

# **HEALING FROM DIVORCE**

Don't be ashamed. The experience of divorce does not make you a second-class citizen. Your dreams for yourself are always worthwhile yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Feel God's love and grace. As 'Desiderata says; "You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars you have the right to be here."

Respect yourself. You are a capable person who is facing difficult decisions and emotions. Look at yourself in the mirror each day and smile with gentle admiration and honest encouragement.

Consult the professionals you need. There are men and women especially trained in the emotional complexities and legal details of divorce. Talk with these people to determine who best can offer what you need during this time.

Continue to do the good things for yourself you've always done. You may want to make a list of the self care things you do and be sure you do at least one each day.

Don't consider yourself a failure. The feelings of pain and loss do not mean You have failed. Rather, you chose love day after day and through, the years and one who chooses to love is not a failure.

Don't enter new primary relationship too soon. The years of marriage and the experience of divorce contain great depths of wisdom for you. Take your time and let your heart, mind and soul learn all the valuable lessons your life experience has to offer.

Don't belabor your friends with details or demand their advice. Let your friends support you but do not expect them to be your therapist, lawyer, or spiritual advisor.

Grieve. The experience of loss is not limited to physical death. You are facing the death of dreams you once held dear. Respect that fact and grieve that loss.

Maintain trusted relationships. Let close family members and friends be your companions through this unfamiliar time. Don't isolate yourself from the people who care about you.

Avoid win/ lose thinking and behavior. When divorce becomes a competition, everyone loses. Consider mediation as an alternative to litigation. Focus on healing

Don't make unnecessary major decisions during this time. Apply your energy and wisdom to the pressing decisions that must be made relative to your divorce. The time will come for other major issues.

Keep your children out of the middle. Regardless of their ages, your children are experiencing an especially painful time as well. Do not add to their pain and confusion by trying to influence their affections or loyalties.

Remain especially available to your children. Regardless of their ages, your children are part of the years that have brought you to this moment. Allow your children to have and express their own emotions. No emotion is "wrong."

Concentrate on your strengths. The many basic skills you use in the course of your daily routine are the primary coping tools You can rely on during these days and months of change.

Keep your children and loved ones informed with facts. Without the burden of details, offer your loved ones the information they need to best support you. They care.

Maintain as much of your daily routine as possible. Routine is a hidden blessing when you're dealing with so much that is unfamiliar.

Allow your faith community to support you with their prayers. You need not provide details - just ask for the community's prayers for healing and peace.

Balance rest and activity. you're pouring out massive amounts of energy during this time, so you need some measure of extra rest. At the same time, do not neglect your need for basic physical activity. A daily fifteen-minute walk can keep you physically, emotionally, and mentally sharp.

Be alert to your weaknesses. When we experience stress we often turn to bad habits and less-than-healthy behavior, perceiving them as means of comfort or coping. Know your weaknesses and avoid their allure.

Bless all the memories of your married life- the good and the bad. All you've been through over the years holds the wisdom for the life you want to build in the future.

Don't expect too much of yourself. This is no time to prove your physical stamina or mental prowess. You don't need to be a "super" anything during this time. Just be your best self.

Maintain a healthy diet. Skipping or reducing meals is never wise- nor is excessive eating. Your daily food intake provides the fuel you need for each day. Eat balanced meals as part of your balanced life.

Befriend change. Don't view change as threatening for only through the cycles of change can new growth be realized. Consider the seasons; even winter gives way to spring.

Review your priorities- they may be shifting. Changes in a primary relationship cause ripple effects. Like the ripples in a pond when a stone is cast in. Continue to ask yourself what's important now and allow yourself different answers over the weeks and months ahead.

Avoid all extremes. If you try to force too much into life or try to absorb too much from it, you lose a sense of perspective- and without a good sense of perspective, good planning for your future is at risk.

Let holiday traditions become something different. After all the definition of family is changing for you- thus will your 'family' traditions. Give yourself and your family time to discover what needs to change- and what needs to be retained.

Make simple changes that are yours to make. Some things must change; other changes things can be chosen. Rearranging the furniture in your bedroom, for example, or finding a different favorite restaurant can help you make simple changes in simple ways.

Seek healthy humor. Laughter is known to decrease stress by increasing the flow of oxygen in the bloodstream. Laugh often for your own good.

Rely on spiritual practices that have nurtured your spirit in the past. Scripture -reading, meditation, and prayer. These practices are sources of sustenance for now and in the future.

Ritualize the removal of special mementoes from your life. Even if you don't want to save things like your wedding ring, significant photos, or other memorabilia, think carefully about what to do with them. These items were important to you at one time; what you do with them now should respect the value they once represented.

Deal with your emotions in healthy ways - Anger, betrayal relief, joy: Whatever your emotional experience, express yourself in ways that respect your body, mind, and spirit and that of others

Ritualize the date of your final divorce. Just as you noted and remembered your wedding day, respectfully note and remember the date of your divorce. It's the end and the beginning of many things for you.

Do not try to "win over" people to "your side." This time is painful and confusing for your family and friends. Do not make it more so by campaigning for your 'cause.'

Know your own limits and respect them. Some of the responsibilities you shared as a couple may now fall to you alone. Be willing to let some things go, learn how to do new tasks, and ask for help when you need it.

Claim your divorce. This is your experience; it is part of your life story. Using language like "my divorce" rather than "the divorce" helps you personalize this experience and foster healing.

Seek a little solitude each day. Even if this is not part of your daily routine, take the time to enter the peace of stillness, where you'll find a wellspring of inner strength.

Present yourself with a "Citation of wisdom." List the lessons of the heart you learned during the years of your marriage. These lessons will serve as guideposts for the future.