining a Positive Image While Going Through Divorce



By Joanne Pittman of Pittman Consulting & Image for Hope After Divorce

The teenage son of a dear friend of mine said something one day that really stuck with me. He was speaking about a relationship his mother was building with a new boyfriend, and he flatly stated, "He is not the star of my show!"

As an image consultant who has worked with celebrities, models and public figures as well as professionals and individuals, I see all of my clients as "stars of their shows." Life is filled with transitions, and divorce is one of them. While in a transitional state, it's common and needful to make adjustments to our images that allow us to circumvent needless

and costly detours on our road ahead.

In fact, we are each the stars of our show – train wrecks, triumphs and all. We have our own paparazzi in the form of friends, peers, colleagues, parents and children. Dare I mention the long line of predators ready to take advantage of our tender state while undergoing divorce and all of its rigors?

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While most people don't have the advantage of having a team of public relations (PR) experts ready to announce or confirm rumors of personal relationships in failure, the need to have help managing the distress of divorce is no less significant. In order to attract the best people into your world, I impress upon you the importance of maintaining an authentic and clear image statement during this precarious time in your life.

Two celebrity couples that have navigated their divorces brilliantly are Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt and Courteney Cox and David Arquette. Each leading lady maintained consistent appropriate looks and, with the help of her PR team, was clear about her messages. They both managed to appear simple, chic and tastefully put together and demonstrated their resolve to stay true to themselves while going through divorce with dignity.

Pitt and Arquette also managed the very public ending of their marriages gracefully by preserving a well-defined message and image presence. Despite the media blitz making Pitt out to be the man who broke the heart of America's sweetheart, he maintained his impish good looks by keeping his intentions clear. Similarly, Arquette has kept his understated look with a slight modern edge while being committed to a healthy and friendly co-parenting relationship with his former wife.

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***Consider your image just as important as that of a public figure or a rising actor.***

Here are a few tips for you as you move forward with reshaping your storyline. As the leading character, choose your look wisely. Be clear about who you are and why you matter. This isn't always easy to ascertain when going through the metamorphosis of divorce, but I assure you, now is the time to create your outline, your plot and your script.

– Create a personal mission statement. Use key character traits that you possess like integrity, loyalty, highly-organized, etc. Then include character traits that you wish to improve or that you admire in others. Doing so helps keep you focus on goals and desires which are meaningful.

– Rid your closet **and** overall image of anything that is incongruent with your intended message. For example, if you have the goals of becoming "holistic, natural and healthy," refrain from elective and excessive plastic surgery, implants, hair extensions, filler injections, etc. We all know those choices are fake and far from holistic! For clothing, you would choose natural fibers and textures as well as colors and prints that are soothing.

– Create a budget and acquisition plan. You're not an A-list celebrity; you're not going to be offered free clothing from the A-list designers so they can use you for their PR campaigns. However, **you are a star** and should dress yourself accordingly. Therefore, take time to work out a budget that will allow you the **BEST** for your needs. Don't settle for less!

While you may not live the dream of receiving an Oscar, Tony, or Emmy, you can live the dream of a happy and authentic self as the star of your show!

*For more information about Hope After Divorce, visit our Experts page.*



*As founder of Pittman, Lamitie & Associates, Joanne has developed their proprietary IMAGE Authenticityâ„¢ 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.*

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## **Are You Dating Someone with Narcissistic Personality Disorder?**





By Tina Swithin, HopeAfterDivorce Expert

The term, “narcissist” seems to be spreading through the world like an out-of-control wildfire. The term itself doesn’t always have a negative connotation since, ironically, we are all narcissistic by nature and there actually is a certain degree of self-love that is healthy. However, there is a line that separates healthy confidence from the Å¼ber toxic Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). That’s what we need to be mindful of when we date someone.

The celebrity world seems to be brimming over with unhealthy narcissism. The spotlight that shines in Hollywood is highly attractive to a person with NPD. Celebrities are equipped with fame and power, which feed a narcissist’s ego. While many celebrities forge a balance through grace and humility, there is a significant number who bathe in the spotlight in complete self-indulgence.

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In 2006, Dr. Drew Pinsky and Mark Young conducted a scientific

study with over 200 celebrities using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). The results showed that celebrities are 17.84% more narcissistic than the general public. It isn't surprising, given that most aspiring celebrities are driven by fame, money, and admiration. What better place for a narcissist to be than in the limelight? It's the equivalent of flipping on the porch light and watching moths come to life!

