

naked divorce

Your new life in 21 days

Naked Divorce

21
DAY

Divorce Angel Guidelines - READ and SIGN



THE RIGHT SUPPORT

Why your friends and family are sometimes the worst support during your divorce

Although your friends and family are an important part of your life, you may find that they're ill equipped to support you through your loss. I found that even though my friends and family were well meaning, they didn't know what to say to me and I often didn't feel better around them.

Before you chuck this well-meaning lot, remember that although they're trying hard, they're just not equipped or trained to help you. Society has conditioned them to deal with loss in a particular way. It's not their fault. They love you very much and they hate to see you suffering. They'll try to take the pain away and will do whatever they can in every moment to achieve this.

Whenever I hung out my friends they would try to distract me from the pain I was feeling or unknowingly invalidate my emotions and my right to feel lousy. I'd leave feeling superficially better but also feeling as if I'd moved two steps backwards. I soon realised that I'd have to get divorce support elsewhere.

Bear these in mind about some of your friends and family (you'll probably recognise some of the points below.)

They may say weird or inappropriate things

We've all been there; the awkward moment where you say something you wish you didn't say. Family and friends often succumb to some old clichés in their struggle to try and make things better. They are all attempts to move you out of your emotional state but these statements are often damaging to your overall healing.

Common phrases my clients have heard include:

- “Thank goodness this happened before you had children.”
- “God will never give you more than you can handle.”
- “There are lots of fish in the sea.”
- “There's someone special out there for you.”
- “It's better to have loved and lost than not to have loved at all.”
- “Be grateful you were once married and knew love.”
- “Now you are free to relive your teenage dreams of being single.”

These are awful platitudes designed to make you feel better. But they don't!

You cannot fix matters of the heart with intellectualisations of the mind. These statements do not encourage your healing.

They have no idea what to say, so sometimes they change the subject

When I was young I attended my friend's mum's funeral. I felt so awkward. I was standing next to my friend and her face was a picture of despair and grief. We'd been playing dolls a week earlier and now I had no idea what to say. I stared at my shoes. I couldn't wait to get out of the church and away from the coffin and her pain. I looked at her and cracked a joke, trying to lighten the atmosphere. She didn't look up. She simply turned and walked away.

You've probably experienced this with one or two of your friends. When you talk about your divorce, they change the subject, pretend not to hear you, or crack a joke. They do this because they love you, they want to make things better for you, but they have no idea what to do. Understand their ineptitude.

Some want to revel in the drama

Some family and friends love the drama of your situation. They will ask to know everything about it so that they can revel in the excitement and intrigue of your divorce as a distraction from their own lives. Be wary of these people because getting into the drama of your divorce will not help you.

They don't want to talk about divorce

After a while you'll realise that some of your friends and family simply don't want to talk about your divorce and will encourage you to do things to get over it so that hanging out with you is fun again. The bottom line is - you need to talk. You need to be heard. You do not need fixing. There is nothing wrong with you or the fact that you're emotional or struggling.

They are afraid of catching this disease called divorce

I remember coming home after a night out with a girlfriend, feeling awful and deflated, like an insect that had been squashed and scraped across a pavement.

I had just recounted my divorce story (okay, it was the second time) but halfway through, she looked out the window, absorbed in her own world. I was shocked. Had I said something wrong? Was I boring her? Was she disinterested?

She then changed the subject.

While I sat listening to her rattling on about some issue at work, the conversation in my head went something like this:

- "It's okay for everyone that I feel the pain, but I cannot appear to be floundering."

- “I am expected to discuss the divorce with my friends only once (don’t overdo it as no one wants to hang around with a basket-case).”
- “I mustn’t mope around because it’s not healthy. It also makes people feel awkward.”
- “But while falling apart I can’t seem too happy either. That would brand me as insensitive or immature.”

I realised that I was alone in my divorce. I had caught the disease called divorce and as I walked around with a scarlet letter D on my forehead, this made me persona-non-grata. When I mentioned my ex husband’s indiscretions, I knew she was wondering about her own husband. I could see that all she wanted to do was go home to check that they were okay. (Months later she admitted my presumption was true.) I excused myself and gave her the opportunity to do that. I know my friend felt awkward. She wanted to help but didn’t know what to say. I remember the same feelings of inadequacy at my friend’s mother’s funeral.

Myths about getting over your divorce

Friends are fantastic, but they all have their own lives and issues.

In the table on the next page are some common phrases that my clients have told themselves in the past or have heard others say.

