

DOWNLOAD PDF NEW ROLES, NEW RULES : THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIVORCING SPOUSES : MYTHS AND REALITIES

Chapter 1 : National Stepfamily Resource Center | Frequently Asked Questions

A new way: new divorce rituals --New roles, new rules: the relationship between divorcing spouses: myths and realities --The emotions of ending a marriage --The seven keys to a healthy divorce --Healing --Helping children --Parenting plans: transitions to an unmarried family --Parenting as a lasting partnership: the working relationship.

Acknowledgments [Page ix] This volume, and the symposium on which it is based, had many contributors besides the authors of the papers. We are grateful to Professor Brian Foster, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, for his financial support of the Family Research and Policy Initiative, a multidisciplinary consortium of faculty with interests in child and family research and its policy implications. Funding for the consortium provided support for the symposium on which this volume is based. Brian Wilcox, for assistance in planning and organization. Our colleagues Lisa Crockett of the Department of Psychology and Lynn White of the Department of Sociology served as discussants at the symposium, and their comments contributed to the lively exchange of ideas that are reflected in the chapters of this volume. We have personal debts as well. Paul Amato would like to thank Stacy Rogers for her humor, warmth, and practical assistance with the symposium and the subsequent volume. Amato Divorce touches the life of virtually every person. But even people who have not directly experienced divorce are likely to know of friends, relatives, or coworkers whose marriages ended in divorce, or who grew up in families where divorce occurred. They are likely to think of their own marriages differently because of the very real possibility that divorce may happen to them. Marital dissolution, once considered to be a rare, unfortunate, and somewhat shameful deviation from normal family life, has become part of mainstream America. And many family scholars, cultural critics, and policymakers believe that the increased acceptance—indeed, expectation—of divorce in American family life has led to fundamental changes in marital commitments and responsibility to children that work to the detriment of society. Divorce, however, does not bring an end to the family. Most children maintain relationships with both parents after divorce even while their family networks may expand to incorporate stepparents and, sometimes, stepsiblings. An increasing number of children are, in short, growing up in a new kind of family: The norms and expectations for the traditional American family are institutionalized in custom, tradition, and legal policy, but social norms for the postdivorce family are vague and are continuing to evolve. During the process of divorce, of course, parents must decide about where their children will live, how much contact children will have with each parent, the economic responsibilities of each parent to their offspring, and other obligations and privileges of parenting. But these initial decisions create only the scaffolding for postdivorce family life. In the years that follow, noncustodial fathers may visit regularly or infrequently, and may or may not maintain fidelity to their child support obligations, as their lives become increasingly distant from offspring. Custodial mothers may remarry, move to a new part of the country with the children, or experience other life changes that directly affect other family members. Former spouses may be capable of cooperating congenially, or instead battle adversarially, in ways that profoundly influence the well-being of their offspring. The ways that children adjust to marital separation is both a result of how successfully the family has negotiated the transition to postdivorce life, and an important influence on its future. There are no clear societal guidelines, or expectations, about how parents and offspring should live after divorce. And although many perhaps most families experience these profound changes as intensely personal concerns, they occur against a backdrop of public policies that are meant to support family members, especially children, in postdivorce life. But there are increasing questions about how well such policies accomplish this goal. Does it foster the conditions that enable both parents to maintain meaningful parenting roles in the lives of their offspring? Should policies be changed to better enfranchise fathers in the postdivorce family, support the custodial parent, or discourage divorce altogether when children are part of a marriage? Legal scholars, policymakers, and individual parents are each struggling to determine the rights and responsibilities of both parents after divorce. Children are the focus of these concerns. An emphasis on the

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well-being of children reflects their vulnerability to the significant changes in family life that follow divorce and the realization that they are least responsible for, and accepting of, the changes that occur. But concern for children derives also from research evidence that divorce has important costs for them. This volume is based on a symposium on postdivorce family life at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the spring of 1995. The symposium was sponsored by the Family Research and Policy Initiative, a multidisciplinary consortium of faculty with interests in child and family research and its policy implications. Our goal was to promote interdisciplinary thinking and crossdisciplinary dialogue on family life after marital separation, with special attention to the mutual influence of social research and public policy. The presentations at the symposium were provocative, the discussions were lively often continuing long after the conclusion of the formal sessions, and although many questions were addressed, new ones were continuously posed by presenters, discussants, and audience members. Students in a graduate seminar that was conducted concurrently with the symposium provided additional ideas for thought and reflection. After the symposium, each of the contributors prepared chapters for this volume based on their presentations, the discussions of the symposium, our suggestions, and further development of their own ideas. The themes of this volume, like those of the symposium on which it is based, are the issues that currently inspire some of the most important research, analysis, and debate concerning divorce and its consequences. For each theme, there are contributions from two scholars who approach the topic from different disciplinary perspectives. Each contributor offers perspectives from empirical research as well as policy perspectives. In Part I, the contributors focus on the consequences of divorce for children, considering the benefits but also the costs to offspring of marital dissolution, and how to best conceptualize the factors that enhance their gains and reduce their pain. In Part II, the emphasis is on parental responsibility after divorce, with particular concern for policies and practices of child custody and noncustodial visitation that help to shape postdivorce family life. Each of the contributors to this section of the book struggle with how best to define the standards allocating parental care after divorce, and to ensure that each parent can maintain a satisfactory postdivorce relationship with offspring. Part III focuses on nonresidential parenting, with special emphasis on the experience of fathers and the factors that influence the frequency of their contact with offspring and the reliability of their child support payments after divorce. The emphasis of this section on fatherhood is not meant to neglect the experience of mothers who commonly are custodial parents in postdivorce life, but the multifaceted influences on postdivorce mothering are considered in other chapters in this volume and have also been extensively discussed in other forums. Finally, in Part IV, the concern is with divorce and society, and how life in a culture with high divorce rates affects marital expectations, kinship ties, and social institutions. This, too, has been the topic of considerable recent public debate, and our chapters in this section attempt to shed light on these important and contentious issues. As the chapters of this volume indicate, although there is much that we do not understand about postdivorce family life, a coherent body of research findings has emerged with relevance to divorce policy. Our aim in the symposium, and in this volume, is to provide a forum for analysis and reflection on this information and its implications for public policy.

