

# A Father Without a Family

## The First Ten Steps – Recently Separated

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## The First Ten Steps

This is all about getting some momentum in your life. You have recently separated and now wonder; how will I survive, how will I see my kids, where will I live, can I fix it, can I recover?

Losing a marriage is like a part of you dying, for me it was one of the most traumatic experiences I have ever been through.

Emotionally you will need to learn to walk again. The good news is that you can do it! There are literally millions of people like us who are going through the same misery after losing their marriage.

Here is a ten-point plan that will get you off to a good start regardless of whether you are male or female. This is a tough game, and a long one especially if you have kids.

## Details

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1: Secure your finances.

- Finances are one of the biggest problems you will have with your ex. Make yourself a budget and be conservative, you will have to be allot more frugal than you did before.
- Make safe any share in cash you have as a couple.
- Get your own bank account setup.
- Get your mobile in your own name.
- Adjust your will, superannuation and/or life insurance.

2: Secure your shelter.

- Find a place to live. If you have kids, try to remain as close to the other parent as reasonably possible. Yes it does matter!
- Worry about the 'core' material things you need to survive. In the end it's not worth fighting over a lounge or DVD player, really it isn't. What you need is clothing, bedding, and basic kitchen items.
- If you have to share a place then ensure they are child friendly, and that they are not going to keep you down. Positive people only...

3: Put your absolute trust in one person.

- Out of all your friends and family pick one person you can open your heart to and be completely honest with. You will need someone to be your sounding board, you will need someone that will not judge you, but support you.

4: Write everything down.

- He said, she said is not a game you want to be playing with your ex. Have conversations, settle on decisions and then follow them up with something in writing.
- Keep a journal, and keep it safe, use Dropbox or the like to back up all your critical documents.
- Never use offensive language it will only come back to bite you later on, especially if you end up in court.

5: Ask for help.

- In Australia, talk to the CSA. If you are anywhere else contact your relevant Government agency. Most western democracies have support networks for single parents. There is a whole host of benefits for single parents available.
- Get legal advice! You do not need to act on it, but get it.
- Talk to your employer if you are working, you will need their support, you will change and you will struggle for a period. Be open and honest with them.
- Lastly, rally your family and friends. Expect to lose some as part of the separation; the true ones will always open their heart for you.

6: Leave the children out of it.

- It will be very tempting to use the kids as leverage to get back at your ex, or to try and win them back. It will never work people! Marginalising your kids to suit your emotional needs is destructive to their lives.
- Do not degrade the other parent in front of the kids. Let them form their own opinion of their parents.

7: Plan regular time to see the children or to share them with the other parent.

- The quicker you can settle on a regular pattern to see your children the better. Humans are creatures of habit; this is particularly acute with children who see it as safety. To keep them top of mind means making the effort to spend time with them.
- Make sure you share any information that is important with the other parent. IE: Sickness in particular. Get over the personnel issues with your EX, the kids are more important.

8: Learn to compromise.

- If you thought you had to compromise allot in marriage then think again. Many things will not go the way you want them to. Your ability to see the bigger picture, and be the bigger person will put your best foot forward in showing your kids that they are the priority.
- If it is not something that you would care about on your deathbed, let it go. This is a long process...

9: Learn to be patient.

- This goes with the point above. Patience is key, I see you all looking funny at this right now, but seriously, if you let your emotions take over all the time you will get nowhere.
- I had to wait three years to get permission to take my kids on an aeroplane in Australia. It was hard, but it's now a done deal!
- Set goals, not deadlines!

10: This will get harder before it gets better.

- Sometimes we fluff things up a little more than what the reality reveals. Try and be as pragmatic about this as much as possible. Be honest with yourself, don't worry too much about what others think at this point, get your head around you, get to know you, what makes you tick and what is important to you!
- This is a long game, whilst there will be plenty of cases where people separate and divide their assets and move on very quickly, I see that as somewhat utopian and not reality. If you have kids with your ex you need to get your head around the fact that you are going to have to have a relationship with him/her for the rest of your lives. There will be times when your kids need to see mum and dad as a combined force and capable of adult communication without throwing knives at each other. One breath, and one day at a time...

Whilst this list is not exhaustive and there are plenty of other topics to include I feel these are the core struggles you will face in your first three months of separation.

Being completely honest the toughest thing is to be honest with yourself. People naturally cover over what they fear with a number of mechanisms. Your challenge is to remove all the facades and make yourself vulnerable to your own mind, heart and soul. I cried for months and months when I first lost my marriage, I made a lot of mistakes, I said things I shouldn't have, but what started the turn around was my drive to be honest with myself about my role in the demise of my marriage.

I hope this helps...