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Divorce and Remarriage: Learning from the Past, Altering the Future

ACTIVITY PART ONE



ACTIVITY PART TWO



Years Later we Formed the “Brimhall Bunch”



Learning Objectives

1. **Examine** the divorce and remarriage experience from a broader perspective
2. **Learn** common findings from the divorce and remarriage research
3. **Discuss** how clients carry experiences from their past relationships into their marriages, their divorces, and their remarriages and how these experiences impact their current relationships
4. **Describe** strategies that can help couples navigate the decision to divorce
5. **Describe** how divorce impacts family relationships
6. **Learn** how to help remarried couples limit the negative impact of their first relationship on their current marriage
7. **Identify** clinical intervention for working with divorce and remarriage that increase effectiveness

These are My Objectives, What are Yours...?

- Name 3 areas where you feel pretty knowledgeable about Divorce and Remarriage
- When you came today, name 3 things you were hoping to learn/take away?

“Human beings of all ages are happiest and able to deploy their talents to best advantage when they are confident that, standing behind them, there are one or more trusted persons who will come to their aid should difficulties arise”

John Bowlby (1979, p. 3)



Most People Get Married



- Majority of American women will marry by age 30*
 - 81% of European American
 - 77% Latina
 - 52% of African American

*those with highest levels of education marry most frequently

- Divorce Rate: 40-50%
 - Steady increase between 1950-1970
 - Asian American and Latina lowest rate of divorce
 - African American highest rate
 - Most people who divorce will remarry
 - 2/3 of women (66%)
 - 3/4 of men (75%)

Reasons for Divorce

Women (initiate 66% of divorces)

- Communication problems
- Incompatibility
- Marital Unhappiness

- Also cite serious problems
 - Extramarital affairs
 - Physical abuse
 - Problems with substance abuse
 - Neglect of children

Men

- Communication problems
- Incompatibility
- Marital Unhappiness

- Cite daily interpersonal problems:
 - Wife's nagging
 - Fault finding
 - Whining

Risk Factors for Divorce



- Risks factors that increase the likelihood of divorce are:
 - Young age
 - Low levels of education
 - Being from a divorced family
 - Cohabiting pre-maritally
 - Having a child pre-maritally

Until Death Do us Part...



- Most people marry expecting to stay married
- Most divorce is met with strong feelings of:
 - Failure
 - Disappointment
 - Grief
 - Loss
 - Loss of partner
 - Loss of family
 - Parts of oneself (roles, identity, etc.)
- Only 20% of divorces are mutual (sought by both partners)
 - Grieving is often harder for the non-initiating partner

“Many of the most intense emotions arise during the formation, the maintenance, the disruption, and the renewal of attachment relationships”

John Bowlby



“There is a strong causal relationship between an individual’s experiences with his parents and his later capacity to make affectional bonds”



John Bowlby (1979, p. 135)



Insecure Attachment and Relationship Functioning

Feeney, B. C., & Monin, J. K. (2008). An attachment-theoretical perspective on divorce. In J. Cassidy and P. R. Shaver (2nd Ed.), *Handbook of Attachment* (p. 937)



- Insecure attachment strongly predicts:
 - Conflict behaviors
 - Social support and caregiving behaviors
 - Biased information processing
 - Coping strategies
 - Responses to stress
 - Emotional regulation/expression
 - Trust
 - Defensiveness
 - Forgiveness
 - Relationship dissatisfaction
 - Poor communication
 - Poor problem solving

Insecure Attachment and Relationship Functioning

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In an insecure relationship, protecting oneself is the primary objective, and it often overrides one's ability to respond empathically to one's partner

Insecure Attachment and Relationship Functioning

Feeney, B. C., & Monin, J. K. (2008). An attachment-theoretical perspective on divorce. In J. Cassidy and P. R. Shaver (2nd Ed.), *Handbook of Attachment* (p. 937)



1. Both partners defensively avoid dependency (both withdraw during distress)
2. One partner feels deprived of support; other feels overwhelmed with insatiable needs
3. One partner always occupies the dependent role, the other is defensively accusatory and dismissive

Significance of Divorce

Feeney, B. C., & Monin, J. K. (2008). An attachment-theoretical perspective on divorce. In J. Cassidy and P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of Attachment*



- Divorce is among the most significant of all life events because it involves the disruption of one of the strongest affectional bonds formed by adults

Significance of Divorce

Feeney, B. C., & Monin, J. K. (2008). An attachment-theoretical perspective on divorce. In J. Cassidy and P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of Attachment*



- Divorce often leads to:
 - Increased illnesses
 - Depression
 - Increased psychopathology
 - Suicide
 - Homicide
 - Violence
 - Substance abuse
 - Accidents/injuries
 - Diseased caused mortality
- Gender differences
 - Women suffer because economic hardship
 - Men suffer because of loss of social support

*(when compared to married individuals)

Significance of Divorce

Feeney, B. C., & Monin, J. K. (2008). An attachment-theoretical perspective on divorce. In J. Cassidy and P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of Attachment*