The Creation of Postdivorce Family Life

The postdivorce family has its origins before parents have divorced, even before they have begun to contemplate marital separation. It begins with the quality of marriage that shapes how children experience family life and subsequently cope with divorce. Many of the problems that children exhibit in the years following marital dissolution may arise, in fact, from family problems preceding divorce—and these problems often continue after divorce. The same is true of their parents. By the time the process of divorce begins, they are ready to move on with their lives. But worries over their financial condition can keep many women in unhappy marriages. They may resist negotiations over divorce and custody until they have accepted the fact that the marriage has, for all intents and purposes, ended. Both adults are likely to experience anger, bitterness, and feelings of loss and regret to varying degrees, but for somewhat different reasons. Men and women therefore enter divorce differently because of the different readiness and expectations that accompany marital dissolution. Like their children, men and women arrive at divorce with a family history that guides the postdivorce roles they will assume. In

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the vast majority of cases, these represent the consensual decisions of couples as they negotiate the parameters of postdivorce life. Yet these parenting arrangements may be troubling to the children whose future lives they shape. Regardless of the reason, the result is that children experience not only the breakup of their families, but also the eventual loss of one parent. Family scholars are, as a consequence, pondering how the conditions of postdivorce family life can be changed to foster active parenting by both mothers and fathers. Yet these formal arrangements, limited as they are, are important because they define the initial parameters of postdivorce parenting. Child custody and visitation are not the only issues of divorce negotiation. Parents remain financially responsible for their offspring, and this is also a shared responsibility. Because men are usually financially advantaged after divorce because of the career assets they have developed during marriage, their fidelity to their child support obligations determines the economic well-being of their children. Yet as Dan Meyer notes in Chapter 6 in this volume, an unwillingness to pay child support is only one of several reasons why fathers may fail to comply. In other cases, fathers simply may be unable to pay child support, or their fidelity to child support awards may depend on the strength of their family ties or their perception of the need for child support such as when the mother remarries. Child support is the most important but not the only means of financially supporting children. Taken together, they indicate that even under the new regime of child support enforcement, defining and ensuring the financial obligations of each parent after divorce can be complicated. Adding complexity to this equation is the fact that public attitudes are changing toward the public support of economically distressed children, such as those from single parent homes, reflected in welfare reform and other measures. As a consequence, the social safety net for children is rapidly eroding. Beyond defining economic and child rearing responsibilities, perhaps the most difficult and certainly the most intangible facet of divorce negotiations concerns establishing a new postdivorce relationship between parents. This often comes as a surprise to divorcing spouses, especially those who are highly motivated to begin a new life independently of a former marital partner. Moreover, continuing consultation between ex-spouses is even more necessary when they share legal custody of offspring and must regularly discuss educational decisions, health and medical care, insurance, and many other matters. Consequently, divorce negotiations set the stage for the postdivorce family in the framework they create or neglect to create for constructive consultation between two adults who are no longer married, but who remain the parents of their offspring. Even when this occurs, however, constructive postdivorce parenting requires considerable personal effort to overcome the lingering feelings of anger and betrayal that often follow divorce, and cooperate for the sake of the children. When this occurs, children are the losers. But social norms and [Page xix]expectations for the postdivorce family have not yet evolved sufficiently to create the incentives necessary for the reliable negotiation of a constructive postdivorce relationship between ex-spouses, perhaps because of the continuing value placed on enabling each adult to make a fresh start after marital dissolution. In this light, it might be expected that children emerge from divorce with a mixture of psychological bruises and scars. Yet as Robert Emery notes, children of divorce also show lingering psychological pain that is rarely clinically noteworthy, but personally significant. While some children emerge from divorce with a strong sense of loss and feelings of anger or despair, others are capable of acknowledging that divorce has pain but also benefits for themselves and other family members. What determines whether children are scathed or strengthened through the process of divorce? Not surprisingly, these circumstances are the central qualities of postdivorce family life: Some family scholars believe, however, that this is an unduly narrow view. Divorce has broader consequences not only for children, but also for the society in which they are growing up. For many children, divorce radically changes family life and their understanding of parenting, gender roles, and the marital relationships that will be part of their future. Divorce may be a prelude to a stepfamily and the creation of a new network of family relationships. For [Page xx]society as a whole, as Paul Amato notes in Chapter 7 in this volume, divorce has equally significant implications for gender equity especially in economic terms, intergenerational relations, and cultural values concerning marital integrity and family relationships. These societal outcomes have the potential of influencing us all. In a sense, the growing frequency and increasing acceptance of the postdivorce

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family means that Americans are entering into a postdivorce society in which the realities of divorce affect broader social institutions and our views of ourselves in relation to others. Interpreting the meaning of the emerging postdivorce society has become one of the most important policy debates of the s. Although policy reform of the past two decades has predicated efforts to improve the conditions of single mothers and their children on an acceptance of the social realities of the current high rate of divorce, some scholars are asking whether public policy should instead be oriented toward reducing divorce and affirming marriage and fidelity to child rearing e. In this emergent view, family law has a powerfully hortatory influence as an enunciation of consensual social values. With respect to marriage and divorce, they argue, law reforms of the past several decades most notably the universal advent of no-fault divorce in America have inadvertently contributed to the progressive deinstitutionalization of marriage and the widespread acceptance of marital dissolution. Yet the costs of divorce to children should motivate a reconsideration of whether this is the proper direction for public policy, they argue, and one result of this reassessmentâ€”the Covenant Marriage Law recently adopted in Louisianaâ€”is profiled by Ross Thompson and Jennifer Wyatt in Chapter 8 in this volume as an illustration of the current debate over divorce and family values. This debate arises because of how social values concerning the family are institutionalized, explicitly or implicitly, in the policies and procedures governing marital dissolution. The postdivorce family is created in the conditions of family life before divorce, shaped in the decisions over child custody, visitation, economic support, and other parameters of divorce negotiations, consolidated in the ways that mothers and fathers craft their livesâ€”and their relationships with each other and with offspringâ€”in the years following marital dissolution, and framed by public policies that are designed to achieve broad sometimes inconsistent goals for families and children.

