

SURVIVOR SERIES

Introduction

The Survivor Series has been written for those who have been victims of pain and grief caused by life events and circumstances. The survivor's are those who are left behind to deal with the trauma, pain and grief. Through this series of specialized booklets, we aim to provide information and the necessary tools to help you move beyond victimization to victory, by taking control over your own life and well being.

Coping Skills Personal Tool Box—Print them and carry them with you, share them with someone who is grieving or experiencing pain!

Allow yourself permission to cry, be sad and grieve

Do not “Isolate” yourself! This is one of the unhealthiest things for a griever. If this is not by your choice, find support through a support group, grief therapy, place of worship or other support organizations.

Talk about your situation only when you choose, if you do not choose let others know that you do not want to talk until you are ready. Remember, it is not healthy to keep it inside, but it is also impossible to move forward if you keep reliving the story over and over again in thought or by repeating it.

Accept help or assistance from others

Do not make personal decisions you may regret later—WAIT!

Focus on your personal care; Eat, Sleep and Exercise to keep yourself well and to lift your mood.

Take as much time as you need to process your grief-there is no time limit!

Do not over extend yourself be gentle, patient and kind to yourself.

KNOW that you are not to blame for the decision of another, regardless of what you said, did or did not do.

If you feel guilty, FORGIVE YOURSELF! This is a big part of the healing process, living with guilt does not change anything or help your situation in any way.

Allow yourself to laugh, love and be happy again without feeling guilty

Allow yourself to live and know that your life is important and you have your own purpose regardless of the depth of the loss you have experienced...put yourself first!

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DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

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SURVIVOR SERIES

DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

Life is not predictable...When people are in love or first marry they normally do not go into the relationship thinking "Oh, maybe one day we will not be together" People assume they will be together forever.

Divorce and Separation should be treated the same way as we treat a death. IT FEELS THE SAME...This is a major life change and involves many others besides the couple. It evokes many different and scary emotions: fear, sadness, alienation, anxiety, anger, jealousy, envy, regrets, agony, distress, uncertainty and distrust. These are the different emotions, which can come and go, change, and reappear. Just when you think you have moved past one of them, it creeps back in. You see, we all have moments; we are never always one thing or the other. Life is always moving forward even if we are not. We grieve some things throughout our lifetime, but not every moment of everyday. Remember, God gave us memories for a reason and those memories creep in from time to time. Some of these memories are glad and some are sad, but they all have a part in who we have become.

There are many different reasons that couples separate or divorce. One of the most common reasons is that their interests change or they grow in different directions, or one may grow and the other may not. I believe that every obstacle that arises during a relationship of any kind can be worked through and resolved if both parties are willing to put in their 100% to make it work and find solutions and resolutions; but we cannot force others to cooperate or participate if they are not willing.

This is where free will comes in and we all have a choice, so it seems. But if one party wants to work at it and the other does not, then there is no longer a choice. This typically causes a great deal of grief and fear. It is like being in an airplane when the captain comes on and says "fasten your seat belt, we are experiencing turbulence" and you need to secure yourself and hold on for the remainder of the trip...you have no control. But someone does, that someone is GOD...he is in control and always has been in control. Sometimes we just fail to recognize this until we are faced with a crisis. When we check in daily and keep ourselves connected spiritually we find that we receive all the guidance and direction that is needed. It is very difficult to feel that connection in the midst of grief, trauma and severe pain. But everyday, just like the pilot who must check-in and keep a constant flow of communication going with the air traffic controller, we need to do the same. Stay connected so that when circumstances become difficult you know who your source is and where your inner strength comes from. Trust that your

source, God, will make the wisest choice for you even when you cannot see your way clear through the storm. He will light the way and lead you if you rely on him.

The choice at that point is clear; work on yourself since you are the only one that you can change. The benefits will be great. If you can truly accomplish this goal and bring all of your energy and attention to yourself using baby steps, you will be able to move forward into your new life. Everyone has been taught that this is selfish, but it is truly the way to find peace, self confidence and self assurance. Remember, everyone around you will benefit if you feel your best and you are able to focus on you; your children, friends, family and even pets. Once you are feeling better, the people around you will notice. Your focus and renewed energy will allow you to help others work through the process that they are experiencing with you.

Who does divorce affect?

Divorce affects everyone that the couple is connected with...children, family, friends, extended family, co-workers; life changes for all parties involved.

How can you create a peaceful separation?