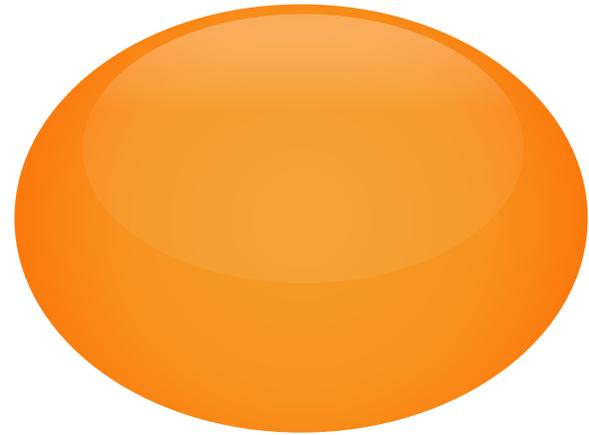
- Persistent attachment
 - Attachment bonds may be established fairly quickly but are broken slowly
- Primary cause of adjustment* problems post-divorce
 - Separation distress creates proximity seeking behavior
 - Can be a time of heightened violence
- Relationship between former spouses often determines the emotional climate

*42% reconcile at least once

Four Basic Facts about Divorce

- Divorce is not a single event
- Change influences the entire family system
- The entire social system influences an individual's response to transition
- There is great diversity in how people respond





CLINICAL CASE EXAMPLE #1

“Who is in your family?”

Imagine this is you...

- How will you tell the children?
 - What should you do?
 - Is there anything you shouldn't do?
- What type of custody arrangements will you create?
 - What things play into your decision?
- How will you decide about material belongings?
 - Who will get the house?
 - Who will get the car?



Grieving Divorce: When, What, How*

Baum, N. (2003). The male way of mourning divorce: When, what, and how. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 31(1), 37-50.

Women

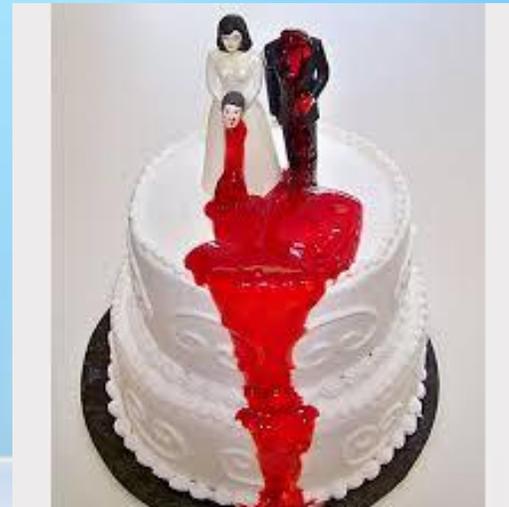
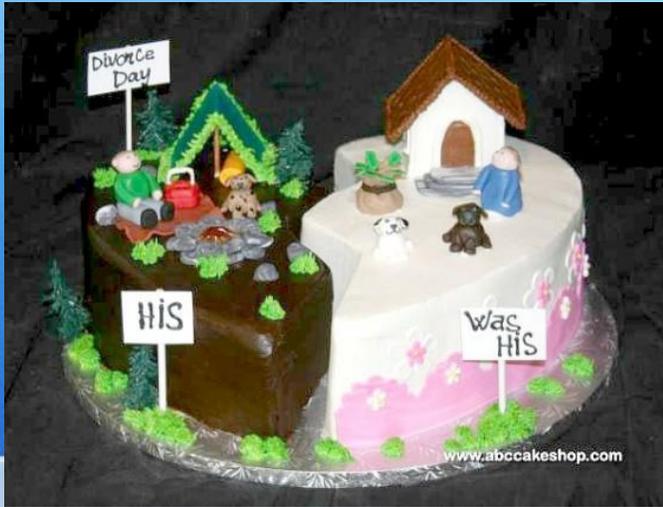
- Early (When)
 - Highest level of stress before divorce
 - Mourn the divorce up to a year before
- Relationship (What)
 - Mourn twice
 - Marital relationship
 - Loss of child's father
- Emotion (how)
 - More likely to reach out for support
 - Show grief in depression/expression

Men

- Delayed (When)
 - Highest level of stress after the decision
 - Show poorer adjustment several years after
- Family (What)
 - Children
 - Home
 - Family routine
- Activity (How)
 - Increased somatization, activity, medication
 - Sought help because of appetite loss



Divorce Cakes?



Two Major Factors Influence Transition

- Parent's ability to maintain authoritative parenting behaviors
- Parent's ability to put aside their anger toward other parent for sake of child

RAISING THE
KID YOU
Love
WITH THE
EX YOU
HATE



EDWARD FARBER PhD

3 Types of Divorce

- Cooperative Divorce (25%)
- The Distant Divorce (50%)
 - Hetherington called this “parallel” parenting
- The Angry Divorce (25%)

**TYPES OF
DIVORCE**

Reactions to Divorce



Common Reaction

- Sadness, Fear, Depression, Anger, Confusion, Relief (10%), Abandoned, Responsible
- Boys more external behavior
- Girls more internal behavior



Common Reaction

- Usually preoccupied, anxious, depressed
- Often unavailable when children need most
- Become either more permissive or more harsh
- Significant hit economically



Common Reaction

- Become either permissive (Disney Land Dad) or disengaged
- More likely to get involved with another person quickly

How Should We Tell our Children?