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Chapter 2 : The Divorce Surge Is Over, but the Myth Lives On () | Hacker News

While divorce can be filled with anger, frustration, and bitterness, most divorcing couples want to end their marriage in a manner that preserves their dignity and emotional health, especially if there are children in the picture.

What is a Stepfamily? A family in which one or both of the adult partners bring children from a previous relationship. Siblings - biologically related; from the same parents. Stepsiblings - not biologically related; parents are married to each other. Half-siblings - partially related biologically i. Mutual child - a child born to the remarried couple. Residential stepchildren - live in the household with the remarried couple the majority of the time. Nonresidential stepchildren - live in the household less than half of the time. People can be members of a stepfamily and not live all of the time in the stepfamily household. Unfortunately, the Census Bureau does not recognize that the child can be a member of two stepfamilies. The Census Bureau only counts the household where the child lives most of the time. Since divorce courts still typically decide that mom will become the primary custodial parent, you can see that our stepfamily statistics usually only count biological mom and stepdad households also known as Stepfather Households. Our statistics do not include the biological father and stepmother household even when the child spends a lot of time with them. Of course, the reverse is true if a divorced custodial dad marries again. Why use the term "stepfamily"? All other family types are defined by the parent-child relationships e. While the choice of stepfamily and any step attribution is seen by some as negative the wicked stepmother, treated poorly as a stepchild, etc. Referring to stepfamilies as "blended families" is troublesome to stepfamilies and the professionals who work with them. It is a catchy media phrase that does not describe either a family relationship or what happens when at least one partner to a marriage brings children from a prior relationship marriage ended by death or divorce or an unwed parent. Stepfamilies do not "blend. A stepfamily does not recreate a first family i. Therapists have learned and research confirms that when stepfamilies try to "blend," they are typically doomed to failure. Children actively balk at inferences that the stepfamily is to be considered their new family eligible to demand their full attention and loyalty. They know they have divided loyalties. Consider the confusion when both parents remarry and the child is expected to be a full-time member of TWO "blended" families. Parents must accept the reality that their children have lots of "parents" now and the nurturing no longer comes from a traditional family structure. Instead of trying to blend everyone, it seems far better to help all individuals to understand the nature of the extended and expanded family with various segments having permeable boundaries. It is not helpful for anyone in a stepfamily to pretend that they are blended. The concept itself precludes working together with the expanded family members. Additional comment - the media seems to have a love affair with the designation "blended family. Stepfamilies are not blended! Healthy ones recognize that children from prior relationships have two families and do not blend solely into one family. Stepfamilies that try to ignore this reality are typically doomed to either failure or considerable unhappiness on the part of several or all of the stepfamily members. We are combined families, extended families, expanded families, almost anything is better than blended as a designation! How are stepfamilies different than first-time families? Some of the uncomfortable feelings you may experience come from these differences. Most people find that knowing about the differences helps. Learning can give us a feeling that we will be better able to handle our situation, and can help us feel more in control. And that gives us a sense of relief! Stepfamilies come about because of a loss. All stepfamilies have faced numerous losses and changes. It may be a final ending It may be the ending of a marriage or relationship. Endings are hard because they mean adjusting to loss and change. Because people have trouble separating from old ties, endings mean grieving. Both adults and children grieve. The loss of a partner. The loss of a marriage relationship. The loss of our dreams about the way we thought it would be because we are not "the first" for our new partner. The losses involved in the changes that happen because of the death or divorce moving, a new job, change in life style, etc. The loss of a parent even if the nonresidential parent visits regularly. The loss or lessened availability of the remaining parent when courtship and remarriage

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occur. The loss of stability. The changes that happen because of the divorce or death new place to live, new school, loss of friends etc. The loss of their fantasy of family the way they want it to be. Unresolved grief can sometimes be seen in the continued warfare and hostility between some parents, or in the inability of a child to accept a stepparent. Children and adults may still be grieving when remarriage takes place, or the grieving may be "reactivated" at that time. This can make it difficult for the adults to feel as though they are the primary, long-term relationship. It also means that the incoming marriage partner often feels like an intruder or outsider. Sometimes the close relationships that develop between parents and children in single parent households mean that the new adult partner has difficulty "being allowed in. All of us have emotional "memory books. Stepparents need to be aware that creating a stepfamily memory book takes time and can only be accomplished as people share activities. The memory book you create with your partner is also vitally important. It means that when life gets difficult you will be able to leaf through your book and remember the good times, the funny stories, the romantic interludes, even the difficult times you have overcome. But, it does help you understand why sometimes stepparents feel on the outside. A biological parent ex-spouse is in another place. Children need to be allowed to have memories of their other parent. They need to be allowed to have pictures and to talk about the other parent. Research tells us that the children who adjust the best to divorce are those who have the easiest access to both their parents. It is important that a child be given permission by the parent and stepparent to love the other biological parent. It is also important for the child to be given permission by both biological parents to like the stepparents. Children who are asked to choose are put in a no-win emotional dilemma. Children are members of two households. Children have the ability to adjust to two sets of rules or two ways of doing things as long as they are not asked to choose which is better. It is important for parent and stepparent to talk about rules for the household, rules for behavior of the children and the consequences for broken rules. Once the adults are clear about the rules, they need to be communicated to the children in the family by the biological parent. Authorities recommend that at the beginning, discipline come from the biological parent This means that parent and stepparent decide on the rules together but that the biological parent announces the rules and enforces the consequences. Later, after relationships have developed, the stepparent can become more involved. Adults also need to understand that there is a difference between "parenting" and "discipline. Discipline has to do with enforcing consequences when values, boundaries and limits are not observed. Flexibility on the part of the adults in one household can help to establish a "parenting partnership" with the other household. If this can happen, adults and children benefit. Often this parenting partnership cannot be established until feelings about the divorce and remarriage have settled down, but it is a goal worth working toward. Stepparents may be asked to assume a parental role before emotional ties with the stepchild have been established. Often a stepparent is thrust into the role of "instant parent". With no previous parenting experience, this person is asked to play a knowledgeable parent role in the household. Biological parents grow into their parenting roles as their children grow. Stepparents are often expected to adjust instantly as though parenting is an inborn skill. The reverse is also true. Children are bonded to and thus often more tolerant of their biological parents. Parents can assist the stepparent by helping them to "get to know" their child. They can show them the picture albums, run the home movies, tell the family stories and help fill in the gaps. Some children will enjoy being a part of this process. Be aware that your acceptance of this parent will help this child be less resistant to you. You can be reassuring to the child that while you have an adult role in this household, you will not try to replace his or her other parent. Many stepparents find a satisfactory role in simply being a "helper" to the biological parent. This can work well, especially where stepchildren are elementary school age or older. There is no legal relationship between stepparents and stepchildren. This lack of a legal relationship we are not birth, adoptive, or foster parents is another reason our role as stepparent is unclear.

