

**You Can Handle This Divorce!**

**10 Powerful Secrets  
to Coping with Divorce**

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### **10 Powerful Secrets to Coping with Divorce**

These are some of the toughest times you will ever experience but I promise you that there are highly specific things that you can do to effectively handle the emotional overwhelm of divorce.

I have given you **10 powerful tools** to utilize so that not only will you survive this life transition, but do so in a way that will move you forward and empower you to take charge.

Divorce, one of life's greatest challenges, will reveal itself to be an experience that will gift you with new strength, knowledge and wisdom that will evolve you as a human being. It might not feel like that right now, but as time passes, these invaluable life lessons will reveal themselves to you.

For now, read on and use these skills and tools to support and guide you to coping with your divorce:

## 1. Taming Mind Chatter

Let's call a spade a spade, shall we? The mind chatter that is running on a permanent repeat loop in your head is your gremlin. To get a better idea of what a Gremlin does, let's look at what a gremlin might look like:



Ugly little devil, wreaking havoc. The great self-saboteur, telling you everything you do wrong, how life won't work out and what a fool you are...on and on and on. I know you know exactly what I am talking about because we all have our own customized Gremlin within. It is the voice inside our head that does not know when to stop, the voice that will limit what we can do in life and keeps us stuck in fear and unable to move forward. It's time to tame that critter.

Name your gremlin. Mine is Angelika, the little brat from the children's television show Rug rats. Naming your gremlin reinforces the fact that your mind chatter is not you. It really isn't. Your gremlin is part of your wounded ego. It is responding to the pain of your divorce. All the emotional baggage you've been schlepping around all your life intensifies it. This is baggage you brought into your marriage. Simply observe your gremlin yapping away and notice that you are not the gremlin but the person doing the observing.

Notice your Gremlin and you are on the way to taming it. Simply in the act of noticing, you begin to dis-empower it. You see that you are a separate entity from the chatter. You notice that what is being said is not necessarily true and based on fear. A gremlin thrives on your fears. It wants to use those fears to hold you back and keep you stuck in the pain of the past. You get to choose whether you will listen to that ugly little sucker or simply notice it, thank it for sharing and move on. Practice makes perfect. Be on the lookout for your gremlin!

## 2. Be Aware



You'll tame that Gremlin if you are living in a state of awareness. Most of us are not truly connected to what is happening within. As a result, we tend to react to situations and end up regretting what we have said and done. There is a good reason for this: the right side of our brain that controls our emotions reacts much faster than the left side, our center of rational thinking. Basically that translates into our emotions running the show. We react much faster emotionally than rationally and oftentimes we aren't even aware that we are on our way to upset.

Be aware of your body because it will offer you clues as to your emotional state. When I am heading for upset I get highly specific clues: my stomach gets butterflies, my heart races and my muscles tense. If I am conscious of these clues, I can stop the upset by taking a step back, removing myself from the situation and giving myself a time-out.

Let me give you an exercise to practice:

### **The Time-Out:**

When you notice yourself getting upset, stop and remove yourself from the upsetting or stressful situation. Go sit somewhere quiet and take about 5 deep breaths, with each inhale and exhale lasting about 4 seconds. Be fully focused on the physical sensations of your breath. Notice it hitting the back of your throat and how you belly expands and contracts.

Then visualize a time when you were experiencing joy or a deep sense of peace. Perhaps it is the face of your child sleeping your arms or a beautiful sunset. Reconnect with how you were feeling and just sit with that for a minute or so. Then come back to now and ask yourself how you want to handle the stressful situation.

Another benefit of awareness is noticing what make you feel good and what makes you feel bad; what empowers you and what dis-empowers you. You drink 5 cups of coffee before lunchtime and you become jittery and cranky. Notice that and resolve not to do it anymore because it is working against you. You blow up at your ex, he/she says some very hurtful things in response and you end up feeling horrible. In the future, notice you are heading for upset and stop yourself. Get the idea.

Try keeping a notebook with you during the course of one day and mark down what makes you feel good and what makes you bad, what empowers you and what dis-empowers you, what moves you forward and what moves you backwards. Then look over the list and commit to removing the things that don't serve you well and emphasizing those things that make you feel better.

### 3. Take Care of Yourself



Exactly how are you treating yourself these days? What are you doing to take care of yourself under these extraordinarily stressful times? If you don't think self-care and self-nurturing are important, you are dead wrong. Not taking care of yourself at this point in your life only adds to the pain of your divorce.

If you feel like hell and can't think straight there is a scientifically proven reason: stress breaks us down both physically and mentally...literally. The stress hormone cortisol has been shown to not only suppress our immune system but to also affect our cognitive functioning. Of the top ten stressful life events one will ever face in their lifetime, divorce is #2 only behind the death of a spouse! Guess what #3 is? Marital separation.

It is absolutely imperative that you pay close attention to your self-care regimen. Here are some tips to help combat depression, anxiety, stress and anger:

- Are you getting enough sleep? If you are experiencing insomnia then see your doctor and perhaps think about some sort of sleep aid for a period of time. Sleep deprivation is like adding fuel to the fire of stress. Take long hot baths before you go to bed, drink a glass of milk, and look for natural herbs to help you fall asleep. Exercise also helps you sleep better. Get adequate rest.