- Tell them together
- Make sure the children understand:
 - Both parents are committed to the care of the children
 - Communicate as much as you can about new changes
 - Reassure that their needs will be met
 - Divorce was not caused by the child but by conflict between parents
- Things you SHOULD NOT do:
 - Burden children with negative views of each other
 - Blame the other parent
 - Ask the child to “take sides”



Protective Factors

- Age
 - Elementary children and early adolescents at highest risk
 - Late adolescents at lowest risk (already independent from family)
- Timing
 - Boys suffer more difficulties at time of divorce
 - Girls suffer more problems at time of remarriage
- Level of Support:
 - Grandparents can be instrumental
 - School
- Level of Conflict between Parents

Long-Term Consequences

- Behavior
 - 75-80% doing well; function similar to non-divorced individuals
 - 20-25% continued to display aggression, impulsive decision-making, and depression
- Relationships
 - More likely to get divorced themselves
 - Have a harder time with intimate relationships

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Divorce: The Loss that Remains Unclear

Psychological Family (Boss, 2006)

- Originated with Waller (1938) (also Hess & Handel 1959)
 - Interactions between humans different because of psychological comp.
 - But the insistence on “hard data” restricted our focus to the observable and quantifiable physical structure of couples and families (p. 30).
- Intrinsic in human psyche
- Compensates for loss
- More than collection of remembered ties
 - **“the psychological family is an active and affective bond that helps people live with loss and trauma in the present. Cut off from loved ones physically or psychologically, people cope by holding on to some private perception of home and family” (Boss, 2006, p. 26).**
- We do not necessarily disconnect from loved ones just because they are physically gone, nor do we always connect to people just because they are physically present at home or in our daily lives (Boss, 2006, p. 2)

Boundary Ambiguity

- Individual perceptions of who is in and who is out of the family
- More uncertainty = More Ambiguity
 - More discrepancies between the “physical” family and the psychological family (among family members) means the more boundary ambiguity
- Who fulfills what roles within the family?

Impact of Boundary Ambiguity

- Sociological
 - Family boundaries no longer maintainable
 - Roles are confused
 - Tasks remain undone
 - Eventually the family becomes immobilized
- Psychological
 - Cognition is blocked
 - Lack of information and ambiguity
 - Decisions are often put on hold
 - Coping and grieving become frozen

Absent vs. Presence

“Rarely is someone we care about fully present, physically and emotionally. It is the unrelenting and extreme situations that can traumatize” (Boss, 2006, p. 32).

– Two kinds of psychological families

- **Psychologically Present/Physically Absent**
 - Ex-spouse
 - Non-resident parent
- **Physically Present/Psychologically Absent**
 - Diminished parent
 - Dependent parent
 - Stepparent

**Psychologically Present
Physically Absent (PSP/PHA)**

- Family often is preoccupied with missing member
 - Kidnapping
 - Soldiers missing in action (MIA)
 - Missing body
 - STORY of my current client
 - “Other persons are present to us less from the evidence of our senses than from the activity of our imaginations” (Waller, 1938, p. 20; see Boss, 2006, p. 32)
- Divorce and Remarriage
 - Non-residential parent
 - Ex-spouse

Non-resident Parent (PSP/PHA)

- Joint custody more popular but statistic still report
 - 85-90% of children live primarily with mother
- Lose the power of everyday interactions
 - Children in Florida
- Noncustodial parents feelings of anger and loss severe
 - Simultaneously losing their spouse, their children, and their home
- Afifi & Keith (2004)
 - “There are few institutionalized proscriptions for how children should grieve the loss of a noncustodial parent who is still alive but seemingly absent. Nor are there any typified coping mechanisms for noncustodial parents whose relationships with their children is ‘there’ but ‘not there’ like it used to be when they were living under the same household” (p. 66)

Non-resident Parent (PSP/PHA)

“At its core, the visiting relationship is ambiguous and therefore stressful. A visiting father is a parent without a portfolio. He lacks a clear definition of his responsibility or authority. He often feels unneeded, cut off from the day-to-day issues in the child’s life that provide the continuing agenda of the parent-child relationship (Wallerstein & Corbin, 1986, p. 88).

Family Tension

- Resident Parent is often trying desperately to forget
 - They no longer want the person in their lives
 - Divorced to not have daily interaction
 - Facilitates most nonresident parent/child interaction
 - More conflict less likely they are to facilitate relationship
- Child is doing everything possible to keep present
 - Display pictures, tell stories, maintain routines
- Non-resident Parent
 - Longs for “family life/routine”
 - Those that are successful maintain “everyday” talk
 - Try to keep presence alive

Ex-Spouse (PSP/PHA)

- Lack finality and temporal definition of death
 - Enhanced when children are involved
 - Forced to redefine emotional and physical relationship
- Persistent attachment (Weiss, 1975)
 - Healthiest relationships were:
 - Low in hostility, high in friendship, low in preoccupation
 - Level of preoccupation main predictor of divorce adjustment
- Often intense levels of pain, hurt, and often betrayal
- Relationship is replete with opportunities for:
 - Anger
 - Hatred/hostility
 - Possibly violence
 - Anger and retaliation is a way to stay attached
- Brimhall, Wampler, & Kimball (2008)
 - Remarried partners experienced physical and emotional reactions in their new relationship that were specifically attributed to their past relationships.

