

like many millions of others in the Western world, have come to expect more of my primary partnership than staying together for the sake of the children. As author and marriage historian Stephanie Coontz points out, relationships have changed more in the past thirty years than in the three thousand years before. And I, like so many of us, aspired to a union that was far beyond the ones my mother, and my grandmother before her, expected to have. It's not that Mark and I weren't wholeheartedly and doggedly devoted to raising a well-adjusted, healthy, happy daughter. Of course we were; our lives revolved around this shared commitment. But did that really mean that we had to be bound together with the bonds of matrimony and morally required to have sex with each other for the rest of our lives in order to do so?

I mean, Mark's a sexy guy but . . . seriously?

As someone who is an evolutionary at heart, meaning that I believe in the noble pursuit of consciously making the effort to become a wiser, more enlightened, and more evolved human being in service to helping build wiser, more enlightened, and more evolved human societies, I am ever-fascinated with new

*I have woven a
parachute out of
everything broken.*
WILLIAM STAFFORD

and emergent possibilities for loving connections that are a little left of center—and perhaps even a whole lot outside of the box. I'm quirky that way. As a "cultural creative," and there are millions more like me throughout the world, I'm prone to pioneering new possibilities on the vast frontier of human relationships. My orientation as a licensed marriage and family therapist is strongly rooted in humanistic psychology with a particular devotion to the human potential movement, which

is about the purposeful striving toward the realization of our highest potentials, on both individual and societal levels. So, it's not really my nature to stay married simply because of current cultural assumptions about what's best for the kids. Assumptions that, while certainly well informed by research that is worthy of deep discussion and reflective thought, seems to fundamentally lack the creative effort toward solving the problem of how we can form a balanced, stable, and loving family life in the aftermath of divorce. When I thought of it this way, my curiosity got the best of me, and I became deeply interested in discovering how we might collectively begin to do this better.

The Journey Ahead

I will be sharing with you, in the pages ahead, the results of that curiosity. You are invited to join me on what became a profound inner journey of healing, transformation, expansion, and reinvention. To begin, I will challenge you to rethink our collective long-held assumptions about breakups and divorce, and ask you to reconsider the very common knee-jerk conclusion that a relationship has failed if it ends for any other reason than that one or both people have died. I will also attempt to raise our awareness about how, inside of this collective assumption of failure, we have never really evolved beyond primitive and destructive ways of separating, yet at great cost to well-being and wholeheartedness—and in many incidences, severely handicapping ourselves, our children, and each other from successfully moving forward in life. And finally, I will offer a new possibility between us, that of Conscious Uncoupling, which allows for a healthy and humane way of ending a romantic union.

At that point, Part Two will move you into your own,