

Divorce

Introduction: The pain and stress suffered in divorce is second only to death and many people will testify that the two experiences are much the same. This is especially true when one contemplates the fact that divorce is separating you from the one who you once considered your soul mate in life. Kessler (1975) described seven stages of divorce that will give insight into this very difficult experience.

Stage 1 Disillusionment

It isn't long after we are married that the fog of infatuation begins to clear in our relationship and we begin to realize that our spouse has some faults. We may notice a tendency toward control, anger, self-centeredness, or enmeshment with his or her family of origin. Among the worst of faults are deficits in integrity and fidelity. Too often these issues are not addressed until they become full blown in mid-life and by then intense damage has been done. If a couple does not immediately address these issues the marriage is often headed for divorce.

Stage 2 Erosion

If the issues in stage one are not dealt with one or both partners will begin to lose respect for the other and intimacy will suffer. Instead of continuing to share life together each spouse tends to chart his or her individual course in life.

Stage 3 Detachment

In an effort to avoid being hurt spouses often isolate from each other. Very little communication takes place and anger and resentment sets in. Thoughts of separation come to mind.

Stage 4: Physical Separation

When separation occurs spouses often experience conflicting emotions such as relief (that the arguing has stopped) and loneliness, fear and feeling like a failure. People who are not committed to reconciliation may prematurely bypass the grief process and immediately become involved romantically with another person.

Stage 5 Mourning and Letting Go

When divorce does indeed occur a grief process must occur that often takes 1 to 2 years to complete. It is critical that this process occur before becoming romantically involved again. It is a time to mourn the loss of a partner and of the one who we assumed would be the love of our life. It is a time to accept reality and resolve sadness, anger, guilt, fear and revenge. Often this process involves one step forward and two steps back, that is, you may have to work through the stages of grief several times before emotions are healed and you can sense recovery.

Stage 6 A New Life

Here one is able to look to the future instead of ruminating about the past. Here the goal is to have learned from the past especially as it relates to your contributions to the failed relationship. New insight enables you to make healthier choices in your new life. Negatively if insight has not been gained individual may become obsessed with finding that new life in drinking and partying and seducing in a desperate attempt to squelch loneliness.

Stage 7 Healthy Adjustment

With God's help, time and hard work there can be abundant life after divorce. The goal is to be wiser

and stronger and operating with increased insight into God's purpose for your life. As God leads you are ready to move on, under His direction, to a better life.