

Overcoming Divorce and Lost Relationships

“Finding New Hope and Self”

Contents:

Facilitation – Page 2

Facilitators Profile – Page 2

Introduction – Page 3

How to Take the Classes – Page 3

Class-1 Basic Divorce Survival – Page 4

- ***“Six Key Points to Remember”***
- Accepting the Reality
- Accepting That It's Over and Moving On
- Accepting Life
- Accepting Responsibility
- Keep Your Mind Straight
- Your Opportunity
- Feeling Abandoned
- Separating Feeling Bad About the Divorce and Yourself
- Moving Away From Hopelessness
- Healing After a Divorce or Breakup
- Dealing with Grief During and After the Divorce
- Relaxing and Calming Down with Color
- “It’s Complicated”

Class-2 Dealing with Feelings – Page 11

Dealing with your personal feelings

- Emotions are Not Good or Bad
- Allow Yourself to Grieve All the Losses of the Relationship
- Tips for Grieving After a Breakup or Divorce
- Divorce Means Change
- Make Lists
- Don’t Blame
- Take Care of Yourself
- Spend Time Doing Things You Enjoy
- Get Support
- Tell the Truth to Yourself (**The Enneagram**)
- Breaking the Emotional Bond

Tools for dealing With Your Ex-spouse During and After Divorce

- Remember That You Are No Longer a Couple

- Keep Your Gripes to Yourself
- Look Towards Your Bright Future
- Be Grateful for Your Good Relationship
- Keep Your Logic Intact
- Revel in Independence
- Say No to Seduction
- Kill Them with Kindness
- Treat Yourself
- Learn, Grow, and Change

Dealing with your children's feelings

* Common Questions That Children May Ask

Class-3 Dating, Remarriage, and Children “Yours Mine and Ours” – Page 18

Are You Ready to Date After Divorce?

- Five Stages of Love
- Helpful Information When You Start Dating
- Thirteen Dating Red Flags
- Ten Quick Thoughts on Red Flags
- Effects on Family and Friends When You Start Dating
- Dealing with Children (Tweens and Under) When Dating or Remarrying
- Dealing with (Adult) Children When Dating or Remarrying

Class-4 Ten Ways To “Win at Being Single” – Page 27

Is there really a typical single?

- Who Are Singles?
- Definition of "Single"
- Social Attitudes Towards Singles
- Ups and Downs of Being Single
- Looking After Yourself as a Single
- Strategies for a Happy Single-hood
- What is a Happy Single?

Ten ways to “Win at Being Single”

- Closing

Facilitation

Guidance is provided by *John Cerro, a facilitator* who *is not* a professional therapist, lawyer, or minister. I have been through two divorces and have attended similar classes. I have also done extensive research on divorce, and have a desire to help you during this time of change. It is my personal ministry to assist you in finding a ***path to a healthy recovery!*** If at anytime you have any questions or concerns while taking these classes, you may contact me, John Cerro, ***confidentially***, by e-mail at john@reddingumc.org . I will be more than happy to address your questions or concerns.

John Cerro's profile

I have been a First United Methodist and a member of our First Church family for over 20 years. I first got married when I was 20 years old and my wife was 18. We were married for almost 25 years. We have a girl and

a boy, who are both happily married. We also have two grandchildren. My daughter has an adopted boy who is 8 years old and my son has a boy 10 years old.



My wife's religious beliefs were very much different from mine. We were young, thought we knew everything and the differences would just work themselves out. But our beliefs became a deep wedge between us over time and eventually did us in. Since my children were raised in the same belief as my wife, it was not easy at first for us to have a relationship after the divorce. We now have a great relationship. We get together as much as possible for holidays and do many other things together.

I remarried a second time about a year after my first marriage, which I call my rebound. It lasted 4 years. She was going through a divorce when I met her, and I had just come out of one. We both had too much baggage to overcome.

I was then single for 6 years before marrying Maggie. Maggie and I have been happily married now for 8 years. We are both retired and very active in our church. We also have many activities that we do together as well as separately, which we find to be a great growing tool for us.

Introduction

To start with, as I said on the introductory page, this class is not a bible class. What I am saying here, is I do not quote scripture lines. Let me be clear, ***this class is not First Church's or my intent to convert you.*** I believe that the bible is to be taken as God's love for us, and ***His love is always given unconditionally.*** I have a firm belief that God works with us continually by nudging us to "Love First". That being said, I will always give you my "Love First" positive religious beliefs. As I tell young people "Life is precious and it can be hard" and divorce is one of those hard things. I am going to repeat this because I really want you to understand this, ***"God always loves you unconditionally"***. So never let anyone tell you that God is punishing you or thinks less of you because of your divorce, or for any other reason. If someone does then you may want to distance yourself from them as fast as you can. This only tears down your self-esteem and friends do not do that. You are already struggling to make sense of everything that is coming at you right now.

From time to time I will recommend nonreligious books and movies that I feel will be helpful to you. I do not expect you to buy all of them. However, remember our lives are always ongoing works in progress and can be hard work at times, so I will point out a few books that I feel are a must in surviving in this world. ***They are an investment to your New Happy and Peaceful Life.***

Clearly understand this class is not for putting marriages and relationships back together. However, if you are not divorced at this time, and you feel that there are still options open to you to save your marriage or relationship, then by all means I encourage you to move in that direction.

Note: At this time you and your spouse should or may have already found separate legal advice. It is important to obtain separate legal advice so that each person has accurate information, making everything fair and up front. This does not mean that you cannot use a paralegal; it just means you need to talk to ***separate*** legal counsel first.

How to take the Classes

The four informational classes cover everything starting with the beginning of separation, whether it was mental or physical, to your beginning of a new and peaceful happy life. All the information given, including books and movies recommended are given to stimulate thought. The best way to take these classes is to take your time and take them one at a time starting with ***Class-1*** Basic Divorce Survival. Then ***Stop***. Try to relate the information that was given in each class to what is happening in your life at this time. Go back over the information as often as you need. Take a week to fully comprehend each class, as it relates to you, before moving on to the next

class. At this time in your life it is sometimes very difficult to think clearly. However, it is totally up to you. If at any time you have any questions or concerns while taking these classes, you may contact me, John Cerro, *confidentially*, by e-mail at john@reddingumc.org and I will be more than happy to address your questions or concerns.

Class-1 **Basic Divorce Survival**

So let's begin. Once love has been lost and trust has been broken, for whatever reason, the relationship begins a downward spiral. One person cannot make a relationship happen. It takes two people that are willing to rebuild that love and trust. Over the years I have found from my own experience that once a person has made the decision to leave the relationship or has already left; there is little chance that you, your ex, or any other person can do anything to change the situation. However, in this difficult time of your life it is the mission of the class to give you good positive information (*life's tools*) so that you will never have to go through this kind of pain again and help you move to a "*Happy and Peaceful life*". This takes time. Some will heal faster than others; there is no quick fix when it comes to emotions. Just remember God feels your pain, and He wants you to become a whole person as quickly as possible.

“Six Key Points to Remember”

First - Going through a divorce, a breakup of a significant relationship, or losing a loved one in death, are very similar. They are similar (not exact) in that they are all **grieving the loss of the relationship they once had**.

Second – Understand, you are grieving the loss of your relationship, whether it was **good or bad**. Some may say that is not true. And that could be true, but for most of us it is a grieving process.

Third - Divorce is an **undoing of everything** that was once normal in your life. This can put a lot of fear in you so take things slow. You are never alone God is always there, with you.

Forth - Divorces are **not a death sentence**; we all work through them and God will help you with that if you give Him the chance.

Fifth - **We all have a part in our divorces** and I will talk more about that later. “Again God does not condemn you.”

Sixth - All the feelings that you are experiencing right now are **perfectly normal**. If you are feeling pain, fear, and anxiety, then you are not alone.

1. Accepting the Reality

A. In the United States and around the world divorce statistics show: This is not met to approve or disapprove divorce, but only to say that we need to think about how we fit within these statistics.

- ***First marriages*** end in divorce at a rate of **40 to 50 percent**.
- ***Second marriages*** fail at a rate of **60 to 67 percent**.
- ***Third marriages*** fail at a rate of **74 percent**.
- ***“One-fourth”*** of adults in the United States have been ***divorced at least once in their lifetime***.
- There are ***one million divorces*** each year in the United States.
- In Shasta county from 2003-2009, there were a total of ***6,900 marriages***. In that same period there were a total of ***7,072 divorces***. Shasta County has always had a large number of divorces. Why I'm not sure, but our local economy is probably a big part of it.

B. Reasons for divorce

According to divorced couples, there are a number of reasons why their marriages failed:

- Lack of communication or poor communication.
- Martial conflicts and arguments.
- Infidelity

However, underlying factors can contribute to these issues as well:

*Age * Education * Income * Religion * Cohabitation.

2. Accepting That It's Over and Moving On

It doesn't matter if the breakup evolved from a divorce or a long term relationship, the difficulty of dealing with it is the same. The main point we have to remember is that it took time and a lot of pain for the initiator to come to the conclusion that separating was in the best interest of both parties. I realize that this is difficult, but it is about you now, and you getting healthy again. So the healthiest thing to do is to give up as gracefully and quickly as possible. It's also healthy at this time in your life to look at life as **"full of new and happy beginnings"**.

3. Accepting Life

Life just is. Make the best out of any situation. **You can't change reality by wishing your divorce never happened.** Accepting the reality of your situation and living fully within that reality facilitates letting go of the past and moving ahead to the future. A future you carve out for yourself based on what you want and who you are now, not based on where you used to be. When the divorce procedure begins, don't dwell on the little things that mean little or nothing to either of you. It only shows that someone wants to have more control and accomplishes nothing except anger and hard feelings. It's best to get through the divorce as fast and as comely as possible so that you can begin the process of healing.

By all means tell your friends. There's no substitute for telling your friends, your family, and even yourself that you are getting a divorce. Not "we're having a little trouble now" or "I don't know if he or she is coming back" but clearly **"we're getting a divorce"**.

4. Accepting Responsibility

Own your mistakes and make peace with your past. To move forward and let go of the past, you should also work through any feelings of guilt or anger that are left from the divorce. **Stop trying to hurt your spouse.** As long as you're trying to get even with your spouse, you're locked in this failed relationship, and **you're keeping your spouse in control of your life.** If you are harboring feelings of anger, then learn ways to work through the anger in a constructive manner. I will cover this in depth in the second class "Dealing with Feelings".

A. Tell your spouse goodbye

Let's make this clear; this is an imaginary exercise. You really don't want to tell this to your spouse. Just pretend that you are. It helps to say it out loud, and if you feel comfortable with it, tell it to a close friend.

(In the privacy of your own home, tell your spouse out loud what he or she has meant to you. Tell them how much it hurts to let them go. It's okay to get very specific about how the divorce is hurting you. Then tell them you accept that your marriage is ending. Tell them they are free, and so are you.) Just hearing it out loud can give the feeling that you are free and headed in the right direction.

B. Give up responsibility for your spouse

It's built into the process of divorce that your spouse has done and is doing things that you think are wrong, perhaps stupid. Understand that you cannot control your spouse and you're not responsible for what your spouse does. If they want to keep drinking, you can't stop that. If they keep spending time in an adulterous affair, you

can't stop that. You're going to have your hands full taking care of yourself; let your spouse bear the responsibility for what he or she chooses to do.

C. Give up your spouse's responsibility for you

Just as you're not responsible for your spouse, neither is your spouse responsible for you. It's your job, not your spouse's, to see that you have what you need to get through the crud and live after divorce. It's your job, not your spouse's, to focus on what you need in the way of property division and support.

Often your spouse will want to take responsibility for you. Men are bad about this; *guys, you are not responsible for your spouse anymore*. And ladies if you are used to having your spouse take care of you then you need to hear the same thing; *your spouse is not responsible for you anymore*. *"You and your spouse are single now"*. So either way, just say no because your spouse needs to focus on what he or she needs, and you need to focus on what you need.

5. Keep Your Mind Straight

Stay open to positive thoughts about everything in your life and welcome in "good" energy! Negative thoughts have a way of creeping into our heads uninvited. The good thing about negative thoughts is that they come to pass, not to stay. Negative thoughts about your situation can't harm you unless you allow them to do harm.

Allow negative thoughts to pass through your brain unnoticed, *don't attach meaning to them*. Quickly usher them on to make room for positive thoughts that spur you into actions that benefit you and the life you want to live. Finding a quiet spot to meditate or pray can help when negatives are overwhelming you.

6. Your Opportunity

An opportunity is a chance to fulfill your dreams, choose your purpose in life, become who you want to be and do what you want to do. Sometimes opportunity is invited in; sometimes it is forced upon us. As hard as it may be to accept, *divorce is an opportunity*. *Never ignore an opportunity*. This new opportunity may come with fears and emotional pain, but these are not excuses for not taking advantage of the opportunity to fulfill dreams, find purpose, and become what you want.

- **Start by setting some goals**

This is not about planning the next 20 years of your cash flow. It's about committing to get up tomorrow morning by 7:00am, take a shower and going to work. It's about making at least three calls about jobs in the classified ads if you don't have a job, or calling three friends to tell them you're getting a divorce. Make sure your first goals are short-term, specific, and attainable. You want success.

- **Clarify who you are without your spouse**

This is the time for you to ask the question "What kind of person do I want to be now that I'm going to be divorced?" This is a wonderful opportunity for you to reinvent yourself. You may want to be thinner, or funnier, or more spontaneous, or firmer. Describe who you see yourself becoming now that you are going to be single, and think through your plan about how you will change. Maybe you want to live more simply.

7. Feeling Abandoned

Keeping your self-esteem is probably the most common destructive side effect of any divorce. No matter how good of a spouse you were, you are probably telling yourself that you could have done better and feeling abandoned can magnify that.

If you were the *Left Person* (the one that was left and abandoned) for whatever reason, you can't help but feel terrible about yourself; it's just a given and *a normal feeling*. However, the *Leaver* (the one that left) can feel just as abandoned, especially if the marriage ended in a *Costing-out* situation.

Definition of Costing-out: *Costing-out* is when one partner in a relationship creates an unbearable situation that forces the other partner to begin to start looking at the costs and losses of the relationship because of the toll on their emotions, self-being and intimacy within the relationship.

“Two ways costing-out can make the “Leaver” feel abandoned”

- **Type-1 Relationship Loss** can be when one partner **creates a relationship loss** but doesn't even really know or care because they are so preoccupied with something else. This can make life so difficult for the other person that the other person has to leave. Examples of this: *alcoholism, doing drugs or some other addiction, or maybe violence toward the other partner.*
- **Type-2 Emotional Loss** can be when one partner has decided that they no longer want to be in a relationship, for whatever reason, but does not want to be the initiator of the break up. They may **create emotional loss** by having an affair or may just leave the other partner out of their life altogether, forcing the other partner to make the first move.

“The cancer of any committed relationship”

- **Subtle Costing-out** usually starts out small by one partner pulling away from the relationship a little at a time creating loss. Once a partner starts costing-out, it often starts a counter reaction from the other partner and they start costing-out as well. This can go back and forth for a long time until the loss becomes so great that someone makes the first move to separate; *this is the cancer of any committed relationship.*

The main point is that the *Leaver (the one that left)* can feel just as abandoned as the *Left Person (the one that was left and abandoned)* without realizing why. **Remember:** feeling abandoned is just a normal feeling and *your self-esteem* is your personal responsibility. If you value yourself, you will command respect that you deserve. Remember it is how you feel about yourself that is most important; not how someone else may think of you. *So take charge of your life.*

8. Separating Feeling Bad About the Divorce and Yourself

To start with, nobody can tell you not to feel bad about all that is happening because it is just a feeling; feelings are not good or bad (*THEY JUST ARE*). You are dealing with a lot of grief and emotions. Hopefully, the following can help you separate feeling bad about the divorce and feeling bad about yourself, (and maybe even about the other person).

First - There is no connection between feeling bad about the divorce or bad about you. It is like apples and oranges, they can't be mixed. They can't be in the same sentence.

Second -There is nothing “wrong” with either person in the divorce (that might be hard to say in some cases!) *“You were both just part of a bad situation that didn't work”.*

Third - Something Everyone Needs to Hear and Understand

This is probably the most important one. We can analyze our marriage and make a list of reasons why it did not work. We have a strong tendency to try to understand things, especially the bad things that happen to us. We can actually drive ourselves crazy to make sense of these things, but this is not productive because our reasons may be wrong or artificial. It is more productive and better to look at a divorce as a **“random accident”** with no diffident cause. *In other words, it was not the intent in either party's plan at the beginning of the marriage.* This way it doesn't put the blame on either person. This will help you think about what you need to do to prevent such an accident from re-occurring in the future, *which is my personal goal. Remember: Nobody is perfect no matter how much they may seem to be.*

9. Moving Away From Hopelessness

We all have the ability to build a wall of despair and self protection to hide behind. The only problem is, the higher we build the walls, the harder they fall.

Examples:

- * Once I have been burned, never again
- * I'll never be able to trust anybody ever again
- * I can't go through this again
- * I'll never have any happiness

These are all natural self-defense reactions, but they are not healthy or productive. You are setting yourself up for loneliness. There is a huge difference in being alone and lonely, and being alone and happy. **Being alone and lonely is being isolated Being alone and happy is having a fulfilled and Peaceful life.**

10. Healing after a divorce or breakup

Why do breakups hurt so much, even when the relationship is no longer good? A divorce or breakup is painful because it represents the loss, not just of the relationship, but also of shared dreams and commitments.

Romantic relationships begin on a high note of excitement and hope for the future. When these relationships fail, we experience profound disappointment, stress, and grief. A breakup or divorce launches us into uncharted territory. Everything is disrupted: your routine and responsibilities, your home, your relationships with extended family and friends, and even your identity.

Yes, a breakup brings uncertainty about the future. What will life be like without your partner? Will you find someone else? Will you end up alone? These unknowns often seem worse than an unhappy relationship. Recovering from a breakup or divorce is difficult. However, it's important to know (**and to keep reminding yourself**) that you can and will move on. Healing takes time, so be patient. God is there with you, so don't be afraid to lean on His shoulder.

11. Dealing with Grief During and After the Divorce

There are Five Faces of Grief

Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance

They're called the faces of grief because we move in and out of the five stages of grief in maddeningly random order. In other words, you can be in the Depression Stage one moment, and then you're back to the Bargaining Stage or another stage the next moment. You can jump from any stage then back to another stage any time. We are off balance and that is to be expected because this is what grieving is really like and **it is normal**.

Stage-1 Denial

Examples:

- Surely this isn't happening to me. Surely this isn't happening to us. Even if it's happening, it's just a stage.
- He's left before; he'll come back.
- She's talked this way before; she doesn't really mean it.
- Even if he means it, he'll soon realize the error of his ways, and our marriage will survive.
- Even if she's telling me she wants a divorce, it's just because she's been talking to that friend of hers. Everything's really okay.
- ***If you relate to these that's normal.***

Denial is powerful, effective, and sometimes essential for dealing with crisis. Denial has also been expressed as excuses. Given this, there is a time and a place when denial is perhaps the healthiest response. It gives you some time to sit back and take a break from what really is happening. Eventually, however, there is a time and place for denial to end so you can confront the problem and begin the healing process. Then in the middle of healing,

you may resume your denial. That's okay. *That's normal.* That's what's supposed to happen when you're grieving.

Stage-2 Anger

Examples:

- I'm ready to kill her.
- I want to hire the meanest, ugliest lawyer I can find and take him for all he's worth.
- I'm ready to go to war, and I'll beat her to a bloody pulp.
- I want to see him spread-eagle on a rock and watch the buzzards eat his insides out one bite at a time
- *Again if you connect with these, that's normal.*

Anger is normal and appropriate in divorce. Let me say that one more time: *it's okay to be angry when your marriage is falling apart.* Let's be honest, you've got a lot to be angry about. Your primary task in dealing with anger, of course, is to acknowledge and accept the feelings of anger you have toward your spouse and others, while at the same time avoiding behaviors that will hurt you, your spouse, and your children. *This is where a friend can be helpful.* You need someone who can listen to the sometimes terrifying thoughts and feelings you have without feeling a need to respond to them. Pray to God and tell Him how you feel. He would love to hear from you.

Stage-3 Bargaining

Examples:

- Here's what I'm willing to do. Okay, honey, here's a long letter in which I spell out for you how I've changed. See, I'm different. I've solved all the problems you told me needed to be fixed. You can come back now.
- I know. I'll give him everything. He'll see how foolish he is to leave me, and he'll want me back. If you'll give it another chance, I'll And the list goes on.

I'm speaking here of the desperate, *"I'll do anything -- just tell me what"* kind of statements that people make when they're clinging to their marriage. This is the most painful stage of the grieving process, because it's demeaning for the left person, distasteful for the leaver, and almost never successful for more than a fleeting moment. That doesn't mean, though, that it's wrong to engage in bargaining behavior. Again, it's a normal part of the process; it's just that you need to move through it so you can continue the grieving process. And just like denial, bargaining will pop back up when you thought you were past all that; again, **that's normal.**

Stage-4 Depression

Examples:

- This is the end. I am nothing. I am so small. I don't think I exist any more.
- *I'm ugly. I'm fat. I don't matter. I think I'll just lie here.
- I'm worthless. Nobody cares if I live or die. I can't go on. He's much better off without me.
- I can see why she's so glad to get rid of me. I hate myself. This is my entire fault.

Normal depression is merely a different flavor of anger. Instead of being directed at your spouse, or your spouse's lawyer, or someone in your spouse's family, depression is anger you turn towards yourself. I'm speaking here of the **Normal**, temporary feelings nearly everyone has *during the grieving process. Remember, your friends can be essential if you're dealing with depression in your grieving.* So your task is to handle depression in the same way you do anger, to acknowledge and accept the feelings you have of your own unworthiness without acting on those feelings to hurt yourself or others. It's no mystery why people going through divorce are at such great risk for suicide.

(Let's clarify here the term "**depression**." We are **not** speaking here of the "**clinical depression**" that is so prevalent in divorce that you may need professional help.) **Clinical depression is when you have the feeling to be self-destructive.** If you feel your depression is overwhelming you and you are having destructive thoughts such as:

- "I'm tired of life"
- "What's the point of going on"
- "My family would be better off without me"
- "Who cares if I'm dead", "I can't go on anymore"
- "I just want out", "You/they would be better off without me"
- "Nobody needs me anymore",

Then you need to seek professional help immediately.

(If you are having these kinds of feelings, **please call "Helpline" (530) 244-2222 immediately.** There are always people out there who love and care about you and can help; there is no need to be alone. *This is strictly a confidential call*)

Stage-5 Acceptance

Examples:*

- I don't like this, but it's going to happen, and I need to get through it. I'll make it.
- Our marriage is ending. We're divorcing. I need to let my marriage go.
- My wife is leaving. My husband and I won't be together anymore.
- We're getting a divorce. I'm ready for my co-workers, my family, and my friends to know that I'm going through a divorce.
- I'm ready to negotiate with my spouse.

Acceptance is difficult, painful, and curiously, often liberating. Some of the crud is gone because now you're working it out. The task is simpler, cleaner. Maddeningly, though, you may think you've accepted the reality of divorce and then realize a day or two later that you've begun bargaining again to save your marriage. **Again, that's normal.** It's okay. Just acknowledge it and get back on task.

Ideally, you and your spouse can both accept the reality of your divorce before you negotiate its terms. You will both be more comfortable with the terms you work out because you will be able to stay in control. You will be able to think strategically. You will be able to focus on the all-important task of getting on with your life. If you have not reached this point, that's alright, few do and it is **perfectly normal**.

12. *Relaxing and Calming Down with Color*

If you have seen my cards and signs that I post in many places, you will see that they are a light blue, it wasn't by accident. **Light Blue** promotes relaxation and calm. Make sure it is a Light Blue, **because too much dark blue can be depressing.** **Light Blue** exhibits tranquilizing qualities often used to relieve headaches and migraines, colds, stress, nervous tension, rheumatism, stomach pains, muscle cramps and liver disorders. **Light Blue** is thought to have a positive effect on all kinds of pain. When you are felling over whelmed with all that is going on, find a quiet place outside on a clear day and look up at the blue sky, it will help you to calm down. If you work indoors, try to find something **Light Blue** to focus on, even if it is just a piece of paper. While you are doing that take in a deep breath and exhale slowly a couple of times, you will find that it will help you to get back on track.

13. *"It's Complicated"*

After all that I want to move to a lighter subject. As I told you I will be recommending movies from time to time. If you haven't seen the movie "**It's Complicated**" then you might want to rent it. It is very funny and at

this time in your life laughing is good for you. However, don't overlook the philosophical points of how life can very easily become complicated if we let our guard down. I have a few philosophical points of the movie that I would like you to ask yourself.

- Why did Meryl Streep have an affair with her ex Alec Baldwin?
- Why did Meryl Streep choose Steve Martin over Alec Baldwin?
- Who got hurt in the affair?

To me there is a definitive answer and I will bring it up again in the third class *Dating, Remarriage, and Children "Yours Mine and Ours"* It is always good to remind ourselves that there are no true winners in some actions, whether it is ours or someone else's.

End of Class-1

Stop. Try to relate the information that has been given in this class to what is happening in your life at this time. Go back over the information as often as you need. The best way is to take a week to fully comprehend each class, as it relates to you, before moving on to the next class. However, it is totally up to you. If at any time you have any questions or concerns while taking a class you may contact me, John Cerro, *confidentially*, by e-mail at john@reddingumc.org and I will be more than happy to address your questions or concerns.

Class-2 **Dealing with Feelings**

Dealing With Your Personal Feelings

During and after the divorce you are probably going to have mixed emotions about your ex-spouse. Some days you hate your ex-spouse, and, surprisingly, other days you miss them. You may wonder why you feel any fondness for someone you are divorcing. Let me tell you "ben there don that" *this is perfectly normal - It can't be turned off like a light switch.*

So how do you cope with these changing emotions? Here are eleven things that you can expect to feel and things you can do to help with dealing with your feelings.

1. Emotions are not good or bad

The marriage is dead and you are grieving the lost relationship. A death and divorce are basically the same, both grieving the loss of the relationship they once had, except the divorced person still has to deal with the living ex-spouse. You may even feel that it would be easier if they were dead and that is a normal feeling. *Again feelings are not good or bad (THEY JUST ARE).*

When a couple divorces, the bad times you shared will probably be the most recent memories. There are times when each person feels vulnerable, lonely, or scared of the changes taking place. At these times, you may also think of the good times (Hopefully, they were not all bad!) Allow yourself these trips down memory lane. Don't try to push down your emotions, but allow yourself to feel all the emotional stages of grieving your divorce. I wish I could tell you this is easy but it's not. However, the effort that you do put into it will be helpful latter on.

2. Allow yourself to grieve all the losses of the relationship

Grief is a natural reaction to loss. A divorce and the breakup of a love relationship involve multiple losses:

- Loss of companionship and shared experiences (which may or may not have been consistently pleasurable)

- Loss of support: financial, intellectual, social, or emotional.
- Loss of hopes, plans, and dreams (can be even more painful than practical losses).

Allowing time to feel the pain of these losses may be scary. You may fear that your emotions will be too intense to bear, or that you'll be stuck in a dark place forever. Just remember that grieving is essential to the healing process. The pain of grief is precisely what helps you let go of the old relationship and move on. And no matter how strong your grief, *it won't last forever and it's just feelings.*

3. Tips for grieving after a breakup or divorce

A. Don't fight your feelings. It's normal to have lots of ups and downs and feel many conflicting emotions, including anger, resentment, sadness, relief, fear, and confusion. It's important to identify and acknowledge these feelings. While these emotions will often be painful, *trying to suppress or ignore them will only prolong the grieving process.*

B. Talk about how you're feeling. Even if it is difficult for you to talk about your feelings with other people, it is very important to find a way to do so when you are grieving. Knowing that others are aware of your feelings will make you feel less alone with your pain and will help you heal. *Journaling can also be a helpful outlet for your feelings.*

C. Remember that moving on is the end goal. Expressing your feelings will liberate you in a way, but it is important *not to dwell* on the negative feelings or to over-analyze the situation. Getting stuck in hurtful feelings, like blame, anger and resentment, will rob you of valuable energy and prevent you from healing and moving forward. *In other words, don't get stuck in the victim mode.*

D. Remind yourself that you still have a future. When you commit to another person, you create many hopes and dreams. It's hard to let these dreams go. As you grieve the loss of the future you once envisioned, be encouraged by the fact that *new hopes and dreams will eventually replace your old ones.*

4. Divorce means change

Realize that every divorce brings about change, and change is not always easy. There are times when you will be tempted to look back because it is easier than facing the fact that you now have to rebuild your life. *Trust yourself* that you can handle anything that comes along and that you have made the right decision to divorce. *Don't let fear overtake your judgment.*

5. Make lists

It helps to make a list of the reasons you divorced and the differences you had. Also, make a list of the good parts of your former relationship. Many newly divorced people are so focused on the bad that they grow resentful and hold a grudge against their ex-spouse. This makes it hard to move on with your life. *Everyone has some good and some bad traits.*

6. Don't blame

It's easy to make your ex-spouse the villain, but in order to be successful in your future relationships; *you need to take time to look at your part in the failure of the relationship.*

One person does not hold most marriages together, and they don't end because of one person either. *So, deal with the anger you feel in a constructive way.* (That can be a real slap in the face, but I have to say that over time I found that I was angrier with myself for my part in the breakup, and that is not always easy to deal with).

7. Take care of yourself

Divorce can be a real roller coaster of emotions and can be a real strain, so make sure you develop good self-care habits during this time. Get plenty of rest, avoid stress as much as possible, put non-essential things on the back burner for now, and eat a healthy diet. ***Your Self-care during and after your divorce is a requirement if you want to maintain your good health.*** (During my first divorce I lost my appetite, lost a lot of weight, and my teeth hurt terribly, simply because I was not getting the proper nutrition, so take care of your health).

8. Spend time doing things you enjoy

Most people say when they went through a divorce, it was on their mind every waking moment of their day. (***Personally***, I was in complete mental pain and felt that everyone could see it.) Take some time to do something you enjoy; something that will “recharge your batteries.” This could include meditating, spending time with friends, spending quiet time alone with a good book, or watching a good movie. Let your mind concentrate on something other than the divorce when you are feeling overwhelmed.

9. Get support

Sometimes you may need a sounding board or a shoulder to cry on. ***Don't shy away from seeking support and validation from friends and relatives.*** If you feel the need, get into therapy to help you sort through your shifting emotions and the resulting stress. (I did, and I am very thankful for it.) Don't let anybody say you don't need to. If you feel the need to do it, then by all means, do it.

