



## **Yes Virginia, there is life after Separation & Divorce**

So, you are facing a juncture in your life and some days you think life is over and there's nothing left but go to work and come home, go to work and come home.... Sprinkle that with a little bit of laundry, shopping, house cleaning and taking disciplinary actions against our children, because that's what we love to do and that's all we are looking forward to and that's who we are! Wake up! Get excited! But more importantly, start looking at who you are behind all the previously mentioned exhilarating and stimulating activities!

Most of the women we see in mediated separations are resigned to the fact that their marriage is over and we see them for two reasons. The first reason is that they want to finalize the ending of the marriage or relationship with a contract without the exorbitant expenses commonly associated with the usual process of a court supervised and imposed agreement working through the adversarial justice system, and secondly, they want to establish the processes of going forward as parents; what are our roles, responsibilities and obligations. Hopefully, what they come away with along with the above is a sense of beginning. They have the right, no, the obligation, to themselves and their children, to be the best they can be. That does not mean they pick up day one working towards that doctorate degree necessarily, but it does mean taking a good hard look at their identity and reaffirming the one they currently have or now taking the time and dedicating the energy to developing one. Many women spend so many years in the building of their families and their homes, that they have not had a good hard look at the individual strengths, depths and capacities they themselves possess; the foundation.

I don't want to give the impression that dealing with divorce is entirely a matter of self-actualization. Mavis Hetherington, who is the current guru psychologist of divorce matters in the United States, views divorce as an uplifting experience. Her research, showing little impact on children of divorce actually encourages divorce as the best solution to relationship issues.

In fact, it is this "dumbing down" of divorce that has given rise to many of the problems women experience after separation. The process is easy. There are literally thousands of full service firms providing a complete range of financial and legal expertise that make the actual process simple. But in the period following divorce, The Divorce Center, an

organization that collects data on divorce, reports that over one third of divorced parents remain bitter and hostile many years after the divorce. In addition, despite, Mavis Hetherington's glowing testimonials to divorce, the children of divorce will still experience significantly more social and emotional dysfunction than children from intact marriages. Again this is due to a lack of help available in the immediate period following divorce, where uncertainty flows from the parent to the children.

In a mediated separation, we work with both parties so that they know there are people out there trained and ready to give you 100% of their attention and expertise in re-establishing themselves or finding their own identities, now that they are not tied to another person's identity.

We all agree that after separation, our children are our priority. But why can we not give ourselves some priority at the same time. If we sit and read a novel to which we may not remember the characters tomorrow, what limits us from reading a textbook, or investigating who we are with some well-researched material designed to assist us? Some women leave behind marriages that during which felt their self-esteem sinking to depths they didn't know existed. The labels we developed (sometimes with unkindly help) are only labels. How we're able to shed those labels and stop living up to them is the work of professionals trained to do just that. Personal Coaches can help fulfill those long shelved dreams. Professional therapists are in place to assist those with problems that seem too big to overcome at first. Take the time to plan the next steps. Don't just jump into therapy without knowing what you want to accomplish from it.

It's a clean slate. You *can* design your future from here on. It doesn't matter what the age. I have met many women who restart their life after leaving a partner behind, not only through separation and divorce but also through death of a partner as well as through job loss. They start off by sitting back and thinking about their identity and reevaluating who they are and what their dreams are. Some need help, others don't. But the idea is that to sit back and choose not to choose is the worst thing you can do. If you deliberately come to the conclusion that who you are, is where you want to be, all the power to you. If you are not happy with your place, investigate!

Using mediation for a separation agreement is a process designed to smooth this transition in a neutral setting and at a financial saving. But restarting your life is also a

process, and it should be designed to smooth this transition in a neutral setting with the focus on rebuilding you.

Yes Virginia, there is life after separation and divorce. You only have to ask.

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