

FACTORS LEADING TO DIVORCE

The most common cause of divorce is selfishness. It may be the selfishness of not spending time with one's spouse or children. It may be selfishness with money. It may be that a spouse is too selfish to have children, too selfish to care, too selfish to work, too selfish to nurture a spouse or too selfish to apologize. It may be shown in the actions of one spouse dominating the other or in refusing to share in the rearing of the children. Selfishness may be shown by one's spouse refusing to acknowledge the needs of her/his spouse, or to appreciate his/her contribution to the marriage. Lack of communication with a spouse is selfishness because a partner refuses to unveil his/her feelings to his/her spouse. Sexual infidelity is selfish self-satisfaction without regard for the feelings of the other spouse.

Other causes may be changing value systems, physical or emotional abuse, and irreconcilable religious differences. Alcohol and substance abuse are the cause of many marriages dissolving, as are physical and extreme mental abuse or severe mental illness.

Possible discussion questions:

1. What type of selfishness contributor to divorce?
 - Finances
 - Substance abuse
 - Sexual infidelity or sexual orientation
 - Children
 - Selfishness
2. Are there valid reasons for ending a marriage?
3. What can be done when a spouse finds him/herself being treated selfishly?
4. Can a person tell when her/his actions are selfish and are harming a marriage?
5. How are society's standards changing concerning marriage and divorce?

Divide the class into small groups and discuss the following case studies. Have each group identify the problem(s) and devise solutions on how to resolve them.

CASE 1

John was the youngest attorney in his law firm. He had been given increased responsibilities and wanted to prove to his senior law partners that he was the perfect partner for the firm. He frequently left for work before his children were awake and worked late hours every evening. When he was home, he often had a briefcase full of papers he needed to review. He told his wife to go to bed without him when he still needed to finish briefs for the next day. It seemed there was never enough time. His wife, Sharon, felt lonely and resentful that he rarely had time for her or the children. She had lately confided to her friends that her marriage was not worth saving. Why be married to someone she rarely saw?

CASE 2

Ned worked full-time as a teacher. In order to make ends meet, he also moonlighted four nights a week as a chef in a local restaurant. It seemed that no matter how hard he tried to earn enough money, there was always something more the family needed. His wife, Ruth, did not work outside the home, and occupied her time caring for their three children. Ruth felt resentful that Ned did not seem to be able to get all the yard work done and never sat down to read to the children at night. She complained constantly that his work did not pay enough, and told her husband that she wished he had gone into a different line of work that paid more. Ned felt unappreciated and found himself not wanting to come home right after work. He would rather visit with friends who understood him or go fishing.

CASE 3

Susan had five children under the age of eight. Three were still preschoolers. Her days consisted of doing laundry, cleaning, picking up toys and clothes, taking the children to medical appointments, and cooking meals. She was exhausted at the end of the day, and felt angry when her husband had plans after work and on weekends with his buddies. She tried not to complain but found herself wondering why all the child care was left up to her. Wasn't he their father? She was so tired that she went to bed about 10:00 each night. Her husband did not like the fact that she was too tired to spend the evening with him. He felt she should be anxious to talk and relax with him. It seemed that other wives were more responsive and that he deserved better from his wife.

CASE 4

Chris was thirty-four and had a career as a banker. His wife, Jill, was thirty-six and worked full-time as a newspaper editor. They both had good incomes and earned enough money to travel and buy the things they wanted. Now that Chris was secure in his position at work, he wanted to direct his attention to having a family. He and Jill had decided when they married that they wanted three children and now seemed the best time for them to support children. However, Jill was having second thoughts about having children. Her work demanded her full attention and on weekends she liked to entertain guests and go sailing. The more she thought about children, the more she felt that they would hamper her free time and ability to do what she wanted. She tried to explain her thoughts to Chris but it always ended in an argument. He thought he should have married someone else who would give him children. He wanted a divorce.