

THE EIGHT STAGES OF SEPARATION*

Recovery from separation commonly involves eight necessary stages, identified below. The sequence of stages and duration of each may vary from person to person—some stages may be skipped entirely, others may be experienced more than once—but all are normal reactions to the stress of separation.

Circle the number of each question for which you can answer "YES." Three or more circles indicate you may be experiencing that stage of recovery.

1. ACTIVE BLEEDING (2 months - 1 year duration)

1. Do you feel on the verge of tears a good deal of the time?
2. Does seeing couples or families make you want to go home and cry?
3. Do Sundays or dinner time make you particularly blue?
4. Do you find yourself getting angry with someone in your family who has a happy marriage?
5. Do you feel like a failure?
6. Do you find yourself thinking, "If only I'd done ---, my marriage would have lasted"?
7. Do you feel ashamed about the break-up?
8. Do you find yourself not wanting to talk to people?
9. Do you relive the marriage in your mind?
10. Do you stay home because you feel you can't face the world?

2. EUPHORIA (2 months duration)

1. Do you feel like everything is rosy?
2. Do you feel that things that used to bother you don't?
3. Do you walk around with a perpetual smile on your face?
4. Are you experiencing a feeling similar to the one experienced when you were first in love?
5. No matter what season it is, do you feel like it's the best season of the year?
6. Do you feel that you don't have any problems?
7. Do you have the feeling that things will work out—someday, somehow?
8. Do you feel you don't want to discuss your problems?
9. Do you feel like you're on a high—perhaps walking a few inches off the ground?
10. When advisors, such as your lawyer, talk to you, do you often feel they are being overly concerned, overly cautious, overly pessimistic?

3. RUNNING (6-18 months duration)

1. Do you feel compelled to get out of the house several nights a week?
2. Do you start to grow panicky when you're home alone, and the hour gets later and later?
3. Do you find that, in the middle of going out again and again, you ask yourself, "Why am I doing all this?"
4. Do you pick up on the smallest suggestion for a way to get out of the house?
5. Do you find yourself exhausted much of the time?
6. Do you try to fill up every hour of your day, every day?
7. Do you find yourself unable to concentrate or read as you used to?
8. Is your health run-down?
9. Do you prefer a "brass band and a three-ring circus" to quiet evenings with friends?
10. Do you feel that the more people around, the merrier?

4. ALL WORK, NO PLAY (a few weeks - several years duration; generally experienced in lieu of Stages 2 & 3)

1. Do you feel life is grim?
2. Do you feel your guidelines for living are set around work, school or parenthood alone?
3. Do you have trouble telling people you're separated?
4. Do you look down on the single lifestyle?
5. Do you find you don't leave yourself time to play?
6. Do you find you don't look forward to entertainment time?
7. Do you find you don't look forward to dating?
8. Do you have excuses for refusing invitations, or do you resist looking for leisure time activities?

(OVER)

5. POST-LOVE BLUES

(This stage—reaction to the end of the first affair following separation—is very similar to Active Bleeding, though often considered much more painful. It is important to recognize that first affairs can greatly facilitate the initial recovery process, but they rarely have the right elements for a lasting relationship. Examining the "reality quotient" of the affair can be very beneficial.)

6. YAHOO! (1-3 years duration; must follow one of the more extreme stages)

1. Do you feel in balance?
2. Do you have one or more goals to accomplish?
3. When you close your eyes, can you imagine there are a couple of little people behind you pushing you ever so lightly?
4. Do you feel life is worth living again?
5. Do you feel like a real grown-up person now?
6. Do you feel you can handle things pretty well?
7. Are your feet mostly planted on the ground?
8. Are you excited about things?
9. Are you enjoying a lot of new experiences?

7. POST-YAHOO BLUES (3 weeks - 3 months duration; recurs from time to time)

1. Do you feel restless?
2. Do you have a vague "down" feeling?
3. Are you listless?
4. Do you find yourself wondering what's wrong with you since things aren't too bad?
5. Do you feel vague disappointment or unhappiness?
6. Have you just finished accomplishing a major goal?
7. Do you find yourself enumerating your accomplishments over and over?

8. THE SEARCH FOR THE REAL ME (begins 4-7 years after separation).

This stage is a quieter time of self-acceptance, motivated by a desire for self-improvement. It provides a wonderful opportunity for growth, and charting the ways you have changed since you first separated can point to new roads to pursue.