

Five Reasons Why Second Marriages Fail at a High Rate

By

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For some time the divorce rate in the USA for first marriages has held at about 50%. This is a national tragedy. This statistic also means that many people have subsequent marriages.

Common sense suggests that someone who remarries is older, wiser, more mature, has learned from their mistakes, and knows better what they want and need in a partner. Therefore, the divorce rate for second marriages would be expected to be substantially lower than the rate for first marriages. Despite our common sense expectations, according to demographic data the divorce rate for subsequent marriages is, in fact, significantly higher than that of first marriages—65%, nearly two out of three! Why?

1. Money, Sex, and In-Laws

The above “big three” issues are the primary problems that plague most first marriages. These same issues also impact subsequent marriages—but even more so. The money problem becomes even more troublesome in second marriages due to child support and spousal maintenance payments. Second marriages feel the strain when money is tight and hubby has to send checks to the first wife.

The sex issue also gets “interesting” in subsequent marriages, if, for no other reason, one or both of the partners were previously in a committed relationship. Uncomfortable questions and comparisons are likely to arise.

The in-law situation becomes especially taxing in subsequent marriages, particularly when both partners bring a child into the new relationship. There would be husband’s parents, wife’s parents, husband’s ex’s parents, and wife’s ex’s parents. Whose house do you go to for Thanksgiving? Statistically, two of these in-law couples could be divorced so that could add another pair of in-laws this new couple may have to appease. If one of the partners is marrying for the third time and had a child with the previous two spouses, the mathematical permutations of potential in-laws is beyond this liberal arts graduate.

2. Children

Children keep tenuous marriages together. While natural children are binding agents in first marriages, step-children are often divisive factors in subsequent unions. Many parents struggle with managing their natural offspring; nearly all step-parents are frustrated with dealing with their step-kids. A major problem in blended families is

partners not supporting each other with regard to the management of their respective natural children.

3. Ex's

Some ex-spouses are pleased to see their ex enter a new relationship—especially if it could result in fewer legal motions being filed or reduced child support and alimony payments. Some ex's, though, especially if they were the “dumpee,” are resentful when their ex finds a new relationship and may attempt to sabotage it. Some angry ex's continue to bring their ex-spouse back to court for various reasons long after the divorce is final. This adds emotional and financial tension to the new partnership. Another sad but unfortunately common ploy is to negatively lobby the child against the new partner. This tends to make problem # 2 worse.

4. The Speed at which We Re-Couple

When you have been rejected by someone you once loved or decide to end a committed relationship, attention from another possible suitor is quite intoxicating. The data shows that many separated individuals are in a new exclusive relationship before the ink on the divorce decree is dry. We like to be coupled. A sizable number of persons will purposely enter a new relationship as a means of extricating themselves from an unfulfilling marriage. Rushing from one relationship into another is foolish and does not provide the time to fully explore the new one before becoming emotionally committed to it. Once the infatuation wanes, the new relationship could be in trouble.

5. Unconscious Dynamics

Psychoanalytic theory holds that who we marry is pre-determined. We are unconsciously attracted to individuals with certain characteristics. This attraction does not guarantee a healthy pairing; this subconscious desire, in fact, may lead to angst in the relationship. Unfortunately, most of us are unaware of our unconscious forces. If the marriage ends, we tend to put all the blame on our ex and rarely consider our role in that failed relationship. Thus, we subsequently unconsciously seek another partner with essentially the same dynamics of our ex—and the next relationship is in jeopardy.

I recommend that if you have left a committed relationship, for any reason, you should immediately get into counseling for a minimum of nine months before you consider entering another exclusive relationship.

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