There are a vast number of celebrities who display many characteristics of narcissism (if not full blown NPD) such as Tom Cruise, Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian. While many people enter the celebrity arena with pre-existing characteristics of NPD, their egos balloon to extreme levels with every flash of the paparazzi camera, VIP entrance admission, limo service, and autograph request. These things often lead to a sense of entitlement as Reese Witherspoon displayed during her husband's DUI arrest.

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When it comes to the business world, narcissists are generally successful individuals. This is why the political arena and corporate scene is another area with a high concentration of NPD. These individuals generally attract their mates with their charisma, larger-than-life persona and their successful careers. Those with extreme NPD believe that they are the best, and such confidence can certainly be attractive. Narcissists consider themselves special and those who are accepted into their circle *must* be special by default.

## **Prince Charming**

In 2000, I met a charismatic man named Seth who offered me the world on a silver platter. There were times in which I questioned whether our courtship was too good to be true. His parents had been married for 25 years, he was on his way up in

a very promising career and I felt like I was living a fairytale. Seth told me all of the things that I wanted to hear and showered me with poems, flowers, shopping sprees, and vacations. My friends and family stood by in awe as this modern day Prince Charming wooed me and everyone around me. While there were red flags, the good outweighed the bad in the first few years and I swept my concerns under the rug and left them there.

Six years into our marriage, I sat on a therapist's couch and confided in the woman sitting across from me. I told her about Seth's lies and the manipulations which included financial schemes, stealing his parent's retirement savings and racking up 1.6 million dollars in debt – much of this was done behind my back. I described Seth's lack of remorse and his inability to show empathy. I explained that I had never felt so alone and unloved in my life. In a six-year period of time, I had been reduced to a shell of my former self. When I looked in the mirror, I was ashamed of the fake life that we were living. To those around us we were the golden couple, but behind closed doors my life was a living hell.

My therapist walked across the room and handed me a book from her bookshelf. The words seemed to jump off of the page, "Narcissistic Personality Disorder." To my naïve mind, it was thrilling to have a name for the hell that I was living. With a name, there was hope, or so I thought. My therapist went on to explain that NPD is not curable and that, in fact, most mental health professionals will not treat those with this personality disorder. Her next words stung, "You either learn to live with this or you leave. There is no cure."

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I spent the next year and a half trying to block out my therapist's words. However, our marriage finally ended in 2009. In short order, I discovered that the only thing worse than being married to a narcissist is divorcing a narcissist.

I quickly went from a 4,000 square foot luxury home to a local women's shelter. From there, I spent two years fearing for my life, sleeping with a hammer under my pillow and holding a can of mace in my hands as I made scrambled eggs for breakfast. I jumped at every noise. My modern day Prince Charming was actually a modern day Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Part of my healing has come from educating others on the red flags that I chose to ignore in the beginning of our relationship. I have listed them out for you below:

## **10 Red Flags**

**1. Excessive charm:** Question a person that seems too good to be true. Narcissists are masters at wooing their targets. If you are receiving tickets to your favorite ballet and bouquets of flowers larger than your Christmas tree before the third date, you may be dating a narcissist. Offers to whisk you away to Paris for New Year's Eve are fabulous but could be considered odd behavior if you just met last week and don't know his middle name!

**2. Overly confident:** A healthy dose of self-esteem is a good thing, but remain cautious if he seems to be the president of his own fan club. In short order, you are likely to become the secretary of that fan club.

**3. Haughty:** Pay attention to elitist comments and general arrogance toward those who are "beneath" him. Narcissists will often put down co-workers, friends, and even family members. People with NPD are skilled at making you believe that they are superior. If you find yourself in their chosen circle, this attitude can rub off. Being chosen by someone so superior must mean that you too are superior, right? Wrong. That feeling will be short-lived. Trust me.

**4. Bragging:** Narcissists do not care about your feelings, views, or opinions. Narcissists are generally too obsessed with telling you how great they are to even ask about you.



Their bragging rights carry over to a wide variety of topics including their family, heritage, money, cars, physical appearance, elite gym memberships, clothing and shoes.

**5. Grandiosity:** Narcissists seem to live by the phrase, "Go big or go home." They like to be seen and known. Grandiosity is often their middle name. A narcissist will pick up an enormous group drink tab or buy everyone in the bar a round of shots. Their motivation is to be showy and to attract attention. These gestures could be easily interpreted as kindness, but this is the furthest thing from the truth. While a narcissist is signing the tab for drinks, he is also scanning the group to take inventory on how he can personally use each person to maintain his inflated self-image.

