

Chapter 1: Your Divorce Guide

Divorced again?
Am I doing something wrong?
Am I capable of being happily married?
Why is this happening... again?

Divorce is a multi-year challenge filled with turmoil and ongoing adjustments. A breakup of a second marriage, however, is not a repeat of a first divorce. How it affects you and how others react to it are unique. You have figured this out. That is why my book is in your hands.

That understanding—that the end of a remarriage is different—sets *Divorcing Again?* apart from other divorce books. It is your roadmap and lifeboat through your journey. Based on my groundbreaking research, it provides the information you need to understand this relatively new path, how your spouse and children will respond, and your steps to get through your upheaval and into a happy life.

Many remarriages include one spouse, who has had a previous marriage and one for whom it is a first. If you are a once-wed partner in this situation, this guide is for you, too. As you may already suspect, your marriage and breakup are different from your second-time spouse's and different from your friend's traditional-first where both are leaving a first union. More than a third of this book speaks directly to you about how to navigate your distinct path.

As a psychologist, I have been researching family breakups for more than thirty years starting with my doctoral dissertation on adult divorce stress and adjustment. Back then, divorce was increasing rapidly but little was known about it, especially the adult process. With numerous friends, family, and clients getting a divorce at the time, I wanted to better understand these separations and how to make them easier.

The current research began about ten years later. As I watched so many who divorced once now doing it again, I wondered. Why was this happening again? How could I help families get through their ordeal? To explore this trend, I conducted a series of studies including a follow-up. Because my research started prior to the legalization of same-sex marriages, the men and women in this study were exiting opposite-sex marriages. Likewise, in this book, marriage and divorce refers to opposite-sex, couples. At last count, 722 adults have joined one of the first four inquiries reported in this book. In two of these, 333 parents described a child's reactions to their recent split as well as their own.

Soon after I began this investigation, I noticed that the breakup of a remarriage was different from the more common divorce where both are ending a first. Then, I discovered three other facts.

Fact 1: *Remarriage and divorce are becoming common.* Starting about ten years ago, one in four weddings was a remarriage for the bride and/or the groom. Because second unions are more unstable than first ones, divorce has increased rapidly in recent years, even among older couples.ⁱ So if you are in or ending a rewed, you are part of a modern trend.

Fact 2: *Remarriages take three forms.* Each of these marital types has unique characteristics and fault lines. When these couples split, the process and challenges are often dissimilar. Therefore, I will discuss each of these remarriage and divorce experiences separately and focus on how they are similar and how they are not.

In some American marriages, the husband is remarried, but his wife is only in her first. Some

male celebrities, and four United States Presidents, are part of this set. This includes Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump.

In his late thirties, President Reagan's eight-year marriage to Jane Wyman ended. Four years later, he married Nancy Davis, a first-time bride ten years his junior. The couple was happily married for about five decades until he died at age 93.

President Trump is in his third marriage and second remarriage to a first-time bride. His current spouse, Melania Knauss, wed him in her mid-thirties and is about 24 years his junior. When he entered the White House, they had been married for about twelve years, fewer years than his first union to Ivana Zelnickova, but longer than his second to Marla Maples.

In a second group, the wife is rewed, but her husband is only in his first. President Trump's first marriage was an example of this. His original wife was divorced when he met her in his twenties. At 24, Ivana left her first of four husbands, an Austrian skier named Alfred Winklmayr. Four years later, she and Donald Trump wed, but divorced fifteen years after that. For the third or largest remarriage set, the couple is wed following the divorce of both partners. Celebrity marriages are often dual remarriages.

Fact 3: For both first and second-timers, *the end of a remarriage is a learning opportunity and, for many, the path to a better life*. A successful divorce is a lemonade experience—bitter at the start, but ends with personal growth, a better understanding of how to achieve a happy partnership, and redirection.

How to Use the Book

This book contains general and specific information not only on how remarriages get into trouble, but also and, more importantly, how to successfully navigate the three versions of the redivorce process. For an overview, read the book in chronological order. You can also hopscotch through the book, stopping to read areas that interest you. You may want to start with the section dealing with your top issue so you can solve it first and then read other parts.

Most chapters incorporate special features to help you understand the material and make the best choices. As an aid, many sections start with a quiz. Completing each of these prior to reading the rest of the chapter will help you grasp the upcoming material.

Especially if you like numbers, you will want to take a close look at the graphs. These will help you quickly see and find the major results from the study.

