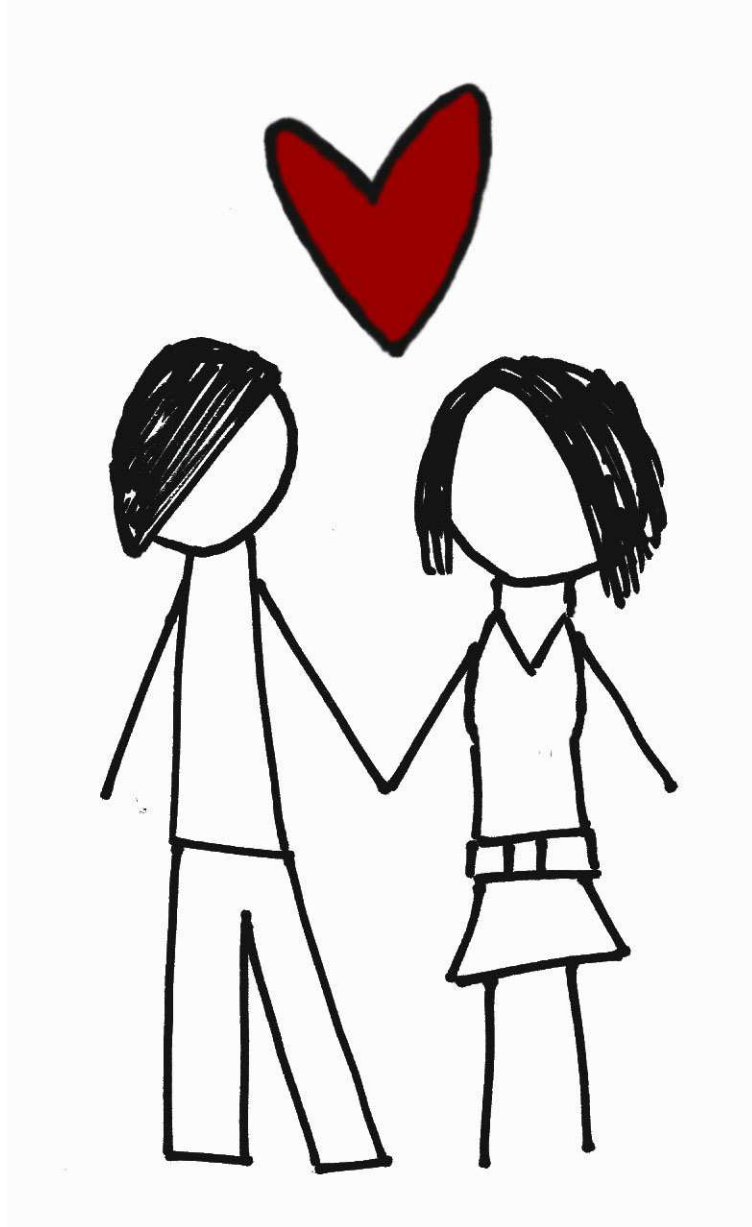


The Separation Survival Guide



How to Survive Separation and
Live Happily Ever After

The Separation Survival Guide

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Introduction

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What you are about to read is the result of five years of recovering from a failed ten-year marriage. The advice in this guide is intended to help you avoid making the same long list of mistakes that I made, and then having to live with the repercussions.

Life is too short to not enjoy it to the fullest. I realized this once my wife left me and I had to make a decision about what to do next. I decided to seize the opportunity and my new freedom and throw myself into my new life. I started dating again and much to my amazement, discovered I was good at it (much more successful than I used to be)! I met a wonderful woman and decided I would get her and then keep her. Five years later, we're still ridiculously happy and very much in love – and I'm enjoying every minute of my life.

My goal with this guide is to show you that I'm not amazingly talented, nor am I lucky to have found happiness. Instead I applied a few rules and made some changes to my lifestyle and my attitude. It was only after I'd made such a mess of my earlier life that I realized what I had to change to make a success of my new life.

I have captured those rules and changes and present them here for your benefit, so you can avoid the pain and disappointment I experienced. I hope this shows you the way to best adapt to your new situation and find true happiness for the rest of your life.

Good luck!



