

# Dealing with Divorce

*Coping, Surviving, Thriving*

Divorce can be one of life's most stressful experiences. It also can be a time of creating new relationships, learning about your self and growing. Understanding the emotional and physical stresses that often come with divorce is the first step in learning how to deal with them. When you accept your feelings, and learn ways to care for yourself during this stressful time, you'll find that you not only can cope with divorce, you can survive and even thrive.

## Emotional Stress

Separating from someone you had hoped would be your life partner is usually painful. You might feel like a failure. You miss the intimacy, friendship, financial security, and sex you had or hoped you would have.

Your job as a parent is suddenly much bigger if you now have primary responsibility for the children. You may have less time to spend with them, yet their needs are greater. If you did not want the separation, your resentment and anger may flare up around them, although it's not their fault. You and your former spouse may have conflicts about child support.

If you are a parent whose children are not living with you, you may feel guilty, lonely and resentful. You may worry that the children may forget you or be turned against you.

Divorce is especially painful if everyone you know is happily married, or if you get little support from your own extended family.

## Physical Stress

As with any distressful situation, your body is affected. Ongoing stress can cause minor and major illnesses, including headaches, backaches, ulcers, flu, and asthma. Even if you feel relieved by the divorce, you may have physical symptoms as you work towards adjusting to the changes in your life.

## Taking Care of YOU

You may not be able to change your situation, but you can stay healthy during the transition if you take care of yourself:

### 1. Make sure you pay attention to your emotional needs

Find a support group to participate in, a therapist to talk with.

### 2. Keep yourself physically fit

Stay as active as possible by keeping a regular exercise routine. Nothing helps our emotions bounce back better than physical activity. It will help in relieving tense, anger and anxiety.

### 3. Do things that will nurture you emotionally and physically

Read a good book, get plenty of rest, take a hot bath, develop a new hobby, eat healthy and nutritious foods, and surround yourself with positive people. Put effort into living a lifestyle that will promote feelings of good self-worth.

### 4. Let go of problems that are beyond your control

If you are faced with an uncomfortable or painful situation learn to let it go, take some time to figure out what is best for you and then come back to it. Stay focused on what you have control over and let go of the rest.



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**1300 our eap**  
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## 5. Give yourself permission to feel

Emotions are normal, whether they are negative or positive emotions. What we do with the emotions we are feeling plays a big role in the quality of life we experience. Avoid destructive activities such as drinking or drugs when trying to deal with your feelings. Don't allow your feelings to cause you to seek revenge, play the victim or become abusive toward your spouse. If you are hurt or angry, it is best to find someone safe to vent to and get those feelings out.

## 6. Change any expectations you have

No one has any control over the feelings and actions of another person. We might think that during our marriage we had some control but we did not. Now that there is a divorce in process we have even less control than before. Let go of trying to control any aspect of what your spouse may feel or what actions they will take. Let go of what you feel the outcome should be and learn to accept whatever might happen.

## 7. Don't make any hasty decisions

When you are living through a highly stressful situation any decisions or changes to your life should not be made until you have thought of all the consequences. Take time to think things through and thoroughly weigh all your options.

## 8. Be sure to make time for fun

Remember to laugh and play. Schedule activities that bring you pleasure and participate in them regularly. Maintain a close circle of friends and socialize often. Do not isolate yourself from others.

## 9. Let go and move on.

Take the time needed to heal from the divorce and those feelings of loss. Try to look inward and own your responsibility in the problems that led to divorce. Forgive yourself and your spouse and don't let the issues from this marriage follow you into new relationships.



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