Myths about getting over your divorce	The deeper 'meaning' you may have taken on board about loss...
Don't cry	Don't feel bad
There are many fish in the sea	Replace the loss with something else quick
Be by yourself	Grieve alone
Time heals all wounds	Just give it time and the numbness I feel is actually acceptance
Be strong for my children/mother/brother	Be strong for others and don't show my emotions
I must stay active	Keep busy and distract myself from my emotions
I mustn't fall apart	Don't drown in my emotions
Don't mope around	I must bounce back quickly or I will have no friends left
Don't bring my emotional baggage into the office	It's not OK to express my emotions
Don't fall in love with anyone else too soon	Rebound relationships are bad

WARNING:

Be wary of buying into any kind of intellectual theorising. Ban all these phrases from your head.



Give your family and friends a *Weirdness Pass*


Give the people in your life a *Weirdness Pass* which is a ticket allowing your loved ones to say weird or inappropriate things while you're dealing with your divorce.

They don't know any better and no one trained them on how to deal with the situation.

Remember not to take on board anything that they say. Remain aware of what they are saying, and of the myths and possible generalisations in their comments, to guard against becoming embroiled in their intellectualisations.



Exercise:



Are any of these myths, intellectualisations or thoughts shared above, familiar to you? What myths about divorce have you found yourself buying into?

Which friends or family members have you noticed are being a bit unsupportive?

Can you find it within yourself to give them a *Weirdness Pass* so you can forgive their ineptitude?

#NAKEDDIVORCE

Divorce Angel

Appoint a *Divorce Angel*. This should be someone who is preferably not a close friend or family member but someone you can discuss your **naked divorce** experience with.

Your *Divorce Angel* is your champion who will walk alongside you in the darkness of your divorce, back into the light. If you are feeling vulnerable or have anxieties, it's best to work with a trained *Divorce Angel* from www.nakeddivorce.com but ultimately be careful whom you choose. If you select someone who dislikes your former husband or has any kind of agenda for you or your life, each discussion could turn into a rant session. Also, someone you know too well could feel too much empathy for you. This could impede your progress.

Your *Divorce Angel* should be someone that:

- ✓ you don't necessarily know that well, someone who won't buy into any of your drama.
- ✓ is wise and has it together.
- ✓ has successful and healthy personal relationships.

- ✓ is not afraid to tell the truth.
- ✓ cares about you and is willing to commit to you being empowered.
- ✓ will stick with you through the programme.

When choosing your *Divorce Angel*, avoid a person that:

- ✗ has tumultuous personal relationships.
- ✗ likes to talk about themselves a great deal.
- ✗ is opinionated or bossy.
- ✗ likes to tell you what to do.
- ✗ will feel sorry for you or see you as a victim in a bad situation.
- ✗ dislikes or hates your ex.
- ✗ is so involved with their own life that they will abandon you.
- ✗ has a hidden agenda where you are concerned.

It's important to understand that your *Divorce Angel's* job isn't to be your therapist or a shoulder to cry on. They're there to help you stay on track and to ensure you're taking care of yourself.

Make a list of five potential *Divorce Angels*. Pick the first one and make a time to talk. Be honest with them. Show this book to them and ask if they will be available for discussions and some of the homework exercises.

Ask if it's okay for you to check in with them once a day, for no more than fifteen minutes, during the 21-day programme.

If they agree (well done!), ask them to read through the guidelines for the *Divorce Angel* and ask them to sign the declarations and commitments at the end of this section.

If they don't agree, don't take it personally. It is a commitment and a responsibility that some might not have the time for. Move on to the next person on your list until you find your *Divorce Angel*.

WARNING:

I don't recommend doing the *naked divorce* without a *Divorce Angel*. The programme was designed to be done with a *Divorce Angel* at your side.



If you wish to have an impartial super-trained *naked divorce* coach to be your personal *Divorce Angel*, feel you require any additional support, or just want to do the programme with people like you (so much more fun) you can join the many *naked divorce* support programmes by checking www.nakeddivorce.com for more information.

The Divorce Angel guidelines

So your friend asked you to be their *Divorce Angel*. That's a fantastic honour and says a great deal about you. If you're thinking it's a big responsibility and you are accountable for your friend's healing, relax. This is not therapy and you are not a therapist. All you need is a pair of listening ears, some patience and a commitment to follow the guidelines below during your 21 days of support. The most important thing is to check in daily and watch out for the warning signs.

I, _____

- understand that it is NOT MY JOB to get my friend over his/her divorce. He/She has to do the *naked divorce* on their own.
- know that my job is to listen and not to offer any advice.
- commit to be vigilant and watch out for any warning signs (covered at the end of this section) and am aware of the Notice of Important Information and Health Warnings (covered at the end of this section). If I notice anything out of the ordinary, I will notify my friend's doctor, family or the *naked divorce* team immediately. I have their contact information.
- understand that it's okay to set limits. I have a life, too, and I don't want to be taken advantage of. If 15 minutes on the phone is all I can do, then that's cool. I will let my friend know when I am available and what to do in case of emergency meltdowns.

