



"Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it turned into a butterfly."

From Caterpillar to Butterfly

Free E Book

Your personal guide to overcoming your breakup and changing your life (spreading your wings) successfully.

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Forewords

Welcome to your journey towards changing your life.

A Divorce is NOT a breakup point in your life, but a change of direction.

My name is Nadia, I am a certified counsellor, divorced, a single mom of 2 teenage boys and I am the founder of SADSA | The South African Divorce Support Association.

A few years ago I was a parent facing divorce. I experienced the emotional roller-coaster that seems to be an inevitable part of the process -- including fear, anger, resentment, stress, relief, anxiety, sadness and, of course, the inevitable guilt.

Separation is never easy, especially when there are children involved.

No matter what you may think about divorce. No matter what you may feel about divorce. No matter what your situation or experience, life will change for you and your children.

However, **how it changes, is up to you.** But how well do you think you are prepared to deal with change? Sometimes, we are simply not well equipped to deal with it and if the changes were easy, you'd have done it by now.

Divorce has become a norm and its process is no longer unmapped. You can now be better prepared for what lies ahead. If you understand the emotional process of a divorce and know what to expect, the upcoming months and years will be considerably less stressful.

At the time of my divorce I had just started studying for a diploma in counselling and communication. Having just picked up studying again in my early forties while going through a divorce after a 20 year relationship was indeed a great challenge, yet if it hadn't been for the studying I believe my recovery would have been a lot more strenuous.

What made the difference was what I was studying. My counselling diploma included subjects such as mental health issues, self-esteem, conflict and anger management amongst others and this brought me insight into my emotions. Some days I would arrive to class feeling so low and then just opening the chapter of the day gave me such "aha" moments that I would go home with a renewed energy and hope for the future.

In this book, I'm going to take you through some insightful steps which will hopefully take you to a new level and equip you with the skills to embrace your new journey.

If you are prepared to follow the advice in this "eBook", you will overcome the difficulties encountered by your breakup and create a better life for yourself.

You may need to consider changing your current habits and look at creating new ones. But by committing to making one small improvement each day you can make all the difference. If you seriously want to explore new opportunities and are ready to work at it, then we can start to get you on the path to a happy and successful life and be confident to unfold your wings.

Chapter 1

A divorce/breakup is possibly one of the most stressful events in one's life. It is also painful but it is the end of one part of your life and the beginning of another. Like the caterpillar, divorce changes us but it can be for the best and we can grow from this experience and live a happy, fulfilled life again.

It is easy to become emotionally distraught and overwhelmed during this time and we are often held back by our inability to "let go". Without the ability to let go we cannot move forward in life in an effective way.

● ● ●
**Letting go is having
the courage to accept
change.**

● ● ● Facing change is not easy because, as human beings, we like what is familiar, even if familiarity does not contribute to our happiness. We fear the unknown and to take a step towards change means taking responsibility, with the thought that we may not succeed. With this approach, change is therefore more a threat to our wellbeing than a step towards new opportunities.

It is important to keep an open mind and to have confidence in the future while we gradually move towards acceptance of the loss and embrace the change.

● ● ●
**Staying in control is
exactly what you need
to do.**

● ● ●
To stay in control you need to be aware of the various stages that you are in and will be going through. An awareness of the stages of grief can help you deal with the feelings that inevitably accompany loss. Becoming aware allows us to effect change.

“What we ponder and what we think about sets the course of our life.

Any day we wish; we can discipline ourselves to change it all.

Any day we wish, we can open the book that will open our mind to new knowledge.

Any day we wish, we can start a new activity.

Any day we wish, we can start the process of life change.

We can do it immediately, or next week, or next month, or next year.

We can also do nothing. We can pretend rather than perform. And if the idea of having to change ourselves makes us uncomfortable, we can remain as we are.

We can choose rest over labour, entertainment over education, delusion over truth, and doubt over confidence.

The choices are ours to make. But while we curse the effect, we continue to nourish the cause.

As Shakespeare uniquely observed:

“The fault is not in the stars, but in ourselves.”

