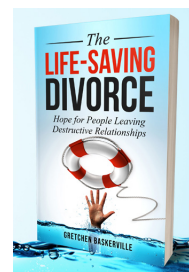


# THE LIFE-SAVING DIVORCE



## 7 Effective Ways to Deal with Criticism When You Divorce

Nobody likes criticism, but it's a fact of life. When you finally get the courage to divorce, there's nothing more painful than family, acquaintances, and people at church questioning you, calling you selfish, and trying to instill fear in your heart about your future. They assume you didn't try hard; you gave up too easy; you didn't value the sanctity of marriage; you didn't care about your faith. They accuse you of not caring about your children and their future.

You need confidence to deal with these situations. And you need a calm, polite response. Although they may be well-meaning, long-time friends, they are wrong about your situation. They aren't living in your home, dealing with the tension in your relationship, interacting with your spouse, forgiving the indignities you've experienced. They have no skin in the game, and they have no say. It's your life and only you know what's happening behind closed doors, and only you know how much you can take. You don't owe them an explanation.

**Here are 7 responses to have at your fingertips to give you confidence**

**False Claim 1: You're divorcing because you are a quitter. Or you're not willing to endure the normal ups and downs of marriage like everyone else.**

**More than 40% of divorces are "Life-Saving Divorces,"** divorces to end desperate marriages that are unsafe and/or high distress. These are not marriages with normal ups and downs. Usually these marriages are impacted by serial infidelity, physical abuse, chronic emotional abuse, sexual immorality, neglect, or debilitating substance abuse. Sometimes these marriages are confusing: There's control, pressure, tension, fear, despair, and walking on eggshells, but you can't quite figure it out. Some people are suicidal from trying to improve the marriage, sacrificing their own wellbeing, but failing to see any real improvement. These are anything but frivolous divorces.

**False Claim 2: Divorce doesn't solve your problems; it's just running away**

**Divorce saves lives. No-fault divorce has lowered the suicide, domestic violence, and murder rates.** In states that adopted no-fault divorce from 1969-1983, researchers discovered that the suicide rate for wives dropped around 20%; the domestic violence rate by and against both men and women dropped 30%; and the homicide rate for women murdered by intimates dropped by 5-10%.<sup>1</sup> If we care about safety, we need to have a new view of divorce.

**False Claim 3: You're going to destroy your children if you divorce.**

**Divorce is no longer as devastating to children as it once was.** Now researchers are finding that kids *on average* bounce back well. So, if your children were fine before the divorce, they will have some additional stress during the divorce process, but on average within a year or two, they will go back to normal.

**For most youths, the legacy of divorce is largely overcome. Twenty years after divorce, most men and women who had grown up in divorced families and stepfamilies are functioning reasonably well. Only a minority still exhibited emotional and social problems.<sup>ii</sup>**

**—Dr. E. Mavis Hetherington and John Kelly**

**False Claim 4: Being raised in a two-parent home is always better for children.**

**Divorce is often better for children than staying in a high-distress homes.** The pro-marriage, pro-family Institute for Family Studies says divorce may be the best option in difficult or dangerous marriages<sup>iii</sup>. And leading family researcher, Paul Amato, says it's better to get your children out of there.

**“In some cases, divorce may be the best option for husbands and wives in a difficult or dangerous marriage. Domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and infidelity — among other things — are certainly legitimate grounds ...”**

**—Bradford Wilcox, *Inst. For Family Studies***

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**When parents reported high levels of discord...offspring with divorced parents were better off than offspring with continuously married parents.<sup>iv</sup>**

**—Dr. Paul Amato**

**False Claim 5: Your children will become drug addicts if you divorce.**

**Divorce Doesn't Mean Your Kids Will Have Drug and Alcohol Problems.** Your kids are not likely to have alcohol or drug problems. The vast majority of kids in single-parent and step-parent families do not have *any* substance abuse problems.

