

Recovering from Divorce: Honoring the Truth

Do you remember the old adage that states there's your side, there's my side and then there's the truth? If we were totally honest with ourselves, we too could see the truth of any situation. Once we accept that truth, we have the newfound freedom to gain clarity, discover our options and make real choices that are based in reality and not a subjective interpretation of what is. The past no longer runs the show. A world of possibilities opens that we might otherwise have missed. To recover from divorce one must face the truth.

The gist of the adage is that we don't really see reality for what it is. Rather we see things through our interpretive abilities and we interpret things based on our past experiences. Reality gets fine tuned through our own personal filters. We live in a world based on the past, a world that no longer exists.

Here's an example. Recently I was coaching a woman and we were discussing how she had interpreted her Mom's behavior to mean that she wasn't lovable. She had a brother and a sister who grew up in the same home and they did not feel unlovable. How? The truth was that the Mother was a non-emotional, logical and somewhat distant person. Those were the facts. It had nothing to do with my client and yet she had interpreted her Mom's behavior as meaning that something wrong with her. If she had been lovable, her Mom would have been the nurturing and loving Mother she needed. The client's belief that she is unlovable has colored her entire life's experience. Only it wasn't true.

Facts versus interpretations. Now look at your divorce. What are the real facts and what are your interpretations of those facts? Perhaps your marriage broke down because you felt your husband was never happy with you and you were the target of his constant criticism. Your husband's story is that you were never truly loving and nurturing and he was desperately attempting to fix that situation. The marriage counselor sees something different. She sees that you interpreted his attempts to receive more love as constant criticism. That is indeed how it felt to you. She also sees that he had been somewhat needy and his approach only pushed you farther away.

Our inability to see the truth without our personal interpretations makes it impossible to resolve the conflict. In truth, you may have had an experience from your past where a parent constantly criticized you and you have become extremely sensitive to anything about your behavior. In truth, your husband may have been raised by parents who were not loving towards him and so he craves attention. Whatever. The truth is that we allow our past to serve as a filter for our present and thereby create reactions that are not based in reality. The operative word is reactions: we are only reacting life and not being the master of our fate.

It could be that your marriage broke down because the two of you married for the wrong reasons and you simply cannot make it work. But most people will not admit to that truth and will heap all sorts of blame on one another based on their own personal interpretations of who is at fault.

To break free of the pain of divorce we must be willing to see the facts versus our interpretations of the facts. What is versus what we think is. In order to do that we must be willing to set our egos aside as well as our past. Facing the truth instead of what we want to believe is the truth is what we have to do to be able to make the changes we want in life. That is not necessarily an easy task but it is a necessary one if we are to move forward in our lives. You cannot begin a new life until you end the old one.

Here's an exercise you can do to start on the road to recovery. Take a piece of paper with two columns: one listing the facts of your marriage's demise and the other your interpretations of why things went south. For instance, the fact might have been that you and your husband had different ideas on money. Your interpretation of that fact might be that your ex was incredibly cheap. Separate fact from interpretation by being as objective as possible without allowing your personal opinions to cloud the issue.

A good marriage counselor will tell you that a marriage does not fail because of just one partner. Although it may not look like it to you, it is the truth. Even if your ex had an affair, there were reasons for his infidelity other than his lapse in moral judgment. If you are really honest with yourself, you will see the real reasons for why things happened the way they did.

I had a conversation with a woman whose husband left her and her kids unexpectedly... or so she thought. In reality, he had been taking solo vacations/adventure for the past year. She went along with his absences, assuming full responsibility for their home and children. She had always taken care of everyone and everything, which enabled him to be totally self-absorbed and yet initially she could not understand what had happened, why he left. She gave him all the rope he needed to hang himself or rather, to hang their marriage. When she was honest, she saw that the signs were there all along and that she had a good deal of responsibility for the marriage's failure. She had been an enabler of bad behavior on his part.

Another old adage states that the truth will set you free. Knowing the difference between the truth and our own personal view of reality will indeed set you free. Grounded in reality, in the truth, we can become the person we want to be and live the life we want to live because we are no longer living in a world of our own making, a fantasyland.

It is how we choose to handle life's circumstances that matter in the end. We can choose to be truthful with ourselves or we can choose to continue living a

convenient interpretation. Al Gore has described facing a harsh reality as an inconvenient truth. I like that idea. Anything worthwhile takes effort. With effort come rewards. If we choose to accept the inconvenient truth, we are choosing a life filled with abundant rewards. The choice is ours to make.