

Now You Are Divorced, What's Next?

Podcast # 10 of 10

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How are you going to move on? The entry of the Judgment of Divorce in and of itself is not going to improve your life. The divorce simply changes your legal status from being married to being separate. What you do as a result of the change of status is now up to you.

Many years ago, the book *Passages* by Gail Sheehy defined life as being a continuing process of going through passages from one stage or "box" to another.

Such passages occur, for example, when we graduate from high school, leave our friends and go through a passage which now leads us to college. That "passage" can be frightening; the person going through it often feels that they simply cannot continue without their lifelong friends and familiar high school environment.

By analogy, the same thing and the same thoughts occur when you must go from having been married to now being divorced. As you move into the new status of being single, you should analyze honestly and carefully who you are, what you want to do and what you need to make your life complete. We are not psychologists or mental health professionals and we have no expertise in those areas.

However, we, regretfully, see many clients struggle with getting through the "passage" leading them from a married to a single life. However, it is fully within your control to decide what and how you want your new life to be. For example, how do you want to relate to your now ex-spouse. If you have children, it is inevitable that you will have to relate to them. How and under what boundaries do you want to govern those relationships. Correspondingly, what do you expect of your children (even adult children) with regard to your ex-spouse and your respective continued relationship in their lives. It is not fair to your children, whatever their age, to leave them to guess as to your expectations and to establish the ground rules which you and your spouse yourselves have re-established.

With younger children, it is extremely important that you discuss with them and give them guidance and direction as to how they should relate and feel about yourself, your ex-spouse and their respective times with each of you.

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Inevitably, as life goes on, there will be new third persons in your respective lives. Discuss with them and with your children how you expect your children to relate to them and them to your children. Are they to be given the authority to discipline your children, what names do you wish to use, how do you expect them to begin developing a meaningful role in your child's life.

You may have to face the question as to whether or not you wish to return to work. In some instances, it is a financial necessity that a divorced person return to work. In others, it is of significant social benefit that a person have employment responsibility, co-workers and a work or professional life that gives them new growth and opportunities.

You should consider where you want to live. Is the area in which you lived as a married couple still conducive to your new lifestyle and desires? Are there areas that are less expensive, where the taxes are less or are more financially or socially friendly?

In short, you must now think creatively to create for yourself a new life and new opportunities which will bring you the happiness and fulfillment which you had hoped to obtain but did not during your marriage.



Robert J. Durst II is Chair of the Divorce Group of Stark & Stark and is certified by the New Jersey Supreme Court as a Matrimonial Attorney and by the National Board of Trial Advocacy as a Civil Trial Attorney.

Mr. Durst is a frequent lecturer on Family Law topics, was a Co-Founder of the New Jersey Summer Family Law Institute and is currently the Co Director of the American Trial Lawyers annual Boardwalk Seminar on Family Law. His leading lectures include a nationally known presentation on the distribution of stock options, the use and distribution of life insurance, and an original series on evidence in divorce cases.