James Carter
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Chapter 1 – Picking Yourself Up After Separation

So it's all gone wrong and the relationship is over. The house is empty and for the first time in a while (maybe a long time), you're alone. It's a daunting time as you come to terms with your new situation – you probably thought it'd be fun to be single again, but the reality is quite different.

For me, it was a time that required a major decision: do I choose to be happy or unhappy? Thinking back, it really was that simple (yes, there were lots of other issues and questions to be dealt with too, but this was the biggie). Choosing happiness would mean I'd have to think and act positively, think about the future not the past, and see my new situation as an opportunity to be explored.

As I write this, to say that I'd consider choosing unhappiness sounds ridiculous, yet that's what so many people seem to do. Actually, they probably just DON'T choose either option; instead they dwell and fail to move on. I think this is a crucial mistake because it delays when you'll begin to feel better and be ready to move on. Having said that, I realize that it's not as easy as just deciding to be happy & then seeing all your worries melt away. However, I believe that it is possible to make the decision to be happy then approach each day with a positive attitude. This will help you deal with stuff earlier so when you do have a bad day, the fact that you've overcome issues already will make you realize that the situation isn't hopeless and there is a way out.

Of course it's not always easy to make the steps yourself to start moving forward. This is why it's so important to keep talking to your friends – don't shut yourself away. You need people who will empathize with you, give you practical advice, reassure you and tell you when you're wrong. If you prefer, find a good counselor and talk to them – just keep talking because the more you talk, the easier it will be to deal with your demons.

To help get you started, here are some ideas that helped me pick myself up and get on with the rest of my life:

- Make a list of all your friends and make an effort to catch up with them, especially those you've not seen for a while.
- Join a sports club, movie group, wine club or whatever, to get you out of the house and give you something new to get excited and motivated about.

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- If you have kids, make sure you get as involved as you can with them – it's good for you and good for them too.
- Join an internet dating site! I know that might sound cheesy, but even if you're absolutely not interested in meeting anyone, it'll let you see who else is out there (sometimes it's just reassuring to know others are in the same boat). Take a look at Chapter 3 – Tips for Successful Online Dating for some more ideas.
- Buy some new clothes and give yourself a spruce up. Either walk into a good store and ask the assistant or take a friend with taste to help you choose some fashionable clothes that make you feel and look good. Don't be afraid to be adventurous and change your style - now's your chance to break your old routine. For more ideas see Chapter 4 – Dress Yourself to Make a Great First Impression.
- While you're changing your look, why not get into some regular exercise and change your physique too? Some cardio workout and a few muscle exercises can work wonders for your fitness levels and can change your body shape into something no woman could resist!

In general, take each day at a time but try to achieve something positive: maybe deal with some stuff from your past, make some plans for the future, or try one of the things from the list above.

It takes time to recover from a major trauma such as separation. Even if you feel fine initially, sometimes things can creep up and overwhelm you when you least expect it. So give it time, don't rush back into another relationship until you're sure you're ready.

Related articles from [The Men's Place](#):

- [Second Time Around](#)
- [Getting On With Life After Divorce](#)
- [Post-Divorce Surviving Guide – A Male Point of View](#)

When you think you are ready to start again, there are several ways to meet potential mates. The next chapter shows you some of the best.

Chapter 2 – Dating Options

It's a daunting time: you've been in a relationship for several years and now you're single again. You'd like to start meeting people again, but things have changed so much since you were last single: all your friends are married so you can't go out with them, and hunting for dates in the pub or club scene at your age isn't a good look! So how do you meet new people?

The good news is there are lots of ways to find a new partner if you're prepared to put yourself out there and are not afraid to try something new. This is actually very important – if you don't try to meet people, you'll not succeed; they won't come knocking on your door! The best place to start is to decide what sort of environment you're most comfortable in, as this will give you the best chance to shine and show someone the real you.

If you're loud and extroverted, and love being the centre of attention, then speed dating or organized group dating (like dining groups) can be a great way to show off your natural exuberance, entertain everyone and meet like-minded people. (At least they'll know what they're getting, as they'll have seen you 'performing'!)

Alternatively, if you prefer one-on-one interactions, then internet dating may be the answer. You have the chance to talk to a number of people via email or chat before deciding to meet face-to-face. You should use this as an opportunity to find out about them; their likes and dislikes, their interests and beliefs, and their views on anything you deem important, e.g. politics, religion, sport, etc.

