

Home alone: The post-divorce social scene

How to rebuild your social life after a divorce

By: Deborah Moskovitch



“It’s the weekend and once again, I am dreading the feeling of being alone.” I hear this sentiment expressed all too often from many divorcées—be it at the beginning of their separation, or from those that have been divorced for years.

Is it possible to embrace the feeling of aloneness and actually do something positive about it? You bet it is.

At the beginning of their separation or divorce, many people often feel abandoned or sidelined by their married friends. I tend to think of it as the “fifth wheel bug”. Don’t worry, it’s not something you catch—but the discomfort is there. The dynamics of socializing often change upon separation and divorce. While the situation of being the odd person out in a couple’s world—a Noah’s Ark society—is not uncommon, it can be unnerving. Suddenly single, it’s at this time in your life when you need the love and support of your friends like never before.

I not only hear about the loneliness frequently from my clients and friends, but experienced this first hand when I was newly separated. Not every couple excludes the single person, but there are lots who do. There are many reasons why the single person is left out, so don’t take it personally. It is easier to fit four or six around a table than three or five. Balanced, even.

It's not you, it's them

What you need to understand is that this not about you. It's about the way your friends feel about your situation—or their own. Some people are threatened if they are not in a perfect relationship and seeing you happy might make them feel uncomfortable. I've also learned that happily married couples don't always mean to overlook their single friends; it's just that they are less likely to think outside the Ark on the weekends.

Coco Johnson (M.S.W., RSW), a therapist in private practice in Oakville, helps her patients understand what might be going on socially around them. For instance, "if the woman precipitates the ending of the marriage, that may be threatening to another woman, in a mediocre situation, who has decided to stay and settle."

She helps her patients see that "It is better to be alone than lonely in a relationship. Sometimes people are very lonely and have very terrible lives while married; they just didn't anticipate the loss of their marriage." Johnson's advice is that "it isn't catastrophic to be alone, especially if you came from a marriage where you were lonely."

Here are some tips to overcoming your loneliness and while building your new social life.

Pursue your passions and interests Living your life by doing the things you enjoy will open up a whole new world of people and opportunity. It also provides you with the chance to meet people with similar interests. Join or start your own walking group or book club.

Be adventurous—and move outside your comfort zone. Jumping the hurdles of your uneasiness by doing something you enjoy alone will give you greater confidence, while making you a more interesting person with experiences to share. Enjoy a movie, browse the bookstore, see the latest exhibit at a museum or art gallery.

Follow your dreams If you've always wanted to study a new language, take a course, join a conversational group or do it in style—learn it in France or Spain. There are lots of ways to travel and not feel alone. Sit at the bar of a fabulous restaurant, join a tour for solo travelers, request to share a room if on a tour, ask a friend to join you in your latest adventure.

Make new single friends Ask your friends if they know of someone single to introduce you to, not for a romantic relationship but friendship. Be daring, go to a singles event on your own; after all, that's why people are

there – to meet others.

Be happy and honest with yourself It is important to admit to the loneliness, because sometimes it's that loneliness that will drive you out and sets you on the path to find a partner. If you find you need encouragement, want to be introspective and overcome your obstacles, then perhaps work it through with a therapist, support group, clergy member or a trusted friend.

Divorce is rich in opportunities to learn and grow. You may find that over time, you will build a more interesting social network than the one you had while married.

Make the time to learn what really makes you happy and find ways to enjoy your alone time. There are times that you will feel lonely, but that is part of what it means to be divorced, and once you embrace that feeling instead of pretending you're never lonely, it also opens up the joys of solitude and time to reach out to the world to search out that which makes you happy.

Deborah Moskovitch is a divorce consultant and educator, and author of The Smart Divorce: Proven Strategies and Valuable Advice from 100 Top Divorce Lawyers, Financial Advisers, Counselors and Other Experts. Deborah has become an opinion leader in the media and has shared her insights and research on television and radio to explain that divorce can be managed in smarter ways. To learn more visit thesmartdivorce.com

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