- Are you exercising to burn off anxiety and depression? The Mayo Clinic suggests that exercise raises the levels of certain mood enhancing neurotransmitters in the brain. It boosts feel-good endorphins, reduces sleep better...need I go on? It also boosts your confidence, serves as a distraction and is a great coping activity.
- Take up something you really enjoy doing and get out there and do it. Start off with small steps and then build up. Try walking 10 minutes a day and then increase it incrementally until you can spend an hour out there. Go back to tennis if you had played previously. Enlist a friend in an activity. Anything to get you out and moving at a brisk pace.
- Consider yoga. Not only will you get a great workout but you will also start to access yoga's restorative benefits on a mental and spiritual level.
- Meditation works wonders and if you are like me and can't seem to focus for long, don't worry. Meditative practices can be done in less than 5 minutes and still works wonders! I have already given you the Time-Out exercise. Use it whenever need be.
- Practice gratitude. Think of what you have versus what you don't. List all the things that you have to be grateful for in your life. Be appreciative. This practice will make you feel better. Look for what is right in your life instead of everything that is wrong. I promise you that if you are looking for everything that is wrong in your life, you will find it!
- Pamper and nurture yourself. Give yourself the love and compassion that you deserve instead of beating yourself up all the time. We are our own worst enemy but we can also choose to be our own personal nanny! Take long, hot baths. Get a manicure and pedicure. Splurge on a massage and if you cannot afford one, get the kids to you give you one! Read a book that you have been putting off. Take off for 24 hours. Think of the things that make you feel better and do them for yourself.
- Don't isolate yourself. Seek the support of family and good friends. Check out a local divorce support group in your area so you can talk to other people experiencing the same emotions as you. No one said you had to go it alone. Get the help of a therapist or coach. Give yourself what you need. You have one precious life to live and you get to choose how to live it.

## 4. Set Boundaries



We are defined by what we say no to. Say for example you are on the phone with your ex and he or she begins to verbally abuse you. Do you stay and listen or do you set a boundary to protect yourself? How about using a little Pavlovian conditioning? Remember the Russian scientist who trained dogs through the use of electro-shock therapy? Now I am not suggesting you use a cattle prod (although I'll bet you are thinking that is an enticing idea) but I am suggesting that you set boundaries and enforce them consistently.

"I want you to know that I will not accept verbal abuse from you and in the future when you go there, I am simply getting off the phone." And back it up with action. Or how about not even allowing phone conversations period? "If you want to communicate with me, please do it through e-mail", and once again if you get abusive verbiage via an e-mail, set a new boundary.

Limit exposure to your home by your ex or stop it completely. Do what you need to do to create a safe and secure environment for yourself. Your home is now your home and that means your ex can no longer come and go as if things were the way they were. They aren't. You are no longer married.



Ask your friends not to discuss your ex with you anymore as it only ends up making you feel bad. If you have children, set up ways to communicate and to handle custody so that you will not be upset every time you have to have an interaction. If that means you dropping the children off, so be it. Notice what your emotional triggers are: the buttons that get pushed and set you off. Once you have identified them, remove them as best you can from your life.

I always encourage people to utilize their divorce attorneys as much as possible if financially feasible. Billable hours build up so you must be cognizant of that but all too often our ex attempts to discuss things that are best handled by the lawyers. Don't get bullied and don't allow yourself to get upset.

Remove those situations from your life that are making you feel bad. Being keenly aware and conscious of what causes you upset is the key. I note that many of my clients are extremely upset after speaking with their ex. That brings to mind the story of the patient who complains to their Doctor that their arm hurts when they move it in a certain way. What does the Doctor say? Don't move it that way! So if you cannot speak with your ex without getting upset, don't speak to them!

If you are attempting to cut the emotional cord between you and your ex, I assure you that continuing to keep your ex in your life will maintain and even strengthen that cord. Cutting yourself off from your ex as much as possible gives you the room to heal.

## 5. Watch Out for Interpretations



All too often, it is not so much the events of our life that keep us in pain but our interpretations of those events. Let me give you a perfect example. Let's say that when you were a child you had a Mother who was very negative. She only told you what you did wrong and never what you did right. As a child, how might you have interpreted that?

Perhaps you decided that you weren't good enough or not lovable. Because you were just a child, your interpretation is understandable but therein lies the problem: you go on to internalize that core belief about yourself and live your entire life as if you weren't good enough.... all based on a child's interpretation that is not necessarily true. The truth is you had a Mother who was negative. It was her issue. It does not mean you were unlovable, it means that you had a Mother who couldn't give you the positive reinforcement every child needs. You interpreted her behavior as meaning that you were not good enough. Your interpretation is not a fact.

It happens the same way in marriage and divorce. We create meanings or interpretations about ourselves as a result of the events of our relationships. You may have heard a friend bemoan the fact she is a failure because her marriage ended. Again, that is her interpretation and one that is based on the pain she is experiencing. Common meanings we attach to a divorce are I am not lovable, I am a failure, I am stupid, I will be lonely the rest of my life and I'm not good enough... just to name a few.

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