Recommendations pepper discussions. All these ideas are quick solutions and easy to apply. Everyone is an individual, so find ones that work best for you. You may want to buy a notebook in which to write notes as you read. In your journal, you can write your favorite tips, record your reactions on worksheets, and list relevant resources. Alternatively, you can put these in your note section of your iPhone.

Composite examples are added to clarify the material. They are called composites because they combine several stories. These are often fictional dialogues between two friends talking about their journey. Others emphasize redivorce rules. Although there are many cases, the book primarily uses nine couples. The section below gives a synopsis of these. Many of their children's reactions appear in Chapter 15.

Synopsis of Nine Couples

Type 1: Mono-remarriages have a once-married wife and a twice-married husband.

1. Janet & Stanley

At 24, Janet, a dental hygienist, married Stanley, a 31-year-old plumber. Eight years later, Janet divorced Stanley when their daughter Lilly was almost seven and his first marriage son was in high school. When they split, he blamed the divorce primarily on her parent's hostility, while she blamed primarily financial strain from his first-marriage obligations.

2. Grace & William

Grace, a hairdresser, and William, a salesman, began their six-year marriage when she was 23 and he was 32. They had three sons, one from his first marriage, Lane, and two from theirs, Mark and Steve. Soon after they married, he lost his job and could not find another one for four months. On his next job, he was frequently away from home for at least three days at a time. Lonely and worried that he might leave her, she left him for someone new.

3. Louise & John

Louise, a late twenties florist, was married for six years to John, a supermarket manager. They had one son from his first-union, Cody. John's mother and son, were openly hostile toward Louise and took every opportunity to undermine their marriage. His mom even shouted at the wedding rehearsal, "Do you have to marry that woman?" Eventually, John left the marriage via an affair.

Type 2: Uni-remarriages have a once-married husband and a second-married wife.

1. Scarlett & Elvis

On their wedding day, Elvis was an early thirties bus driver, while his bride Scarlett, was in her late twenties. When they divorced, she went on welfare. They had two daughters, Sunny from her first marriage and Elle from the current one. Scarlett left Elvis because she was fed up with his partying, drinking, and abuse.

2. Bolta & Carter

When Carter, an artist, wed Bolta, a real estate appraiser, they were both in their late twenties. They had a son Max from her first marriage, but no children from this one. Max considered Carter his emotional Dad. Carter complained that she never made a commitment to the marriage or supported his artistic goals, and as a result, they grew apart. Bolta resented that she was the major breadwinner. Carter married Madeline several years later.

3. Savannah & Pug

In their mid-thirties, Pug, was an architect, while Savannah was a bank teller with an eleven-year-old daughter, Princess, from a prior relationship. They had a brief, rebound marriage. With very different lifestyles and values, they bickered over many things even how to put on the toilet paper. Pug didn't get along with his stepdaughter, felt like an outsider, and didn't feel close to Savannah. He divorced Savannah and then had a brief love relationship with another woman.

Type 3: Bi-remarriages have a remarried wife and a remarried husband.

1. Desirée & Saul

Desirée, a teacher's aide, married Saul, a construction worker. When they married, she was 29 and he was 32. They had Lois from her first marriage, Peter from his first marriage, and their mutual son, Tucker. Their seven-year marriage ended when she left Saul. She complained that he favored Peter over their other children and her. He countered that she treated Peter with disdain.

2. Cheyenne & Ralph.

A mid-thirties couple, Ralph and Cheyenne were high school teachers with a daughter, Rose, from his first marriage and Lilac from theirs. Ralph ran off with the next-door neighbor, Sabrina.

3. Beth & Nickolas

Beth, a veterinarian, and Nickolas, an accountant, were briefly married in their late thirties. She had two daughters, Sarah, 12, and Ann, 7. He had a boy and a girl, Bret, 14, and Carol, 13. They blamed problems with the three older children for their breakup. Sarah got into trouble at school for breaking rules, failed several courses, and fought with her mother, stepsiblings and stepfather. His children didn't like Beth or her children, either. The divorce decision was mutual.

When you read the longer versions of these stories, you will be able to “see” how a person's past often foretells his future. Your past, however, does not have to predict your destiny. You can learn from another's solutions to redirect and improve your journey. Use your divorce as an opportunity to take a closer look at yourself, ditch ineffective habits, and develop new, more effective ways of relating to a partner. With increased self-knowledge and the information in this book, you can choose your new direction, make you and your family happier, and advance to a better, more fulfilling life.

So, sit down, put up your feet, and let me show you how to get back to happy. We will get through this together. I'll be by your side the whole way through until you're smiling again.
