THE EIGHT STAGES OF SEPARATION*

Recovery from separation commonly involves eight necessary stages, identified below. The sequence of stages and duration of each may vary from person to person—some stages may be skipped entirely, others may be experienced more than once—but all are normal reactions to the stress of separation.

*Circle the number of each question for which you can answer "YES." Three or more circles indicate you may be experiencing that stage of recovery.*

1. **ACTIVE BLEEDING** (*2 months - 1 year duration*)
   1. Do you feel on the verge of tears a good deal of the time?
   2. Does seeing couples or families make you want to go home and cry?
   3. Do Sundays or dinner time make you particularly blue?
   4. Do you find yourself getting angry with someone in your family who has a happy marriage?
   5. Do you feel like a failure?
   6. Do you find yourself thinking, "If only I'd done _____, my marriage would have lasted"?
   7. Do you feel ashamed about the break-up?
   8. Do you find yourself not wanting to talk to people?
   9. Do you relive the marriage in your mind?
   10. Do you stay home because you feel you can't face the world?

2. **EUPHORIA** (*2 months duration*)
   1. Do you feel like everything is rosy?
   2. Do you feel that things that used to bother you don't?
   3. Do you walk around with a perpetual smile on your face?
   4. Are you experiencing a feeling similar to the one experienced when you were first in love?
   5. No matter what season it is, do you feel like it's the best season of the year?
   6. Do you feel that you don't have any problems?
   7. Do you feel that things will work out—someday, somehow?
   8. Do you feel you don't want to discuss your problems?
   9. Do you feel like you're on a high—perhaps walking a few inches off the ground?
   10. When advisors, such as your lawyer, talk to you, do you often feel they are being overly concerned, overly cautious, overly pessimistic?

3. **RUNNING** (*6-18 months duration*)
   1. Do you feel compelled to get out of the house several nights a week?
   2. Do you start to grow panicky when you're home alone, and the hour gets later and later?
   3. Do you find that, in the middle of going out again and again, you ask yourself, "Why am I doing all this?"
   4. Do you pick up on the smallest suggestion for a way to get out of the house?
   5. Do you find yourself exhausted much of the time?
   6. Do you try to fill up every hour of your day, every day?
   7. Do you find yourself unable to concentrate or read as you used to?
   8. Is your health run-down?
   9. Do you prefer a "brass band and a three-ring circus" to quiet evenings with friends?
   10. Do you feel that the more people around, the merrier?

4. **ALL WORK, NO PLAY** (*a few weeks - several years duration; generally experienced in lieu of Stages 2 & 3*)
   1. Do you feel life is grim?
   2. Do you feel your guidelines for living are set around work, school or parenthood alone?
   3. Do you have trouble telling people you're separated?
   4. Do you look down on the single lifestyle?
   5. Do you find you don't leave yourself time to play?
   6. Do you find you don't look forward to entertainment time?
   7. Do you find you don't look forward to dating?
   8. Do you have excuses for refusing invitations, or do you resist looking for leisure time activities?
5. POST-LOVE BLUES
(This stage—reaction to the end of the first affair following separation—is very similar to Active Bleeding, though often considered much more painful. It is important to recognize that first affairs can greatly facilitate the initial recovery process, but they rarely have the right elements for a lasting relationship. Examining the "reality quotient" of the affair can be very beneficial.)

6. YAHOO! (1-3 years duration; must follow one of the more extreme stages)
1. Do you feel in balance?
2. Do you have one or more goals to accomplish?
3. When you close your eyes, can you imagine there are a couple of little people behind you pushing you ever so lightly?
4. Do you feel life is worth living again?
5. Do you feel like a real grown-up person now?
6. Do you feel you can handle things pretty well?
7. Are your feet mostly planted on the ground?
8. Are you excited about things?
9. Are you enjoying a lot of new experiences?

