



# Single...again.

■ by Deborah Mitchell, MS, LMFT

**If this title speaks to you, you have probably lived the old cliché: *Life is what happens when you're making other plans.* At some point, you found somebody to love before something happened to make life turn upside down and inside out.**

I chose this topic due to personal life experience. Happily married to my high school sweetheart, the last thing I expected was a call from the hospital telling me my husband had been in a car accident and I should "come quickly." (Widowhood at 22 is not something I'd ever recommend.) I married again at 28. This time, a call came from my mom informing me he had been in an accident at the steel mill and to "please have someone else drive you." I was widowed again at 30, and this time with a small daughter.

I have also seen countless families in therapy and known many outside of therapy where the "single...again" status comes from divorce. Death and divorce have their own struggles, and pain comes from different sources. However, there are some very common issues and some common coping skills.

One thing in common is grief. Grief isn't only about death - it's about change. Anytime there's a change, there's a loss. Grief is frequently taught as stages, but that makes it sound reasonable and orderly. When this is the assumption, one feels crazy when emotions change by the hour or by the minute.

Another common issue can be the loss of friends. Sometimes they just don't know what to say so they don't call. Sometimes, married friends can become concerned about relationships developing with their spouse. Sometimes, they don't want the reminder that nothing in life is certain.

## A FEW TIPS TO COPE:

1. **Stay connected in your faith.** Even when I was angry at God, He was my biggest support. Isaiah 54:5 says "The Lord your maker is your Husband." We are also known as the bride of Christ. No matter how abandoned we feel by our earthly partners, He will comfort us when we are brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18). He's even there when you awaken at 3 AM feeling crushed. No phone needed.
2. **Try to find a support group** that fits your situation. People who understand a little of what you're going through, with some who are coming out the other side can be a valuable resource.
3. **Don't make life-changing decisions** until you've worked through grief- usually a year is recommended (Yes, this applies to new relationships). Grief leaves the brain "fuzzy" and decisions are not always the most rational although you are your most vulnerable.
4. **If there are children, do NOT speak badly of the other parent.** Allow them to talk about the parent if they want. Remember they will be grieving too, and watch for signs of acting out.
5. **Try hard to look for any positives.** It's easy to stay focused on our own turbulent emotions, but we miss out on the peace that comes from a thankful heart that way.
6. **Don't hesitate to get counseling.** There are impacts on many emotional, mental, and spiritual areas with both death and divorce with which counseling can assist.



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