

# Top 3 Ways to Cope with the Divorce You Didn't Want

by Marci Payne, MA, LPC

*'You are like the foundation of a house. It can withstand fire as well as the most severe of storms. You built your marriage on top of this foundation. The marriage crumbled, the walls came falling down, and you grieved. When you sweep away the debris, you are left with a beautiful, strong foundation to build your new life on.'* ~ Cindy Holbrook

If you're going through a divorce, you may feel like you've been hit by a tornado, where there is literally debris everywhere. You don't even know where to begin and what to focus on first.

There's a part of you that knows you'll be ok, but there's also a part of you that thinks you won't ever be the same again. Well, they are both correct. Someday you will look back on this time and realize that you aren't the same, that you got through one of life's biggest challenges and you are stronger for it.

Until then, rebuilding after a major change in your relationship support system will take work and energy. So first you focus on coping with the day-to-day as well as the myriad of feelings that are coming up as you grieve. In last month's article, I explored the many emotions you may encounter while grieving the loss of your marriage relationship. Now, let's explore the top 3 ways that my clients say they were able to recover from their divorce to find hope and new confidence.

## Coping with the Divorce You Didn't Want

At the beginning of your divorce recovery, you may feel like you are in survival mode. Remember it's normal to feel a range of emotions. You've lost someone that used to help you manage stress and challenges. And until you find your new normal, you are going to be trying different things to learn what works for you to manage these emotions.

- **Connect:** Reaching out and connecting with others is one of the main ways people say they coped with their divorce. This can be challenging if your friends and family members

are taking sides. You may need to meet new people that have been through a divorce and are now thriving. Or you may need to reach out more than you did while you were married. Many people feel like they will be a burden or they can't leave their kids with a babysitter. But your kids and your sanity need you to feel less lonely. And getting together with friends doesn't have to solely involve talking about your divorce. Decide how much time alone is too much, and then initiate doing something with a friend that you both enjoy.

- **Move:** Another main way people cope with their divorce is to get moving. While divorce stress typically contributes to feeling anxious and even weight loss, many find it helpful to move their bodies by beginning a walking or exercise program. It helps to have some place to disperse some of your stress and can help you appreciate the strength you already have. Or if exercise isn't your thing, try moving toward a new interest or passion that you've always wanted to try.
- **Learn:** Lastly, if you are a person that loves to learn, reflect, and grow, better understanding what wasn't working in your marriage can bring clarity to a confusing and emotional time. While you may never get the closure you are looking for from your ex, you can learn more about relationships as well as your strengths and weaknesses in this area. Listen to podcasts or read books about relationships when you are ready to look forward. Instead of dwelling on past regrets or shortcomings, identify what you want to do differently in current or future relationships.

When you feel like many things are out of your control, finding that you can control how you connect, move, and what you learn about can give you a sense of strength and confidence. Day by day you will not only be discovering who you are without your ex, but also that you deserve to be happy again.

*Marci Payne offers divorce recovery counseling in Independence MO (near Blue Springs and Lee's Summit). One of her specialties is working with men and women who are going through a divorce and want to boost their confidence about being single again. Schedule a free 15-minute phone consult to determine if she is the best counselor for you.*