

Are You Staying Married Only For Your Children?

by Barb Hepperle

There are many people who have come close to ending their marriage for any number of reasons and yet stay in unhappy, unsatisfying relationships. According to Dr. Michael Broder, if your relationship lacks some degree of mutual commitment and passion and falls into the category of stormy, indifferent or one-sided, you have a sure-fired recipe for disaster.

Are you feeling confused and ambivalent? You want to leave, but you don't want to let go of the good stuff. It hurts to stay but it's soooo scary to go.

Everyone feels ambivalent at times and this is natural. A little bit of ambivalence is good. It keeps us from making rash decisions that we will regret later, but too much ambivalence keeps us paralysed and prevents us from living a full and rich life. So not making a decision one way or another is still a decision and chronic ambivalence will affect both your emotional and physical well being.

To sort through all the confusion, it may be helpful to take stock of the pain versus the gain of either staying or leaving. There are many things to consider and there are no right or wrong answers.

There is no magic formula that says how children would respond to a divorce but if you are sure that you would leave if you didn't have children then here are some things to consider.

Children are affected by divorce to the extent that it affects the parents. As long as parents continue to provide a loving environment for their children and foster feelings of love and respect toward the other parent, you can create an 'extended family' environment rather than a 'broken' family mentality and your children can be happy and well adjusted.

Because of the kids or because of fear?

Would you leave your relationship in a heartbeat if you were confident you would make it on your own? People often use the children as an excuse not to get a divorce because they aren't really sure that they want to leave or have some other fear keeping them stuck. One huge fear is financial considerations. Another is your own self-worth. Are you able to see yourself as someone who can make it without a relationship? If not, you could be wasting your life by staying only out of fear and dependency.

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Because of the kids or because of guilt?

Many people will continue to stay in unhappy or unhealthy relationships out of guilt, telling themselves that they don't want to hurt their children or even their partner for that matter. Guilt is a chain around your neck that only serves to help you deny your own dependency.

You need to realistically examine what adverse effect divorce will have on your children. If you are staying only because of guilt, you will still have an unhappy marriage and how is that affecting them? People who are unhappy in their lives tend to dump their unhappiness on others. It oozes out as more criticism and anger.

Try to look at all the perspectives and ask yourself how much you really want this relationship to continue. Score yourself on a scale from zero to ten, with 0 being 'not at all' to 10 being you have no doubt at all you want this relationship to continue. This number can change as your circumstances change but it can always be a guiding light for you to determine the extent of your unhappiness.

Time to Go?

If you reach the stage when you stop liking yourself, you realize that the relationship is causing you more harm, it is preventing you from growing, you are feeling emotionally and or sexually disconnected or depressed, then it's time to leave.

Ready to stay and work it out?

Are you taking full 100% responsibility for your part in the problems? Are you ready to accept your partner just as he/she is without trying to change them? Do you ask for what you want or need? Can you communicate from your heart without judgement or blame?

Your journey.

Each person travels his or her own road through life. Only you know what is right and best for you.

Divorce brings about many fears, losses and changes that are tough for all involved. Please remember though that children have remarkable resiliency and just like you, they can come through divorce stronger and happier than before.

The one thing that shouldn't change is that both parents will always be there for the children, no matter what.

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