

Divorce

John Raymond, MA

David Stoop and James Masteller in their book “Forgiving Our Parents Forgiving our selves: Healing Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families” recognizes that “there is no such thing as a perfect parent. All of us are descended from imperfect parents, and grew up in imperfect families. However, to acknowledge this as an intellectual proposition is one thing. To actually admit that our parents have failed us is, for some, a very hard thing to do.” What parent does not fear divorced parental failure scenario for their children? Going through a divorce can amplify this fear. When a divorce occurs, failure as a parent is not the only failure that the isolated partner feels. There are feelings of failure of financial development, social interaction, and intimate emotional connections. Parents and individuals going through a divorce question their ability to recover from their loss and fear.

Parental failure is a common mood experienced by divorcing parents. For the custodial parent, being overwhelmed with the daily activities and responsibilities of rearing the children “alone” can be stifling. On the other hand, the non-custodial parent struggles with being a pertinent influence in their children’s lives. The custodial parent can be seen as the “parent” while the non-custodial parent can be seen as the “grandparent”, “event planner” or “Santa Clause”. Feeling guilty about relaxing while the children are with the non-custodial parent, is not uncommon. Feeling pressure to make the short amount of time the non-custodial parent has the children “quality” time is

unreal—it is unrealistic. Not knowing what to do is frustrating for all involved. “Creative Parenting After Separation” by Elizabeth Seddon is a resource that may help with new ideas for the children. Another resource that may help at the start of the divorce is Mimi E Lyster’s book, “Building a Parenting Agreement That Works : How to Put Your Kids First When Your Marriage Doesn't Last.”

Children also add more to the financial mix during a divorce; however, this is certainly a relevant issue for all who are going through a divorce—with or without children. There are as many financial scenarios as there are couples who divorce. Divorce creates an exciting and scary financial situation. On one hand, the separated partner can now make independent financial decisions. On the other hand, the separated partner can now make independent financial decisions. You read that correct. Being independent is a blessing and a challenge. One option is to seek the assistance of a financial planner. Some financial planners charge by the hour while commissions pay others from investments of yours. It is important to find a planner who will explain how they are paid. Having financial challenges is an issue divorce can influence. Seeking help can assist in not being isolated in financial decisions.

Isolation is a huge issue with divorce. As a couple, there may have been a good social network. When divorce happens, this network is drawn between the two divorcing partners. Most of the time, one partner is identified as the “problem”. This is the partner that loses most if not all of the couple’s old friends. Isolation sets in. Depression takes hold and reconnecting with a social support group seems hopeless. Combating the feelings of failure, individuals discover their lack of social skills, which are required to connect with others. When was the last time you ate at a restaurant alone or went to the

movies alone? This can be a challenging event if you are used to having a spouse with you. While learning to connect with society as an individual, the individual may need to connect with him or herself as a non-married person. This new view of self as an individual in society permeates every aspect of self and environment. Negotiating isolation while transforming self is an issue that may be helped through counseling—individual or group.

Counseling may even help with intimate emotional connections. Losing a partner through divorce can create insecurities about self that will be negotiated either through continued broken new relationships or through the assistance of a counselor. Working through the issues of the previous marriage is an important developmental task that will support you in future intimate relationships. Further more, exploring your feelings and beliefs about divorce and remarriage can help relieve anxiety you may be having in thinking about intimate relationships. InterVarsity Press published a book entitled “Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views” written by H.W. House. While this book is a bit heady and at times confronting, it does present differing views about the topic of remarriage. House’s book can stimulate you to examine your own beliefs.

No matter what your view of remarriage is the fact that divorce affects almost every aspect of your life and deserves all the attention you can afford. Children, finances, social interaction, and intimate relationships are a few of the issues that need addressing. Stoop and Masteller suggest that the process of forgiveness is a discovery of our own and other’s failures. Grace is the answer. Counseling can help with this process.