

Life After Divorce: Acceptance of Your New Reality

What do you think of people who are detached from reality? People that are seemingly living in a world of their own making? It's unnerving to say the least as well as truly sad. Yet for those of us attempting to recover from a divorce, our inability to fully accept our new reality is not too far removed from living in a fantasy world.

Non-acceptance of what our life is right here and now is the biggest obstacle to letting go and moving on after divorce. Initially I believe this is due to denial, which is part of the grieving phase that follows any major loss in life. Unfortunately, all too many of us stay in this state way beyond the end of this grieving phase. We continue to deny our present reality. We refuse to accept what our lives are now. We yearn for what was or what we think should or could be, all of which are fantasy. The only thing that exists for us is the here and now, the present.

I want to liken this to the process of aging. In the past couple of years, I have moved into my late 50's. As a former member of the counter-culture, I have always seen and experienced myself as much younger than my chronological age. After all, in another life I was a rock and roll DJ! Note please how I refer to that stage as another life.

Luckily I don't look my age, that is from the neck up! The signs of my true age are now evident on this body.

I remember about twenty years ago being at my mother-in-laws and seeing a friend of hers who I now recognize as having been my present age. She was dressed in a revealing dress and as I noticed her sagging skin, I thought to myself how unattractive it looked. Guess what? I have that same skin now. I can wish that I had the skin of a thirty year old but that will never be. If I adopt that attitude of non-acceptance, looking in a mirror will fill me with regret and resentment. The other choice, and really the only viable choice, is to fully embrace this new phase of my life and revel in my new reality: a much wiser and experienced woman who is a beautiful fifty- something. If I choose the former, I lose out on all that life has to offer me now and remain stuck in a past that no longer exists! If I choose acceptance, I can take advantage of what my life has to offer me now and not lose out on any new opportunities or possibilities.

You are getting divorced or you are divorced. That is what is, that is your only reality. Whatever went before is gone and can never be retrieved. You really need to get this because until you are willing to be fully conscious of what your life is now and accept it for what it is, you are going to stay stuck in pain and regret. You are going to give up the pleasure of living life to its fullest. You are going to give up on all of life's sweet moments. You are going to give up happiness, success and fulfillment. You are going to give up on life. Are you willing to pay that price?

What is it that holds us back from acceptance? My gut feeling, as well as my experience coaching other women to acceptance, is the culprit is fear. Fear is an emotional response to threats and danger. Our fears lie in the unknown. What has already

happened does not provoke fear. It is the not knowing that frightens us. Uncertainty. What if I cannot take care of my children and myself? What if I am alone for the rest of my life? What if I am never happy again? What if I end up a bag lady? What if the sky falls?

What can we do about uncertainty? Sorry but there is not much we can do with not knowing what comes next. No one on this earth can predict the future. This is another aspect of reality that calls for our acceptance. Real courage and wisdom is the ability to be okay with not knowing. After all, what is the choice when you cannot possibly know what the future holds? The very nature of life is uncertainty.

How can we best live in an uncertain world? Well, we know that being in fear of not knowing is not the answer so how about the opposite? What if we were able to hold the belief that everything will work for us? What if we were to believe that everything happens for a reason? What if we were to believe that there are new and exciting opportunities and possibilities opening up for us now in this new phase of life? What if life will work out and we will be happy and fulfilled? What if this divorce is just what we needed to get back into life? What if?

Look, you get to choose: fear or a belief in a better future. One viewpoint will keep you stuck and one will serve you well. A simple shift in perspective or attitude can work miracles. Our attitudes not only change the way we think, they change our reality. Don't believe me? Try it on yourself. It is the old power of positive thinking. I am not suggesting taking on a Pollyanna-ish persona but I am suggesting that you take a good hard look at your prevailing attitude on life. If it ain't working, change it!

It is not only our fear of uncertainty that keeps us from acceptance but also our unrealistic expectations of life that get in our way. You may or may not be conscious of your expectations but they are there and they bite you in the behind all the time. If you feel that life isn't fair, you have unrealistic expectations of life. If you feel that your ex should be a certain way, you have unrealistic expectations of life? If you think that life should not include difficult times, that's right...big time, unrealistic and totally unenforceable expectations that set you up for disappointment, resentment and unhappiness. Get real and recognize life for what it really is. It is not all hearts and flowers. It is not always fair. It is what it is! Quit setting yourself up.

Examine and manage your unrealistic and unenforceable expectations. Know what you can and cannot control vis- a -vis these expectations as that is what makes them unenforceable. Learn to make uncertainty without fear a part of living. Learn to believe in your future instead of fearing it. Learn to accept life as it is instead of as you think it should be. Live in reality instead of fantasy. Honor yourself and commit to your life. Use this divorce as a catalyst for a better life. Go for it!