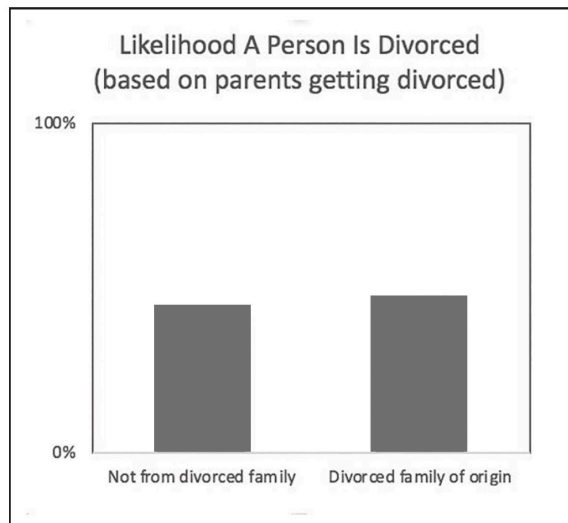
- Only **6 in 100 adolescents in single-mother** families had substance abuse problems. 94 in 100 have no substance abuse problems.
- Only **5 in 100 adolescents in two-parent** families had substance abuse problems. 95 in 100 have no substance abuse problems.<sup>v</sup>

**False Claim 6: If you divorce, your kids will likely divorce too.**

**Divorce Doesn't Mean Your Kid's Marriage Will End in Divorce Too**

Most adults whose parents divorced *do not* divorce. The majority of people whose parents divorced have lifelong marriages. According to 2018 figures<sup>vi</sup>—

- 45% of adults whose parents divorced, got divorced themselves.
- 41% of adults whose parents did not divorce, got divorced.

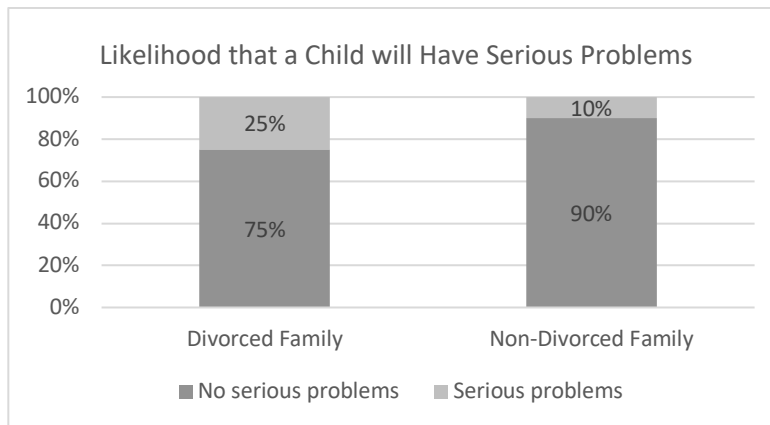


The difference is only 4% (that is minimal!) between the divorce rate of children of divorce homes and non-divorced homes.

**False Claim 7: Your children will be emotionally damaged for life.**

**Divorce Doesn't Doom Your Children to Serious Emotional Problems.** Your child is not likely to have long lasting damage from a divorce. According to research, 3-in-4 kids from divorced homes do not have any serious problems psychologically, socially, or emotionally. While everyone acknowledges the first two years are stressful, divorce doesn't have long-lasting effects on most kids. In non-divorced homes 10% of children are likely to have serious problems. In divorced homes 20-25% of children are likely to have serious problems.

This chart shows that 10 in 100 youths from non-divorced homes are likely to have serious social, emotional, or psychological problems, and 25 in 100 youths from divorced homes are likely to have serious social, emotional, or psychological problems.



