Restore Your Faith in Love: 7 Pathways to Success

Written by Terry Gaspard, MSW, LICSW for Adult Children of Divorce

PATHWAY ONE: **Examine your parents' divorce from an adult perspective**. Realize that you don't have to define yourself by your parents' marriage or breakup – you can learn from their mistakes. **Action Step**: Ask each parent the reasons why they divorced. Even if you think you know the reasons, discussing it as an adult may shed new light on their split. If you don't feel comfortable doing this or don't have access to both of your parents, attempt to ask this question to a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or trusted family friend.

PATHWAY TWO: **Attempt to forgive others and move on from the past.** You can't change the past, but you can make better choices today. **Action Step**: Write down three crucial ways that your parents' divorce has impacted (or is still impacting) your life. Write down three personal goals to address these issues if the affects were (or are) negative. Keep in mind that the objective here is to focus on pain from your past that may be carrying over into the present. Attempt to pick goals that are attainable and it's always wise to enlist the help of a close friend, family member, or therapist.

PATHWAY THREE: **Examine your relationship with your father**. Try to repair any father-daughter or father-son wounds that may prevent you from having a healthy connection. If you're your relationship with your mother is damaged, this might apply to her. **Action Step:** Write a statement that will help you release any leftover negative feelings from the past. For example, one possible release is: "Dad, I release you for not spending as much time with me after you remarried. I still feel some resentment about this, but I'm working on letting it go." Many

people choose to keep this release to themselves but another option is to include it in a letter to your father – regardless of whether or not you decide to mail it.

PATHWAY FOUR: **Get to the root of self-esteem issues**. Internalize the belief that you are worthy of love. **Action Step:** Examine your divorce experience as a child or adult and any self-feating messages derived from it. Write a prescription to feel better about yourself . For instance, you might decide to do one positive thing for yourself each morning before you leave for the day. Take a risk and try something new such as practicing ten minutes of stretching or yoga.

PATHWAY FIVE: **Extend trust to others.** Operate from a viewpoint that your partner wants the best for you and will not hurt or abandon you. Let him or her prove, through word and deed, that he/she is trustworthy. **Action Step**: Pinpoint how your parents' divorce may impact your feelings of trust in intimate relationships. Extend trust to a partner worthy of trust. When others have lost your trust, don't assume the worst. Pause and examine whether your mistrustful feelings are a result of your past or present. Make a choice to trust your partner and keep in mind that restoring trust is a gradual process. Don't be hard on yourself as you are learning to rebuild trust in relationships.

PATHWAY SIX: **Develop interdependence and reign in your self-reliance**. Allow your partner to come through for you. **Action Step**: Visualize yourself in an honest and open intimate relationship and set a goal to be more accepting of nurturing from your partner. Put together a vision board or write down what you want your relationship to look like. Make a point to reflect upon this image or written passage at least twice a day. Remind yourself that it's healthy to

accept help from others and that the payoff from sharing your vulnerabilities is a deeper level of love, trust, and intimacy.

PATHWAY SEVEN: **Examine your attitudes and beliefs about love and commitment**. A healthy respect for commitment will enhance your ability to build love, trust, and intimacy. **Action Step**: Identify specific ways you might be avoiding commitment. Along with this, evaluate your choice in partners and confront qualities that they share in common. Examine the impact your relationships have had on your self-esteem and life choices. Lastly, make a list of ten qualities in a partner that are a priority to you. Set a goal to become more deeply invested in a romantic relationship with a current or new partner who possesses some of these qualities.

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