And

How do you stand in your integrity and do what's best for all parties involved?

Do not play games; be honest with yourself and your spouse even if your spouse is not. Tit for tat just further complicates the situation. Do not lie or ask others to lie for you. You will be able to look back, hold your head high and know that you always did the right thing. We have a tendency to want to hurt those who hurt us and our families; this is natural, human behavior. It takes a lot of work on yourself to maintain your integrity and achieve this state of being. It is very important that you stay spiritually connected to accomplish this first step.

Do not involve others and they should not involve themselves. It is natural for family and friends to want to protect each other when everyone is hurting and emotions are running wild. Often you end up sharing your feelings and hurts with well meaning people and they make comments that just add fuel to the fire when they should just listen without interfering and passing judgment. Instead of moving forward, you get caught up in all the drama. You are not required to explain yourself or talk about the situation with others unless you are ready or feel like it. Don't let others try to influence you or tell you what they think is best for you, only you know what is truly best for your life.

YOUR CHILDREN'S FEELINGS MATTER. THEY SHOULD NOT BE PLACED IN THE MIDDLE!

They need to know that you both love them, and allow them to freely share their pains, hurts, fears and concerns. Let them know what is happening by being honest about your feelings but only addressing what is appropriate for their age. Often children feel they are to blame, let them know it's not their fault.

Do not put your children in the middle!

Do not play them against your spouse!

Do not make them feel guilty in any way!

Do not imply that they don't love you because they spend time with the other parent!

Do not show signs of anger towards them!

Do not force them to choose!

Do not discuss unnecessary details with them or in front of them!

This is the biggest mistake I see in divorces that involve children. They do not want to be in the middle, nor should they be placed there and used to benefit the other or make you feel better. Regardless of what happens between the parents, the children normally love both parents, often even if there has been abuse. This applies regardless of what age the children are, 7 or 70. I know what you are thinking; "but, they did this or they did that." The story is the same, they still love both parents even if one or both have hurt, caused them shame or harmed them in any way. I see it every day in my work, I hear the stories, and I have lived the story myself. I KNOW! Just ask them and if they are not afraid of hurting your feelings, if you have an open line of communication, they will tell you. Children often times believe they are the cause of the separation. They sometimes feel responsible; carrying regret, guilt, and shame, even though they had no part at all in the cause or decision. You will not be able to lessen the blow completely because the fact still remains that their lives are forever changed, but you can do your part in making it as smooth a transition as possible. Remember, no one is perfect and we all make mistakes but do your best to stay in your integrity.

Again, the disagreement or differences are only between the two parties in the relationship. If you have put the blame on your children or tried to place it on anyone outside of the relationship, you need to look inside. There are only two parties in each relationship and that is the two involved. Keep all others outside of it and things will be less complicated.

Give everyone the right to grieve the situation in their own way. Just because you have worked on yourself and perhaps even moved on, others often need time to do the same. Everyone needs time to process the change in their own way and in their own timing.

Sometimes well meaning friends and family will want to share their opinion. Anyone can give advice, but it takes a special person to just sit back and listen

without judging or being opinionated. Remember, there are two sides to every story and each person sees a situation through their own eyes and they do not always reflect the same story. The best policy is to listen without interfering. Stay neutral as hard as that may be; it is truly only between the involved parties. When there is a conflict it is best resolved if all others remain out of the mix. Sometimes the person may need to vent, so just listen. Do not interject your opinion one way or the other. Do not bring up the subject first; if they need to discuss it they will let it out to you when they are ready. Trying to force a discussion when they are not prepared, or not feeling up to it may cause anger. It may even seem that the anger is directed towards you, when indeed it is just their frustration from the lack of control over the situation.

All relationships require respect of one person to another, but that is not always the case. Without respect a relationship becomes damaged, sometimes one sided and even resentful.

REMEMBER, the only person you have control over is you...your decisions, choices, actions and reactions; it is all up to you to choose how to handle any situation.

Now what should you do for yourself?

Eat Well - even when you do not feel like it, eat something small and continue to do this throughout the day each day until you have your appetite back. Drink lots of fluids.

Exercise - take brisk walks, join a gym, find a walking partner, swim, join a team or a drop in sport.