Family Tension

- Psychological Presence of ex-spouse playing active role in remarriage
 - Physical and emotional reactions
 - There are three people in our marriage
 - Some research indicates:
 - Better relationship between ex-spouses, more negative effect on the remarriage
 - Ex-partners seen as more of a threat/concern than others
- Amount of conflict between partners main predictor of child's adjustment
 - Often times ambiguity is centered around how to remain loyal to both

Diminished Parent (PHP/PSA)

- Divorce mothers typically experience:
 - Increased stress and depression
 - Lower income/resources
 - Less social support
 - Less time with their children
 - Due to decreased energy and increased levels of employment
- Children experience accumulated loss
 - Physically lose 1 parent & psychologically lose the other
 - Parents' grief can be transferred to children
 - “my mother had a nervous break for a while...she lost it and I had to pick up the slack. I was 10 years old and I baby sat my little sister all the time...I was like the mom in my family for four years. I took care of everybody” (Afifi & Keith, 2004, p. 78)

Dependent Parent (PHP/PSA)

- Divorce mothers typically experience:
 - Increased stress and depression
 - Lower income/resources
 - Less social support
 - Less time with their children
 - Due to decreased energy and increased levels of employment
- Often times due to lack of support, resident parent:
 - Disclose feelings
 - Share decision making
 - Promote oldest child to emotional confidant
 - “My mom vented to me basically. She had friends also but she came to me. So, our relationship became stronger, but it was strained on my part because I had the burden of her telling me everything” (Afifi & Keith, 2004, p. 79)

Stepparent (PHP/PSA)

- Introduction of any new member is time of transition
- Role of stepparent is vague and undefined
 - Lack of time to develop couple relationship
 - Lack legal rights but expected to contribute equally
- Common feelings are:
 - Confused, frustrated, isolated, excluded
- Often receive conflicting messages/expectations
 - Biological parent (diminished or dependent) may want them to step in immediately and take active role
 - Children want them to stay away and not get involved
- Parent child relationship has more history
- Often psychologically and emotionally ignored

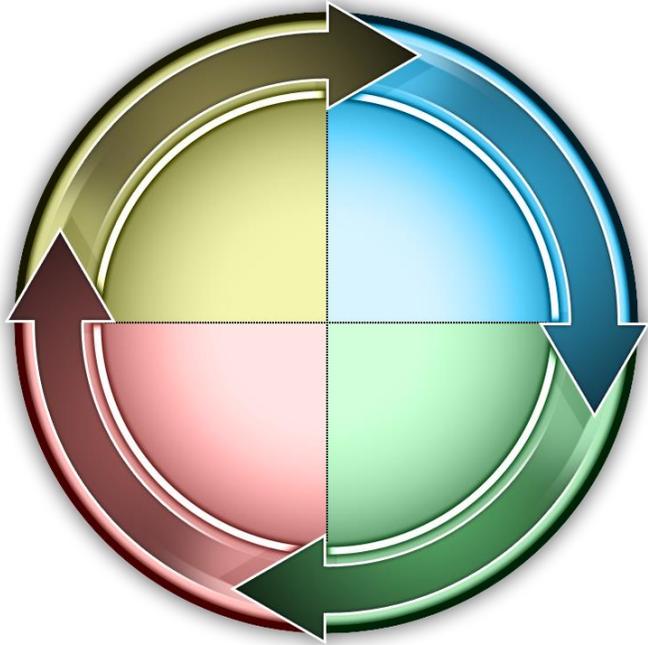
Tension in Family

- Resident parent wants them involved
 - Often glad to have more balance
- Child often feels replaced
 - Both for diminished and dependent situations
 - Child doesn't know how to be “demoted”
 - “He [stepfather] moved in with us after they got married. Up until then, I spent every minute with my mom. She never went anywhere without me...It was a big shock when they got married because I was like, what? I cannot spend as much time with my mom anymore”
- Stepfamily development
 - In divorce kids have more liberty/autonomy
 - New stepfamily often requesting more time

Overarching Goals of Therapy

- Knowledge
- Acceptance
- Resilience

Therapeutic Guidelines



- Find meaning
- Tempering mastery
- Reconstructing identity
- Revisiting attachment
- Normalize ambivalence
- Discovering hope

Finding Meaning

- Striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force (Frankl, 1963, p. 154).
- Important to know:
 - What meaning do they attach to the divorce?
 - Who initiated?
 - Who was responsible?
 - Affairs made it much more difficult for spouses and children
 - What was their role in divorce?
 - What circumstances contribute to meaning?
 - Is it opportunity for growth or punishment?
 - "I'm unlovable" vs. he/she is a jerk
- Ambiguity cannot be altered

Questions to Ask

- Listen for:
 - each person's perception of what happened
 - amount of disagreement among family members
- What are your thoughts about the person that is missing?
 - Parent (diminished, non residential)
 - Stepparent
 - Based on expectation may feel child is psychologically absent
 - Spouse
- Is there disagreement about missing person's status?

What Helps?

- Name the problem
- Dialectical thinking
 - Chinese proverb about two wolves
 - Grieve part that is gone, celebrate part that remains
 - Think in terms of “legacy” instead of closure
- Start small
 - Story of Kosovo women
- View suffering as inevitable

What hinders?

