

INTERACTION CONSULTANTS

A Successful Divorce Starts with Oneself

Here's the truth of it, your divorce will cost you – BIG TIME. How big may be a thing of your own making...

Whether you are the person leaving, the one who is left or even if a joint decision, separation/divorce is costly.

That cost will be on several fronts: financial, emotional, psychological and in terms of relationships.

The financial cost of divorce is not only a function of your cost of living escalating, because all expenses related to living must now be duplicated, but also owing to the expense of resolving your differences. The equation is simple; the greater the conflict, the higher the cost.

If you find yourself fighting over everything, you may also find you are fighting over principles. Chief among those principles is fairness. In trying to set a balance on the issue of fairness, the cost of the dispute can be far greater than the matter of dispute. For instance, a fight over household items can be far greater than the replacement cost of the items in question. You really need to ask yourself, is the price of fairness worth the cost?

There is also the emotional toll related to the dissolution of a relationship.

Those emotions will vary and will wax and wane over time, but commonly include: anger, anguish, sadness, elation and anxiety. Indeed some emotions may be experienced at the same time, even if seemingly contradictory. This can be crazy making, but it is important to appreciate that a mix of simultaneous emotions is uniquely human and not a signal that we have necessarily lost our mind. It is the outcome of the loss of certainty and entering into uncertainty that is so emotionally disheveling not to mention the grief that is often associated with the loss of things as they were.

Psychologically, people wonder what next; why me; will I find happiness; will I land on my feet; what of my children? These are the existential questions that arise when contemplating one's fate.

Perhaps the biggest cost though, is in terms of relationships.

So many relationships change the result of a relationship's ending. There are changes in the relationships to one's partners' kin and their friends. Relationships may also change to one's own kin and friends.

And then of course there's the big one – the relationship with one's own children.

At the very least, the time spent with your kids will change. This often creates the greatest struggle for adjustment. Given the struggle of adjustment, many parents fight over the time the children spend between them. While the fight is typically couched in what's best for the kids, underneath that struggle more often is the pain of loss and having less time with one's very own children.

Given the tremendous losses associated with separation/divorce, why is it that some people seem to breeze through while others have just a miserable and sometimes disastrous time of it? What can we learn from those who seemingly adjust better/faster?

Here's the short of it: Those who concentrate on loss and blame tend to fare far worse than those who focus on moving forward and take as much responsibility for their own lives as possible.

That old adage, it takes two to tango is only partially true. While it is true that if you are connected to a narcissist or a bully or someone with a serious mental health or physical health issue you will have a harder time of it, it still remains that how you manage yourself, come to terms with your situation and develop reasonable expectations of your circumstances will have a big impact on the outcome for you.

Here are the strategies of the more successful people at managing the move to their next stage of life:

1. Successful people don't get hung up on the principle of fairness. The end of a relationship has nothing to do with fairness. It is about hurt, disappointment, disillusionment; despair, anger and anxiety. Very often people seek to balance those feelings through money, household items, time with the kids, etc. Things won't be fare. Things will rarely be balanced as everyone will bring different issues and concerns to that equation. Instead of looking for fairness successful people think in terms of what they can live with – minimally. So instead of thinking, what is the most I can live or get away

with, they think, what is the least I need in order to survive and move forward.

2. Successful people get help early on. As the saying goes, many people are penny wise and pound foolish. In other words, they won't spend a bit up front only to wind up spending large later on. In this regard, successful people invest in themselves. They will actively seek support and input early on to address their loss and grief such that those emotions don't get confused in with their settlement needs. When emotions go unchecked; when emotions escalate; when emotions get entrenched, people then find themselves seeking to redress their bad feelings through the settlement process. This leads to longer and more costly disputes which in turn only creates more hardship. Successful people think in terms of dealing with their own feelings so they don't take out those feelings on the former partner thus escalating matters.
3. Successful people can differentiate between what they may wish for and what they may realistically obtain. They tend to have a more realistic appraisal of their situation and what can be achieved in any settlement process. When one has that realistic appraisal, then you can choose to settle, maybe not loving the agreement, but realizing it is within what may otherwise be achieved. Even though coming to terms with the loss or change to relationships, particularly one's own kids, successful people know that the kids will continue to have a relationship with both parents, albeit differently than when the parental relationship was intact.
4. Successful people will actively grieve. They don't shy away from the upset of their changing situation. They acknowledge it and don't hide behind a veil of feeling fine. By actively grieving, they acknowledge the pain of their situation versus seeking to avoid it. They can thus come to terms with the many upsets that this life alteration imposes.
5. Successful people tend to live not just in the moment, but in the future. Instead of trying to manage or minimize losses, they consider how to invest in the next day and the day after that. They are playful, seek to develop resilience (the capacity to overcome adversity) and they seek to take responsibility for their own well being.

6. Successful people strive more towards peace and value peace over things. They also have an appreciation that peace alone is one of the greatest gifts they can offer their kids, even at the expense of time with their kids. Thus successful people can prioritize the needs of the kids as measured by peace, over one's own desire for fairness however that would be measured.

Don't think that for a moment, successful people don't struggle.

While some may look as if they manage with ease, for others it takes considerable conscious effort to be successful in one's separation. Those struggles are made easier by seeking and accepting support. Success won't be measured by time or money, but peace. Success will be a function of finding one's way with whatever one's former partner has to throw at you and managing oneself over the other in the process.

As a wise person once told me, "It's bad enough when someone knocks your head against the wall. Its even worse when you knock your own head against the wall."

Grieving, learning to cope, managing one's own emotions and being realistic are the keys to a more successful separation. Need help? Get help.

Separation/Divorce is costly. Now it is up to you to manage you.

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