

PERSONAL PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH DIVORCE

No one ever escapes from a divorce unscathed. He or she is permanently harmed. The hopes and dreams shared with a mate are shattered and are replaced with feelings of rejection, insecurity, and loss of self-esteem.

In *The Case Against Divorce*, Dr. Medved lists the major arguments against divorce.

1. Divorce hurts you. Divorce brings out selfishness, hostility, and vindictiveness. It ruins your idealism about marriage. It leaves emotional scars from which you can never be free. It costs a great deal of money and significantly reduces your standard of living.
2. Divorce hurts those around you. It devastates your children for at least two years and probably for life. It hurts your family by splitting it in two; both family and friends are compelled to take sides. It forces you to be hardened against people you once loved. It rips the fabric of our society, each divorce providing another example of marriage devalued.
3. The single life is not what it is cracked up to be. Ask anyone—the swinging singles life is full of frustration, rejection, and disappointment. The Mr. or Mrs. Right you assume waits for you may be only a futile fantasy. Even a successful affair that bridges you from one marriage to another often becomes merely a second failure.
4. Staying married is better for you. You do not have to disrupt your life for two to seven years; instead, solving marital problems provides a sense of teamwork and stands as a concrete accomplishment that enhances problem solving skills in the larger world. Marriage is statistically proven to be the best status for your health; divorce the worst. Marriage gives you something to show for your time on earth—children (usually) and a bond built on continuity and history.

The “Social Readjustment Rating Scale,” which lists the life events most shattering to one’s equilibrium, shows marital separation and divorce as the second and third most stressful situations (after the death of a spouse) that anyone can experience.

Divorce also takes a toll on a person’s health. Divorced people have more illness, more premature deaths, higher suicide rates, and more accidents than those who are married.

Emotionally, when we divorce we learn to doubt that any relationship can be permanent. We go into future relationships with a handicap, believing somewhere deep down inside that it may not work, either. We feel jaded and suspicious. We learn that even though our former mate pledged his/her undying love for us, that it was be reversed and changed. In future relationships we become guarded and unable to believe that things will really be lasting.

The children affected by divorce have their own set of problems with which to deal. They fear that something they did caused the divorce and feel rejected and abandoned. Children worry

about finances and whether or not they will be able to live in the comfortable surroundings to which they are accustomed. Pressures of divided loyalties between parents are very real; children wonder about whom they should live with, where they will spend weekends and holidays, and whether they will ever see their non-custodial parent. Associations with grandparents and other extended family are often stifled or terminated, causing more feelings of worry and uncertainty. Young children hold onto the belief that their parents will someday remarry and have fantasies of being a matchmaker to help their parents get back together. In the long term, children have a deep-seated fear that love will not last for them, that marriage will last only as long as either partner wants it to.

On the positive side, children who have witnessed severe abuse and neglect or chemical dependency may find it a relief to have the offending parent leave. They can be spared future insecurity and fear in their own home and may come to find more peace and security than they previously had. A major determiner of the adjustment of a child is the healthy adjustment shown by the custodial parent. If the parent releases her/his anger and bitterness, the child will have an easier time coping with life after divorce.