- Hate and revenge
 - Especially relevant with ex-spouses
- Secrets
 - Children may not know about divorce
 - Children may not know about remarriage
- Sole focus
 - Focusing exclusively on absent member
 - Leads to immobilization

Finding Meaning

Adaptive

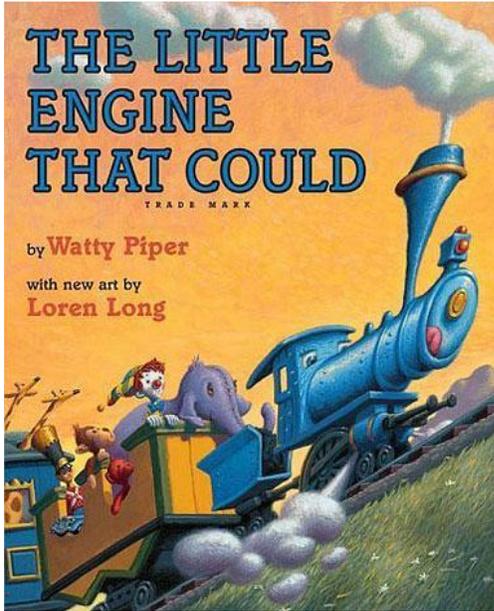
- Children
 - Psychologically alive
 - Sperm donor

Maladaptive

- Children
 - Insist on reconciliation



Tempering Mastery

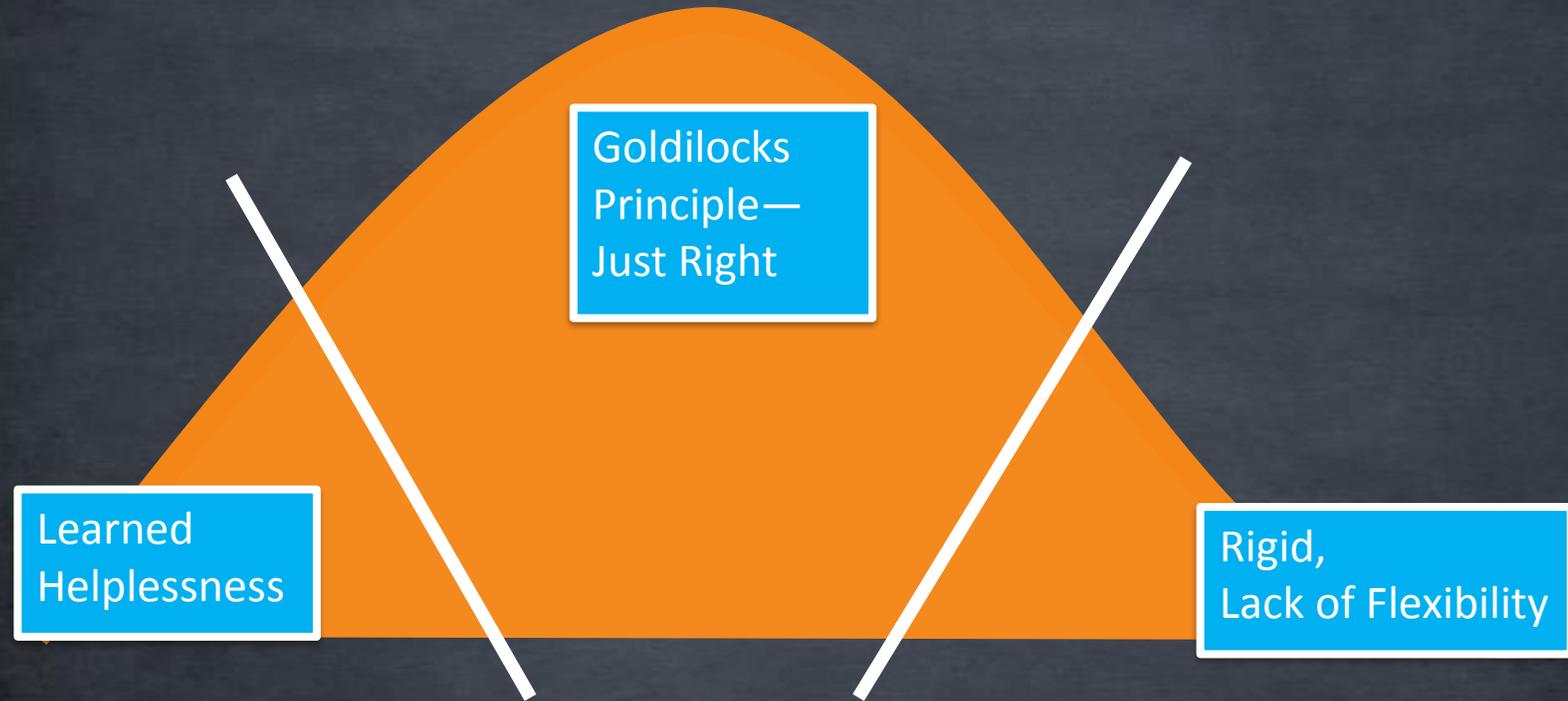


- Part of our culture
- Ability to exert power when needed to manage life
- More control needed harder to adjust
- Goal is to “live with” not get over

What Helps?