We created our circumstances by our past choices.

We have both the ability and the responsibility to make better choices beginning today.”

Jim Rohn

Chapter 2

Several years ago Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross wrote extensively about the Stages of Grief one goes through when mourning the death of a loved one. They are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Whether divorcing or breaking up, you will both go through the same stages of grief in mourning the “death” of your relationship. Being aware of these stages can be reassuring, and help you view your emotional healing as being part of a normal, human process. However, it is also important to understand that the emotional stages come accompanied by stages in the legal process and are perceived differently by both the adults and children.

Below, I will pinpoint those stages.

First Stage: Denial

Emotional State: Usually our first reaction to the loss of something we're attached to is denial. What we all need to know though is, denial is normal.

The adults will normally experience emotions such as: This is not happening to me.

Children will most likely have thoughts where they will deny existence of the experience they feel. They may tell themselves that everything will soon be back to normal, after all, it's not the first time mom and dad have a fight.

The legal process will be marked with the commitment to separate or the actual separation

Second Stage: Anger

Emotional State: Feelings of Anger are probably the cause of the most pain from grief. Anger can cause deep and sometimes permanent wounds that are totally unnecessary. Let it go!

This stage of grief is probably a major cause of law suits.

The adults will mostly experience a feeling of powerlessness to control the events that are happening. This is a stage for much blame contributing to a rising in resentment and anger.

Children will experience feelings of anger towards their parents as well as general anger towards the outside world. Some children become furious at no one or nothing in particular. Outbursts at inappropriate time and places are typical.

The legal Process will be marked by the filing of or responding to the initial legal papers.

Third Stage: Bargaining

Emotional State: Bargaining is as strange a grief behaviour as Denial. It's where we try to make deals to gain back what we lost.

Adults find themselves saying or thinking things such as: 'If I can convince them I've changed, they'll leave their new partner and come back to me.'

This stage can be seen as the beginning of the end of the old you and the beginning of the new person you will become.

Younger children will internalize the break up as somehow being their fault. If only they had been better kids, their parents would not be breaking up. This leads to the thinking that they can get the parents back together again. Some children even make plans to get the parents together, believing that if the parents see them "behaving" appropriately they'll get back together. It is of utmost importance to assist children in understanding that this is not their fault.

In the legal Process the attorneys and/or the parties themselves begin initial negotiations.

Fourth Stage: Depression

Emotional State: Depression is the most dangerous stage of grief. Everyone goes through depression before they can heal from a major loss. When we're going through this part of the grief process, all of life seems pointless...but then we start to see some joyful things.

As adults, we will experience a period of suffering and chaos where the emotional and physical symptoms of the break up sets in. We will spend time replaying the relationship, the good and the bad. This is when grief, sadness, loneliness, self-pity, fear, remorse, guilt, anxiety and depression become a daily ritual for many. Chaos and uncertainty run the daily life. We will experience sleeping problems, whether too much or too little. Weight problems, gaining or losing. Drinking, smoking, drugs and searching for easy sexual fulfillment become appealing distractions.

Children will describe an intense pain from the realisation that their world is coming apart and it is common that they will have feelings of deep sadness and overwhelming helplessness. They will often cry for no apparent reason.

The Legal Process will engage in the Court hearings, settlements, agreements, and / or the final decree.

Fifth Stage: Acceptance

Emotional State: It's a decision to be at peace with the way things are. To know that no amount of denial, bargaining, anger or depression is going to recover our loss. We begin to accept that loss is part of life. It's not good or bad...just how it is.

For the adult the focus becomes clearer and directed towards the future, not the past. So we decide to go on, to find joy in our lives and to bring joy to the lives of others

Children will in turn become talkative about the break up and are able to express the loss of their two-parent household. Healing begins.

Legal Process: It's over!

Chapter 3 | Exercises

Acknowledge the reality of
the divorce

It is important to first acknowledge your breakup as a Trauma. Trauma is defined as:

1. A serious injury or shock to the body, as from violence or an accident.
2. An emotional wound or shock that creates substantial, lasting damage to the psychological development of a person, often leading to neurosis.
3. An event or situation that causes great distress and disruption.