**6. Success:** There is a reason why the political and celebrity arenas are brimming over with narcissists. Narcissists are often found in leadership roles where they have free reign to dominate and dazzle those around them. They flourish in big cities where there is less accountability and less risk of developing a reputation that will haunt them.

**7. The Band-Aid:** Narcissists are professional Band-Aids. They will seek out your weaknesses (abandonment issues, poor self-image, etc.) and will morph themselves into your savior. Whatever voids you have, they will fill. This may sound great, but it will not last. Once you are hooked on them, they will rip off the Band-Aid and leave you bleeding.

**8. Hypersensitivity:** Fluctuations between extreme confidence and extreme insecurity seem to be a common trait with narcissists. They will often perceive non-existent criticism and will respond by shutting down and sulking, or acting out in a rage. Any interpreted attack or criticism against the narcissist is dealt with in an unhealthy manner. In his mind, you are either with him or against him; there is no gray area.

**9. Moving Quickly:** Narcissists have a tendency to move at the

speed of light. Has he extended an invitation to meet his parents after the second date? Did he have towels monogrammed with your initials as a gift for your first sleepover? These are red flags. By the way, beware of the monogrammed towels. I haven't found any studies to back my claim but there is something very suspicious about people with their initials sewn into hand towels!

**10. Lying:** You may initially notice a few white or grey lies. Take stock of these. Expert manipulators are well versed at twisting reality until you find yourself doubting reality.

Anyone in the dating world should be well versed on the red flags of Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Dr. Craig Malkin, author, clinical psychologist and Instructor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School provides a list of five early warning signs to watch for in his recent article in the Huffington Post which discusses narcissism in the dating world. "In real life, the most dangerous villains rarely advertise their malevolence," states Dr. Malkin. This could be why narcissists are commonly known as wolves in sheep's clothing.

*Tina Swithin is the author of "Divorcing a Narcissist: One Mom's Battle" and the popular blog, "One Mom's Battle". Tina is a Huffington Post contributor. She is also a contributing writer and expert for [HopeAfterDivorce.org](http://HopeAfterDivorce.org) and [FamilyShare.com](http://FamilyShare.com), [LAFamily.com](http://LAFamily.com), and [CupidsPulse.com](http://CupidsPulse.com). Tina's writing covers sensitive topics including, how to navigate your way through a high conflict divorce. She is a family and child advocate. Tina is happily married, and resides in sunny California with her two daughters and three-legged tortoise named, Oliver.*

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# Relationship Advice: Must We Remain Friends With Our Ex-Husband?



By Nancy Lang for Hope After Divorce

The Universe can have a very ironic sense of humor. I recently had an altercation via e-mail with my ex-husband (about money, of course), and all of my old buttons were not only pushed, but they got stuck in “I’m hurt, I’m not respected, I’m not appreciated, I’m pissed, and I hate you!” mode. For two days, I stewed and chewed on the not-so-pretty file in my memory drive, as I was reminded of the many reasons why we got divorced. Several days later, funny enough, I find myself with the opportunity to write about maintaining a friendship with one’s ex-husband.

In recent news, Denise Richards (perhaps we should call her Mother Denise?) has raised the bar for all ex-wives: she offered to have temporary custody of her ex-husband's (Charlie Sheen) kids from his last marriage to Brooke Mueller (his third ex-wife), who is in rehab for the twentieth time. This arrangement has been approved by L.A. County Juvenile Court.

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Clearly, Richards has put the needs of these children before anything else. They are, after all, half-siblings to her children with Sheen. She is providing them with a more stable environment than either of their parents can provide. I'm guessing she would open her heart and home to them even if she and Sheen weren't getting along. So, while it's great that they are able to co-exist or even co-parent, whether everything remains copasetic or not, the priority is the well-being of the children.

Is it possible to remain friends with your ex-husband? This depends on the reasons for the split and the level of hostility. There are also other things to consider:

- If you don't have kids, and you think friendship is possible, first give yourself some time to move on and adjust to who you are as a single person.
- There is a difference between being buds and maintaining a good relationship. If there are children involved, you will always be connected to your ex, so it's best to at least get along. Kids hate when there is tension between Mom and Dad.
- If regular communication would bring up old hurts, then keep it peaceful and keep interaction to a minimum.
- If you can't be friendly, try not to bash your ex to your children, no matter their age. I made the mistake of saying my ex was a short name for Richard. Not my best mommy moment.

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Yes, the Universe works in mysterious ways. Many years ago, when I was beginning my acting career in Los Angeles, I was an extra in a movie starring Martin Sheen. He played a man with a wife (Blythe Danner) and kids, who discovers he fathered a child from an affair. The mother of this child dies, so his wife, understanding of the circumstances, suggests they take the child into their home.