7. POST-YAHOO BLUES (3 weeks - 3 months duration; recurs from time to time)
1. Do you feel restless?
2. Do you have a vague "down" feeling?
3. Are you listless?
4. Do you find yourself wondering what's wrong with you since things aren't too bad?
5. Do you feel vague disappointment or unhappiness?
6. Have you just finished accomplishing a major goal?
7. Do you find yourself enumerating your accomplishments over and over?

8. THE SEARCH FOR THE REAL ME (begins 4-7 years after separation).
This stage is a quieter time of self-acceptance, motivated by a desire for self-improvement. It provides a wonderful opportunity for growth, and charting the ways you have changed since you first separated can point to new roads to pursue.

*Excerpted from Living and Loving After Divorce, by Catherine Napolitane & Victoria Pellegrino
Divorce Support

• Discussion Meetings
• Expert Speakers
• Social Events

a community of others who understand

New Beginnings® is a nonprofit support group for men and women coping with separation and divorce. Established in 1979, we are the oldest and only group in the metro area that deals strictly with separation/divorce and is open to people with or without children.

Meetings are held in members' homes throughout the DC metro area (MD, DC, VA). Topics include issues specifically for people in the early stages of separation as well as issues pertaining to dating, new relationships and personal growth. All meetings are facilitated by a member volunteer trained to guide the discussion. There is never any pressure to talk.

Contact:
Carol Randolph, Executive Director
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Olney, MD 20832
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www.newbeginningsusa.org

NEW BEGINNINGS®

ELIGIBILITY:
• Physical separation from a spouse due to marital separation or divorce
• Former partner is not already a member

DUES:
Initial Membership (6 months) ——— $35
Initial Membership (1 year) ——— $59
Renewal (1 year) ——— $59
Initial/Renewal Membership (2 years) ——— $99

Meeting fees are $10.00 and include the cost of refreshments. Non-members may attend 2 discussion meetings without obligation to join.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION TOPICS:
The 8 Stages of Separation
Coping with Anger
Reconciliation: Hope or Hazard?
Achieving an Emotional Divorce
Harnessing Hope
Building New Social Networks
Beginning to Begin to Date
The Finances of Dating
Separation & the First Love
Communicating with the Opposite Sex
Trust & Risk in Relationships
Redefining Ourselves

“I can’t stop telling people about NB and encouraging them to join and get all the benefits I got during that first year. I’ll be grateful forever!”

“NB has been a lifesaver for me!”

NEW BEGINNINGS® is a 501(c)(3) organization which relies on membership dues and contributions for its support.
If You Are Separated . . .

Feel the feelings.
The only way around is through. As painful as the feelings may be, burying them will not make them go away. It is important to experience what they have to teach you.

Get professional help.
It's normal to be "crazy." A counselor can help you manage the "rollercoaster" of confusing emotions and the often overwhelming feelings of anger and sadness. Especially if there are children, a professional can offer guidance in helping your kids cope and in finding ways to work cooperatively with the other parent.

Join a support group.
Others who are "in the same boat" know exactly what it's like. By sharing their own experiences, they can offer emotional support and understanding as well as practical suggestions. You will know instantly that you are not alone.

Consult an attorney.
Even if you think the separation is only temporary, today it is your reality. You will be better prepared by learning the facts about your situation and the options available to you.

Tell friends and family how they can help.
What time of the day or week is worst for you? Is there a task that was your partner's responsibility that is now a problem? Friends and family members will be glad to know something specific that they can do.

Go slow.
Be kind to yourself. Use the time of separation to heal, to learn as much as possible about who you are and what you want.

And Remember . . .

Each person's journey is unique.
Even though circumstances may be similar, the path that one person takes can be very different from the path taken by another. Sometimes we take a few steps back, go around in circles or run into a deadend. Even these seeming wrong turns are essential to the process. Forgo judgment, forget what "should" be, and follow your path where it takes you.

It takes however long it takes to get wherever you're going.
Separation and divorce force you to remake your life. You can use the time as well to remake yourself. The destination is rarely visible at the beginning, when the future may loom as a huge black hole. Patience, compassion and a willingness to look at your own piece of the puzzle can help you move forward.

