

A New Paradigm of Divorce

A three pronged approach that actually addresses every aspect of divorce.

“A practical, common sense approach to the divorce process.”

The current paradigm of divorce is only two-sided, as it only considers the legal and the financial aspects of the process to be pertinent and important. A divorce under this two-sided paradigm is typically acrimonious. Once the process is initiated each party usually arms itself by hiring a divorce attorney and a forensic accountant. In this article I will discuss the idea that each respective divorcing couple's feelings are not considered in the current divorce paradigm. The result of this is both destructive to the process as well as to the emotional health of both of the parties. Furthermore, a three pronged divorce paradigm is necessary in order to take into account the emotional aspect of divorce, and not just the legal and financial.

A typical person going through the divorce process may feel a wide variety of emotions, including feeling betrayed, angry, and victimized. An attorney may, if she notices that their client is suffering emotional turmoil, instruct this client to see a counselor who is outside of the divorce process. This counselor has no actual official part in the current divorce model.

In theory a divorce is a cut and dry process involving numbers, facts, figures and the application of the law. People's feelings are not factored in as an integral part of this process.

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Written by Lisheyne Hurvitz

Most people that I have seen post divorce in my capacity as psychotherapist/divorce consultant, through my 30+ years of practice, tell me that during the divorce process they felt the need to operate in such a manner that they tried to override their upset feelings by stuffing them under the surface in order to get through the divorce. At the conclusion of the two-sided divorce paradigm, what is left is the emotional fall-out wherein each side is left blaming the other for all that has emotionally transpired. If this emotional fall-out is left unaddressed, it can feel like a snowball rolling down a hill, which grows larger and larger as it rolls. Additionally, if the parties have children together, they are expected to come together and co-parent during and after this adversarial process, despite their built up animosity and blame.

And who do they take their anger out on inadvertently? The other parent, of course; and they do this by triangulating the children (which means putting the children in the middle). The children are then basically pulled apart internally, as they feel they have to side with whichever parent they are currently spending time-sharing with. The children do this in order to make peace and to feel loved and approved of by that parent. To the child, each parent is virtually saying "Agree with my point of view about your mom or dad and "I will love you. Disagree, and I will continually enroll you in how bad the other parent is so that you, the child, are put into an emotional bind, until you finally agree with my point of view."

Children in these situations usually end up being dammed if they do and dammed if they don't. There is no winning for these children, and it is unbelievable how quickly parent alienation can develop. Parent alienation derives directly from the un-addressed unhealed aspects of the parental divorce process.

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Unfortunately, under the two-sided model for handling divorces, the “upset” that created the divorce to begin with remains in place even after the legal divorce process is finished. The polarization of victim/perpetrator is locked into place during the legal divorce process. Usually the person who leaves is called the leavor and can be perceived as the perpetrator. The person who is left may be referred to as the levee and is generally perceived as the victim. This victim/victor mentality creates an inner (inside each parent) and outer (relational between the two parents) pattern that the system fails to acknowledge or even address. Actually the aforementioned pattern is in place prior to either party retaining an attorneys. Thus, the system as it stands reinforces this pattern.

Worse yet, to simply expect these people who are in a “serious power struggle” to magically co-parent and to somehow create a time-sharing schedule that is in the best interest of their children is as ludicrous as expecting a pro se litigant to do a better job advocating on his/her own behalf than an experienced family law attorney could.

IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE.

But instead of changing the two-sided divorces model, we have developed all kinds of post-divorce programs in hopes of dealing with the unaddressed emotional fall out of this extended painful emotion-ladden process. It’s like putting a Band-Aid on an open wound that refuses to clot. One program we’ve created is called “parenting coordination.” Simply put for the sake of this example, we expect two angry parents to put the best interest of their children first. That means putting the children ahead of their pent up, built up anger toward the other parent. It is like pushing a large boulder uphill---painful, exhausting and many times futile. So then we go back to court to keep the emotional fires fueled and to continue to prove that we are the “good parent” and the other is the “alienator - the sick, bad parent.”

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The fall out of this dual, unbalanced approach to divorce is painful, never really complete, and takes its toll mainly on the children. Everyone gets worn down in the process and no one actually wins.

The attorney's get frustrated and burned out dealing with the emotional minutiae. The couple is stuck on their upsets and get more and more entrenched in their feelings. The children feel caught and polarized –who has their best interest at heart if their parents are still playing out the emotional upset of the divorce? And a five year marriage quickly turns into a seven year contentious litigated war, based mainly on the parties' emotional hatred for the other. The judges are then ready to pull their hair out, but instead the judges take their frustration out on the attorneys who remain in the cases. Do judges really want to hear about who pays for the Karate uniforms, what type of religions training is best for the children, etc?

