

Avoiding the “Blame Game”

By

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There is no escaping the trauma of divorce because both the grieving and the transitional process of separation can be overwhelming. But it is important to understand that when you are ending your marriage you have a choice about how you choose to respond to the circumstances and events that follow. It is your attitude that will determine whether or not you have a healthy divorce or become a victim of your separation.

To begin the recovery, it is important to be honest with yourself. Do you know the reasons why your marriage did not flourish? Can you be honest with yourself about your responsibility for some of the dynamics that led to the divorce? What regrets do you have throughout the course of your relationship? Knowing what you know today, would you approach your marriage differently now? Was your worst fear self-fulfilled? Were the issues and the problems that contributed to the divorce familiar to previous relationships or to your family of origin? Ask yourself these important questions, and look within for answers.

A sense of failure can often magnify the trauma of a divorce. No one likes to fail, so if you perceive your role as the victim, then the divorce is not your fault and you did not fail. The shadow side of our personalities can rationalize anything, but to emerge from a divorce as a healthier individual, you have to accept responsibility for your role in the demise of your partnership. Whether your role is conscious or unconscious, taking responsibility for your part in the dissolution of the marriage is imperative. Acceptance provides you with the opportunity to learn from your errors thus making it less likely that you will repeat these mistakes in your next relationship. This repetitive process is what Freud termed “Repetition Compulsion.”

Regrets are a normal part of life, but feeling guilty about the demise of your marriage will only compound your emotional chaos. Blaming your partner, and projecting your feelings and issues onto them is another common defense mechanism, but again will only result in escalating the problems. Avoid playing the “Blame Game” by examining your feelings during the grief process and identifying them as “sad”, “mad”, or “scared”. It is also important to stay away from the “Game Triangle” which means that you have accepted the role of victim, persecutor, or co-dependent rescuer. Remaining in the “Game Triangle” means you cannot begin the healing process

Playing the “Blame Game” will also make the divorce process more difficult for your children. You cannot place them in the middle of your separation because they must be allowed to experience their own grief process. They cannot be expected to take on your issues and should not have to worry if you are going to be okay. It is in the best interests

of your children if you can ensure that they see both parents deal with the divorce as mature adults and move forward with their lives.

Attitudes and beliefs about divorce have a profound impact on how we frame the process of separating. One of the functions of the brain is to provide a reality perspective. In psychological terms, this is referred to as a mental status and ego structure. It is important to remember that divorce is both an ending and a beginning and both realities must be accepted. Most people do not adequately deal with their divorce while they are going through it because they find a myriad of distractions to minimize their pain. Typical methods of escape include addictions, affairs, and/or losing yourself in work and family. While these may provide temporary relief from the trauma and grief, these distractions only serve to repress feelings into the sub-conscious. These repressed emotions can become toxic and drastically effect how we think, feel, and behave. The shadow side of our personality is stimulated by this negativity and thus causes more chaos and more drama. Repressed feelings resulting from a divorce will often resurface in our lives within 3 to 5 years. Old adages remind us that “The truth is not always perfect, but it is the truth” and “If you do not deal with it, it will deal with you.”

As you are going through this unpleasant time of your life, you must remind yourself that divorce can provide a genuine opportunity to really look in the mirror and create a new self awareness. This means knowing the healthy part of your being and also knowing your shadow side. Which one do you want talking to you in the future? Which one do you want teaching and scripting your children’s lives? Playing “Blame Game” will only prevent you from attaining the awareness that is vital for the process of healing to begin.

Because divorce is such a common social reality, there are many options available to assist you through the process. Gaining support from friends, family, divorce recovery groups, individual therapy, grief therapy, single’s support groups and self help books can all help you avoid the “Blame Game” and achieve a greater awareness that will aid you in your recovery from divorce and promise you a brighter tomorrow.