Helping a Friend or Family Member Through Divorce

an end is also a new beginning . . .

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a support group
for separated and divorced men and women

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301-924-4101
HELPING A FRIEND
OR FAMILY MEMBER
THROUGH DIVORCE

A marital separation is a time of turmoil for everyone involved. Regardless of the length of marriage, who left whom, whether or not there are children or how old they are, the separation signifies a rupture in the marital relationship. The family unit can never be the same. It is a time when those going through it need friends and family the most, but too often the support isn’t there.

Most likely, the absence of support is not because people don’t care but because they just don’t know what to do. Rather than say or do the wrong thing, they do nothing. The effect is to leave the separated person feeling even more isolated and bereft than s/he already does.

The ideas offered here were gathered from people who have been there. They represent things that people did for them that were especially meaningful or things that they wish had been done for them. This is only a sample of ways that you can help someone coping with separation or divorce. We invite your suggestions as well.

If You Know Someone Going Through Separation or Divorce...

Don’t try to figure out who is the “Good Guy” and who is the “Bad Guy.” Reasons can be complex, developing over a long period of time and rarely lend themselves to simplistic assumptions about who did what to whom. Therefore, you do not need to take sides. It is possible to remain friends with both partners, but many people find it too difficult to maintain confidentiality with both. If you are a family member, it is important to maintain a cordial relationship with both partners if children are involved.

Express your concern, just as you would about any other life event.

Because a separation involves what goes on between two people in an intimate relationship, friends and family members often feel it is none of their business. The details ARE none of their business, but the FACT of the separation is a major event in the person’s life and one that will consume much of his/her daily focus. Acknowledging it, rather than acting as if nothing has happened, will help the person feel less isolated.

Call or write periodically.

Even a message on an answering machine or a quick e-mail lets a person know that you’re thinking of him/her.

Continue to include the person in social gatherings, but don’t invite both partners to the same event.

Invite the person to share a meal, go to a movie or a ball game. Let him/her know that s/he is still someone you want to be around.

Give a hug.

Direct human contact is a great comfort—perhaps even a necessity, according to some experts.

Offer to go with the person to an attorney.

Sometimes having someone accompany him/her is all that’s needed to help someone take a necessary practical step. Depending on your relationship, you might offer to sit in and take notes.

Listen. Listen. Listen some more.

Try not to judge, and squelch the need to fix it (because you can’t). Talking about the separation—even if it’s the same theme over and over—helps the person process it.

New Beginnings® is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, serving the DC metro area since 1979
Resources

Here are some books that are recommended reading. Purchasing through Amazon.com by using the links below will benefit New Beginnings.

DIVORCE RECOVERY BOOKS

- **Getting Past Your Breakup: How to Turn a Devastating Loss into the Best Thing That Ever Happened to You**
  - Susan J. Elliott JD MEd (Author)
  - A proven roadmap for overcoming the painful end of any romantic relationship, even divorce.

- **He's History, You're Not: Surviving Divorce After 40**
  - Erica Manfred (Author)
  - Erica Manfred shares her own divorce experience, as well as the advice of experts, with specific sections tailored to women in their 40s, 50s, and 60s.

- **Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends, 3rd Edition**
  - Bruce Fisher (Author)
  - Bruce Fisher's divorce process rebuilding blocks offer a proven, supportive nineteen-step process for putting one's life back together after divorce.

- **Crazy Time: Surviving Divorce and Building a New Life, Revised Edition**
  - Abigail Trafford (Author)
  - A common-sense, compassionate, human book about the crazy process that more than half of us go through.

- **Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working through Grief**
  - Martha Whitmore Hickman (Author)
  - For those who have suffered the loss of a loved one, here are strength and thoughtful words to inspire and comfort.

- **How to Survive the Loss of a Love**
  - Peter McWilliams (Author), Harold H. Bloomfield (Author), Melba Colgrove (Author)
  - One of the most directly helpful books on the subject of loss ever written, the first edition of this comforting and inspiring book, published in 1976, sold nearly two million copies.

