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Marriages May End But Families Are Forever

By Malti Bhojwani

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It was at that time when our marriage was falling apart and we completely hated each other when we needed to work constructively as parents, as our child's world was crumbling too.

I have been divorced for over five years now and have a beautiful eleven year old daughter. My ex-husband has re married. They now have a baby girl. I get along very well with my ex husband and his wife and there are many reasons for this friendship.

Deciding to have a child was a separate commitment from the one we made to marry each other. So, from the time we divorced, we decided that we would not let that come in the way of us constructively being her parents.

Yes, but it was hard as we were both very childish back then. We both did terrible things to each other. He hid her passport and often threatened to take her away from me. I threatened to get a restraining order in place, such that he could not come within a certain radius of me. There was name-calling that lasted for months. We each competed for her love and affection and we each thought we were "better". Luckily, both of us grew up and owned up to our respective childishness.

We had a few bad-examples around us to show us what we did not want for her and we genuinely started to cooperate.

I realised that no one apart from him has her best interest at heart as much as me. I also realised later when he was about to re-marry that I didn't want my daughter to have to be with a Fairy Tale 'Wicked Step Mother'. With these things in mind, I decided consciously to prioritise this friendship between my ex husband and myself, initially and then later, when he re married, I made choices to encourage a healthy and working friendship between his wife and myself, respecting her role as his wife and my daughter's step mother and often seeking her support and opinions. I was careful never to cross the boundaries or to take advantage of the fact that I too was once married to him, for example, I never

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referred to my ex husband and me as "we" in front of her. I appreciate her influence in my daughter's life. I discovered that people generally have so much to contribute to others, if we would only let them. I learnt from them too that when in a relationship or marriage, it was very healthy to encourage your current partner to tolerate and accept your ex spouse being discussed politely in the household.

What the experts think

You may think that this is about sacrificing and giving in but really it's about being selfish. This is an approach preferred by Dr. Ron Wilkinson, PH.D, a psychotherapist in Dallas, Texas, with 23 years clinical experience working with families. In my discussions with him, he said "I encourage parents to be goal-oriented and selfish. In our culture, `selfish' tends to be seen as a dirty word. In a more pure sense, however, a selfish person is someone who gets what they want." When each parent sees that there is something in it for them, to have a friendship with the ex-husband, for example, getting to look like the good guy, it makes the whole task easier to do.

Family functioning has been the major emphasis of Dr. Wilkinson's study and training at both the master's and doctoral level. He has treated many families struggling with this very issue, and has found time and again that nothing is more important to a child's life post-divorce than the relationship between the two parents. Both his clinical and personal experience was confirmed by his 1992 research: that the parents' relationship, more than anything else, determines the child's post-divorce functioning.

A child, even a grown up one, is not concerned with who is right and who is wrong. They are concerned with having a relationship with both parents—regardless of their age.

All this requires fortitude and focus on the goal and not allowing the day to day irritations to get to you. In my training and experiences as a Life Coach and a parent, I learnt to practice the art of Responding versus Reacting. A reaction is automatic, not thought through consequentially, whereas a response is chosen. Between an action and its reaction there is a space, and in that space is the opportunity to choose. Responding is using that space to make that choice and to do or say what will get you closer to your goal rather than away from it. In your dealings with your ex spouse, always remind yourself that your goal is having a working and pleasant relationship with them and it is your goal because of what it's going to bring YOU. Not just your child.

Develop the habit of carefully choosing your responses instead of impulsively reacting to each other.

Trust is one of the most important ingredients in this relationship. Remember that we are dealing here with your Flesh and Blood, and your ex-husband's Flesh and Blood too. Both need to feel that the other will do what he/she says they will.

Win Win

Another thing that helps is to be polite "Please" and "Thank you" will get you very far. —just remember "you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar". In that way you win and your child wins. Of course, your ex spouse also wins. In human relationships, such as marriage and co-parenting either

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both partners actually win or actually lose. And when one wins at the expense of the other, the one who really loses is the child. So, although sometimes, revenge may seem sweet, check yourself and notice that the only ones who suffer and lose is your child.

Dr. Rick Hanson PH.D says that about 90% of what enables divorced parents to work well together is exactly what enables married parents to work well together, including personal well-being, insight into oneself, emotional openness, civility, empathy, goodwill, clarity about the values and principles that guide parenting practices, and skill at negotiating practical arrangements. The other 10% has to do with things like keeping one's feelings about the divorce compartmentalised away from the business of co-parenting, working out the details of money, custody, vacations, grandparents and integrating new friends/lovers/mates. Employing the services of a Life Coach can make this a lot easier.

