



FACING THE CHALLENGES OF DIVORCE

PRESENTED BY MILITARY & FAMILY LIFE COUNSELORS

AGENDA

- **Definitions and Causes**
- **Reality of Divorce**
- **Ways to Cope**
- **Responsibilities**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Children and Divorce**
- **Tips, Hints and Help**



LEGAL DEFINITION OF DIVORCE

**The termination of marriage by legal action.
The division of property, child custody and
support, alimony, child visitation and
attorney's fees.**

“Law.com dictionary”



WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF DIVORCE

- Divorce is one of the most stressful and challenging events a person can experience in their life.
- It is not a single event but a series of transitions and family reorganizations.
- Brings change that are emotional, economic, involve family relationships, standard of living, possible change of residence and extended family.



COMMON CAUSES OF DIVORCE

- Infidelity
- Financial problems
- Poor communication
- Lack of commitment in the marriage



COMMON CAUSES OF DIVORCE

CONTINUED

- Failed expectations or unmet needs
- Addiction or substance abuse
- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- Incompatible intimacy
- Military lifestyle and deployment issues



REALITIES OF DIVORCE

CONTINUED

The experience of divorce is individual but the following realities are common:

- Legal
- Relational
- Financial
- Parental
- Physical
- Emotional
- Spiritual/Religious
- Mental



COMMON PHYSICAL ISSUES

- Weight loss or gain
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Upset stomach or digestive problems
- Fatigue
- Sleeping Problems



COMMON EMOTIONAL ISSUES

- Shock and denial
- Anger and rage
- Sorrow and despair
- Fear and anxiety
- Guilt and shame
- Sadness, loneliness and feeling empty
- Relief and/or acceptance



COMMON FEELINGS

- Numbness: the sense that none of this is real, not having an emotional reaction
- Expecting your “ex” to come back
- Sense of anger and/or injustice
- Feelings of emptiness, loneliness, or despair
- Lack of focus or trouble concentrating



SPIRITUAL & RELIGIOUS IMPACTS

This is a personal road that each individual may want to explore. Spiritual and religious questioning is common.



COMMON MENTAL IMPACTS

- Changes in your view of the world
- Mistrust of self and others
- Fear of abandonment and rejection
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of focus or trouble concentration
- Feeling dazed and confused



LEGAL IMPACTS

The dissolution of marriage by the courts:

- Allows individuals to legally remarry
- Is NOT a problem solver
- May cause or increase anger, hurt and bitterness
- Can create chaos in the family system



RELATIONAL IMPACTS

- Mutual friends may pick sides
- Making new friends
- Dating
- Possible loss of spouse's family
- Custody issues



COMMON FINANCIAL IMPACTS

- What once supported one household, must now support two separate households
- Usually a decline in finances for everyone
- Stay-at-home spouses may have to return to work
- New family dynamics are created



COMMON PARENTAL IMPACTS

- Shared duties are now primarily on parent's responsibility
- Managing children's emotions
- Communication between parents can become strained



COPING WITH THE REALITIES OF DIVORCE

- Productive and healthy ways of coping with loss, pain and stress
- Non-productive ways in which to cope with loss, pain and stress



RESPONSIBILITIES

- Assume responsibility for your present situation
- Live one day at a time
- Make healthy choices for you and your children
- Seek help and realize that sometimes you will need assistance
- Learn how to focus when decisions need to be made and be able to separate your feelings from the facts



FORGIVENESS

- The difficult part of forgiveness
- The myths of forgiveness
- Benefits of forgiveness



ISSUES WITH THE INABILITY TO FORGIVE

- May lead to bitterness and hatred
- Can create broken relationships
- Possibly prolongs the pain
- Possible health issues
- People around you may suffer



PROCESS & SIGNS OF FORGIVENESS

- Reflecting on what might have gone wrong in the marriage, to forgive both yourself and your partner
- We hurt, hate and keep hating or we forgive
- Not telling people what that person did to us



TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT THE DIVORCE

- Share what you feel comfortable sharing and nothing more
- Be careful about what you say about your “ex”
- Find a way to express difficult feelings privately



TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT THE DIVORCE

CONTINUED

- Don't ask friends to give you reports on the activities of your "ex" or to carry messages
- Avoid making your divorce the focus of every conversation
- Talk with trusted friends or relatives who have been through it



CHILDREN & DIVORCE

“Sometimes divorce is good. Sometimes divorce is bad.
But the thing it always does it cause your life to change.”

--15 year-old boy of divorce

- Divorce means change in the lives of children
- Children adapt more easily when they have an idea about what is happening
- When the divorce is undertaken impulsively, pursued in anger or guilt the child’s capacity to cope is severely compromised
- Let children be children
- Be cautious of alienating the child from either parent and/or relatives



CHILDREN & DIVORCE

CONTINUED

- Jointly tell them about your decision to separate/divorce
- Don't substitute gifts for time and attention
- Refrain from using your children as messengers between parents
- Support relationships with both extended families



CHILDREN & DIVORCE

CONTINUED

- Allow your child to communicate openly
- Offer your child choices, when possible, to increase their sense of power over their lives
- Find additional help for your child if needed



COMMON REACTIONS FROM CHILDREN

- Denial, withdrawal and silence
- Fear of abandonment and losing their identity
- Anger and/or aggression
- Acting out
- Increased emotional need
- Possible regression in school and behavioral changes



COMMON REACTIONS FROM CHILDREN

CONTINUED

- Sexual promiscuity in teenagers
- Conflicts of loyalty toward parents
- Panic and confusion
- Physical distress
- Guilt
- Relief (with some children it can be a relief to be free of chaos)



DO'S & DON'TS

- Don't argue with your spouse in front of the children
- Don't discuss your spouse's negative behavior with your children
- Have polite interactions with your spouse in front of your children
- Choose to focus on the strengths of all family members



JUST LIKE...