- **I Thought We Were Happy: Lessons My Wife Taught Me on the Road to Divorce**
  - Jonathan L Lewis (Author)
  - This book bares wide the pain and confusion that an unexpected divorce unleashes. If you've been through it, you'll relate completely.
The Journey from Abandonment to Healing: Turn the End of a Relationship into the Beginning of a New Life
Susan Anderson (Author)
Designed to help all victims of emotional breakups—whether they are suffering from a recent loss, or a lingering wound from the past; whether they are caught up in patterns that sabotage their own relationships, or they’re in a relationship where they no longer feel loved.

Chicken Soup for the Soul: Divorce and Recovery: 101 Stories about Surviving and Thriving after Divorce
Jack Canfield (Author), Mark Victor Hansen (Author), Patty Hansen (Author)
The heartfelt stories provide support, inspiration, and sometimes humor on all the phases of divorce. New Beginnings Founder Carol Randolph appears in this book.

Divorce After 50: Your Guide to the Unique Legal & Financial Challenges
Janice Green (Author)
Matrimonial lawyer Green explores the special legal, monetary, and emotional burdens of a marital split that occurs after age 50.

Marital Separation
Robert S. Weiss (Author)
A compelling account of the personal experiences of those whose marriages have ended.
Useful websites:

http://www.newbeginningsusa.org/

A support group for separated and divorced men and women in MD, DC and VA

www.solomindistry.net

Website for Solo Flight, an Episcopal conference and annual retreat for singles, never married, widowed or divorced.

http://www.smartmarriages.com

Coalition for marriage, family and couples education

www.prepinc.com

Divorce prevention and marriage enhancement program
PEOPLE COME INTO YOUR LIFE FOR A REASON...

People come into your life for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. When you figure out which it is, you know exactly what to do.

When someone is in your life for a REASON, it is usually to meet a need you have expressed outwardly or inwardly.

They have come to assist you through a difficulty, to provide you with a guidance and support, to aid you physically, emotionally or spiritually.

They may seem like a godsend, and they are. They are there for the reason you need them to be.

Then, without any wrongdoing on your part or at an inconvenient time, this person will say or do something to bring the relationship to an end.

Sometimes they die. Sometimes they walk away.

Sometimes they act up or out and force you to take a stand.

What we must realize is that our need has been met, our desire fulfilled; their work is done.

The prayer you sent up has been answered and it is now time to move on.

When people come into your life for a SEASON, it is because your turn has come to share, grow, or learn.

They may bring you an experience of peace or make you laugh.

They may teach you something you have never done.

They usually give you an unbelievable amount of joy. Believe it! It is real!

But, only for a season.

LIFETIME relationships teach you lifetime lessons; those things you must build upon in order to have a solid emotional foundation.

Your job is to accept the lesson, love the person/people (anyway); and put what you have learned to use in all other relationships and areas of your life.

It is said that love is blind but friendship is clairvoyant.

Thank you for being a part of my life...
PRAYER:

May today there be peace within you.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing that you are a child of God.

Let His presence settle into your bones and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, and to bask in the sun.

It is there for each and every one of you.

God Bless.
How Surely Gravity's Law

How surely gravity's law,
strong as an ocean current,
takes hold of the smallest thing
and pulls it toward the heart of the world.

Each thing---
each stone, blossom, child---
is held in place.
Only we, in our arrogance,
push out beyond what we each belong to
for some empty freedom.

If we surrendered
to earth's intelligence
we could rise up rooted, like trees.

Instead we entangle ourselves
in knots of our own making
and struggle, lonely and confused.

So like children, we begin again
to learn from the things,
because they are in God's heart;
they have never left him.

This is what the things can teach us:
to fall,
patiently to trust our heaviness.
Even a bird has to do that
before he can fly.

From Rilke's Book of Hours
(as translated by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy)