

Session 3 – How To Embrace Your New Role As Single Rather Than As A Couple

We live in a coupled world, and no one who has lived as a couple with any degree of satisfaction can properly project the stark reality of living a noncoupled life. We are often unprepared for the shock of walking into the empty house, the silence and the social differences.

The first time you get back into socializing with friends someone will comment how great you look and because a certain length of time has gone by, no one mentions “his/her” name. At that moment you are thinking “how can I get out of here?” because they are all more uncomfortable than I am. There is almost this deafening silence about what is not said and you feel alone in a crowd of friends. You may also end up feeling like the “odd man out” so to speak, tagging along with the other couples. In most cases your friends don’t make you feel this, but somehow you feel it anyway.

With time you will learn to avoid situations that make you feel sad and unprepared to deal with the other couples.

In time, it becomes easier to maintain relationships with the couples you are close with. Make it clear to your coupled friends that you want to be included and that you are happy to reciprocate with at home dinners, restaurant arrangements or other social functions you were accustomed to doing. Here are a few tips;

- Keep entertaining informal; then no one feels so coupled, rather you gather as a group of friends.
- Avoid social gatherings that might become too emotionally charged for the first year or so, such as New Years Eve.
- Don’t feel obligated to attend events that your partner loved and you tagged along because that’s what couples do, such as going to your husband’s alma mater football games.
- Starting out with 1 or 2 trusted couple friends usually is easier than jumping right into a larger event such as the annual fund raising gala.

Make some notes on events you might want to avoid for a while;

Anticipating special events that might be difficult for you will allow you to plan ahead and be gentle with your feelings and decide how you might handle invitations.

List some ways in which you could take care of yourself as you experience anxiety about these approaching events? (example, find an alternate activity)

How To Deal With Feelings of Being Left Out of a World Filled With Couples

Obviously, your social life will be different now that you are single; the ways in which you entertained and socialized changed drastically. Without question you will forgo, miss and yearn for many of the things you used to do. You will at times feel like the third wheel, you might even have a tendency to isolate yourself because you don't want to go somewhere alone. The worst part is that you may get the feeling other spouses don't want you around their spouse alone. Yes that does happen and you feel it in the pit of your stomach. Let it go.

- Death is uncomfortable for the living and often friends feel vulnerable when someone close dies. They don't know what to say or do and so they avoid.
- Know that your friends are probably doing the best they can just like you. They surely still care about you, but they too are grieving the death of your spouse.
- Often widows say, "I know who my friends turned out to be" but remember married friends may have a hard time relating to you as a single when they knew you as a couple.

- The best way to respond if you feel like your relationships are rocky is to be proactive and honest. Even though you are grieving, you may need to put your feelings aside and pick up the phone and keep in touch.
- Also if you haven't heard from a friend in while, pick up the phone and call them because often people can't make the first move because they don't know what to say, but they will welcome your call that has reopened the door.

*“It is easier to act your way into a new way of thinking
Than to think your way into a new way of acting”*

~ J.A. Davidson

The trick lies in deciding what makes you miserable and what makes you happy. List some activities that you enjoyed with or without your spouse while you were married;



Think about what it meant to be a “wife/husband” and write a list of what was most important to you in your role. Then write a second list of what is most important to you now.

Being a wife/husband meant:

What is important to me now and where will I refocus my energy:

There are many activities you can do by yourself and many more in which you can find friends to go along. There might be activities quite frankly you enjoyed doing alone and others you’d prefer companionship, make a note of both;

Things I really enjoy doing alone are:

Things I like to do with a friend are:

Most urgent however, is building your own network of single friends as well as couples with whom you can get out and socialize.

Consider where you might make new friends while enjoying a new activity;

- Take a class or workshop
- On the job
- Join a community group such as the Chamber of Commerce or Rotary
- Reading/book, garden clubs
- Learn a new hobby such as cooking, art, writing
- Volunteer for a fundraising event on a cause you are passionate about
- Volunteer for a local charity you are passionate about
- Spend time at your church teaching or volunteering
- Spend time at your children's or grand children's schools as children have a way of making us celebrate life and see joy in the simplest of things
- Join a widow support group, gain support and make new friends

There are hundreds of clubs in your town with like-minded people who share an interest in something, go to www.meetup.com or church's as an example.

*“You don't heal from the loss of a loved one because time passes,
you heal because of what you do with the time.”*

~Carol Crandell