Related articles from [The Men's Place](#):

- [5 Tips to Jumpstart Your Dating After Divorce](#)
- [Dating After Divorce – You Can Do This](#)

Once you've decided you're ready to get back out there and meet people, a great way to do it (especially for us older folks who find it hard to go to clubs & bars to meet people), is online dating. There are so many sites around you should be able to find one that covers your locality and has some good feedback. The following chapter describes some common mistakes to avoid and some useful tips to remember.

Chapter 3 – Tips for Successful Online Dating

Recently I was asked to help a female friend find a man on an online dating site. I was happy to help as this was how I'd found my own partner. However, this time I was seeing it from the female point of view, which was very illuminating.

The thing that really stood out was the sheer lack of thought and imagination in most men's online profiles. I was staggered and quite dismayed at the lack of choice for my friend and I began to understand why she was having such a difficult time finding a mate.

I decided that men need help to write a killer online dating profile. As I read through the profiles, I saw several common problems repeated again and again:

1. The strong silent type – this guy writes the absolute minimum in the hope that the reader is somehow psychic and can figure out his personality without words. This approach may have worked in the pub when Clint Eastwood was a youngster, but it doesn't work online.
2. The comedian – this guy can't help writing one-liners throughout his profile. On the plus side at least he's taken the time to write a lot of words, it's just a shame that he's not chosen them more carefully. His message is lost amongst the jokes, so he never gets beyond the introductions. Woman who use online dating are seriously looking to meet someone, so the guy who just cracks jokes and doesn't reveal his more serious side will get nowhere.
3. The cliché guy – if he's not a sports commentator then he should be! There's so many "walks along the beach", "snuggles on the couch" and "holding hands in public" that you think you're reading straight from the pages of "How to Pickup Women"! Unfortunately for this guy, women are a lot smarter than he thinks and can see straight through his attempts at sincerity. He'd be much better advised to write something original and heartfelt to show what he really thinks.

The problem with all of these profiles is that none of the writer's personality comes through. So the reader either has to assume they don't have any personality, or she has to work hard to uncover it by asking lots of questions.

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Let's face it – that's not going to happen because there are so many other profiles, why would she spend time on yours?

So how do you write a killer profile that catches the reader's attention and makes her want to chat to you? The answer is simple – SELL yourself. Your profile is your advertisement, so it should be punchy, interesting and descriptive.

Follow these steps and you'll have so many messages to read that you'll need to have the size limit on your inbox increased!

1. A good photo! How do you decide which woman to contact – you check out her picture; if she's cute then she's passed the first test. So isn't it reasonable that women would do the same? It's so obvious yet so many guys either don't have one or choose some dreadful picture that looks like a Wanted poster or a school photo! Select a picture that conveys your personality – make sure you're smiling & it helps if it looks like you're having fun.
2. Avoid cheesy clichés and unoriginal or inappropriate jokes – again this may sound obvious, but it's shocking how many guys' profiles sound like they're the script from a 70's sit-com. Lines like "be the wind beneath my wings" or "seeking a special lady" do nothing but turn-off the reader and make her move on to another profile. If you can't think of something original or genuinely humorous, then just keep it simple and concentrate on descriptive and interesting comments instead.
3. Unless you're naturally so chatty that people often tell you to be quiet, you should write twice as much in your profile as you think you need. That doesn't mean fill it with useless waffle (see point 2 above); instead put some serious thought into what you're writing. You'll be surprised how easy it is if you imagine a beautiful woman is asking you the questions and you're trying to impress her with your answers. (While we're talking about impressing her, nothing is more impressive than correct spelling & good grammar. Take the time to proof-read what you've written – or write it in MS Word and let the software check it for you before pasting it into your profile!)

If you're still in doubt about whether I'm right, have a look in your online dating site for other guys with the same characteristics as you – your competitors! Some of their profiles will have you laughing at how bad they are, some will leave you confused because they've not said anything about themselves, and some (probably only a few) will make you interested to the

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point where you go on to read some of their other pages too. These are the best of the best – the ones you should try to emulate because they'll be getting all the girls' attention (they got your attention, after all!).

