



Taking Care of Yourself After a Divorce

Going through a divorce usually means you've experienced a lot of loss and change which is often disorienting (in the least) for anyone. Often, there hasn't been enough time between major changes to get your emotional bearings before another change hits.

It is common to feel like you're "losing it." That feeling means that you, being *human*, have had a series of difficult, emotionally-draining challenges to handle. The human element is pointed out here because there's often no way to effectively manage these situations without feeling emotionally out of balance in some way. A common instinctive response to that imbalance is to distance oneself from feeling anything (going "numb") or to stuff the feelings deep inside. These are common coping mechanisms we all use, but they're often not effective.

Instead, we advise finding various ways to express and release what you've been bottling up for so long. Regular physical exercise and completing physically exertive projects are very helpful. Writing about what you've been through is another way to express what you think and feel in a private way. Talking with a trusted friend can help you gain a different perspective as well as aid in "getting it all out". Attending Al-Anon meetings (850-224-2294), for families and friends of substance abusers, can be another resource for those whose relationships involved substance abuse. You can meet others who empathize with what you've been through, which may help you gain perspective on your own actions and reactions. Focusing on self-care is also important. Make time to do things you enjoy or find relaxing on a regular basis to counter the difficulties you've experienced along with the usual stresses of day to day living.

We offer two caveats: 1) Alcohol is a depressant, and can contribute to feeling emotionally out of sorts without you realizing it. Having a glass of wine or beer is commonly associated with relaxation or a night out. If you drink alcohol, be sure that you're doing so *with moderation*. 2) If you try our suggestions or other ways of expressing yourself and continue to struggle, we suggest getting input from a counselor. Even if you are "not much for therapy", counseling with the right therapist could help you achieve clarity and emotional balance in a supportive, confidential way. Seeing a therapist does not mean you were weak or deficient in some way, it is simply using the resources available to you.

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