10. Tell the truth to yourself

Be honest with yourself about your feelings and don't be afraid of your feelings.

I found for myself using the **Enneagram**, which deals with personality types, was helpful for me. The Enneagram gives a description of (***nine***) different types of personalities. ***There is no one personality type that is better than another.*** Personalities are like fingerprints; there are no two exactly alike, but in the Enneagram, we all basically, but not completely, fit into one of the nine types. Its function is to give good descriptions of the positives and negatives of each personality type. The Enneagram is meant to give you a way to look at yourself with honesty and in privacy, where no one has to know except you, which helps you get back into a positive and loving mode of life.

Our former retired pastor Marty Murdock has done a class on the Enneagram. Put this one at the top of your list to buy. He uses the book “The Essential Enneagram” by David Daniels, M.D. It is an excellent book on the enneagram. It's easy to understand and simple to follow. There are a lot of books out there on the enneagram but I would start with this one. The book gives you a way to find your central personality type. Then you are given tools to help you work on conquering those things that are negatives in your life. We all have them and it takes work and commitment to get them under control. ***This does not take the place of God or the Bible.*** It is a tool for you to have a better understanding of you and will help you in understanding the *beauty* of the Bible.

Some people have a tendency to use the Enneagram to try and figure out what personality type another person is when they really need to be using it to understand their self. For the most part, when you do recognize someone's personality type, it's because they are “Flaming” (which means they are in their negative state of mine) and that does not give you the whole picture of that person. ***Remember negatives are just our inner fears.***

11. Breaking the Emotional Bond

This is a big one so pay close attention.

Forgiving the other person and also forgiving yourself is probably the most difficult thing to do, but when done it can be the most rewarding. Some of you may be saying to yourselves (I'm not forgiving that no good “blank of a blank”), but hear these out if you will. Jesus taught us that God is always forgiving, so we can at least do the same for ourselves.

A. Forgiving is letting go of the emotional bond

Forgiveness is about your inner peace, not the other person. *Let's read that sentence again.*

Forgiveness is about your inner peace, not the other person. *Forgiving eases you from negative baggage.*

Keep all this in your mind as you proceed because it is very important to understand how the word *forgiveness* and *forgiving* are used. Forgiving someone is one of the best things you can do. It frees you up to spend your valuable time, energy, and other resources producing fantastic new relationships, creating more happiness, and reaching your goals.

B. The secret about forgiveness that changes everything

Here's the neat thing. If someone has really done a "doozy" on you and you believe is "**unforgivable**", here is a secret that changes everything. **Forgive them...for yourself.** Let's repeat that because you really need to get it.

Forgive them...for yourself. Yes that is the "BIG" secret, it is all about you. **That is what Jesus is telling you.** It is about your "inner peace". **You can forgive someone else for a selfish purpose!** It's probably the only time in your life that you can be totally selfish and not have guilt; so take full advantage of it. It is just between you and God. There is no one else in this journey.

What you're doing when you're forgiving them is you're no longer willing to spend your valuable time, energy and resources thinking about them and dwelling on what they did to you. You don't have time to let someone take up rent in your head. Forgiveness can happen in a split second. **"It's a decision and a choice"**. Just give up the burden. Bam...it's gone

C. Your Burden Stone

This is a mental visualizing demonstration I put together so that you can hopefully "**feel**" and understand how forgiving works. Close your eyes and while using your imagination, picture in your mind your emotional burden as a stone. The bigger the emotional burden is, then the bigger your stone becomes. This then is "**Your Burden Stone**" (your emotional burden). Pick up and hold "Your Burden Stone" with both hands. You are now bonded to "**Your Burden Stone**".

Picture yourself doing all the things you need to do each day in your life, (like eating, combing your hair, brushing your teeth, working, hugging your child, grandchild or a friend) except now you have to do them while you are bonded to "Your Burden Stone" with both hands. **Are you getting the picture?** That is what it is like to be bonded to another person when you carry around a grudge or have hate for another person that you feel has done you wrong.

Now let go of "**Your Burden Stone**" (your emotional burden). That's what it feels like "**To Forgive**" ("**Complete Freedom**"). **It's just that simple.**

By letting go of "**Your Burden Stone**" (*your emotional burden*), you are forgiving another and yourself. This gives you complete freedom from your emotional bond to another, enabling you to get on with your life. Having done that, you now have plenty of time, energy, and personal resources to devote to achieving your goals, creating more success, and forming positive lasting relationships with those who truly matter in your life.

Forgiving gives you the ability to have a happy and peaceful life.

So picture "Your Burden Stone" in your mind when you feel like someone has done you wrong and it is eating away at you. Pick up "Your Burden Stone", hold it in both hands and picture everything you need to accomplish while you are bonded to it. You'll find yourself immediately letting go of "**Your Burden Stone**" (*your emotional burden*). With time "**Your Burden Stone**" will start to collect dust in your mind, which is a beautiful thing.

- **Remember forgiveness is not for the other person, it is only for you.**
- **It is between you and God.**

- You have no power over another person; they own their own emotions.
- Forgiving does not release either party from the consequences. It just means that you are no longer bonded to them emotionally.
- It's the only time in your life that you are in total control, so take full advantage of it.

Tools for Dealing with Your Ex-spouse During and After Divorce

The information in these ten tools will be very helpful to you in dealing with your feelings, when you're dealing with your ex-spouse, by keeping you in a more positive mode. You may feel that some of these tools may not fit you, but I think you will find that the overall information will help keep your emotions intact.

1. Remember that you are no longer a couple

Expect the rush of emotions. When you see your ex-spouse, stay calm as you can until you take care of the "business parts". Keep it *business like* as much as possible; *try not to chit chat*. If you want to ask your ex-spouse whatever comes to your mind, do it, but don't expect certain answers. You probably didn't get the answers that you were looking for when you were married, so don't expect anything to change. *Above all, take care of yourself afterwards*. If it did not go well, treat yourself to something that will help bring down the emotions. If it did, you can treat yourself anyway; it doesn't hurt to pat yourself on the back once in a while for a job well done. Be aware that no matter what you think you're going to say, it probably won't come out that way. You will have so many emotions going through you that it will probably be a blur. *But just knowing that the emotions will be there is half the battle*.

2. Keep your gripes to yourself

Don't call your ex-spouse about issues; the only result for you will be anger. At times you will have to talk with your ex-spouse and most likely they won't agree with you. So just say, "**Fine**," and the more you say it, the more you will believe it. "*Fine is a nice place to be*". You will realize the best way to keep your sanity is to stop calling them. *Remember: Not everyone shares a laugh or has a civil conversation with their ex-spouse*.

3. Be grateful for your good relationship

You are mourning the loss of what was once a good marriage. It's important to remember the good times so that you don't become bitter. No matter what, those times won't come back, but when you see little glimpses of what your ex-spouse used to be like, you will be grateful for them.

4. Look towards your bright future

Sometimes, at the beginning, we fantasize and picture our marriage as a Hollywood romantic movie. Back in the fifty's and sixty's we pictured living in a house with a white picket fence happily ever after. *Then reality sets in*. You realize it's not like being at the "Beaver's House"

- You were hoping that you and your ex-spouse could work things out.
- You may feel being in a bad marriage is better than being alone.
- You are not sure what is out there waiting for you.

As you go through the divorce and the grieving process, you will start to understand your feelings better and accept what is happening. It will become less scary to see your life change and also exciting. You and your ex-spouse had children and dreams together, but now it's time to let go of that love. *It's now time to understand that you and your ex-spouse will find wonderful futures, with God's love*.

5. Keep your Logic intact

A. Remember the bad times (but don't forget the good). Perhaps maybe it should be phrased “*don't forget the good but by all means don't forget the bad times*” at this time of your life. If there are moments when you feel like you want to get back with your ex-spouse because you feel you can't survive on your own financially or emotionally, you have to stay strong. **How?** It sounds negative, but what you need to do when those moments creep up, and they will, is to think of the worst things your ex-spouse did or said to you. This will most likely get you angry, but you will be able to wipe away those doubts **making you a stronger person, which is your goal**. Remember, you don't want to dwell on the negatives but at the same time **don't let logic escape you**.

B. Judge with your mind (not your heart). Let's say you have a conversation with your ex-spouse about the divorce, and after a few hours of civilized conversation, you begin to wonder if you're doing the right thing.

Remember, you also know your ex-spouse very well now, and you know what the problems are that got you here. **So it comes down to two questions:**

- What changed so dramatically in this person to make time spent with them enjoyable?
- Are those changes sustainable?

Any time you feel as though you've made a mistake, ask yourself these questions. **Your logic will kick in and help**. Remember, people don't change overnight; it takes time, hard work, and the desire to change. In the movie “*It's Complicated*” has Meryl Streep's ex-spouse Alec Baldwin really changed?

6. Revel in independence

At the beginning, you will be wondering if you will be able to take care of yourself and your finances. **Trust in yourself** that you will figure out how you can, even though it's really hard; then you won't have a thought about going back, not even once. The thing is, your ex-spouse is still sad and a little angry, but probably always was. The real difference now is you are not a part of those feelings. **They own their own feelings**.

7. Say no to seduction

Whatever they say and however they look, stand firm and don't even let them get the idea. **Remember** sex is a bonding of two people at any level. **This is not a rush of emotions you need at this time in your life; it will only complicate things and your emotions**.

8. Kill them with kindness

When you think your ex-spouse is being cold and callous, do not lower yourself to their standards. Act as if you don't feel hurt. Sure, that will irk them but that's not the reason you're doing it; it's because “**staying positive will ultimately cheer you up**”.

9. Treat yourself

To help get through the holidays you need to feel extra special. **You are the only person who can make sure that happens**. For Christmas treat yourself to a special present you really want. Make every holiday special; spend it with family and/or friends; you can never go wrong there.

10. Learn, grow, and change

At times you will feel like you may never make it. Trust me, in time you will feel much better, and God is always there, right beside you, to help you through those tough times. This may take longer for some because not everybody is the same. You will have tough times, but overall you will feel better, and in time you will even say I feel “great”. You will make it without your ex-spouse. It may be hard to go through those negative emotions, but it's worth it to realize how strong you really are. One day you will look back and see how strong you have become.