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Chapter 3 : The Second Stage of Divorce: Moving Out, What to Expect

-Can be conflict between what is good for adult development and what is needed for a healthy new relationship (it might be helpful for a relationship to move a little slower, for them to get to know each other, to be able to develop their family rules).

The action of legally dissolving a marriage. The fall of great expectations of what once was hoped to be an ever-lasting love becomes even more complicated when children are involved. Jennifer Weiner *Fly Away Home*: A tragedy is staying in an unhappy marriage, teaching your children the wrong things about love. With two minor children, an ex-wife and a new girlfriend, he felt like the best way for him was to avoid facing the realities of what has suddenly become his life. He looked at the Manhattan skyline over a long breath, pausing for a moment. Why then it suddenly feels like I found myself at the bottom of a deep, dark hole? Co-parenting after divorce concerns an involvement of ex-spouses on issues related to their children. However, the real life evidence suggests that parental dispute does not end with divorce. Bitterness, broken promises, and years of past dissatisfaction can provide a toxic battlefield for using children as the most lethal weapon. As Pat Conroy once said: When mom and dad went to war the only prisoners they took were the children. When love dies, what is the best course of action kids considered? Positive Outcomes of Divorce The pace of life, economic pressures and the unmitigated pursuit of happiness in the modern world, made us all not wanting to settle for less than we deserve. Though relationships and marriages may fizzle out, there is still a great stigma facing the question of divorce. Her study provides evidence that the legacy of divorce is not as shattering as we usually think. While their new families of stepparents and half-siblings may be different from other families, the majority of these young adults-the study shows-feel connected to the family members who encompass their world. Ahrons advises that former spouses need to be comforted by the truth about divorce and not feel threatened by the worst-case scenarios. Once the marriage is legally dissolved, what is the right formula then, for former spouses to relate to each other? Setting up the Boundaries: Parents, but No Longer Partners In the study *Divorced Families*, Ahrons and Rodgers suggest that in order to reduce the contamination of parental roles by spousal conflicts, the roles between partners and parents must be separated after divorce. In that respect, establishing the right sets of boundaries is the core stone of co-parenting within a post-divorce dynamics. Though former spouses are still parents, they no longer are the partners. They can both be in new marriages or relationships. As such, they both need to take a responsible approach as to what story they are telling to their children. The story that has to be told is that leaving the marriage does not mean abandonment of the children. Divorce means divorcing from each other but not from the children. It is the foremost responsibility of two adults to make sure to offer reassurance to children that the love for their children is unconditional. The relationship between former spouses can be a powerful influence on many aspects of post-divorce child adjustment. Resolving Co-Parenting Conflict Children should maintain relationships with both parents after divorce and in order for this to happen, former spouses have to put their disputes aside and cooperate for the sake of their children. Ex-spouses should understand that kids suffer if the conflict prolongs. They need to put aside all the baggage from their past and do everything they can to facilitate a normal and healthy life of their children. It is all about letting go of past grievances and embracing the new. It is all about being a greater person and serving something higher than themselves. What do the children need? What can we do to facilitate loving relationship with children? For divorced families, it is a great opportunity to rethink love they have for their children.

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Chapter 4 : SAGE Books - The Postdivorce Family: Children, Parenting, and Society

*Can be conflict between what is good for adult development and what is needed for a healthy new relationship
Ex-spouses may still have some influence in the family system the desires and expectations of married partners may not be as easily fulfilled by the new blended family system and its relationships.*

The 10 Step Family Dragons The stepfamily begins with the breakdown of the biological family or families, creating what we call the Bi-Nuclear family system: When either or both parents get involved with new partners, conflict is escalated even more. There is an extended stepfamily system that now has to be taken into consideration and generally is not. We aim to help our new bi-nuclear families move into healthy, working relationships and develop a new family system which can safeguard and nurture the best interests of the children involved. One important way to do this is to by assisting families to face and conquer the Ten Stepfamily Dragons. The sooner everyone accepts that, the sooner we can get to work on addressing the new realities.

