



Divorce, Recovery and a New Life

In the early 90's, my wife shocked me late one evening when she announced she wanted a divorce after 12 years of marriage. I remember the moment like it was yesterday. I was incredulous. I quickly began to see she was very serious. My surprise quickly shifted between a wide range of emotions including panic and fear. I did not sleep that night, and slept poorly for months to come. Despite many efforts to get her to change her mind, the divorce was final 11 months later. What seemed at the time to be a sorrowful end with no recovery possible I view it now as the death that needed to occur so that I may have life. While extremely painful, I would not trade anything for what I have gained from this experience. Why is that?

The months following her announcement I did all I could think of to keep the marriage together. I bought my wife a new car. I bought her the red dress I had promised but never bought. I drove all over town to buy her things I thought she would like. We went to a marriage seminar in up state New York. We went to counseling. I read books. I tried to do all I could to win her back.

Despite these last ditch efforts, my wife went through with the divorce. It felt like the end of the world. I remember being at a 12 step divorce recovery meeting one spring Sunday and hearing a participant tell me that at some point in the future I would embrace this experience and consider it a gift. All I could think of at the time was that on this warm sunny day I should be with my family, not in that room with absolute strangers!

Like many marriages, ours brought two significantly damaged people together. Rather than nurturing ourselves out of the damage, we did what most divorced people do; we looked to the other to meet all our needs, change, to complete us. Any problem was due to the other's weaknesses, personality, attitude, etc. This recipe for disaster provided just that!

I now see that the divorce was the catalyst that helped me become keenly aware of the issues I had brought into the marriage. The recovery process provided the vehicle for healing and significant change and growth for me. These same issues were also influencing my performance and relationships at work and outside work. Prior to the divorce I was hugely controlling, angry, fearful, perfectionistic and incapable of meaningful intimacy. The process of recovery helped me to confront each of these qualities, get to the core and truth of each, and begin the slow process of change.

The recovery process involved numerous activities including:

- Counseling.
- Attending a weekly 12 step divorce recovery meeting.
- Attending a men's meeting weekly whose mission is to allow the pain of divorce to change us in a positive way, changing us to be the men, husbands and fathers we were created to be.
- Being on the phone with my mentor an hour a day, every day, for a year and a half, learning about my motives, feelings and relationships. Establishing an accountability relationship with another man for support and truth telling.
- Being mentored and disciplined by another man further along the path of recovery.

- Investing in the life of other men in similar circumstances.
- Reading numerous books* and attending numerous seminars on marriage, relationships and parenting.
- Learning to identify and process feelings appropriately.
- Most importantly, pursuing a new relationship with God.

Had the divorce not occurred, I am confident I was headed into a brick wall, personally and professionally. Because of the divorce and what followed, I changed significantly. These changes have been confirmed by my ex wife, son, parents, brothers, others in the family, former colleagues and others. I am confident that my ability to continue advancing within my company was made possible in large part because of the changes in me.

While extremely painful, this experience changed me dramatically, for the good. I changed. I grew. I found my purpose, peace, hope, joy. I continue to grow and now know that we are all in a life long process of growth.

You may be in a similar situation. You may be divorced or in the process. You may intuitively know that your marriage or other significant relationships are in peril. If you are like me, your marital relationship may mirror your relationships and results at work. People are a whole and integrated system. Each part impacts the whole. Additionally, business leaders are not stand alone units living their lives in only one setting. For good or bad, people in positions of leadership impact and are impacted by others, at work, at home and elsewhere. The results they produce are influenced by how they see and experience the world and all of their relationships.

Whatever the case may be, there is hope. You can change and experience growth and freedom, especially out of a place of suffering. I personally know this to be true!

Let me hear from you about the challenge or vexing problem you may be experiencing. I would enjoy discussing it with you. If you would also like a free assessment with me to discuss how I can help you grow through your personal trial, achieve the greatest success possible, please call me or email me and we'll get clear about the best immediate next steps for your success!

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*Following are two books that I still recommend for people going through separation or divorce:

Love Life for Every Married Couple by Dr. Ed Wheat

<http://www.amazon.com/Love-Life-Every-Married-Couple/dp/0310214866#>

Rekindled by Pat Williams

http://www.bestwebbuys.com/Rekindled-ISBN_9780800717131.html?isrc=b-search