...other life crisis and losses, divorce is a major loss and needs to be grieved.



COPING TIPS

- Allow yourself time to grieve
- Think about what helped with other losses
- Let friends and family know how they can help
- Take care of yourself
- Look for healthy ways to express your feelings



COPING TIPS

- Follow your own emotional timetable
- Join a support group if needed
- Make major changes slowly
- Talk!



IF IT'S MORE THAN NORMAL GRIEF

If you believe that your grief is adversely affecting your life and activities, you may need to seek outside help from:

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Behavioral Health Services



COPING WITH THE LOSS OR GRIEF...

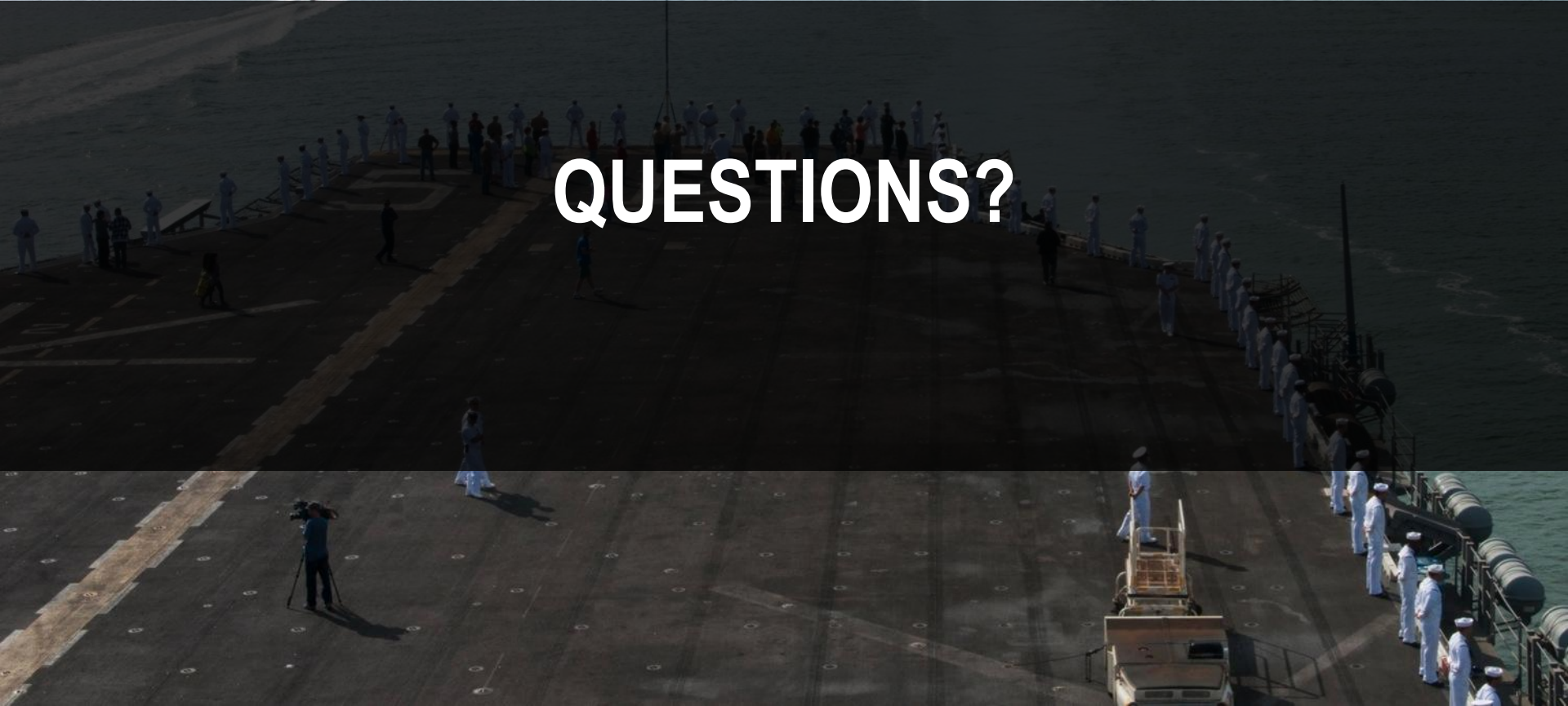
...that often follow a divorce or separation can be one of the hardest things you'll ever do.

But if you allow yourself to grieve and learn ways to cope during this difficult period, you can begin to move forward.





QUESTIONS?



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THANK YOU