Conflicting Forces of Blood and Sex: The blood which bonds people together in the biological family, Parent to Child to Parent , is absent in the stepfamily. By nature this blood bond is in opposition with the sexual bonds in the new partnership between parent and stepparent. Partnership Skills for the New Challenges are at a Premium. Going through divorce or separation, to be followed by remarriage and the building of a new stepfamily or blended family are all events that demand a high level of maturity and a new understanding of parenting and partnering. Chaos of Persistent and Unexpected Change: PARENTS rarely establish an infrastructure or a system which reflects the new reality for everyone involved; a new infrastructure would establish who does what and how, what are the new roles and rules. Boundaries between the nuclear and extended stepfamily remain fuzzy and unclear. Consistency and predictability are at an all time low in most new stepfamilies which naturally leads to conflict and chaos. Conflict of Loyalties are felt by every member of the system. Parent vs child re: Parents can be otherwise occupied with divorce, separation and the demands of a new relationship or family. Parenting between the custodial and visiting parent is often in conflict. Parents experience fear of the loss of popularity with and love of the child which in turn guides their behaviors. As a result there is often an increased amount of permissive parenting. Guilt creates overindulgence towards children and shame inhibits discipline. These can be caused or brought on by the traumatic stress of divorce and post divorce. There is a general lack of awareness of the dynamics of divorce and re-coupling. Individuals easily get into blaming each other instead of recognizing that divorce and the step dynamics themselves are the reason for most conflict and stress. Few parents have a concrete co-parenting plan but desperately need one. Many indulge in bad-mouthing of the other parent. The parent who is badmouthed does not know how to neutralize badmouthing. Often children are made to judge, and often choose, between their blood parents. Most often, upsets or conflict are due to lack of planning. The new parent may feel excluded, experience a lack of a role and receive little or no support from the blood parent their partner. Upsets occur between the new couple, not to mention between the custodial and visiting parents. Children are often caught in the middle or at the very least, are aware of the tension and conflict between those involved. Full acknowledgement is given to Jeanette Lofas, Ph.

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Chapter 5 : A Glimpse into Marriage Advice from the s

Thoroughly discussing expectations and roles with your spouse, being absolutely consistent regarding rewards and discipline, and making time to nurture your relationship as a couple will help to ensure you won't become another divorce statistic.

The Second Stage of Divorce: Deciding to divorce inevitably raises the question of who will live where, and when and how that will happen. That decision heightens fear and conflict as the divorce process proceeds. This article focuses on the second stage: There are couples who separate but have not decided to divorce, but usually a physical separation precedes and is a necessary precursor to traversing the third stage of divorce: Legal Intervention Who will move out may be the first legal dispute. That spouse might demand: This is when the divorce becomes public to family and friends whose reactions may be supportive or may further polarize the couple. Where children are involved, the ultimate custody arrangement should be considered in deciding who should vacate the family residence, because the short-term arrangement will impact the final decision. More importantly, change is disruptive and stressful for children, so unnecessary moves back and forth should be avoided. Additionally, there are financial ramifications regarding mortgage financing and whether the residence will be sold. This allows sufficient time to adjust to the idea of the physical separation, as well as to sort out these other issues. After Separation Upon separation, feelings generally are still ambivalent; many couples attempt to reconcile from one to three times, and 16 percent continue to have sex. More than two-thirds would call their spouse first in a crisis. This creates a constant state of disequilibrium. With one parent coming and going, the family cannot reorganize to establish new roles and boundaries in regard to money, living space, household responsibilities, dating, and parenting. Once the family does so, the new family unit usually resists reentry of the noncustodial parent. Initially, some spouses may experience separation as a relief from the prior family tension. Parents often reverse roles. One who was over-functioning becomes irresponsible; the under-functioning spouse tries to be the perfect mom or dad. After a few months, the legal and economic realities of legal fees, maintaining two households, dividing property, and determining child custody and visitation arrangements increase the stress and emotional reactivity. In the first six months of separation, women are more prone to symptoms of depression, such as poor health, such as sleep and appetite disturbances, prolonged crying, apathy, loneliness, work inefficiency, memory difficulties, or increased substance abuse. Although initially, the person left feels worse, over time the impact is the same on both spouses. During the first year both parents continue to feel anxious, angry, depressed, rejected, and incompetent. Women feel more helpless, vulnerable and a, while men tend to work harder, sleep less, and function ineffectively. These feelings are more intense in older spouses and longer marriages. Both spouses have almost twice as many car accidents and three times as many traffic citations as before the separation. Domestic disorganization continues sometimes after the first year or longer until boundaries and new rules are established, redefining a new, non-intimate, co-parent relationship between the parents and independent parental relationships with the children. The custodial parent may take on dual parenting roles, and the children, particularly boys, challenge the new regime, especially single mothers. Children may fill adult responsibilities. The noncustodial parent must adjust to the lost time with the children, as well as loss of control. In more dysfunctional families, the system may close out one parent entirely. Although stress reaches a peak at 18 months, particularly for women, who may still experience daily mood swings, by the end of the second year, the legal and economic issues are usually settled. Adjustment will be greatest where the family has been able to establish a bi-nuclear, co-parenting arrangement and have completed the third stage of emotional separation. By now both spouses begin to seek sexual relationships, which is particularly difficult for the single parent of young children. Individual psychological counseling can provide support, facilitate decision-making, and accelerate a successful adjustment to the future. Professional help is particularly indicated if there has been domestic violence, substance abuse or children are at risk, or where a spouse shows

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signs of major depression. Marital counseling can salvage the relationship or help the couple achieve clarity in their decision to end the marriage. It can help them emotionally separate in a manner that facilitates the legal process, stabilize their relationship, and maximize post-divorce adjustment. In fact, whenever possible, it is advantageous to utilize other professional resources. If a spouse is confused or indecisive regarding his or her anticipated financial needs, a consultation with a financial planner or accountant is a must. Separation becomes easier and more stable when partners have completed the emotional stage of divorce. [Read More](#)
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Chapter 6 : Outcomes of a Divorce

The parent/child relationship has a longer history than the new couple's relationship. This can make it difficult for the adults to feel as though they are the primary, long-term relationship. This can make it difficult for the adults to feel as though they are the primary, long-term relationship.

