



BOUNCING BACK – Secrets of Moving On After a Divorce

By FRANK GAUNT

At Agreement House™ we take seriously our company motto: “Leading you to a more agreeable future.”™ In this article, one of our mediators, Frank Gaunt, takes a look at the attitudes that distinguish between the people who bounce back from a painful divorce and those who bog down in despair.

In our divorce mediation practice at Agreement House, we work with many people who are taking an unwanted ride on the emotional roller coaster -- fear, hurt, anger, and loss of control. And right then, a time of such significant upheaval, you are faced with the task of making decisions that will shape your long-term future. So, how are you going to make the best of a bad situation? This article will focus on how to avoid pitfalls and to apply practical solutions so that you can get to a healthy and productive future.

It is common for people experiencing divorce to become overwhelmed by negative emotions. If you allow these feelings to dominate your existence, it is easy to fall into the role of victim, revenge-seeker, or controller. These roles are by no means mutually exclusive, and elements of all of these roles can be present in an individual. Here are three unproductive roles and three quotes that serve as an antidote to their thinking.

The victim sees him/herself as being taken advantage of and assuming that the same will happen to them in the future. They view their world as being out of control and they lack the ability to impact their situation now or in the future. Pity becomes a way of life. They abdicate responsibility for their future to other people or to the forces of nature.

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” Eleanor Roosevelt

The revenge-seeker views the divorce process as an opportunity to win or get even. “I was wronged and now it is time to right the wrong”. Payback becomes a primary motivator. Reason flies out the window and is replaced by the urge to take the other person to the cleaners.

“There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness.” Josh Billings

The controller sees the divorce as a loss of control of much of their existence. Therefore, they have the need to take extreme measures to exert control wherever

possible. This can take the form of one spouse accusing the other of being a bad parent and attempting to limit access to the children when in fact they know the other person has been a good parent. They often convince themselves that they are acting nobly.

“The best day of your life is the one on which decide your life is your own. The gift is your alone – it is an amazing journey and you along are responsible for the quality of it. This is the day your life really begins.” Bob Moawad

It is important to understand that negative emotions are a normal and healthy part of what you experience when going through a divorce. Don't try to pretend that these feelings don't exist. Instead, understand and accept these feelings for what they are. Many people seek counseling to help themselves work through the difficulties that divorce presents (advisable in many instances). You can productively utilize the energy created from these strong feelings if you channel the energy properly. While acknowledging and trying to learn from the past, it is important to focus on the future. It is no longer about what went wrong with the marriage, but rather how you will begin the process of creating a strong and healthy future.

The most critical component of maintaining, gaining, or restoring a positive sense of oneself is to have a foundation of integrity. By that I mean that you have a strong and abiding sense of self-respect based on acting in an ethical manner in all aspects of your life.

In the divorce process, there are a number of questions you can ask yourself as a check on whether you are acting with a sense of integrity:

Am I being fair?

Am I conveying the expectation that I should be treated fairly?

Did I balance my needs with the needs of others?

Did I maintain the “high road” despite how anyone else has acted?

Several years from now, will I be able to look back on how I acted and be proud of myself?

In summary, the best way to survive divorce is to use the process to establish the building blocks for a bright future for yourself.

One of the reasons we believe strongly in a mediated divorce versus one that resorts to going to court is that the two parties retain a sense of control. This creates the environment where both parties can move more readily into the positive attitudes described above. For more information on mediated divorce, call 480-496-2201 or visit AgreementHouse.com.