Another point worth noting is there are certain key words that you should avoid using in your profile. Apart from the obvious smutty or rude comments, try to steer clear of "shy", "quiet", "loner" and "addict" (drugs, TV or sports!). They are real turn-off words that will have your potential mate running for the hills!

In summary, if you only do a half-hearted job of writing your profile, you're doing yourself no favors and you're turning away potential mates. To be a successful profile, it needs to sell your best attributes and that means it's descriptive and interesting with a good photo. If you follow these tips, you'll be surprised at just how many messages you'll get and you'll be able to pick and choose who you contact and who you date.

Related articles from [The Men's Place](#):

- [Online Dating Tips – Triple Your Dating](#)
- [Romantic Date Ideas](#)

Once you've decided who to meet, you need to plan the date so that it gives you the best chance to sell yourself. The venue we will cover in a moment, now we'll look at how you can create a great first impression.

It's said that you don't get a second chance to make a first impression – how true, especially when you meet your date for the first time. You expect her to be drop-dead gorgeous when she walks into the restaurant, why shouldn't she have the same expectation of you?

Chapter 4 – Dress Yourself to Make a Great First Impression

The truth is she will have that expectation, but rather than focus on your physical aspects (as you'll no doubt focus on hers), she'll likely pay more attention to how your clothes look. This is where a lot of guys let themselves down by choosing the wrong gear – it either doesn't suit them or fit them so they don't look their best, or it sends the wrong message – something like "my Mother still buys my clothes"!

OK, so how does a guy choose the right clothes to look his best? Well, luckily, it's easy to find the answer – just go to your local mall, walk into good clothes shop, find a sensible-looking assistant & ask her!

Sounds easy? Well it is, except that you've got to know what you want to look like – so you need to do a bit of research and understand some basic rules before you walk in the shop.

First of all decide on how formal you want to look – a suit is probably too much unless you're going to the most expensive bar in town with the most expensive date AND you can afford it! At the other end of the scale, throwing on a t-shirt & a pair of tatty jeans won't get you past the door of the restaurant, or her front door either!

So here are some ideas to keep it simple without bankrupting you at the clothes store. I'll show you how you can wear the same outfit but vary it according to how formal the occasion is.

Shirt

A button shirt is your friend – have a variety of styles & make sure you can wear them with an unbuttoned collar for the casual look. Tailor-made shirts are the best since they fit you properly – not baggy and not too tight. Until recently, I had never considered this as an affordable option but then I found www.bestcustomshirt.com. Their Giorgenti range of shirts can be ordered via their website. You specify your measurements and the shirt arrives a few weeks later and I can testify that it fits beautifully!

Trousers

The lower half is even easier as only two styles of trousers are required – jeans & a dressier pair of pants. This is where you need your friendly shop

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assistant to help you choose the right style that suits your body shape & looks good with the shirt you've got.

Accessories

No, I'm not talking about earrings and nose-studs! Shoes are just as important as the shirt & trousers since they finish off the look. Leather is essential, nothing else will do. Choose trendy casual shoes to wear with your jeans and smart black dress shoes to wear with your pants. Good quality shoes are expensive but they'll last & won't go out of fashion.

A belt can smarten up that pair of dress pants and some good quality aftershave will send her all the right signals about what a quality guy you are. Our sense of smell is very powerful which is why you should always aim to smell good. However, less is more. No need to splash it all over, remember that a little goes a long way, so put some on your neck and your chest.

Finishing touches

Finally, don't overlook the small stuff. Until you know what she likes, play it safe and go clean shaven, brush your teeth and floss too. Tidy up your hair – freshly washed will do – and clean your nails. You're trying to look classy, not dirty! Finally, keep the jewelry to a minimum, a watch or a ring is OK, but you don't want to have more bling than your date!

Most women would agree that less is more when making a good first impression. It's not hard and you don't need to have a wardrobe full of suits, just a few well-chosen shirts & a couple of pairs of pants will give you all you need to make a great first impression. Remember also to smell good and pay attention to the details. Follow this advice and you'll never have a Saturday night alone again!

Having chosen the right clothes, the next thing to organize is the venue. The following chapter gives you some ideas on how to select a great venue and how to act once you get there to ensure you have the best chance of a successful date.