Sleep - essential but sometimes very difficult. Try to stay in the moment and clear your mind before sleeping. Read quick stories, listen to meditation cd's or soft music, take a hot bath or shower one hour before sleep time. Say the word "PEACE" and nothing else repeatedly to yourself until you drift off to sleep or if you re-waken during the night. Stay in a regular sleep routine until your usual pattern returns. Try not to sleep during the day and keep yourself active so that you will be able to sleep through the night.

Socialize - join a support group, club or league, take up a hobby you always wanted to do and may have put aside. This also helps build confidence and helps to rediscover lost dreams. I always say, "never too old, never too late."

Breathe - deep breathing is important to our well being. Practice yoga, deep breathing and/or relaxation techniques. This keeps you in the present moment and helps balance your emotional state.

Be patient - with others and yourself during this time, in other words give your self a break and allow your body to process the changes that are occurring.

Know - that it is OK to share your feelings and experience many types of emotions at different times during the process. There is no right or wrong way or time stamp during this process.

Know - that it is OK to live your life and to move in a new direction that is best for you.

Know - that you are important and treat your self as such.

Know - that life is not as you once knew it, acknowledge that shift and be ok with making new directional changes, even if they are a bit scary at first. You will adjust to the changes as they become your new way of living.

Know that there is no right or wrong, just left and right and not every decision is right or the same for everyone. Be okay making the decisions that best suit you and who you have become. Do not be too proud or cloud your judgment because you are concerned with what others think. Do what is best for YOU! Do not be ashamed if you decide to go back into your marriage to try and make it work. This can only work if both parties are willing and know how to fully forgive the other and move beyond past hurts and mistakes. Both parties must give their full effort in order for things to work; that is 100% effort and meeting each other in the middle. Remember, it should be new and improved. Things are not the same once there is a separation but the goal is to improve on what you already had and make it better by finding the middle together.

I hear people say “I never want to be with anyone again”, “I do not want to get hurt”, and “you can not trust anyone”. If this is what you believe, this is what you will get. Not all people are the same and there is always someone out there like you that is looking for the same things in a relationship. God did not place us here to be hermits and to not love. We are meant to share our lives and all relationships in meaningful ways.

Don't rush into a new relationship. Take time for yourself, find your true self. Often times we have let our hopes and dreams get lost and put aside as we become someone's spouse and a parent. Release the fear of being alone and that you may not find someone new.

How do you release fear?

Learn the art of self love and work at being comfortable being by yourself. Just because you are alone does not mean that you have to be lonely, there is a big difference.

Remember, stay connected to God/Spirit and know that you are never truly alone! I truly feel that people are better off alone and happy than being with someone for the sake of company and being miserable. Get to know new people, friends, make dates with friends to go out and have fun. Try new things and new places, step outside of your comfort zone. Really enjoy your own company, as well as the company of those around you, and exercise your freedom to choose. Rediscover all the things you enjoyed doing before you married. Why did you stop doing them? Discovering who you are and what you enjoy again in life can be a lot of fun and very fulfilling.

Feelings of helplessness and suicide are normal thoughts that may occur during any type of trauma, grief or pain. These are usually passing thoughts, but if they are obsessive or continuous then you should seek professional help without feeling ashamed or embarrassed. This shows great strength. **KNOW THAT YOUR LIFE IS IMPORTANT, THAT YOU ARE IMPORTANT AND WHO YOU ARE MATTERS.**

KNOW THAT YOU DESERVE TO BE HAPPY, WE ALL DO. Life should be lived to the fullest each moment, because that is all we are promised.

May you find peace and comfort during this difficult time and know that everything we experience happens to bring wisdom and help us grow into the persons that we have become and we will continue to be. Yes, the scars remain, but they do not have to stay open wounds. They can be healed if you take the time to work on yourself. Many blessings of peace and comfort are wished for you now and always.

If you want to trust life and this process then do the following:

Make a wish list of the qualities and personality traits that would best match you with your next partner, such as; likes to read, watches old movies, shares in small talk, patient, kind....and so on... Review it as often as needed to remember that you do not need to settle for something less than what you deserve.

Remember, it is best to be by yourself and have peace and happiness than to share your personal space and time with someone just to fill time. When your list is complete, let it be, sending out your prayer to God and surrendering your request. Don't look for love, let it find you!!!

Now, repeat these following affirmations daily:

I deserve the best in life!

I choose to move forward with my life and release all fear of the unknown!

I am happy, healthy and whole!

Lastly, BELIEVE! AND IT WILL BECOME SO!

Know that God is in control and be patient, he knows when we are truly prepared for the next step in life...TRUST

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