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OREGON ATTORNEY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

# *IN SIGHT* for Oregon Lawyers and Judges

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

## NAVIGATING FROM DIVORCE TO NEW BEGINNINGS

As lawyers, we are accustomed to solving problems in a logical progression. When faced with divorce, we are flooded with emotions. Emotions are not a problem we can solve. The divorce transition, like any transition, can be disorienting until we work through our grief and loss and then create new routines, fill in voids, add new activities, and create a healthy and fulfilling new phase of life.

Getting a divorce means changing family structures. Even if a person has come to the conclusion that a marriage is not working, it can be difficult to split up. The couple may rely on each other to fulfill emotional and practical roles and tasks within the household and family structure. Once a separation has occurred, people can find themselves disoriented by the void that is left after the breakup.

### Other Issues People Face in Divorce

- How to tell children and the impact on them
- How to tell others
- How to support your children
- Whether or not professional counselors are needed
- Choosing legal counsel and/or mediators/custody evaluators
- Dealing with financial issues
- Feeling an emotional void and looking for ways to fill it
- Increased need for practical coping strategies

### Grief and Loss: Death of a Dream

When people get married, they have a vision of what the relationship and future life together will be like. Usually couples

envision living together forever, and often the vision also includes raising children together. When things start going wrong, the couple will hold onto the dream. To renew relationships, couples may try many things, like spending time together and/or apart, living separately, and going to workshops. When one of the spouses realizes that the marriage cannot be salvaged, the grieving process may be triggered. That dream of the future is fading.

### Feelings of Guilt and Failure

People often feel like they have failed if their marriages are not working. People may feel guilty for not trying hard enough, for their part in the breakup, and/or for not speaking up sooner about problems. They feel responsible for the relationship not working. Sometimes their guilt is about not leaving soon enough, or because the unhealthiness in the household has impacted the family.

### Resentments and Feelings of Betrayal

Working through resentments in the divorce process can be a worthwhile challenge that may or may not lead to forgiveness but usually leads to acceptance of what was. Often, people going through a divorce feel betrayed and angry, and processing these feelings can be helpful in moving on to a new healthy life.

### Adjustments to a New Life and Healing

The process of shaping a new life, listening to others, reading, processing emotions, and gaining insights will help you

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move along on a new path. Recognizing what wasn't working can help, as can discovering new ways to communicate. Learning to rely on yourself and others for support can lead you to find new friendships and to rekindle relationships with old friends and family you haven't seen in awhile. Adjusting to a new life can include finding new hobbies, better self-care, engaging in volunteer work, all of which can help people feel fulfilled and whole. They also have the opportunity to prioritize themselves and their wellness.

The OAAP offers a divorce support group to help people deal with emotions and the sometimes overwhelming tasks of reshaping your life, while working and often parenting, too. Through the support and wisdom of other participants, group assignments, and the guidance of the OAAP facilitator, group members work through their own divorce at their own pace. In the group, participants will have opportunities to process the death of a dream, guilt, failure, resentments, and adjusting to a new life.

The divorce support group provides participants the opportunity to learn from others as they learn from you, and also to learn you are not alone.

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