Dealing with Your Children's Feelings

This is for the very young to tweens and adolescents:

There is one thing that you cannot overstate to a child: *the divorce is not their fault.* Make sure they understand this; no matter how many times you have to tell them. This can be devastating to their mental health if they think it is their fault. Children have a tendency to blame themselves for the divorce, and will try to transform into the perfect child in hopes of keeping their parents together. It is very important to stress to your children that misbehaving, a dirty room, or bad grades didn't make Daddy or Mommy leave. Let them know that divorce happens because of conflicts between two adults. Assure them that they didn't cause the breakup and that you love them just the way they are. Although you are probably dealing with a fair amount of stress, anger and sadness, try to patiently answer your children's questions about the divorce in a straight-forward manner without bitterness.

It is important to be emotionally available to help your children work through their feelings. An excellent book that captures the essence of children's feelings about divorce is "***My Stick Family: Helping Children Cope with Divorce (Let's Talk)*** by Natalie June Reilly. She puts into words the emotions that children experience. Even though it is written for smaller children, adolescents can relate to it also.

Common questions that children may ask

A. If you stopped loving Dad--Mom, does that mean that you can stop loving me? Explain the love that adults feel for each other is very different from the love between parents and their children. Stress to them that you will never stop loving them.

B. What will happen to me? Where will I live? Be honest about the living arrangements and what changes will occur. Let them know that although you take their feelings into consideration, these are adult decisions. If you give false hopes to their wants, they will be very disappointed later on and may feel like you deceived them.

C. Why are you getting divorced? (This is one of the hardest questions with children, because it is sometimes so hard to explain). Be as honest as possible, but don't burden them with adult issues or make accusations. If there was infidelity or abuse, tell them that the marriage had adult problems that were unhealthy, and that being together was bad for both of you. Children are very intuitive. They probably sensed for a long time that things weren't right between you and your spouse. Remember, if you start berating your ex-spouse, you are putting down their father or mother, and also putting them in the middle.

D. Can I still see Mom or Dad? Be honest about the child custody arrangements and what the visitation schedule will be, and reassure them that they can call them anytime that's reasonable.

E. How will we live? Will there be enough money? The money aspects of divorce and children are tough. If your standard of living will be changing, let them know. Suggest ways to cut back and let them contribute their ideas. This allows them a sense of control over their situation.

Find ways to compromise so they can still enjoy some of the things they did before, without projecting your worries about how you will survive onto them.

Don't burden them with adult worries or bad-mouth your ex-spouse. Let them know that it is okay to love both parents, and that they will always be loved also. As far as divorce and children are concerned, the most important thing that you can do is ***make sure that they understand that the divorce is not their fault, always show your love for them, and truly care about what affects them.*** Let them know that they count and that you will always be there to listen to their problems, no matter what their age. ***You will always be mom and dad.***

End of Class-2

Stop. Try to relate the information that has been given in this class to what is happening in your life at this time. Go back over the information as often as you need. Take a week to fully comprehend each class, as it relates to you, before moving on to the next class. However, it is totally up to you. If at anytime you have any questions or concerns while taking a class you may contact me, John Cerro, *confidentially*, by e-mail at john@reddingumc.org and I will be more than happy to address your questions or concerns.

Class-3

Dating, Remarriage, and Children

“Yours, Mine, and Possibly, Ours”

Are You Ready to Date after Divorce?

“Is adding the dating scene to your life a good move for you right now?”

The divorce has been final for awhile, and now friends are pressuring you about getting "**back out there**" and dating again. You're getting all kinds of helpful advice about people they know who would be perfect for you. By the way, dating before the divorce is final, or dating someone who has not finalized their divorce, is not a good idea because both need to finish the business at hand before moving on.

1. Are you emotionally stable?

As you know there is quite a roller coaster of emotions experienced during and after a divorce and sometimes it can make you feel crazy. Those chaotic feelings should be over at this point. ***No more sudden crying or complete loss of temper for no reason.*** All of those strong emotions about the divorce itself should have passed by now as well. ***You should be over the feeling of sharing your story with everyone.*** The death fantasies about your ex-spouse should have ceased to exist.

2. You see your ex-spouse as the other parent, NOT as a romantic partner

The reconciliation dreams have stopped as well. You have accepted that the marriage is over, and there's no reversal of that. In fact, you may have a better perspective about how your marriage really was and grateful not to be in that situation anymore. A good way to know you've accomplished this: you no longer have a desire to "get even" or try to hurt your ex-spouse. You don't view dating as a race to see who can remarry quicker or are the happiest now.

3. Life has calmed down

The dust has settled on all the crazy changes that happen after the divorce are gone. All the settlements are complete. You know where you're living and are settled there. You know where you stand financially. There aren't all the loose ends hanging out all over the place and the uncertainties that are present everywhere when recently divorced.

4. You've created a family with your children as a single parent

With life settling down and becoming less emotional, you've been able to really reinvest your energies with your kids. You've created an environment in your home that is a family. It's not just a bunch of broken people living in the same house. You've created new traditions and ways of doing life together as this new family unit.

5. You genuinely desire companionship

This is NOT being desperate to be in “a couple”. In that situation, you'll take anyone. Now you actually feel confident in your ability to live your own life alone, but choose to share it. Again, remember ***being alone and lonely is being isolated. Being alone and happy is having a fulfilled life.*** It's about wanting someone to

compliment the life you've created, **NOT fulfilling it**. Your life is already fulfilling. **Your desire now is to just add to it**.

Here is a crucial point that you must understand. If you feel a panicky desire to get out there and date due to a need to be in "a couple", pressure from friends, or any other reason, the hard truth is that you're not ready. With that being your motivation, you're much more likely to wind up in a relationship with someone not deserving of you or your children. Your choosiness antennae won't be up and you'll grasp the first breathing body that smiles at you. **So why settle?** You've already been through a bad ending of a marriage. Now's the time to have fun, get to know some people, and not feel like you have to hurry up and get married again.

As a rule of thumb, waiting one year after the divorce is final is a reasonable time before you start dating; some will take much longer. It is a good time to **learn to be alone and happy**.

Five Stages of Love:

Love develops between two partners in several different levels.

For love to endure, each level is important.

The five stages: (1) attraction, (2) romance, (3) passion, (4) intimacy, & (5) commitment.

Stage 1 ATTRACTION - a positive response to a person beyond friendship.

There are 2 types:

Type-1 Physical Attraction - Sometimes called the "Lust Stage", happens when your body reacts to another person. Heart rate increases; temperature rises; palms get sweaty; stomach flutters; throat tightens, etc. This is the most superficial type "love" on one level, but one of the most powerful on another. It represents the first contact.

Caution beware of (self): There have been studies done where they have a person observe a large crowded room of people and pick out the people that first attracted them, (they can spot them a hundred feet away). Then they have interviews with the people they chose. The studies' found, most of the time, the people they picked had traits that were very similar to their former spouse or past relationships; (this could be bad as well as good). **So beware of (self), don't make the same mistakes again.**

Type-2 Emotional Attraction - Develops next if the circumstances are right. After being drawn to a person physically, you then begin to converse. If you find you have things in common -- hobbies, ideologies, career, education, or some other common ground -- then an emotional attraction starts to form. An emotional attraction can also occur even when a physical attraction does not. And in this case, the bond may even be stronger between the two who connect, since preconceived notions based on physical appearance have not occurred.

Stage 2 ROMANCE - Is essentially an act of trying to influence or gain favor with another by lavishing attention or gifts upon them.

There are two types:

Type-1 Selfish Romance - Occurs when you do romantic acts solely for the purpose of gaining something for yourself. For instance: giving gifts to impress someone else, or even simply for sexual favors whether your partner is interested or not.

Type-2 Selfless Romance - Occurs when you do romantic acts for the enjoyment and pleasure of your partner. You receive your enjoyment and pleasure through their happiness.

Stage 3 PASSION - A desire for another person, which has grown to an intensity that can't be ignored. This

is often when an emotional relationship turns into a physical relationship. The passion stage is very important. It's a plateau. From here, the relationship will fork into two roads and the couple must decide which path to take. The relationship will either burn itself out or will move on to the next stage.

This is the point where you need to be clear with yourself that you are both on the same tract.

The movie “*500 Days of Summer*” is a perfect example. This is about a guy who is in ***complete denial*** of where his relationship is going. It is cleverly done; it takes you awhile to figure out what’s going on. As it says in the beginning, this is not a love story. However, I think you’ll find it worth seeing.

Stage 4 INTIMACY – Sometimes called the “Honeymoon Stage”. This is a close association with another person of the deepest nature. You share your thoughts, your feelings, and your dreams. In true intimacy, there is nothing that you cannot tell this person (though we often hesitate because of our own unfounded fears). Intimacy is not total in one swoop. It is a developing process, ***which never ends***. This is where you ***take the time*** to learn about all the loves and faults of each other, and weigh them out, to determine how they will affect the both of you in the future. If you can't establish intimacy with your partner, your relationship may work for awhile, but is unlikely to endure throughout the years. ***It's important to get it right in the Intimacy Stage before you move to the next stage.***

Stage 5 COMMITMENT - A pledge to remain true to your mate throughout good and bad times. Commitment is easy when times are good. Commitment can be extremely difficult when times are bad. Learn to ride out the bad times. Always listen to each other, be willing to compromise, and remember why you got together in the first place.

- ***Growing Commitments:*** Commitments can only be sustained when both parties understand that it is each person’s responsibility to see that their partner is continually nurtured in their needs. This does not mean neediness because neediness can never be fulfilled. Needs are just little things you do and say to your partner that are very special just to the both of you.
- ***Compromising:*** This does not mean that you give in to everything. Nobody agrees on everything; it just means that you have to give and take, sometimes tactfully. If you do feel that there is something that really merits going to battle over, then choose your true battles carefully and always with compassion. ***Remember, you will always have confrontations with any partner; it's how we handle them that makes them meaningful and helpful to a relationship.***

Helpful information when you start dating

1. Be honest about who you are and what you believe in. These things may have changed since you dated last time. You've changed and probably so have your priorities. It's important to take some time and feel confident about who you are and what's important to you so that you can find a partner who compliments you in those ways.

