

## Introduction



How you manage your divorce will be the most influential event you will go through for the rest of your life. This statement is so true that it is worth repeating: *How you manage your divorce will be the most influential event you will go through for the rest of your life.*

If you find this hard to believe or think that once the divorce is finalized you can simply “put it behind you,” then reflect on some of the people you know who have gone through a divorce. How does the divorce affect them to this day? When the ex-husband or ex-wife is mentioned, is it with understanding or with bitterness? Or is the mention of the ex-spouse’s name avoided all together? If they see one another at a social event is the situation comfortable or filled with tension and hostility? How do they reflect on that time in their lives? How do they talk about their past spouse? If they did not handle the divorce properly, then chances are these situations are filled with hurt, resentment and anger.

When a child is part of the family, how you manage your divorce is all the more critical. While you will have the emotional maturity to eventually move on from the pain and put it behind you, the pain a child feels during a divorce can be much more enduring

and can potentially have a more harmful effect. During this time, your child will look to you for guidance and support on how to behave, on what to think, and how to interpret events. If you do not handle the situation properly, your reactions could have a long term and very hurtful emotional impact on your child. Therefore, you must determine how you will handle situations before they occur so that you can respond in the most appropriate and helpful manner to both you and to your child.

Your ex-husband or ex-wife will be part of your life forever. They will be there for all of the important occasions in your child's life: birthdays, holidays, recitals, sports, graduations, weddings, the birth of their children...and your grandchildren. These occasions can be joyous - as they should be - or they can be ruined by dislike and mistrust. More importantly, if the divorce has been handled poorly you will be taking away from the happiness and joy of these events for your child because they will always be aware of the tension that exists between their parents.

No one else in the world will ever be your child's father or mother. There is a good chance no one will ever care more about your child than their own father and mother. Only you two have that in common. The two of you can share joys and sorrows and understand your child in a way that no one else can. This can be a great comfort and support in life.

The relationship you have with your ex-spouse from this point on will directly determine the amount of bitterness or happiness you experience in your life. For that reason, how you manage your

divorce will be the most influential event you will have to go through for the rest of your life.

It is up to you.

Now this may seem like a daunting, if not impossible task given the tremendous emotions that accompany a divorce. Therefore, while it is the most influential event in your life, it will likely also be one of the most challenging. It will take time. This is not something that can be resolved overnight. But there is a proper way to handle the situation.

It is neither impossible nor complicated to create a successful relationship even though the marriage did not work. This can be done with or without the agreement of the other person. The key is to your being willing to take full responsibility for your situation. Regardless of why the marriage may have ended or who is at fault, you must now be able to step out of the unfortunate situation you are in and work to make it better - hopefully much better. It is entirely up to you to make this transitional time go right.

This includes knowing what to do and what not to do. There are guidelines which if understood and consistently followed can help you develop a working relationship with your ex-spouse that is oriented towards the future. The guidelines are workable and effective but you must work at applying them. They will not come naturally simply because you have read them once. Remember the old saying, "If you don't succeed the first time, try, try again."

This is certainly a case where this is appropriate and should be applied.

But most importantly, it comes back to taking responsibility for the situation you are in and understanding that you alone have the ability to create a healthy and successful upbringing for your child. It is up to you.

With this understanding, let us begin.