This is especially true when we talk about custody, visitation, and child support. Not all men relinquish their responsibility and connection; in fact, recent findings show that some divorced fathers disengage while others re-engage, especially after remarriage. However, enough men disengage to cause social concern. For most public policy makers this concern focuses on child support payment, and recent laws have been enacted to increase the chance that fathers pay the child support they owe. Public policy makers have been less attentive to custody and visitation issues, even though research shows that nonresidential parents usually fathers with weak bonds to their children are less likely to remain financially responsible to them. What do we know about fathers that disengage? First, some findings suggest that divorce is especially difficult for fathers who report having been highly involved with their children prior to separation. Men note that being relegated to a typical visitation pattern e. Part of the emotional distress reported by fathers after divorce stems from this implicit devaluing and their sense of loss due to the reduction in contact with their children. Fathers see their children in pain, and some fathers are willing to sacrifice contact to protect their children from more pain. Other fathers disengage because, unconsciously or consciously, they desire to decrease their own emotional pain. We also know that distance is problematic for fathering. Logically, those fathers who live a greater distance from their children, especially when resources are scarce, are less likely to maintain contact. In stepfamilies, stepfathers also are left with financial responsibility for stepchildren. When stepfathers are also fathers and financially responsible for children from a prior marriage, they may make decisions to provide for one unit over another. In cases where a prior spouse "has a good job," a father may believe that his children have less need for such support from him. If the former wife has remarried, a father may believe that because the stepfather has more daily access to the children and therefore all the benefits that he lacks, his contact may be less needed or desired. Cheryl Buehler discussed some of the dynamics of the former-spouse relationship that affect children and the ongoing relationship between parents. Working out an amicable relationship is best for all. Even a neutral relationship can benefit the father-child relationship. Importantly, much of this literature has treated fathers as if they are a homogeneous group. I argue that such is not the case. As researchers we must be increasingly sensitive to diversity within groups if our findings are to be of use to others. Men define themselves as fathers in unique ways. Because of their unique definitions, they will behave differently with their children. For example, if a man believes that being a good father is caretaking or nurturing his child, he is likely to value more highly his contact with the child and to behave in ways that promote this contact. Another man may define fathering primarily in terms of providing. In this case, he would pay child support regularly, but he might be less invested in seeing his child.

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Chapter 7 : The 10 Step Family Dragons

If you have disagreements with your in-laws, your spouse may feel caught in the middle between parents and you. You, meanwhile, have obligations to in-laws and spouse and children, if you have any. If you feel your in-laws are intruding into your married life, the old saying, "Good fences make good neighbors," may apply.

We may be compensated if you make a purchase via a link on this site. Dealing With Your Ex After Divorce and Setting Boundaries Communicating and dealing with your ex after divorce is a given when you have children together. But how do you handle this new relationship with your ex-husband without slipping back into the same old habits of interacting with each other? The answer lies in breaking the emotional ties that keep you bound to these old habits, as outlined in the article below. Cutting the Emotional Ties that Bind Your divorce decree is only step one in moving into a new life after divorce. The real divorce is the cutting of the emotional, mental and physical ties that still bind you to your ex-husband. This is the real work of divorce recovery: All too often, women experience the same conflicts with their ex that originally led to divorce: To truly be divorced you must put forth great effort and inner work that will sever your ties to your ex and you must build a structure that will facilitate that work. Let me give you examples: You and your ex have children together; therefore you must be in contact with one another on a regular basis. Unfortunately, your discussions with him always end in an argument. The deep resentments and hurts suffered in your marriage and actual divorce remain intact. You continually get sucked into this abyss. If this is the case for you, know that you have not divorced on an emotional level. You are an ex-wife versus a divorced woman. Somewhere inside of you there is still an attachment of some sort to either your marriage or your ex. You need to look inside to determine where you are still tied to him. Acceptance of your new place in life is mandatory. Acceptance comes from acknowledging that your marriage is over with no hope or wish for it to continue. Acceptance allows you to living in a way that reveals a freedom from the past. It means living in the present and the future. It takes work but before you can do this work, you must put in place new rules that will lay the groundwork for a completely new relationship with your former husband. These rules are there to protect you from any further hurts or upsets. Create an environment that supports you. You must build a new structure that empowers you versus disempowering you. Take the analogy of going on a diet to lose weight. You need to create an environment that will both motivate and move you towards your goal. To do so, you remove all of the temptations that lead to over-eating or eating the wrong foods. You clean out all the junk food from the cupboards and replace them with healthy and non-fattening foods. You create a support system with a friend who you can call when you feel yourself slipping into your old eating habits. You take on a partner in your exercise program. In other words, you do everything that you can to surround yourself with ways to achieve your goal. You must do the same thing when you are working at disentangling yourself from your ex after divorce. Create an environment that will help, not hinder your progress towards true independence. Remove all the temptations to stay connected to your ex. Here are some ideas to help you reclaim your space after divorce. Within this framework you are free to do the inner work of healing. Or so I thought. In reading the book, Leaving Him Behind by Sandra Kahn, she mentioned something that set off a light for me. My ex has spent a good deal of time around my new home, as his condo has taken much longer to complete as was predicted. In order for the children to see him more often I have been extremely accommodating and have allowed him to be in my home with the kids. He knows the code to my house lock and oftentimes enters on his own. He has the tendency to walk into the house, open the refrigerator door and grabs something to eat, which is exactly what he always did when we were married. Not such a big deal you might say. Although we have a very friendly relationship for the most part, he is not my husband anymore. I have been far too accommodating to him. I should have created a scenario where it was incumbent upon him to get into his new place in order to have a place for him and the kids. This is my house and I should have laid down the ground rules that said he is to knock on the front door just like any other houseguest. Houseguests do not help