Chapter 5 – The First Date and how to get a second!

She walks in and you recognize her from her photograph, she sees you and comes over – what do you do? If you're not properly prepared then your first date could end in disaster. Here are some helpful ideas to make sure you have a successful date.

Preparation for the date has to start way before the meeting. If you're really keen on her and want to make a good impression, then it's vital you choose the correct place to meet. Of course, I mean the correct place for her, not you! Don't take her to your favorite sports bar where the staff all know you and you've got that engraved tankard behind the bar! She'll think you spend all your life in the bar and won't ever have time to spend with her (and she'd probably be right!)

In order to know the right place for her, before you meet you have to surreptitiously ask her what she likes to find out the sort of environment she'll feel comfortable in. For example, ask her what she likes to drink – if she says wine then maybe a wine bar would be a good bet, beer then maybe a quiet, up market bar, not a drinker then maybe you need to probe some more. Maybe she likes coffee, so a coffee shop would be a good place to start... you get the idea.

Having sorted out the type of place she'd like, it pays to find the right one. What I mean is instead of just randomly choosing or selecting the closest place, do some research to find the best place. When I met my girl for the first time, I chose to meet her at a trendy coffee shop with spectacular views over the city. A week earlier, she had met another guy who had taken her to a coffee shop in the food court of a suburban shopping mall. Needless to say, I got another date – he didn't!

So you've got the venue, what next? Well, as I explained in the chapter before, the first impression you create depends on how you look. Choose your clothes to match the venue, the time of day and the type of woman you're meeting. Obviously if you're taking a rock chick to an evening concert you'll be dressed differently to a lunch-time date at a coffee shop. Decide what you want to wear well ahead of time so you've a chance to iron the shirt or clean the shoes so you'll look your best (you won't have to do this every time you meet her, but it IS important the first time!)

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When she arrives, it's important that you put her at ease immediately, so it's absolutely essential that you are there first. I can't stress how important that is. If you're there first then you can control the greeting and put her at ease. If she's there first then you lose that advantage and if you're not careful, she'll think that you haven't put much thought into the date – and trust me, that's the last thing you want her to think!

Control of the greeting is critical because you want to put her at ease straight away. When she walks in, stand up, smile and greet her. The type of greeting you use is also important: I think a handshake creates the wrong atmosphere immediately because it's too formal, and a kiss is too familiar, unless she initiates it. So a friendly hug is probably the right level of welcome but you'll need to judge it for yourself depending on the type of people you both are. Whatever you do, the goal is to make her feel comfortable in your company and let her see you're a nice kind of guy to be with.

So far so good, but what about conversation? Again, it pays to do some research before you turn up and bore her to death with stories about fishing trips or your last round of golf! How do you know what she wants to talk about – ask her! (And most importantly, listen to the answer!) Ask her if she likes movies, or the last book she read, does she like to eat out & if so, what type of food? All these simple questions can lead to entertaining, spontaneous conversation provided you give her a chance to talk, keep listening to her answers and respond to them. Remember this is a chat, not a job interview (well it is kind of like a job interview, but she mustn't know that!) so keep the conversation flowing and keep it enjoyable.

One question I frequently get asked is, should I make her laugh? Well yes of course, because that means she's having a good time, but don't go overboard. A few light-hearted comments to make her smile or a funny story is fine, but don't resort to constant jokes; you're on a date, not on a stage!

If she's relaxed, smiling, looking at you and you've both had about 50% of the talking time in the conversation (let her have a bit more if necessary – she probably will anyway!) then you're well on your way to a second date.

So, how do you end the first date? Well that really depends on two things - do you want to see her again and has the date gone well. If you get a yes to both of these then I'd recommend you confidently say something like, "Hey, I enjoyed that and I'd really like to see you again". Remember, it's all about making her feel special and comfortable with you. She'll appreciate you taking the lead and being confident, just be careful you don't come across as

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arrogant. Finally, as you're just about to say your goodbyes, give her a hug & maybe a friendly peck on the cheek.

The first face-to-face meeting can be a nerve-wracking experience, but with these tips, you can stay in control and make it an enjoyable experience for both of you. And that's the secret to winning the girl!