- Realize world is not always fair
 - Bad things happen to good people
- Decrease self blame
- Externalize the blame
- Manage your own decisions
 - Can't control parents; can't control ex-spouse

Tempering Mastery—What hinders



Learned
Helplessness

Goldilocks
Principle—
Just Right

Rigid,
Lack of Flexibility

Reconstructing Identities

- New identities in divorce and remarriage
 - Ex-spouse, Co-parent
 - Stepparent
 - Non residential parent
 - Single parent
 - Man of the house (male children)
 - Caretaker (female children)
- Ability to reconstruct identities fosters resiliency

Questions to Ask

- Questions used to assess/reconstruct identity
 - Who am I now?
 - Who is really my family now?
 - What roles am I expected to perform now?
 - To what community do I now belong?
 - Where is my home?

What Helps?

- Define family boundaries
 - Give room for ex-identities
 - Revise roles and tasks for rituals and celebrations
 - Who is going to carve the turkey?
 - Use symbols to reconstruct identity
 - What do you do with wedding rings?
- Focus on major developmental themes
- Develop shared values

What hinders?

- Hanging on to one absolute identity
 - Holding too strongly to one absolute identity of self or family often blocks resiliency and increases inflexibility

Normalize Ambivalence

- Normalizing means acknowledging existence
 - Resiliency depends on knowing this is normal
- Ambiguity = lack of clarity
 - Feeds ambivalence
- Ambivalence = conflicted feelings and emotions
 - Love and hate
 - Desire closeness; want separation
 - Feeds uncertainty about:
 - Which action to follow
 - Which decision to make
 - Which role to play
 - Which task to perform
 - often causing immobilization which decreases agency and paralyzes relational processes.

Questions to Ask

- What are you feeling torn about during this process?

What helps?

- Normalize guilt but NOT harmful actions
- See community as family
- Bring ambivalent feelings into the open
- Develop tolerance for tension
- Remaining emotionally present

What hinders?

- Using a symptom only focus
 - Often times ambivalence and ambiguity are underlying explanation for:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Anger

Revising Attachment

- It is, after all, not the attachment that ends when a person we love dies but rather the relationship as it was. The connection has to be revised” (Boss, 2006, p. 163).
- Common reactions to loss of attachment figure:
 - Think about person all the time (anxious)
 - Close them out and never think of them again (avoidant)
 - Deny the person’s absence (avoidant)

What helps?

- Family versus individual therapy
 - Large portion of divorce treatment is for individual
- Develop farewell or adaptation ceremonies
- Realization that fantasies of reuniting are common
 - Gradually, as people see that complete letting go is not the goal and that they can hold on to the lost person even while they move forward, the desire to put life on hold diminishes (p. 169)

What hinders?

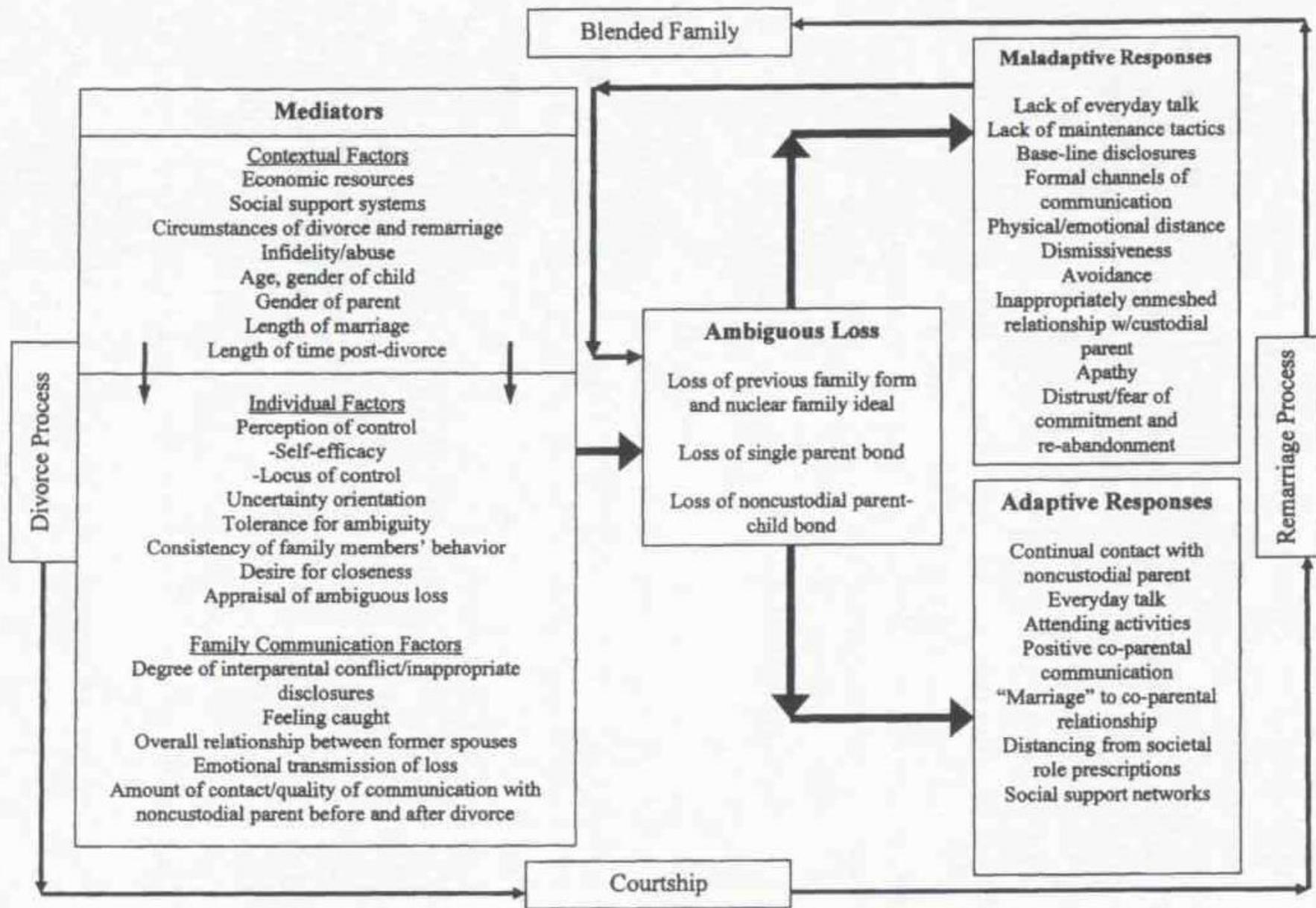
- Overemphasis on individuation
- Expecting closure
- Failure to maintain routines, rituals, and celebrations
- Establishing no-talk rules