Six degrees of Charlie Sheen. We come full circle. Thank you, Universe, for the laugh and the lesson!

✖ *Nancy Lang is a Certified Life Coach, published author, professional actress and M.D. (Maven of Dating!). It was her role in life as a divorced woman that inspired her to write the book, You Want Me to What?!—The Dating Adventures and Life Lessons of a Newly Divorced Woman (available on Amazon) and [www.you-want-me-to-what.com](http://www.you-want-me-to-what.com). She was co-writer and co-star of the original musical sketch comedy, Shtick Happens! which played to crowds from West Hollywood to Minneapolis. Nancy is on a mission to empower women.*

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## Relationship Advice: The EX

# Word



By Monique Honaman for Hope After Divorce

I recall speaking to a divorce support group a few years ago. Whenever someone referenced their EX-husband or EX-wife, each person was careful to use the phrase “my former husband” or “my former wife.” This wasn’t just something that one person used but rather everyone in the group. I thought it was interesting. After all, using the term “EX-husband” seems pretty common. When I asked what this was all about, I was informed that they believed that EX- implied a negative connotation, and they preferred to approach the word a bit more positively. OK! To each his and her own!

But I would like to stand up for EX- words and suggest that there are a number of EX-traordinary EX-words that should be



fully embraced post-divorce. One can wallow in EX-cuses and get stuck in the EX-crement of what they just went through, or one can focus EX-clusively on moving forward and on the EX-citement and EX-cesses that this new life will bring!

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Whether your divorce was your idea or not, it is now a part of your story and part of the journey that defines your life. Someone made an EX-it, which EX-empted you from EX-tending your commitment to your marriage. I speak with countless people who are stuck in the EX-istence of “what was” as opposed to eagerly anticipating the EX-pectation “what will be.” One of my favorite quotes that got me through my divorce was, “I can’t control what happens to me. I can only control how I react to it.” I love it when I encounter others who hold a similar attitude. No one is EX-empt from divorce. To those who say, “It will never happen to me” (like I did), you may find yourself in shock one day. Divorce EX-tends to all corners of our society and EX-cludes no one.

(I’m having fun writing this piece, so EX-cuse me while I keep going!)

To those people who are stuck EX-aming their unplanned lives collapsing around them, I say this: No EX-cuses! Inhale, then EX-hale. Now, pick up the pieces and become an EX-ample of how to move forward successfully after hitting a bump in the road. No one can do this EX-cept for you. Let the world EX-plode around you with new opportunities. EX-press your emotions. Don’t let your ability to love or to be loved go EX-tinct.

Having a failed marriage and becoming a divorcee at age 40 was not part of my EX-pectation for my life. That being said, it did become my EX-istence and part of my story. I was one of those people who opted for life to go on positively. I met an EX-traordinary man. I am EX-tremely grateful that he came into my life and the lives of my kids. It’s nice to be confident in

the EX-clusivity of our marriage. We have a common passion and bond around our EX-tra-curricular activities and have EX-plored the world together. We have EX-panded each other's horizons. I feel EX-alted and respected by him, and in EX-change, I try to honor him in the same way. The bottom line is that this relationship and marriage EX-ceeds anything I ever imagined before.

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Mae West said, *"All discarded lovers should be given a second chance, but with somebody else."* EX-actly!! My point is this: whether you call someone your EX- or your former-, make peace with that part of your past and move forward. Take advantage of your second chance, and make it EX-traordinary. I think I've EX-acerbated my point. There are some fabulous EX- words. Use them. Live them. Celebrate them. Just think: what a great way to celebrate getting rid of one EX by introducing several new and more powerful ones!

By the way, I also met a woman once who didn't use the term "EX-husband" or "former husband." Instead, she had me laughing when she started talking about her "wasband." I thought I misunderstood. Then she clarified and EX-claimed, "The man who **was** my husband is now lovingly referred to as my 'wasband.'" Love it! I thought that was EX-tremely clever.

*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 [www.HighRoadLessTraffic.com](http://www.HighRoadLessTraffic.com) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com). Monique writes for [HopeAfterDivorce.org](http://HopeAfterDivorce.org), [FamilyShare.com](http://FamilyShare.com), [LAFamily.com](http://LAFamily.com) and [CupidPulse.com](http://CupidPulse.com). She can be reached at [Monique@HighRoadLessTraffic.com](mailto:Monique@HighRoadLessTraffic.com).*