



Coping With Divorce

Grief, anger and disappointment can color every aspect of your life during a divorce. But divorce also is a time of rebuilding. Here are some ideas to help you cope with this challenging time.

Understand the effects of stress on your body. The stress associated with divorce can cause minor and major illnesses, including headaches, backaches and flu. Self-care can help you avoid such physical symptoms.

Let yourself grieve. Regardless of your feelings toward your former spouse, you must take time to grieve the loss of a mate and the parent of your children. Doing so will help you regain emotional balance.

Cooperate on parenting. Work out the specifics of custody and visitation before the divorce. Resist the temptation to manipulate the children's loyalties.

Communicate with your children. Children often believe that they're to blame for a divorce. Tell them repeatedly they're not responsible for the separation. When a parent leaves, young children may feel abandoned and unloved. Tell your children

that you and your spouse still love them and will continue to do so. Encourage your children to talk about or act out their feelings.

Take time to adjust. You may be facing some very practical changes in your life, such as moving, finding a new job and making new child-care arrangements. Go easy on yourself and your kids while you make these transitions. Don't rush into any decisions.

Build support networks. Reach out to family and friends. You also may benefit from professional counseling at this time.

Nurture yourself:

- Exercise regularly.
- Enjoy quiet times as well as active play with your children.
- Schedule leisure time just for you—to relax and enjoy some solitude.
- Cut down on alcohol and smoking.
- Eat healthy.

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