Discovering Hope

- Danieli's (1985) words help:
 - “Having been helpless does not mean that one is a helpless person; having witnessed or experienced evil does not mean that the world as a whole is evil; having been betrayed does not mean that betrayal is an overriding human behavior; having been victimized does not necessarily mean that one has to live one's life in constant readiness for its reenactment; having been treated as indispensable does not mean that one is worthless; and, taking the painful risk of bearing witness does not mean that the world will listen, learn, change, or become a better place” (p. 308; found in Boss, 2006, p. 191).

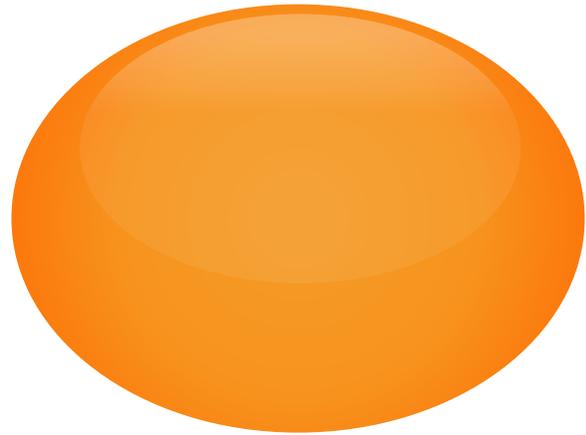
What helps?

- Spirituality
- Increasing options
- Developing more patience
- Redefining justice



Afifi & Keith
(2004)

FIGURE 1 Risk and resiliency model of ambiguous loss in post-divorce families.



CLINIAL CASE EXAMPLE #1

“What roles do you notice?”

“In your opinion, what needs to happen?”

Applying the Theory—Case #1



- Miranda (Mother)
 - Finding Meaning
 - Appears to place a majority of blame for divorce on Daniel
 - Help soften her attribution; see some of her influence
 - Watch language about Daniel around children
 - Family meaning is made within family interactions
 - Sacrifice her feelings of hate for greater cause of child's adjustment
 - Tempering Mastery
 - Cannot control relationship between Daniel and kids
 - She only has control over how she interacts
 - Reconstruct identity
 - Co-parent versus romantic partner
 - See Daniel as a co-parent rather than unavailable partner
 - Normalize Ambivalence
 - Hard to not have children home with you at all times
 - Children are saying things that enhance the fear of losing them
 - Revise attachments
 - Help increase support network of adults
 - Help her share
 - Discovering Hope

Applying the Theory—Case #1



- Daniel (Father)
 - Finding Meaning
 - Don't blame Miranda for divorce
 - Avoid feeling like the victim/non-initiator
 - Tempering Mastery
 - Learn to accept Miranda's decision
 - Don't try to emotionally pull her back in
 - Reconstruct identity
 - Co-parent versus romantic partner
 - See Miranda as a co-parent rather person who rejected
 - Normalize Ambivalence
 - Try to maintain role as father
 - Normalize the grief/loss process surrounding role
 - Revise attachments
 - Help increase support network of adults
 - Help him share emotions
 - Discovering Hope

Applying the Theory—Case #1



- Lydia (Oldest Daughter)
 - Finding Meaning
 - Feels tension/responsibility as oldest
 - Help her navigate attempts to become parentified
 - Tempering Mastery
 - Avoid attempts to be triangulated
 - Don't fight her mother/father's battles
 - Reconstruct identity
 - She is a sister not a parent
 - She is a child not a parent/confidant
 - Normalize Ambivalence
 - She feels tension between roles
 - Normalize her developmental transition
 - Revise attachments
 - Work with mom and dad to remind her of role
 - Continue to build parent/child relationship
 - Discovering Hope