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themselves to the food in my refrigerator. This is him living by the old rules as if this were his home, which it is not. Establish Some Ground Rules These ground rules are meant to protect you and prevent any kind of situations that could lead to an upset. Obviously the less you have to do with your ex after divorce the better. That is not to say that you cannot have a relationship with your ex, but it has to be radically different from the one you had while married. There are those women who cannot have their ex in their lives for any reason other than the children. Their emotional ties to their ex are still strong and they need to isolate themselves in order to break those ties. Set ground rules that determine the nature of this new relationship. These rules might include: Keep all communication limited to only what is necessary for the kids or legal matters. When an upset is looming or when your ex starts to speak to you in appropriate ways, stop the conversation and hang up or walk away. Let your ex know this new ground rule: It is not a place to hang out with the kids. It is not his home. When he is in your house make certain he realizes that he is a houseguest like any other. Do not discuss your fears, concerns or personal issues because that only maintains the emotional tie between the two of you. This might be the hardest tie to break. I remember in the early part of my separation, I continued to treat him as my husband when I called upon him for assistance with the kids. Handle it yourself by getting support from friends or family. Your money, no matter how it is acquired, is your money. If you are experiencing any problems with support checks, take it to your lawyer. Never beg or put yourself in an inferior position. Keep your true financial position to yourself. Blood is thicker than water. If you have developed a friendship with your sister-in-law, make certain it is because you two are friends, not family members. Always insist that the subject of your ex is forbidden. All too often women continue to do things or relate in ways to their ex that were part of their former marriage. If he needs support or someone to talk to about personal matters, he needs to call a friend and not you. You are not there to assist him as you did when you were his wife. You are not his wife anymore and not his friend either, at least not right now. Perhaps in the future, when you have cut all of the psychological ties to your ex that held you back from creating a new life for yourself; you might be able to ease these rules. Let go of anything that does not serve you well. You will be much more successful in healing yourself and moving on if you have adopted rules and created an environment that keep you physically and mentally separate from your ex. The work of healing your emotional wounds and of learning acceptance and forgiveness for yourself and him demands all your attention.

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Chapter 8 : Your Ex After Divorce – How To Establish Boundaries

The new spouses, for their part, must support the parenting duties and the coparenting bond between the ex-spouses. IT TAKES RESPECT The glue that makes it all happen is respect, the Vishers report.

The overall marriage rate has fallen, and people are waiting longer than ever to get married, if they even do. Traditional marriage is slowly dying as an institution. Like, not just on the Internet, but in real life? And known them well enough to be a close confidant? Someone is always unhappy deep down and usually everyone is. Not things that make for a happy relationship. My wife and I are poly. With the right personalities, it can force better relationship health because of the high risk, high reward nature of the lifestyle. I credit poly with giving me and my wife the skills to have hard conversations early and work through problems in good faith, and we do our best to conduct ourselves the same way in all our relationships in order to practice polyamory ethically. I mean accepting a broader range of human interactions and expectations as part of a valid relationship. It can definitely work as long as all partners in a polyamorous relationship clearly communicate their expectations to one another. If you found your niche in polyamory - good for you! AnimalMuppet 4 months ago Without touching on the ethics of polyamory, "requires way more work than monogamy" is one way of being worse than monogamy. Polyamorous relationships are held to a different standard. Such a polyamorous relationship is more unstable and likely to end more swiftly and decisively. Well it kinda makes sense. Intimate relationships take more work. Having a greater quantity of relationships takes more work. For married couples that became polyamorous after getting married, in every case I know of 3 , the person initiating the polyamorous relationship was able to find outside relationships easily. Tons of successful polyamorous close friends? Now, I will agree that trying to fix a broken monogamous relationship by opening it up is a recipe for disaster. You have way more dyads needing active and thoughtful communication, and so people whose motivation for polyamory is not wanting commitment are terrible at polyamory. They ended up divorcing. I do find it interesting, because women actually stand to benefit more from relationships like this: A couple is mostly monogamous, but once in a while has a fling, or invites a friend for a threesome. Maybe couples would do better to "play together" rather than separately? If one partner is frequently spending the night elsewhere and the other partner is sleeping alone all these times, that seems obviously a recipe for disaster. It was a married couple, and they even led a polyamory group. They seemed very happy. I will admit that what I said before is all theory, not experience from practice. I have read though that there are successful poly relationships, and that relationship counselors generally agree that the successful ones have the best communication skills of all their clients. This is how it went down for me. You double down on all your insecurities, ruin everything, and blame polyamory for it. Most of the negative stories you hear come from this. A jackass with laser vision was already a jackass without it. They met at a strip club, and right off the bat they both said what they were and that was that. Been married for 12 years and still doing the open thing. But I have seen many many more open relationships come crashing down over night. I have a number of friends in poly relationships. For some people it works. You need to be effective communicators and good at understanding your own emotions.

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Chapter 9 : Is a Marriage with No Rules Sustainable?

The relationship between former spouses can be a powerful influence on many aspects of post-divorce child adjustment. Resolving Co-Parenting Conflict Children should maintain relationships with both parents after divorce and in order for this to happen, former spouses have to put their disputes aside and cooperate for the sake of their children.