A Divorce/Breakup causes emotional shock and is a stressful event and like any wound, it needs to heal.

What are your perceptions of your Trauma? Check all that apply.

- I have been hurt
- I have lost something I cared about deeply
- I feel lost
- I feel sad
- I feel angry
- I feel numb
- I don't know what to do

In this exercise I want you to write a letter to yourself and focus on how you have been hurt and your experience of the breakup without holding back.

No one else is going to read it. It is just for you to be allowed to release and express all your thoughts and feelings relating to your hurt.

Write as much as you want.

Let yourself feel the pain of
the divorce

Anger is an emotion. It is a signal that we think we are being treated unfairly. As you realize the toll anger is taking on your life you may discover a stronger motivation to resolve it and move on.

Like any other skill, managing anger takes practice.

In this exercise, I want you to take the time to answer each of the following questions. Repeat this exercise as often as you want with different situations.

What triggered your anger? Situation; person...

How do you feel when you get angry?

What was your response?

Was there something you did well in this situation?

What could you have done better?

What have you learned from this situation/reaction?

Shift your relationship with your former spouse

This transition in your breakup involves disengaging from your prior relationship with your former life partner. Shifting your relationship is a vital step in completing your emotional divorce. While not always easy, particularly when children are involved, it is a necessary step in moving toward your new and different life and restructure and redefine your relationship.

When we are hurt and angry we are often left with things that remain unsaid and this prevents us from shifting our relationship and keeps us tied to the past and disables us from building our new future. It is important to wipe our slate clean.

The goal here is to express those unsaid things and externalise them to be able to release them.

In this exercise I want you to write a letter to your ex. Address it to your ex but do not send it.

Write as much as you want without holding back. Write everything you have wanted to say and imagine him or her in front of you but unable to hurt you in any way. It's a good time to list as well all those things that have always annoyed you about them.

No one else is going to read it.

Now ask yourself the following questions and note your answers:

1. Does your life right now reflect your values? Is the way you spend your time consistent with your priorities?

2. If the way you spend your time is not consistent with your priorities, how can you make it so?

3. Are there some parts of your life that you would like to change but cannot right now? If so, what is your timetable for bringing your lifestyle more into harmony with your values?

Search for meaning

The 1st step in the re-creation process is setting intentions for “Who” you are and what you want. It’s about taking responsibility and creating consciously the life you want through acknowledging your personal needs.

Personal needs are needed to be our best. To live a successful and rewarding life our personal needs must be identified and addressed. We usually want 3 things: to be loved, to be valued and to belong. A divorce puts all those 3 things in question and is therefore an enormous painful rupture.

Identify your needs. Circle the ones that resonate with you:

To be accepted; approved; respected; be popular; to achieve; to accomplish; be acknowledged, appreciated; valued; be loved; be touched; be understood; be cared for; get gifts; be comfortable; be heard;..... (Add as many you want)

Now refine your List to 5 most important needs; this process is designed to help you narrow down your list so that it includes only those Personal Needs that are most important to YOU.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Then Create a Plan; the idea here is that you want to be satisfying your Personal Needs automatically at all times, so that they are handled once and for all.

- Make a list of activities/actions that will help you meet your Personal Needs in beneficial ways
- Make a list of behaviours that will help you meet your Personal Needs
- Write down ways that other people can help you meet your Personal Needs and include them as determined by you

You can now let go of the old vision of your life and re-create a new vision where your values are recognised and your needs are met and watch the caterpillar that you were turn into a beautiful butterfly.

There are no failures in life, only learning experiences. Our life's events are neither good nor bad but events unfolding from our choices which were made with the information available to us at the time.

The soonest you realise that you are the only one responsible for the choices you make in your life, the soonest you will be able to make new choices that will fit better with your needs in this present time.

SADSA | The South African Divorce Support Association can assist you with your life transition.

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