2. Focus on being yourself! Relax, and don't fall into the trap of believing you'll have to act a certain way in order to be liked. That's fake. Who wants to spend time with someone if you've got to do what doesn't come naturally all the time? How much fun is that going to be? Trying to fit your date's ideal will only make you unhappy in the long run. You'll have to keep playing the charade and ultimately could lose track of your true self.

3. Focus on having fun and getting to know this person. If you don't match up very well, it's ok! You're not going to want to go out again with every person you date. Remember, when you are dating, the main

focus *isn't on finding a new marriage partner*. It's just about meeting other people and learning to enjoy yourself in new ways. ***Remember you have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find a prince or princess.***

4. A good way to get to know someone new. When you find someone new, the best way is to first ask them to have a cup of coffee or tea with you. In this day and age, it is usually acceptable for either sex to ask. This is a great way to get a lot of information. Then you can make a decision on whether you want to pursue the relationship further.

5. “Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader” If it has been a long time since you have been on the dating scene, then you need to read the book ***“How to Talk to Girls”*** by nine year old Alec Greven. No kidding; it only takes about 10 minutes but it can give you some real insight on the dating world. He just gives basic facts through a 9 year old’s eyes. ***Sometimes we need to see it through a child’s eyes in order to put it into perspective.*** By the way, this is not just for the guys; it’s also for the ladies as well.

6. “Act like a Lady - Think like a Man” by Steve Harvey.

Steve Harvey is an ex stand-up comedian who had a WB radio talk show “The Steve Harvey Show”, from 1996 to 2002 and now has a TV show on week days in the afternoon called “Steve Harvey”. He uses his show to help people with life’s problems using good common sense by drawing from his personal life’s experiences. His book ***“Act like a Lady - Think like a Man”*** can give you a lot of good information on dating and relationships. There was also a comedy movie caled ***“Think like a Man”*** based on his book. It’s not one of those stuffy self-help books; it is fun reading. He uses straight talk and is very straight forward in making some very good points about dating and relationships that everyone needs to hear. You don’t have to agree with everything he says; just get the points he’s putting out. He sounds like he is talking to the woman only, but he is definitely talking to the men too.

NEW: Steve Harvey has a new book out ***“Straight Talk, No Chaser”***. If you enjoyed his first book then you’ll most likely enjoy this one. I am not trying to push sales for Steve Harvey: It’s because he deals with relationships, and the way he presents that information by getting straight to the point with no nonsense gives it value for this class.

7. You are comfortable with “being single and happy” and have chosen to stay that way.

Yet, you still like to date. It is a good idea to be fair and upfront with the person you may wish to date because they may be looking for a relationship totally different from what you are willing to give.

Thirteen Dating Red Flags:

Those little comments or behaviors made by the other person signaling that something is not quite right; it’s a feeling that goes right to the pit of your stomach. These (13) dating red flags may suggest that there are issues worth further consideration before pursuing any kind of meaningful relationship. In searching for the person you want to share a happy and fulfilling life with, which is generally why we date, it is very important to avoid the wrong partner. So you will need to be alert to and aware of the consistency of your partner’s behaviors so you can avoid relationships that are doomed for disaster. ***It is also important to realize that some of these red flags may fit ourselves, and we need to be honest with ourselves if that is the case.***

This book is a must read (“Life Code” by Dr. Phil McGraw “The New Rules For Winning In The Real World”). This will be the best book your money ever bought. It will open up your eyes to how the real world works and will be a big help to you through the rest of your life, far beyond what I can cover in this class. It will help you become a true winner. I’m going to say this, the way Dr. Phil would present it to you. ***If you think that you already know how the real world works, then you most likely did not get this far in this class to read this paragraph. If you did then this book is for you.***

1. Smells like liquor, drugs, or tobacco

Don't rely on your partner's description of their drinking habits (**or any other addictive substance**).

Remember, if your partner is an addict, their judgment is impaired and they are probably in denial. When you love someone with an addiction, you are in a love triangle – you, your partner, and whatever the addiction is. It is impossible to feel truly loved by your partner when they put their addiction above you.

2. Disrespectful or abusive to others

In the early stages of dating your partner may treat you like a queen (or king), while he (or she) is trying to impress you. *Note how they behave with others:*

A. Are they rude?

If your date is rude to your waiter by either snapping their fingers or dismissing the waiter with a wave of their hand, they either have an issue with power or simply do not understand that we're all on this planet together. Decent, common courtesy is a forerunner of good things when looking for a mate. The lack of it is a big red flag. If your date is willing to treat a waiter with such little respect, then someday, they'll be willing to treat you like that. *However*, if your date had a particularly difficult day and acknowledges that and apologizes for their behavior, then they are actually quite evolved and possibly a keeper.

B. Do they describe others in derogatory terms?

You will surely be their target once they let their guard down. So get out before you become their target.

3. Lives with parents

Adults living with their parents, except for temporary or extenuating circumstances, could lack the responsibility and maturity to live on their own. Nothing takes the love and romance out of a relationship than feeling like your partner's mother or father.

4. Has a "Me" problem

I don't care how fascinating your date's life story is, if they're not asking you questions about you, this is definitely a red flag. Here's why; if you're on your very first date and they're not asking about you, that's never going to change: not in one year; not in ten years. If you don't recognize this flag and you go out on a second and a third date, they're going to think you're okay with that dynamic. They're going to think you're agreeing that this relationship is all about them.

5. Lies, cheats, or manipulates

Honesty is the foundation of trust. And trust is the key to intimacy. *Run as fast as you can from someone who lies, cheats, or manipulates.* You'll always suffer from suspicion because you are never sure when your partner is telling you the truth.

6. History of many sexual partners and relationships

A person with a history of many sexual partners and relationships can spell trouble on several fronts. You are increasing your odds of acquiring a STD. Your partner has demonstrated their inability to commit to one person, especially through the difficult times.

7. Has a white ring around the finger

If you spot a white ring around the finger, be sure to be on the alert for other signals that you might be dating a married person.

Suspicious behaviors include:

- Does not let you see his/her home.
- Can only be reached by cell phone.

- Does not like to be seen in public places with you, etc.

Note: The ring itself was the first thing I looked for when I began dating after my divorce. When I got divorced the second time, I wore my wedding ring for the first year, “Just to remind myself that I needed that time to heal and to say I was not interested at this time.”

8. Avoids discussing his or her past

A person who avoids talking about their past could be hiding something serious such as a criminal background, a wife (or husband) they never got around to divorcing, or children they abandoned, etc.

9. Gets attached (or falls in love) too quickly

Individuals that hastily jump into a relationship with both feet may be looking for someone to rescue them from their problems. **Note:** This is why some people get into affairs.

Be sure to assess their motivations before rushing into a relationship.

- Are they a single parent, who is desperately looking for someone to help parent their problem children?
- Are they heavily in debt and looking for a Sugar Daddy/Mommy?
- Are they sad and depressed and looking for someone to make them happy?

In any relationship, there will always be a time when one person will want to move deeper into the relationship. This is normal, so you will have to make the decision as to when it is acceptable.

10. Blames others for their problems

Individuals, who cannot take ownership for their problems and are very entrenched in their “victim status”, will eventually start blaming you for all of their problems. This includes blaming their ex’s for everything as well. Worse yet, they have no hope of improving the situation, since they will not acknowledge their part in a problem or conflict. *Run; don’t walk, to the nearest exit.*

11. Does not want to help with simple chores

Sounds petty, but someone who pouts when you ask them to help you clear the table or take out the trash is likely to view you as a maid or hired help rather than a partner. In the long run, you’ll likely end up resenting this person.

12. Their wardrobe is inappropriate

They show up at the door with flip-flops on, in shorts, or dressed in sweats and you’re going out to a nice dinner at a restaurant. This is a good sign that they don’t respect themselves or you.

13. Their life seems like a soap-opera

They always have a drama going on. This is a person whose life seems to be always in turmoil, not because of natural causes but because of bad decisions and choices. This is a sign of immaturity, move on.

Ten Quick Thoughts on Red Flags

This is after you have been dating for a while. These are just as important as the first thirteen, if not more, because now you are in a relationship.

1. You are not on the VIP list for breaking news

You should be among the first to know about exciting news or bad news.

2. They avoid meeting your family or friends

If they are shying away from meeting your friends/family consistently, then there are problems.

3. They don't make any sacrifices

When someone gives up going to something that they really love, and instead goes to an event that they never would have gone to if you hadn't invited them, that's sacrifice.

4. They can't fit in your future

Be very honest with yourself: Are they someone you would be proud to have by your side in any situation?

5. They are too controlling

It's a major problem if someone is controlling you and not allowing you to be who you want to be within a relationship.

6. The "what are we?" conversation fails miserably

If they are confused and surprised that you're ready to get serious, the timing is not right, and you should try to figure out how long you want to wait around until they are ready.

7. They talk about plans that don't involve you

If you find that someone is making plans or talking about far off places without inviting you along for the ride, don't let yourself get too involved with this person.

8. Your friends or family don't like them

Remember that your friends and family know you best. Don't take their thoughts with a grain of salt. It's one thing if a person or two don't get along with your significant other, but if a lot of them are saying you should reconsider, by all means, take another look.

9. They violated your trust

Whether it's cheating or a little lie that they got caught in, it will be hard to regain trust. Too often people take trust for granted and, once they lose it, they never get it back.

10. You practice "unbalanced dating"; one person makes all the decisions

Relationships are fun when you are both able to contribute. If you're not taking turns creating fun times together, it will most likely fizzle out.

One last thought on red flags. Life can seem really difficult at times and be unfair, but in actuality, we have a lot more control over our outcome than we sometimes think. We don't have complete control over everything, but we do have control over most situations. That is why we need to be completely aware of the red flags that surround us, and *also those red flags that we ourselves may be sending out.* We do have complete control in making good choices in how those red flags will affect us personally and others.

Effects on Family and Friends When you Start Dating

There's something you really need to remember when you begin dating someone. Remember that you are buying into the "*Whole Enchilada*". This means the whole family: your relatives and theirs, your friends and theirs. You cannot underestimate the impact that dating may have, on any one person, on either side, no matter what age they are.

If you remember back in *Class-I*, the question was asked "Who got hurt in the affair?" in the movie "It's Complicated". If you answered everyone but especially the children, you got the point. We so often forget how our actions affect our children. I was given this poem by a grandmother. Her fourteen year old grandson had written the poem some years after the divorce of his parents. I am sharing the poem with you because I feel it expresses very clearly the pain and hurt that children go through because of divorce. I am printing the poem as it was given to me.