Since there are so many questions about how to have a successful first date, I thought it would be interesting to describe the first date with my partner to show you what we each thought of the date.

The First Date – a Practical Example

Firstly, I'll describe from my point of view to show how I saw the date and what I did to ensure it would be successful.

We met each other on the Internet and had chatted on the phone only once before our date, however I'd already decided that she had class and I would need to make some effort to attract her! Therefore I decided that I'd meet her at a trendy coffee shop at lunch-time in a few days time. To ensure that we'd have the best possible experience, I went to the café the day before to check it out and see if I could book a table near the window with a nice view.

I made sure that I arrived before her so that I could relax and think about how I'd greet her & what I'd say. I wanted to be in control at the start so I could appear relaxed & confident (even though I was like jelly inside!). When she walked in and spotted me, I smiled, stood up and gave her a hug to say hello. I did this confidently as if I'd known her for a while – my intention was to show that I was comfortable and that I was pleased to see her.

Instead of rushing up to get a coffee straight away, we sat down and talked for about 10 minutes. This was good as I was feeling quite nervous and it gave me time to get settled before I had to deal with a hot drink! To save any awkwardness, I bought the coffees – no questions, no offering to split the bill – it's just a few dollars and it was much more important to preserve the relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

At the end of the date, we walked outside & she said "now comes the awkward part". I said, "It doesn't need to be awkward, I'd really like to see you again". I said it confidently and looked her in the eyes as I spoke. We

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arranged another date and as we said goodbye, I kissed her on the cheek – again, just like good friends would.

So, here's my partner's perspective on that first date... In her words, "this is so you guys know how it feels for the woman and what is important to us".

I'm a professional career woman who wanted to know whether the date would be worth going to, so I decided to set him a challenge to see how he'd respond. I suggested that JC chose the location for the date so that I could get an idea of what he liked, places he frequented and how much effort he would go to. I knew what I liked and it was important that we had similar tastes. So I was very pleased he chose a small intimate suburban café.

I was on time and walked in looking around pleased to see that he was there first (the man in control!), I gave him a wave as he smiled at me. He stood up and hugged me (this was nice because it wasn't too formal or too familiar) then we sat and talked. I felt very special when he told me that he thought I was "classy" and that he had heard of this coffee place but having never been there he had gone up the day before to check it out and try to book the window table. He got the coffee (not because the man should but just because it was easier to let him) while I sat back and observed him, thinking about things so far and where to take the conversation next. This gave me time to relax again, gather my thoughts and check out his clothes sense (yes, that's important!!). I was already thinking to myself that I liked this guy as he was quietly confident, friendly and well dressed.

It is important for me that the person I am with is confident and interesting, but is also prepared to listen to me and be interested in ME too! I like a man who can follow a topic of conversation that I have started rather than cut it off and follow his own agenda!

I liked the way he handled the end of our date – treating me like a friend already and giving me a confident peck on the cheek.

So there you have both sides of the first date experience – the man who gently controlled the situation to make it as comfortable as possible, and the woman who knew what she wanted and was assessing me the whole time! I really enjoyed the date. It went exactly as I'd planned it and we still talk about it, several years on! I hope your dates are just as enjoyable and successful.

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Thank you for reading this guide, I hope you've found it interesting and useful. If you have, please tell your friends, if not, please tell me! You can email me [here](#).

The Men's Place blog is packed with useful advice and interesting articles. I keep it up-to-date with my own articles and those of well-known guest writers too. I encourage you to pay it a visit.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2009

➔ Second Time Around the Block

By: [Skye Thomas](#) [Digg This Story](#)

Divorce happens. I'm not going to debate the causes or the moral and ethical implications of that here. Even if you're the innocent one who stuck to your vows and got dumped anyway, you still have to pick yourself up and move on. So let's start from that place. At some point you will wrestle within yourself and within your spiritual and religious beliefs as to whether or not you will date again. This article is for those of you who have decided that yes, you are going to date again and maybe even get married again. You've decided to give love a second chance.

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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2008

➔ Divorce Your Partner, Not Your Kids

By: [James Walsh](#) [Digg This Story](#)

Children define themselves by the standards that their parents set. When the two people they love the most decide to go their own separate ways, the life of a child is literally torn into two. Even when

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