

# Marriage & Family

## Adjusting to Divorce

Although individuals are different, most adults need two or three years to adapt to the changes separation and divorce bring. People who also encounter problems such as job loss or illness during this period need additional time for adjustment. These three basic tasks aid one going through a divorce:

1. Accepting the divorce.
  - a. Individuals must accept that the marriage is over and establish an identity that is not tied to their former spouse. For this to occur, the individual must be convinced that there is no use investing further in this relationship.
  - b. Former spouses must make peace with each other. This involves realizing that continued nastiness only creates more nastiness in return. Often this realization creates a more balanced view of the relationship. An individual able to forgive the former spouse for the marriage's end is able to appreciate what is good about that person.
  - c. Individuals also must recognize their part in the breakup. They must stop blaming their former spouses and examine honestly their own role in the relationship. Such self-examination includes:
    - Remembering the reasons for originally choosing the mate and making necessary revisions in expectations for any future mates.
    - Accepting individual contributions to the destructive patterns of behavior within the marriage so that these patterns are not repeated in future relationships.
    - Exploring how individual experiences growing up may play a role in marital struggles.
2. Balancing being a single person and a single parent. Individuals must establish sources of support for each of these roles. They need to begin feeling competent as a single person and as a single parent.
3. Establishing future-oriented instead of past-oriented goals.
  - a. People who are adjusting well are ready to move on. They begin to have new hobbies or leisure activities.
  - b. In contrast, those not ready to move on may need more time to mourn the loss of a spouse. These individuals may not have exhausted their efforts to rekindle the relationship. They may not realize that the relationship is over.