



7 Myths About Your Divorce Experience

You'll Need to Confront These in Order to ~~Grow~~ Survive!

1. I should just get back on the horse and ride again.

This is the first place your friends and family go when they get down and start whispering advice in your ear. And, they mean well. In fact, they've often picked out the next person for you to love already! That "looker" who just moved into the neighborhood, or the "really cute guy" at work. Problem is, this approach doesn't fix anything. Falling right back into "love" only distracts you from the pain. And, it ups the chances that you'll go right back out and repeat the same relational patterns with the exact same person. Only this time—they'll have a different name and may even look different. You won't see it coming until you're in a relationship again and start feeling creepy. Instead, take time to determine what happened and learn from it; take a minimum of one lap around the calendar after your divorce experience. And another lap once you find yourself in a new love.

2. Everything happens for a reason, as if God did this (divorce) to us.

This way of believing is awfully popular these days. And, if the celebrities on *Entertainment Tonight* are your best substitute for theologians, then it at least sounds cool to hear them say it. Trouble is, this belief doesn't square with any theology I've ever taught or preached. And, you'll find it flimsy to stand on in your crisis. Because sooner or later, you're going to get around to asking "Well then why would a loving God do this (or cause this, or allow this) just to teach me something?" The bible makes a case that God not only isn't the author of evil, but isn't capable of causing evil or pain. Let's start with the only fact we have to work with: your divorce happened. Human causes are much more at the center of our difficulty than cosmic or spiritual ones much of the time. The better question might be, "Where will God BE in my divorce experience, since it did happen?" I can't make you believe as I do about this theological matter. But I do at least want to raise the question for you. Wrestle with it, and see where you come out.

3. Having gone through this, I won't make the same mistake again.

Yes, most will if some real emotional work isn't done. What makes you different from so much of the rest of society that lives in patterns of behavior? Some of these patterns work better for us than others, but humans tend to live in patterns more so than in random decisions. In order to do things differently the next time, you'll have to take the time to heal and to learn. "How much time?" you ask. It varies from person to person. Depends on your particular issues, and at what pace you make the discoveries/learn the lessons that re-shape what drives your way of loving. Simply having experienced something once doesn't mean it won't happen again. If we learned that quickly and easily, none of us would have the repeated stories of how we "didn't seem to learn our lesson the first time."

4. I'm not sure I can ever trust or love again.

It can happen — but for many of you the will to love again takes time. Some hit the dating scene like they're on a mission to "get out there!" and do it right this time. Others would say, "I'm personally interested in more certainty because I never want to go through this again." Bottom line is there are no guarantees, but if you do what one lawyer participant termed "extensive due diligence" you'll stand a better chance. That means no

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shortcuts to the vulnerable, risky emotional exploration that EVERY person who has gone through a divorce needs to do. Ask yourself some questions:

- How did this happen?
- What was my mixture of blame in the whole scenario? (This question often seems preposterous to most participants, and this issue alone can take months to surface after divorce!)
- What patterns of relating do I bring to the table that could need some attention?
- What help do I need in order to do the work of “recovery”?
- What will my version of recovery be?
- What would a healthy relationship look like (sound like, feel like) if I were in one?

5. Time heals all wounds. If I can stay busy enough I will heal.

This mindset is instinctive, and almost always quite destructive. Among other things, your divorce experience is a loss. The work of divorce-grief closely approximates the grief of human death in our lives. You must deal with it and work on healing. You must move toward growth that is only possible as you deal with the grief. You will need to spend enough time to unplug and reflect. That’s not easy in our culture of noise, speed and distraction. But take this to the bank—your grieving will wait on you! There is no such thing as healthfully “busing” your way through something while you heal. It’ll be there years later if you defer your grief. Name it, work on it, and grow.

6. I’m the exception to the above issues. I learned my lessons while it was happening.

No, you are probably not the exception you think you are. You probably weren’t learning in real-time; others around you were. But probably not you. We’ll tell ourselves that we are strong, or our friends and family will tell us that we’re smart and different. Convincing yourself that you are exceptional is more likely a defense born of denial. Take an honest look at yourself and see if you are so convincing in your readiness to “move on” without a period of support and hard emotional work.

7. But, I don’t have the time or the emotional energy to do the hard work it sounds like I need to — I’m a busy person.

Yes, you do. We do what we decide is important to do. And, you’ll need to so that you can live a more freed journey as you move forward with your life. If you have the baggage of this experience hanging around still to be unpacked, you’ll be held back. On the other hand, learning and growing will make you a better person for the experience. If you do the work you’ll move on to more possibility in life. Including the possibility of healthy and enjoyable relationships of all kinds. Remember — these issues will wait on you.

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