Applying the Theory—Case #1



- Chris (Middle Son)
 - Finding Meaning
 - Accept decisions of adults
 - Don't blame self
 - Tempering Mastery
 - Reach out rather than act out
 - Connect rather than disconnect
 - Reconstruct identity
 - Don't simply take dad's side
 - Remain as a son not a confidant
 - Normalize Ambivalence
 - Voice fears about role in divorce
 - Talk about tension
 - Revise attachments
 - Build relationship with both parents
 - Boundaries with dad
 - Increased emotional involvement with mom
 - Discovering Hope

Applying the Theory—Case #1



- Natalie (Youngest Daughter)
 - Finding Meaning
 - Developmentally help her understand she is still loved
 - Help her understand both parents are still there
 - Tempering Mastery
 - Maintain routines as much as possible
 - Reconstruct identity
 - Help her maintain childhood
 - Mourn loss through play
 - Normalize Ambivalence
 - Through play help her express feelings of loss, confusion, and uncertainty
 - Revise attachments
 - Constant reassurance
 - Discovering Hope

Applying the Theory—Case #1



- Jackie (mother)
 - Finding Meaning
 - Appears to place a majority of blame for divorce on Luke
 - Help soften her attribution; see some of her influence
 - Watch language about Isabel around children
 - Family meaning is made within family interactions
 - Sacrifice her feelings of hate for greater cause of child's adjustment
 - Tempering Mastery
 - Cannot control relationship between Luke, Isabel, and kids
 - She only has control over how she interacts
 - Reconstruct identity
 - Children can be influenced by more than 1 woman (dialectical thinking)
 - Doesn't mean that she is being replaced as mother
 - Normalize Ambivalence
 - Hard to witness another woman caring for your children
 - Children are saying things that enhance the fear of losing them
 - Revise attachments
 - Help increase support network of adults
 - Help her share
 - Discovering Hope

Applying the Theory—Case #1



- Isabel (stepmother)
 - **Finding Meaning**
 - Try to envision what it means for her to be a stepmother
 - **Tempering Mastery**
 - Don't force the idea of instant family
 - Get involved but slowly, first as a friend, than more as a parent
 - **Reconstruct identity**
 - Children influenced by more than 1 woman (dialectical thinking)
 - She can be influential in the children's life as well
 - **Normalize Ambivalence**
 - Hard to feel excluded
 - Children are saying things increase feeling excluded
 - **Revise attachments**
 - Help increase support network of adults
 - Help her unite with Luke, take things slowly
 - **Discovering Hope**

Applying the Theory—Case #1



- Luke (non-resident father)
 - Finding Meaning
 - How does he explain the divorce (Jackie pushed me away)
 - How did he contribute
 - Look for legacy rather than closure with past relationship
 - Tempering Mastery
 - Don't force the idea of instant family
 - Provide Isabel and kids time to foster relationship
 - Reconstruct identity
 - Coparent, how to be a father from a distance
 - Normalize Ambivalence
 - Often feels pulled in the middle, tries to defend
 - Revise attachments
 - Help him unite with Isabel, take things slowly
 - Look for ways to increase “everyday talk” activities
 - Discovering Hope

Applying the Theory—Case #1



- Anna (daughter)
 - Finding Meaning
 - How do they explain the divorce (Anna placed blame on Luke)
 - Making room for another woman doesn't mean displacing mom
 - Tempering Mastery
 - Can't force parents back together
 - Can't prevent Luke and Isabel from marrying
 - Reconstruct identity
 - Reclaim role of child rather than peer like relationship with mom
 - Normalize Ambivalence
 - Wants to like Isabel but is worried about how mom will feel
 - As a preadolescent wants to pull away while family is trying to form
 - Revise attachments
 - Look for ways to include Isabel while staying connected to mom.
 - Discovering Hope

Applying the Theory—Case #2



- Bernice (daughter)
 - **Vulnerabilities:**
 - Father probably won't be involved
 - Likely to strip his role to try and diminish ambiguity
 - Sperm donor or Bill rather than Daddy
 - Yet still strong pull to understand biological ties
 - **Finding Meaning**
 - She is still lovable even though she was treated poorly
 - **Tempering Mastery**
 - Can't force parents back together
 - Can't force father to remain involved
 - **Reconstruct identity**
 - Developing legacy will help her see who she is
 - May want to develop symbolic ritual
 - **Normalize Ambivalence**
 - Struggles with feelings of wanting to reconnect and wanting to never think of him again
 - **Revise attachments**
 - Connect with mom, therapy with mom to enhance that relationship
 - **Discovering Hope**

Applying the Theory—Case #2



- Birdee (mother)
 - **Vulnerabilities:**
 - Emotionally distraught
 - Lack of time and energy to care for daughter
 - Feels like she lost identity through relationship and divorce
 - **Finding Meaning**
 - What does the divorce mean about her
 - Who is she outside of a relationship
 - **Tempering Mastery**
 - Angry enough to function and succeed but not so angry that she alienates Bill
 - **Reconstruct identity**
 - Develop legacy, help her take good from relationship and leave bad
 - **Normalize Ambivalence**
 - Struggles with feelings of wanting to reconnect and wanting to never think of him again
 - **Revise attachments**
 - Help her look for adults with whom to connect
 - **Discovering Hope**

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