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columns



the mindful divorcée

BY DEBBIE MARTINEZ, DIVORCE COACH

## My Ex is a Jerk

IT'S HARD ENOUGH ADJUSTING TO THE RIGORS OF BEING DIVORCED AND REBUILDING your life but throw a difficult ex wife into the mix and it's down right frustrating and exhausting. As much as we all hope parents will put their children first and not use them to get back at their ex, it doesn't always work out that way. So, what can you do when you are dealing with someone who is toxic, vindictive and combative? Don't focus on the storm, focus on the plan to get out and believe me, there is a difference.

It's natural to talk about the things that make you unhappy or angry but in this instance, it is completely unproductive. Focus your thoughts and energy into a plan. Here are some things to think about.

- » Acceptance is key. Stop trying to change her way of thinking and behavior and focus on changing yours. You have control of yourself but you cannot control her. Once you accept the way things are instead of always wanting them to be different, you will be on your way to finding inner peace.
- » What part are you playing in this drama? Are you being manipulative, passive aggressive or provoking her? Is your ego driving these battles? Let go of negative or manipulative behavior. Be honest with your role in all this and take steps to correct it.
- » Ask yourself what need this ongoing battle is fulfilling in your ex? She is clearly getting something out of it. Is it about control? Ruining your date night or the holidays? Figure out what it is and then take it away from her. For example, if her goal is to ruin a date by picking the kids up late then come up with an alternate plan. You can drop the kids off instead of have her come get them, have a babysitter wait with them, etc. There is a solution to everything if you can get past the notion of fairness and resentment. As long as you buy into her, you will continue to make your life miserable.
- » Here is a tough one but it works. Before you engage in conflict, take a deep breath, step back and try to see the issue through her eyes. Don't let your ego drive the situation and don't threaten to "lawyer up" with every infraction. Keep your eye on the goal and that is to make your life easier.
- » Set up your boundaries and stick to them. Communicate only about the kids or required settlement issues. If you can't speak without your blood boiling then communicate by email or text. Keep your communication business like, void of emotion and do not personalize it.
- » Keep things in perspective. This is only one part of your life and even though it seems like it consumes your life, remember it only will if you let it. Start living your life and be less concerned with what she is or isn't doing. Do Not under any circumstances let anyone steal your joy.
- » There is only so much you can control and unless your ex is doing something to harm the children or extremely egregious, you are left having to accept that the two of you will not be on the same page with the kids. You say white and she says black. Don't set yourself up for unnecessary frustration or failure by constantly trying to fit the square peg into the round hole. Set up your home and parenting the way you want it. Let your children know that when they come home to you, the hat they wore at their moms gets left at the door and your hat goes on. Have open communication with them; however, this is not synonymous with bad mouthing their mom. Depending on the age, it is about listening to them, acknowledging how they feel and including them in the solution process.

How you live your life is a choice and you do have the control even if at times it appears that you don't. Clear out the resentment, the sense of unfairness and stop digging your heels in. Fix your eyes on the goal of harmony with yourself and your children.

*Debbie Martinez, MA is a certified, mindful life coach specializing in divorce (aka: heartbreak coach). She professionally coaches clients on how to avoid the breakup backlash and live better, not bitter. As a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator trained in collaborative divorce, Debbie gives clients the tools they need to successfully untie the knot and stand strong in the wake of adversity. She brings her formal training and life experience into her coaching practice to empower and educate clients through their divorce journey and onto new beginnings. You can contact Debbie at [debbie@transformationthrudivorce.com](mailto:debbie@transformationthrudivorce.com).*