Divorce

Divorce...the worst thing man has created
A schism between one whole
One has the illusion of triumph
One is left with nothing but despair
As one apologizes it means nothing to the other
As if the bond was never formed
How cruel to just vanish without a sound
As one attempts to leave, the other begs
He begs for forgiveness, he begs for understanding
After a few weeks it's all a disaster
The process speeds up even faster
She feels she's done the right thing
As she hastily removes the shiny bright ring
The child is watching all before his eyes
The mother is given him hundreds of lies
Lies about yelling, fighting, and stress
In reality she too, feels depressed
All in all, Divorce is a corruption
All started with one simple eruption
Author: fourteen year old Jack H.

Dealing with Children (Tweens and Under) When Dating or Remarrying

Dating after a divorce will receive mixed reviews from your kids. A big reason for this will have to do with the age of your children. Why? This is because they are at different developmental stages.

Here are some of the reactions you can expect from children

Ages 7 and under

These children are young and rather resilient. But, as is the case with any of these age groups, they've gone through a lot of changes in rapid succession. While children at this age may not voice unhappiness with your dating, you may notice regressive behaviors such as thumb sucking, potty training issues, and an increase in temper tantrums. Kids at this age are not old enough to fully verbalize fear or anger about what's happened, and happening to their family, so they act it out. On the other hand, these children are less likely to realize that you are "dating" right away.

They may just think you're meeting a "friend" and are content with that. This lack of awareness allows you more time to find someone you are serious about before any major resistance may occur.

Ages 8-11

These children are able to express themselves a little more. You may begin to get some flack from these kids about going out. They will know they are uncomfortable but still may not be able to label it as a specific emotion. The resistance will likely come out in grouchy, non-compliant behavior.

A plus, for kids at this age, is if you're dating partner has children roughly the same age. If the relationship becomes serious, and your partner's children begin to meet your children, this can be a big plus. Children at this age are very social. They may look at your partner's child as a playmate and be more comfortable with you dating, if they are able to spend time with this new friend.

Tweens & Adolescents

This won't come as a shock to anyone but this is the age where you will encounter the greatest resistance. By nature, this age group is very self-centered. The world revolves around them and their needs. If those needs aren't met, or if they think those needs are being threatened, they will lash out. Be prepared for this as a possibility.

It's doubly important for you to make sure you don't focus too much of your time and energy on a new relationship when you have children in this age group. This does that mean you're not allowed to have a life? No, but some people find it hard to balance parenting and dating. Remember those friends you stopped hearing from whenever they were in a relationship? This is a perfect example. They were not good at managing both relationships. **As a parent, that's not an option.**

Dealing With (Adult) Children When Dating or Remarrying

Remember, you will always be mom and dad to them and they want the best for you.

Adult Children

Their reaction has a lot to do with how long you've been divorced. If a big portion of their time growing up was spent with their parents divorced, then they may be encouraging you to get out there and date. They'll want to see you happy.

If, however, the divorce happened after they moved out and became an adult, you're more likely to experience mixed reactions. They have the image of an intact family pretty ingrained in their heads. Seeing their parents apart and with someone else can be especially difficult. No matter how old your children are when you choose to begin dating after divorce, be prepared for some discomfort. It seems weird. It also is a firm statement that you are **NOT** planning on reconciling with their other parent. While that may seem like a weird statement, research shows that most children of divorce, ***no matter what age***, cling to the hope that their parents might get back together.

When You Start Dating

These are good to remember no matter what age your children are.

1. Make Sure to Select Wisely

While you may want what's best for you, doing what's best for the kids still rests upon you if their approval matters to you. To avoid the drama, stay away from trigger situations, like dating someone who is younger than your own kids, and stick to people who will fit in with the whole family.

2. Keep Personal Matters Private

When it comes to your love life, there are parent/child boundaries that must be respected. Showing up at every holiday gathering with a new fling can cause conflict among the most peaceful of families. So, if you are actively dating, it's best to keep personal matters private until your romantic intentions are serious, even if it sometimes means putting your own happiness aside for a while.

3. Time it Right

When it comes to their parents, children, no matter how old at the time of loss, cannot be expected to grow up in adult time. Everyone heals at a different pace, so be sure to give your children due amount of time to mourn a failed marriage or death and adjust to the changed circumstances before making any introductions.

4. Break It to Them Gently

Good news spreads quickly; so it's very easy and can be damaging for your kids if they get wind of your relationship from a third party. If your children are adults, make sure they are the first to know about your

relationship. **Important note:** *If they are young children, make sure your relationship is the right one before you introduce them to your children.*

5. Maintain Your Relationship

The most important thing a single parent can do is to keep treating their children the same way they did before they met their new partner. So keep reminding them, ***no matter how old they are, they are still your first priority*** and make sure to maintain obligations and make room for family time ***without having your partner present.***

End of Class-3

Stop. Try to relate the information that has been given in this class to what is happening in your life at this time. Go back over the information as often as you need. Take a week to fully comprehend each class, as it relates to you, before moving on to the next class. However, it is totally up to you. If at any time you have any questions or concerns while taking a class you may contact me, John Cerro, *confidentially*, by e-mail at john@reddingumc.org and I will be more than happy to address your questions or concerns.

Class-4 **Ten Ways to “Win at Being Single”**

Is There Really a Typical Single?

As much as some people would like to think there is, the truth is, there is no typical single person, male or female. They come in all shapes, sizes and ages, just like married people.

1. Who Are Singles?

Let’s face it; we live in a couple-oriented society, so how is it we're not all in relationships? The answer lies in our changing times. In past generations, women got married for life, regardless of their personal choices or careers. Today, women have a lot more opportunities and are much more likely to weave in and out of a few serious relationships in their adult lifetimes. This can be by choice or circumstance.

Singles are also formed from a divorce, something that is not new to us. They may be working in one-gender jobs where it's hard to meet would-be partners. It is also fair to say those people are more cautious and don't want to end up in an unhappy or unsatisfying marriage again.

Being single is a choice and with choice comes power, and that's what being single is all about, ***self empowerment.*** Whether you’re single for a week, a year or 20 years, the important thing is not to see it as a lifestyle forced on you. Never focus on what you lack or that's all you'll end up seeing. Empower yourself to enjoy all that being single means. Terms such as ***"rediscovering myself", "having time and space to myself", "revisiting the meaning of intimacy" and "getting away from limitations"*** all reflect a new identity that can be explored when a major life-change occurs. After all, life is constantly growing and changing, and we can choose to develop with these various stages in life.

2. Definition of "Single"

Does it mean you have never married? Does it mean you live alone? Are you single if you are dating someone regularly? In today’s world there are now subtle interpretations of being single, that were not present a few decades ago when you were either married or single.

A good definition of single people is: ***has never-married, previously married, temporarily unattached, or***

seeing someone regularly. The only time you are not single is when you are in a committed relationship.

There are a few people who want to stay single forever, but most see it as an in-between state. That's fine, as long as you aren't desperate to get off the single's wagon; desperation is like fear, people can sense it a mile off and when you're desperate, you'll either meet unsuitable partners or no one at all.

"*Single*" is a label, and even though we don't like labeling, today's society seeks to identify by stereotypes. If we must wear labels, then at least let's wear them proudly. Never feel ashamed to be single, even if it's not by choice. Identity is as much a psychological attitude as is whether we are short or tall, male or female, and married or single. Let's say you have been married for over 20 years and suddenly you find yourself single; it might take a lengthy transition for you to adjust to this new status and all that it implies. So don't get overwhelmed with it.

3. Social Attitudes towards Singles

The biggest obstacle to self-esteem for singles is the attitude of those around you, particularly partnered people! We would like to think that we've passed the era when singles are avoided by couples as dinner guests because they make for an odd number at the table, but this situation does still exist. There's also the inevitable fear by a married person that the single person might run off with his or her spouse. This seems pretty silly, but it happens. Remember married people can be insecure too. However, we should be able to have 7 or 9 at a dinner table, if we want, made up of couples and singles as desired; the only standard should be *they're fun guests*. The loss of friends after a relationship breakdown is also common. Friends are sometimes forced to choose, and they can easily become yet another casualty of separation and divorce.

What can you do if you feel victimized by these attitudes?

First and foremost, remember that self-esteem is your responsibility; if you value yourself, you will command respect no matter what your relationship status is. Remember it is how you feel about yourself that is most important and not what someone might think or say about you. So take charge of your life.

4. Ups and Downs of Being Single

What's the Up Side? Having total control over your own life, more time for yourself, choices and new challenges, personal growth, more variety and scope in your social life, eating whatever you like, whenever you feel like it!

What's the Downside? You miss the intimacy of a *special person to share life with*, loneliness, the difficulties of social networking, and putting up with negative attitudes. If you feel as if you have much more of the downside, remember that being with another person isn't easy or simple by any means, as you have already found out. So don't presuppose that having a partner will be a positive relationship. Let's face it, there is no lonelier feeling than when a marriage is going wrong, and there is nothing less romantic than divorce.

If you don't want to be single, look around for a partner. Don't complain about lack of a romantic interest in your life if you're not going to try and change the situation. You have to get out there, really make an effort and most of all stay positive. *Cynical vibes are contagious* and you'll only attract people, who are bitter and frustrated by life, hardly suitable companions for a new start in life.

5. Looking After Yourself as a Single

Human beings have a number of needs that should be catered to every day - these include *physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, sexual and social needs*.

Physical: Most of us meet our daily physical needs without much thought. Some, of course, spend more

energy and time exercising than others, keeping fit and taking care of their bodies. This is very important to you at any age. It not only helps you to keep fit, it also does wonders for your brain and morale.

Emotional: Emotional needs are met according to temperament; some people are more emotional than others. Care about your feelings, try to understand your moods, work on personal growth and tune into yourselves more. Do things to keep yourself in a good mood. The *Enneagram* that I talked about in Class-2 can be very helpful. We all pray differently but are always welcomed by God. If just talking to God works for you, then that is perfect for you.

Intellectual: In our society, most of our intellectual needs are met by our occupations. If you have a job that is mentally taxing, it's good to balance that out by enjoying lighter hobbies, relaxing the mind after work, and generally finding balance in this area.