If all else fails, Dr. Hanson suggests – imagine that a video recording is being made of your discussion/quarrel/fight with your ex– and your children will be viewing it at some time in the future: how do you want to appear?

It's okay to love them

Often children feel torn between two parents, this happens within marriages, and definitely in divorced

families. It was important for my daughter to see that I was not jealous or hurt that she loved her step mom and her half sister too. We have pictures all over our place of her little half sister. I did not want to separate my child's family from her.

There is nothing easy about this, and don't let anyone convince you otherwise. It is hard work. But it's worth it. When we make a decision to have a child, it is a lifetime commitment and a promise to provide this child with all they need. Divorce may happen but does that mean that we deprive our child of their family? It's never too late to start building this alliance.

Get clear on what you want for your child and yourself. Think ahead into the future—how it will impact your child when, because of your choices; only one parent is at their graduation, in the hospital waiting room when they get hurt or sick, or at their wedding? Children need both parents and if through a little hard work and perseverance, you can ensure that your child has that, why not do your part?

Ron Wilkinson, Ph.D. A psychotherapist in Dallas, Texas, with 23 years clinical experience working with families. On a more personal note he co-parented his two sons, now 21 and 24, with his ex-wife for the last 13 years and they remain friends yet today. He was very generous to discuss this topic at length with me.

Rick Hanson, Ph.D., clinical psychologist, father (with Jan Hanson) of a 15-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter, and first author of *Mother Nurture: A Mother's Guide to Health in Body, Mind, and Intimate Relationships* (Penguin, 2002).

Malti Bhojwani is a trained Life Coach, certified in Neuro Linguistic Programming. She challenges her clients by phone internationally, to re-own their wonderful attributes, which they have "forgotten" using

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powerful techniques to help discover strategies and create new ones. She works with you to integrate conflicting parts, because she believes that we can only truly move ahead when we are congruent! Call +61419 119900 or visit

The Secret To Success In Courtship And Marriage, Sex And Happiness. (Part 1)

By Arthur Zulu

In a high-divorce society, not only are more unhappy marriages likely to end in divorce, but in addition, more marriages are likely to become unhappy. — COUNCIL ON FAMILIES IN AMERICA.

When Japanese government officials conceived building an airport in Narita, little did they know that the airport will later come to be associated with divorce. Even the engineers and architects who dreamt up the plan, forgot to dream about wedlocks and goodbyes. Morpheus, the god of dreams, did not remember it to them.

Now, the term, Narita divorce has been coined for the newlyweds who on arrival at Narita Airport after a honeymoon, immediately head to the court to file divorce papers. Bad word!

Marriages have been known to hit the rocks, the night after the wedding day. Some may wait to happen after the birth of the first child, while others may choose to divorce after their golden jubilee.

The story of broken marriages — marital bliss turned marital misery, is worldwide. And this is happening despite an army of psychologists, psychiatrists, clergymen and other counselors offering advice on marriage, including a horde of publications on the subject. People have even written best-sellers, offering advice on broken families. Ask Inyanla Vanzant, the author of the book, YESTERDAY I CRIED.

Lets get some statistics. Britain has the highest divorce rate in Europe (4 out of 10 marriages), Canada and Japan (1 out of 3 marriages), Zimbabwe (2 out of every 5 marriage) and Spain (1 out of 8 marriages.) Also in Australia, divorce rates has quadrupled since the 1980s, and in the United States and other lands, teenage mothers, and children born out of wedlock, has been on the rise.

In other countries, like Germany, the traditional family has totally been abandoned. In that country, single persons and individuals account for a majority of the families. And in France, people are marrying less, and divorcing more.

The effect of broken families — the oldest human institution — is already telling on us. What with the violence that we see around us today?

Family disintegration has led to the fall of great empires like Rome and Greece. May it not lead to the end of our civilization!

But why are married couples increasingly getting divorce certificates or simply living as roommates, or

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what has been called emotional divorce? Because they started their marriages with the wrong foot. And head to the wrong people to seek advice -- marriage counselors.

These series of articles will help you to get your marriage to a good start, and stay married. Because it will tell you Gods view about marriage. And since God is the creator and originator of marriage, he is the best authority on this matter.

In these series, you will find answers to questions that you may have asked such as: How can I find a compatible mate? What are the rules of dating? How do I know if I am ready for marriage? What happens on the wedding day? What is needed for a successful marriage? How should disagreements be settled? What is my role in the family? How can a husband get his wifes respect? Why does a wife need her husbands love? Who is the decision maker? What about the children? And many more. . .

But first; folks, let us look out for the dangers in a marriage. Knowing these dangers, like a sailor knowing the location of the hidden rocks under the sea, will help you to find success in your courtship and marriage, sex and happiness.

So, what are they?

(To be continued)

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About the Author:

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