Estate and Retirement Planning for All Ages. The two situations that merit special attention with respect to spousal rights in property are death and divorce. The rights of spouses in property is different in each of these situations. Therefore, when you plan your estate you must plan differently for these two situations. This publication will present an overview of the rights of spouses in property upon divorce. Divorces occur at a high rate in the United States. In , there were approximately 2,, marriages and 1,, divorces. In addition, divorce can destroy the family farm or business by splitting the assets among warring factions or forcing sale of the farm or business. The following will discuss some options for considering the possibility of divorce in your estate plan. This publication will not discuss the rights of the surviving spouse in the estate of the deceased spouse. In addition, this publication will not discuss other issues arising in divorce, such as child support and spousal support. Persons engaged in estate planning should keep in mind that when a divorce occurs, the husband, wife, and children are all financially worse off than when the couple was married. Two living quarters must be maintained and other shared costs are increased. These factors also contribute to difficulties. For example, a former spouse attempting to purchase the marital home often will have less cash flow to make payments. Separate Property and Marital Property Upon divorce, the property of the former couple must be divided between the two parties. If the parties can agree on a division of property, that division governs. In Virginia, the local Circuit Courts hold the power to determine ownership of the property of divorcing persons if those persons cannot agree on a division of the property. The rules under which the court determines the division of property between spouses is called equitable distribution. Parties going through divorce should be aware of the rules by which the Virginia courts divide property of divorcing parties. These rules inform negotiations on property divisions. Note that the rules for property division vary from state to state. In community property states, husband and wife are treated as equal partners and each owns a one-half interest in all property. Upon divorce, the property is divided in half with each party receiving an equal share. If divorcing parties acquired or owned property in a community property state prior to residing in Virginia, community property laws may dictate the ownership of that property. Therefore, divorcing parties must carefully consider this factor when dividing property. Virginia law distinguishes between separate property and marital property. Separate property is property owned by one of the spouses and not the other. Separate property remains the property of the spouse in whose name the property is titled. Marital property is property in which both parties own an interest; regardless of in whose name the property is held. Marital property must be divided between the parties. Virginia law further defines separate property as: Personal effort means labor, effort, inventiveness, physical or intellectual skill, creativity, or managerial, promotional or marketing activity applied directly to the separate property of either party. Marital property may be described further as: All property acquired by either spouse during the marriage is presumed to be marital property. Property may be part marital property and part separate property. This allocation must be made where income from separate property during the marriage is attributable to the personal efforts of either party. For example, if the husband inherits cash from his parents and invests the money in real estate chosen by his wife, the income from this real estate and any increase in value may be attributable to the personal efforts of the wife and thus part separate property and part marital property. However, if the wife shows that, by using her real estate expertise, she was able to purchase property for below market value and manage the property to increase normal income, the income and increase in value becomes part separate and part marital property. In addition, when separate property is mixed with marital property as in depositing separate property funds into a marital account , the property may be part marital and part separate if the properties can be traced. If the properties cannot be

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traced, the entire account in this example becomes marital property. The court must first divide the property of the couple into: The court then divides the property between the divorcing spouses. The court may also make a monetary award to a spouse. Divorce Planning The rules just described for the distribution of property among spouses upon divorce are extremely complex, even for lawyers and judges. The authors observe that this complexity often results in a court-ordered split of property "down-the-middle. At a minimum, the complexity of these rules leads to uncertainty among divorcing parties as to the disposition of property. The authors realize the delicate nature of "divorce planning" and do not suggest that one enter into a marriage assuming divorce. However, given the high rate of divorce, persons should take steps to minimize the upheaval resulting from divorce. The authors suggest several strategies to cope with the realities of divorce in the United States and consequent uncertainty. The following should be considered as suggestions only. Each person must consider the risk and practicalities of each situation. Separate property should remain separate. Spouses should each maintain a separate bank account, along with a joint bank account. Do not mix separate property with marital property without understanding the consequences. The spouses should make conscious decisions as to what they wish to remain separate and what they wish to transform to marital property. Informed decision making and full disclosure should be the goal. Consider the consequences of the titling of real and personal property. These decisions should not be taken lightly. Take time to ponder the options and the consequences of each choice. If one spouse enters into a business venture, contemplate the relationship between the role of the other spouse in the business and his or her ownership interest. Keep good records of all transactions and of all property owned. Consider entering into a marital agreement. The authors use "marital agreements" to refer to marital or premarital agreements in this publication. Ensure that each spouse acquires some property on his or her own and maintains the property as separate property so that division will be easier in the case of marital discord. Marital Agreements The most "fool-proof" way to ensure that property is allocated pursuant to the wishes of the parties, as opposed to a judge, is to enter into a premarital agreement. A premarital agreement is "an agreement between prospective spouses made in contemplation of marriage and to be effective upon marriage. Therefore, spouses may enter into a marital agreement at any time. A marital agreement must be in writing and signed by both spouses. Content of a marital agreement may include: Marital agreements will be enforced so long as they are voluntary, full disclosure was given, and the provisions are not grossly unfair. The authors recommend that the salaries of the parties be noted in the agreement itself. In addition, accurate balance sheets for each spouse should be attached to the agreement. This ensures full disclosure of the financial worth and incomes of the parties as of the date of marriage. If the agreement is later challenged the disclosures can be examined for accuracy. Finally, independent legal counsel must represent each party and the identity of each counsel should be noted in the agreement some agreements provide for signature by the legal counsel for each party. So long as these precautions are taken, and contrary to impressions in the popular media, post-and-pre-marital agreements should be enforced. Marital agreements provide certainty in an uncertain arena. However, the personal issues involved in considering a marital agreement may outweigh the benefits they provide. The decision to have or not have a marital agreement is a very personal one, and must be made by each individual after due consideration. Conclusion The consequences of the division of property between spouses upon divorce can be severe to family farm and business operations. The law in this area is complex and this complexity leads to uncertainty. Spouses should be very careful in arranging property ownership, bank accounts and business affairs. No one enters into marriage thinking it will end in divorce. When a family business, second marriage, or other unique circumstances are present, the complexity increases. Planning for possible divorce is a necessity. Spouses should also consider entering into a marital agreement. As always, legal counsel should be consulted when making titling, business, or other decisions in the planning process. Leon Geyer can be reached at phone ; facsimile ; and geyer vt. National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. Provisional Data for Reviewed by Leon Geyer, Professor, Agricultural and Applied Economics Virginia Cooperative Extension materials are available for public use, reprint, or citation without further permission, provided the use includes credit to the author and to

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