Spiritual: Spiritual needs are the most neglected. If you are religious, you probably feel you are already giving energy to that area of your life, but I'm speaking here of the wider definition of being spiritual, which can be expressed in a number of ways other than going to church or belonging to a particular religion. For instance, your spirituality can be expressed by creative pursuits: art, nature, pets, poetry and music. You don't need to make time for being spiritual - you naturally are, so all you need to do is allow expression of it; "how" will be your own personal choice.

Sexual: Being sexual is also a form of spirituality. Again, I mean this in the wider context. In our society, sexuality usually means intercourse, but being sexual is a permanent state and has little connection with the act itself. You can't ever cancel out your sexuality, but you can block it very successfully. The obvious question is - if sexual activity is not the only way you can be sexual, what else is there? Again, the things you can do to express *spirituality* through a range of life-affirming activities will free up your sexual energies as well. I am not telling you to abstain from sex. We are all grownups here and it is your choice. We have all been raised with good positive morals. How you handle your sexuality needs is your own personal business. Just remember keep it in a *positive and loving state of mind*.

Social: Social needs are sometimes the most frustrating and difficult area. Dating protocols may have changed so much that it might be like being turned loose in a foreign land. The safest bet is still honesty and communication. If you're not sure about practical things like "who picks up the tab?" and "do you meet at the restaurant?" ask to be clear - *you won't go far wrong that way*.

6. Strategies for a Happy Single-hood

Here are some general tips for a positive journey as a single person:

- 1.** Don't ever feel that you need to explain or justify being single; *be proud of where you are in your life, it took hard work to get there*.
- 2.** *Enjoy the journey* of being single, whether it's short or long, by choice, or initially forced upon you.
- 3.** If you have come out of a relationship, you might want to grieve and heal for a time; *when you're ready*, start going out again.
- 4.** Don't let your pride stand in the way of accepting *or* initiating invitations - *go for it!*
- 5.** If you're feeling lonely, don't wait for someone to call you - *reach out*.
- 6.** Don't absorb the *negative ideas/beliefs* around you.

7. See your single life as a time for yourself, *to be "selfish" for a while, and grow as an individual.*
8. Remember that love often taps you on the shoulder when you least expect it, *so stay ready.*
9. *Don't accept second best* - hold out for what you really want in a relationship.
10. Allow your friends to set up blind dates for you with good grace. *You never know!*
11. *Never ever be desperate* when seeking a partner. Hold onto your own completeness and you'll meet another complete person, not someone who expects you to fulfill their needs.
12. *Never say never* - always be open to life's opportunities.
13. *Become a joiner*; seek out groups that allow you to share common interests or learn more about yourself and being single. Just as we should see each day as an adventure, think of changes, even apparently undesirable ones, in the same light. Being single is just another adventure! Being pushed out of your comfort zone is scary but also exhilarating and liberating. *Single, or part of a couple, you are always you and that's more than enough to be happy.*
14. *Stay positive* and involved with people. I can't over stress this one. It is very important that you don't feel alone. I would like to offer you a personal invitation to our singles group "Singles Talking to Singles" at First Church. "Singles Talking to Singles" is an outreach program of First Church and is open to everybody who is divorced, in a divorce, has ended a significant relationship, never been married, or widowed. "Singles Talking to Singles" is *not a bible study*. It is purely a social activity, a way to make your extended family larger. It provides an opportunity for singles to have fun, good conversation, and fellowship with other singles. It is *not meant* to be a primary place to find dates. Activities have included barbecues, theater, movies and dining out. We extend an invitation to all singles to join the group whenever you can with no obligations or fees. Kin Wickman is the leader and has been doing a great job with this group for a long time now. For more information go back to the main page of this class and click on "Singles Talking to Singles" at the bottom of the page or contact Ken by email: singles@reddingumc.org. If you feel you are not quite ready for this group, please keep it in the back of your mind, you may feel differently later on.

7. What is a Happy Single?

I liked this so much that I thought I would share it with you because it describes being a Happy Single quite well.

"Being single can be a life-saving, rejuvenating experience. In fact, one can't truly be successful in a relationship without being single for a time. Being single allows us to do what we want, when we want, and with whom we want without having to answer to anyone. Being single allows us to take full responsibility for paying our bills, cleaning and decorating, cooking our meals, planning our activities, and entertaining ourselves.

It allows us the time to sit in quiet solitude, to run naked around the living room, to belch as loud as we want, and secretly watch shows that no one else would actually ever admit to watching. This is because we have more time on our hands and are not avoiding looking at ourselves by focusing our energies on someone else. Basically, being single affords each of us the opportunity to discover who we are, what we do and don't like, how we deal with things, what we want out of life, what our expectations are, what our potentials and limitations are, what energizes and empowers us, and what discourages and disappoints us.

The goal of being alone should not be to prepare us for couple-hood. Rather, the goal of being single should be to learn to fulfill ourselves, to meet our needs, and to develop as a human being regardless of whether or not we

choose to enter into a relationship. By learning to love and care for ourselves, we diminish the risk of starving for someone else to fill the void within our souls; a void that only we can truly fill.

The purpose of entering into a relationship should be to share oneself with another person as opposed to trying to get from someone what is lacking in ourselves. For us to expect someone else to fill in the gaps usually results in grave disappointments, a sense of failure, and endless resentment. Being in an unhealthy relationship is no more admirable than being alone and isolated. However, choosing to be a happy single can be just as satisfying as thriving in a healthy relationship.

With the advent of increased divorces, delayed marriages, fewer births and growing female independence, more and more people will find themselves single. So, why not make the most of it? Sit back, have a soda, and try belching as loud as you can! You'll never know what you can accomplish until you try!"

Ten Ways To “Win at Being Single”

Here are ten ways that will make you a winner at being single. Make a copy of this and post it so that you can read it every day. All the *life tools* that have been given you in the four classes are just that, **tools**. You have to use them in order for them to work

- 1. Say yes to every opportunity to learn, grow and meet new people.** Opportunities are knocking everywhere, just open up to them. Don't become hermitlike. "Don't wait for extraordinary opportunities. Seize common occasions and make them great. Weak people wait for opportunities; strong people make them."
- 2. Be grateful for what you have.** After the grieving period, focus on what you do have: For example, good health and a good support system of family and friends. Your family and friends are there for you, so stay close to them. "When you are grateful, fear disappears, and abundance appears."
- 3. Don't be afraid to invest yourself in deep relationships with other people.** You don't have to be dating somebody to have an intimate and fulfilling relationship with them. Don't be afraid to open up and be vulnerable sometimes. "We're never so vulnerable than when we trust someone - but paradoxically, if we cannot trust, neither can we find love or joy."
- 4. Decide for yourself if there are aspects of your life or your personality that you would like to change and do it. You are your best evaluator.** You don't need to listen to those people who tell you that you are single because you are too "picky", too fat, or too old to meet someone else. Remember; always keep your logic intact. Being alone and happy is having a fulfilled life. "He who knows others is wise. He who knows himself is enlightened."
- 5. Ignore the toxic people in your life.** It is easy to recognize them. Their negative words of fear and discouragement sap your energy. Good people will tell you "If you have made mistakes, there is always another chance for you. You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing we call 'failure' is not the falling down, but the staying down. "
- 6. Think about all the things you can do because you are now single.** You could take off and go traveling without discussing it with somebody else. You can watch TV all day without being called lazy. You don't actually have to do these things but, sometimes, just the knowledge that you could is enough to make you feel great. "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. You are the person who'll decide where to go."

7. Invest in yourself. Save some money and get a professional massage. Get a manicure and pedicure or join a gymnasium **and use it**, anything that nurtures your body and lifts your spirit. "Take care of your body and mind. It's the only place you have to live."

8. At times, small things can tend to pull you way down. Try to see the glass half full instead of half empty; in other words, try to see the brighter side of things. Being positive increases life span, lower rates of depression, lower levels of distress, gives greater resistance to the common cold, gives better psychological and physical well-being, reduces risk of death from cardiovascular disease and gives better coping skills during hardships and times of stress. "You don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing."

9. Look in your local newspaper for opportunities to join a service club or volunteer with an organization. Look in your church newsletter, if you belong to one, for church related activities, if that makes you happy. Check the continuing education program at your local community college to see if there is a class that you would like to attend. Join a Singles Group if you like. "Today's opportunities erase yesterday's failures."

10. This is the most important one of all "Never Forget the First Nine" even after you start dating, remarry or decide to stay single. "Life is full of new and happy beings"

Closing

All the information given, including books and movies recommended were given to stimulate thought. You may or may not agree with everything that was discussed or recommended; however, if you found that the class gave you hope, and you understand "***God loves you unconditionally***" then my work is done. All you have to do now is put it into action. Feel free to print out the class, or save it to your "favorites". Please feel free to return to the "Home Page" of our website and check out all the other active groups at First Church. You are always welcome to join us for Sunday Services at 9:00am, 11:00am and 5:30pm. Pastor Rod Brayfindley does wonderful "Love First" Sermons.

If you are trying to understanding where the ***love*** is when it comes to some peoples Bible interpretations, that sound so hateful, then "***Love Wins***" by Rob Bell is a book for you. Yes it is religious, but not the ordinary religious books that you have read or heard about in the past. Rob Bell writes just as the title says "Love Wins".

If you are still overwhelmed with all that is going in your life then you may want to look into "Stephen Ministry". This is for people that are in a Crisis or a Loss and are having a very hard time getting a grip on it. Stephen Ministry is our congregation's one-to-one caregiving ministry. God works through Stephen Ministers to plant a seed of hope and healing in a person whose life seems barren and forlorn because of some crisis or tragedy. There is no charge for this. There is a button for "Stephen Ministry" on every page of our webpage in the right hand column.

Books Recommend:

1. "**The Essential Enneagram**" by David Daniels, M.D.
2. "**Life Code**" by Dr. Phil McGraw
"The New Rules For Winning In The Real World"
3. "**Love Wins**" by Rob Bell
4. "**Act like a Lady - Think like a Man**" by Steve Harvey.
5. "**Straight Talk, No Chaser**" by Steve Harvey
6. "**My Stick Family: Helping Children Cope with Divorce (Let's Talk)**" by Natalie June Reilly.
7. "**How to Talk to Girls**" by nine year old Alec Greven

Movies Recommended:

1. "**It's Complicated**"
2. "**500 Days of Summer**"
3. "**Think Like A Man**"

*God Loves You Always,
John Cervo*