



REBUILDING PARENTAL SELF ESTEEM AFTER DIVORCE TAKES ITS TOLL

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By Rosalind Sedacca

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We all know divorce can be devastating on many levels. But sometimes we forget its emotional toll. In addition to the physical and financial stress on both partners, divorce can also wreak havoc on one's self-esteem. Even those who initiate the divorce process can experience tremendous emotional turmoil resulting in guilt, anxiety and insecurity. Those who were not expecting or in any way desiring the break-up can come away feeling psychologically battered, confused and questioning their own worth.

It's hard to tackle these burdens alone. A support group, private coach, professional counselor or other similar resources will be very valuable in reminding parents that

- 1) You are not alone in your experiences or feelings, and
- 2) There is a brighter future ahead for you – if you take proactive steps in that direction.

While family and friends are usually very well-intentioned, their support may not always be valuable for you. They have their own agendas, perspectives and values about marriage, family and divorce. What parents most need at this difficult time is a support system that is dispassionate, compassionate and knowledgeable about responsible behaviors that will move you into a more positive chapter in your life.

Here are a few suggestions to guide parents in boosting their self-esteem during the divorce and its aftermath.

Be committed to releasing the past

If you stay stuck in reliving and clinging to what no longer is your reality, you will not open the door to the next chapter in your life. There will be better, brighter days ahead – if you allow that awareness into your experience. Make space in your life for new friends, relationships, career options and fulfilling activities. Look for and expect new opportunities in new places. See the future as a positive beginning for you and your children. You'll be pleasantly surprised about what you can create when you anticipate good things ahead.

Choose your company wisely

We can't easily change other people, but we can change the people we associate with. If your social group isn't supportive of you, or tends to wallow in self-pity, realize you have a choice in your life about who you spend time with. Choose instead aware, introspective people who accept responsibility for their own behavior and proactively move ahead in transforming their lives. Move out of the blame game and put yourself in the





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company of positive people with high self-esteem who can appreciate you, with all your assets and baggage, as the wonderful person you are. You may find these people where you least expect them. So step out of your comfort zone – and be receptive to new friends and new experiences.

Be Flexible about Change

Life is always filled with changes, not just during divorce. Get comfortable with the unknowns ahead and accept that change is inevitable. While dark periods are tough to handle, realize they too will fall away and be replaced with better days and new relationships. Listen to your self-talk. Let go of limiting beliefs about yourself. When you catch yourself in doubt, fear or put-down language, become aware of that message and consciously refute it. I am a worthy parent. I can attract a new loving partner. I deserve to be happy in my relationships. My children love me and know how much I love them. Determine what you want to change about yourself from within and relax about controlling circumstances around you. When you come to accept the reality of changes in your life, you'll feel more at peace with yourself and those around you.

Life is all about choices and decisions. Use your divorce as a catalyst for positive change. Choose to be the person and parent you most want to be. Then watch how circumstances around you settle into place more harmoniously than you ever expected.

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