

Victimhood: The Curse of Divorce Recovery

Feeling or labeling yourself a victim of your divorce is one of the most disastrous moves you can make. It will prevent you from moving forward into a new life. Victimhood renders you powerless. To create a new life after your divorce takes a person who is fully responsible for their past, present and future. Being responsible means having control over one's life and that is what it takes to both recover from the emotional wounds of a divorce as well as plan for your new life.

If you consider yourself a victim then you believe that you had little to do with what happened to you. You take no responsibility. The responsibility is someone else's and that leaves you with no power. Victims blame someone else. Blame absolves them of their part in the dissolution of their marriage. Blame keeps them stuck in the pain of the past and their divorce.

It is so much easier to place blame on someone else than accept personal responsibility. The fact is that two people inhabit all marriages. Those two people are co-creators of their marriage and their divorce. Even if one of the partners was unfaithful or a liar, there are always signs along the way that we either refused to see or to acknowledge. If we are in denial about all the warning signs along the way, we can only look to ourselves for lack of some responsible action.

Blame leads to resentment. Resentment consumes our mind chatter. We spend far too many hours ruminating about all the things that our ex has done or continues to do to us. We resent their new life and our lack of one. Consider the amount of time wasted being in resentment? Exactly who suffers? The answer of course is clear: you. You are the one who is angry, sad, bitter and unhappy, not your ex. Your blame and resentment, along with your regrets, are like poison in your system. It completely immobilizes you.

How do we overcome these feelings of victimhood? Here are some suggestions:

1. What is the truth of your marriage? If we are completely honest and courageous, we will have begun to recognize that indeed, we played an integral part in our marriage and divorce. All too often, we interpret events and situations in our marriage and believe them to be the truth. For instance, my husband was cheating and lied to me about it. I interpret that to mean that I am no longer desirable, that I failed as a wife. I live in my marriage as if that is a cold, hard fact. It is not. The fact is he cheated. Period. That fact could mean a hundred different things. Stick to the facts.
2. Where am I responsible? What were the warning signs along the way that I refused to acknowledge? Where was I in denial? Where was I an enabler? For example, I know a woman who was completely surprised when her

husband left her. She went on to tell me that she always gave him total freedom to do whatever he wanted: trips that lasted a month at a time and little or no responsibility in rearing their children are just a couple of items on the list. She handled it all. Translation: she was an enabler and gave him the rope that was needed to strangle the marriage. Acknowledge where you didn't do what you needed to do. Accept responsibility. Responsibility if empowerment.

3. Exactly what are you resisting? Why can't you see the truth and accept responsibility? Why do you suppose you cannot accept the reality of your life as it is now? These are questions that must be addressed. What do you gain by remaining a victim? Are you afraid of facing the truth? Are you living in what you think should be versus what is? Do you enjoy being a victim? Do you like the fact that being a victim absolves you of any responsibility and therefore any positive action?
4. If you are resisting the reality of your life, consider doing a turnaround and simply go with the flow of your life's direction. Fighting reality is a useless business. The more you resist something the more it will persist. Consider the flow of a river. What does it feel like to swim against the current? That is what you do when you cannot accept what is.
5. Do you allow your fear of the unknown to run you? Are you afraid of your future? Are you afraid of being alone? What exactly are you afraid of? I recently heard someone say that they spend so much time worrying and little or nothing of what they worry about actually comes true! Do you see the insanity of that? As far as the future, we don't know from day to day what the future holds for us. How about if you believed that your future was going to be just fine instead of being in fear? What if everything happens for a reason?
6. Consider your perspective on life. Your attitude. What is it? Do you believe that life is hard and unjust? Do you see all that is wrong and nothing that might be right? Let me tell you something, not only does your attitude affect how you handle life; it can actually determine your reality. If you believe that life is too hard then that is exactly what life will be for you. Kind of like a self-fulfilling prophesy.
7. Do things differently. If your victimhood along with it's blame and resentment is not working for you (and I guarantee it isn't) then for heaven's sake, do things differently. Try on a new perspective. Examine the truth of your life versus your own personal interpretations. Take responsibility. Take actionable steps forward. Stop resisting. Get out and do new things, meet new people and don't isolate yourself. Get back into the swing of things.

8. Learn from your experience and use that new wisdom for empowerment. Once you see the life lessons of your marriage and divorce (and believe me they are numerous and impactful) you can use that wisdom to be a better person, to help you to become the person that you truly want to be. Everything that happens to us in life has a hidden lesson for us if we only look for it. Might there actually be a silver lining in this storm cloud?
9. Consider the costs of remaining a victim? Do you want to live your life as a bitter and angry person? Is that how you want to be seen? If you have children, is victimhood what you want them to model? How do you want to be seen? Do you realize that as a victim you have no power to change your life? Remaining a victim is a very bleak picture.
10. Choose a new and better life. Think of all the decisions and choices you make during the course of a day. Are they moving you away from being a victim or keeping you stuck there? Stop and think before you make important and even not so important decisions or choices. Our choices define us and determine the course of our life.

In closing, I want to share a few bits of wisdom from the Dalai Lama:

When you lose, don't lose the lesson.

Follow the three R's: respect for self, respect for others and responsibility for all your actions.

Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a stroke of luck.

Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.