Here is a description of the parental inner and outer “make wrong battle” that traps everyone.

One parent gets caught in their inner critical parent and talks down to the other parent as if that parent were a “bad child.”

The other parent gets caught in their inner wounded child and rebels against the other parent as if that parent were their own “critical external parent.”

The first parent's inner adult and inner child remain small and quiet as the over inflated inner critical parent takes over. The second parent's inner parent and inner adult remain small and quiet as the over inflated wounded inner child takes over.

This parent, adult, and child model is taken from a model of psychology called Transactional Analysis.

The system locks the above struggle into place and clearly is not effective. Now let's bring forth a whole new paradigm of divorce. One that addresses all of the key components----emotional, financial and legal. And they are all addressed in a team approach—no one part more or less important than the other.

What if people got counseling and got EMOTIONALLY divorced at the same time as the LEGAL and the FINANCIAL divorce?

The process could be as follows:

1 Each person gets individual sessions with an “emotional coach” to address and to heal their wounds or wounded areas.

2 As the power struggle gets identified, each person sees their part as the victim or the victor/perpetrator.

3 The emotional coach communicates with the attorneys and the financial consultants as

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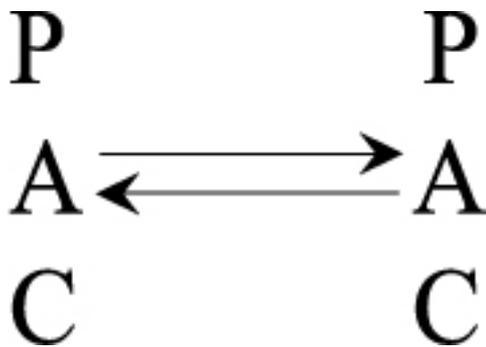
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needed. This creates a team approach.

4 Each person (parent) learns how to create a healthy, functional, internal “adult”.

5 Parents have communication sessions together to learn NEW ways of communication from ADULT to ADULT

DIAGRAM OF THIS AS FOLLOWS WITH EACH PARENT RELATING FROM THEIR INNER ADULT TO THE OTHER PARENTS’ ADULT:



In this way parents can create a parenting plan from their inner adult. That inner adult place will automatically create something that is in the best interest of their children. They are NO LONGER working out their inner issues on the other parent in this model. They have done this

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separately in sessions with their coach. And best of all, they are NOT putting their children in the middle of their “marital upset” any longer.

The above model is truly the ideal. Many variations of this model can be extremely effective as well. If only one parent cares to participate in the emotional clearing process, this will be enough to break the entrenched dysfunctional pre divorce relational pattern. In other words, the parental fight in its current form would end. The healthier parent will separate from that old pattern. When that happens, an opportunity for parallel parenting is present. It takes two people to create a boxing match or a parental struggle. Have you ever seen a boxing match on TV with only one fighter in the ring? And so it is with feuding parents.

The Parenting Coordinator or Emotional Coach then becomes a TEACHER/COACH

The coaches teach adult to adult communication skills. They help parents to find the “middle way.” They can help parents learn how to agree to disagree peacefully, all the while without making the other parent wrong. This is true skill building, and clients will learn how to parent their children without always needing a referee, and without having to continually seek court intervention to remedy simple disagreements.

These emotional coaches work hand in hand with the attorneys and the financial consultants to make sure that the parents become “emotionally” divorced. Just as there are no legal aspects of the divorce process that are left unaddressed, the same would apply to the emotional process as well.

This is NOT psychotherapy or counseling from some old model. Rather, it is teaching practical communication skills, identifying each person’s inner model of blame, learning ownership of one’s feelings/perceptions, and learning how to CHOOSE the high road in order to become healthy and functional parents.

Attorneys will then have the “emotional burden” lifted from their shoulders so they are better

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able to practice family law. Financial experts can freely be the financial consultants in this process.

It is both time and cost effective for all. Some extra financial investment at the front end for emotional coaching can save a lot of money in the back end. As we all have come to know, post-divorce struggles are financially and emotionally draining on the parents, as well as the attorneys involved, and it most certainly clogs up the court dockets to the detriment of cases which desperately need judicial intervention.

This TEAM APPROACH creates both a clear ENDING of a marriage, and a new beginning of single parenting as well. It is a welcome relief to have this complete model which empowers people in one of life's most challenging transitions - DIVORCE.

When applying this new model to divorce, people are assisted in moving through ALL 3 areas of their life transition with consciousness and with clarity. And it is this model that contributes to the providers, the team, as well as to both parents. Clearly, this is a paradigm shift from victimization to empowerment, and it is the children involved who become the ultimate beneficiaries.