In fact, it's more dangerous for the long-term health of your children if they are brought up in a two-parent home where they observe you being mistreated, or them themselves experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or are exposed to substance abuse or mental illness.<sup>vii</sup>

Landmark family sociologist Dr. Mavis Hetherington wrote:

*“In the short run, divorce is brutally painful to a child. But its negative long-term effects have been exaggerated....*

*“Twenty-five percent of youths from divorced families in comparison to 10 percent from non-divorced families did have serious social, emotional, or psychological problems. But most of the young men and women from [the study] looked a lot like their contemporaries from non-divorced homes. Although they looked back on their parents’ breakup as a painful experience, most were successfully going about the chief tasks of young adulthood: establishing careers, creating intimate relationships, building meaningful lives for themselves.”<sup>viii</sup>*

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### **Bonus Fact: Does God Say: “I Hate Divorce”? No! That’s a Bad Translation**

God doesn’t say, “I hate divorce.” The translation of this verse in some versions of the Bible is incorrect. This verse is about God’s anger at unfaithful violent husbands who kick their wives to the curb. The Hebrew does not say “I hate divorce.”<sup>ix</sup> Rather it says:

“So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth. **“The man who hates and divorces his wife,”** says the Lord, the God of Israel, **“does violence to the one he should protect,”** says the Lord Almighty. So be on your guard, and **do not be unfaithful.** —Malachi 2:15b-16 ASV

Or the same verses in the English Standard Version (ESV)

**“...let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.** “For the **man who does not love his wife but divorces her,** says the LORD, the God of Israel, **covers his garment with violence,** says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and **do not be faithless.**” — ESV

**God is not against all divorce. God is against treacherous divorce,** divorce where the vow breaker abandons the innocent spouse. And God is also against treacherous treatment of spouses, such as abuse, abandonment, neglect, and exploitation.

*A marriage must be safe and loving, or at least respectful.  
If it is not, it's not a marriage.  
It is more like kidnapping, incarceration, or servitude.*

Sign up for the Life-Saving Divorce email list for more helpful fact sheets: [www.LifeSavingDivorce.com](http://www.LifeSavingDivorce.com)



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For more encouraging, hope-filled, and supportive information, sign up for the email list at the Life-Saving Divorce site. Watch for the book of the same name released in 2020 [www.LifeSavingDivorce.com](http://www.LifeSavingDivorce.com)

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- <sup>i</sup> Stevenson, Betsey, and Wolfers, Justin, *Bargaining In The Shadow Of The Law: Divorce Laws And Family Distress*, © 2006 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, February 2006, p. 267, 268, 286
- <sup>ii</sup> Hetherington, E Mavis, Kelly, John, *For Better or for Worse, 2002* (New York: WW Norton & Company), p. 253.
- <sup>iii</sup> Wilcox, Bradford, Sturgeon, Samuel, Three Reasons Not to Make This January Your Divorce Month, January 11, 2017 <https://ifstudies.org/blog/three-reasons-not-to-make-this-january-your-divorce-month> (captured 9-2-19)
- <sup>iv</sup> Amato, Paul, Reconciling Divergent Perspectives : Judith Wallerstein, Quantitative Family Research, and Children of Divorce. *Family Relations*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Oct., 2003), pp. 337
- <sup>v</sup> DePaulo, Bella, using data in the Hoffman and Johnson “Adolescent Drug Use” study, which draws information from the principle source of data about drug use in the United States. DePaulo, Bella, *Singled Out*, p. 176-177. 2006: St. Martin’s Griffin, New York.
- <sup>vi</sup> Wolfinger, Nicholas H., *Trends in the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce*, *Demography*, September 1999. Pages 415-420. Updated with new 2016 data, Apr 17, 2019.
- <sup>vii</sup> Merrick MT, Ford DC, Ports KA, et al. *Vital Signs: Estimated Proportion of Adult Health Problems Attributable to Adverse Childhood Experiences and Implications for Prevention — 25 States, 2015–2017*. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2019;68:999-1005.
- <sup>viii</sup> Hetherington, E. Mavis, Kelly, John, 2002, *For Better or For Worse* (New York: WW Norton & Company), p. 7
- <sup>ix</sup> Link to the Hebrew-English interlinear for this verse. <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/malachi/2-16.htm>