- will put aside any personal feelings I have about his/ her ex. I will focus on how he/ she can heal from the break up or divorce and how he/she can bounce back within 21 days.
- will take a stand and be honest. I will not allow my friend to sink into bitterness, resentment or victim-type behaviour. My job is not to be nice. My job is to challenge any negative thoughts and instead of giving solutions I will ask open questions about the impact of their behaviour on his/her life.
- promise to keep everything shared absolutely confidential. Absolute confidentiality means that I carry any personal information shared to the grave with me.
- understand that the 21-day programme is designed to be the duration it is designed to be. I will support my friend to push through the eye of the needle but if he/she needs to slow down, I will support his/her wishes.
- will not compare my healing to my friend's healing. I understand that he/she is an individual and it's essential for to heal in their own way. I will endeavour to respect his/her individuality.
- will be vigilant about his/her use of dis-empowering language. I have read this section and will guard against offering general, intellectualised encouragements for healing.
- understand that people struggle to stay committed to something big in life. I will endeavour to support my friend in completing the ***naked divorce***.

naked divorce participant

Divorce Angel

Date

Date

The *naked divorce* warning signs

It is completely normal and appropriate to feel extreme sadness and a complete loss of control as the result of a bad break up or divorce. It is normal to feel hopeless and helpless. It is normal to feel you want to withdraw from life to grieve and get over your lost relationship. It is also normal to feel numb and to wonder about dying, but only if this is a passing thought.

If you're dwelling on morbid thoughts, you need to address them. Below are the warning signs to watch out for. Contact your doctor, family or the **naked divorce** team if you suspect you're moving into dangerous territory.

www.suicide.org advises a full list of warning signs that you can review. I have re-written this list as I believe the behaviours described should be red-flagged only if they are above and beyond what is reasonable for someone dealing with divorce.

Please review the warning signs below with your *Divorce Angel* and ensure that when you check in with them, that your *Divorce Angel* keeps these warning signs in mind.

Normal feelings that should be monitored if they continue longer than 7 weeks:

- ➔ Feeling hopeless and helpless.
- ➔ Experiencing dramatic mood changes.
- ➔ Exhibiting an extreme change in personality.
- ➔ Losing interest in most activities.
- ➔ Experiencing an extreme change in sleeping habits.
- ➔ Experiencing an extreme change in eating habits.
- ➔ Performing poorly at work.

If you experience these symptoms, please seek help from your doctor immediately:

- ➔ Appearing depressed most of the time.
- ➔ Talking or writing about death or suicide OR planning your death.
- ➔ Withdrawing completely from family and friends for an extended period.
- ➔ Feeling trapped; feeling there is no way out of the situation.
- ➔ Abusing drugs or alcohol.
- ➔ Exhibiting a change in personality – above what is reasonable for your divorce.
- ➔ Giving away prized possessions.
- ➔ Feeling excessive guilt or shame.
- ➔ Acting recklessly. Emotional loss will already have impaired your concentration levels. As a result, impulsive behaviour could place you in danger.

Be responsible for your well-being during the **naked divorce** 21-day programme and keep a vigilant watch over the above warning signs.

Notice of important information and health warnings

Some people experience some heightened levels of stress during the 21-day programme. Although stress is a part of life, for some people, this stress is abnormal if they have a history of mental illness or emotional problems. If you have a history of emotional problems or mental illness, you may find yourself more vulnerable during the programme.

If at any stage, this heightened level of stress is a cause for concern, seek medical attention immediately. If you have a history of mental illness or emotional problems either personally or within your family OR if you have concerns about your ability to complete the programme or handle the daily commitment of the programme or handle the stress of examining your relationship, whether temporary, occasional or intermittent, and whether treated or not, do not participate in the *naked divorce* 21-day programme.

If you are not sure about your ability to participate in the programme then discuss your participation with a mental health professional or contact one of our trained staff at www.nakeddivorce.com. It is ultimately your choice but I have been advised that you do not participate in the 21-day programme if you:

(a) are uncertain about your ability (either mentally, emotionally or physically) to participate in the 21-day programme or are currently in therapy and your therapist has advised you to not participate in the 21-day programme;

(b) have a history of manic-depressive disorder which is also known as bi-polar disorder either personally or within your family, are taking, have taken or been prescribed to take within the previous 18 months any medication to treat bi-polar disorders; any drugs or medicines, whether prescription or non-prescription, intended to treat or affect mental processes or mood or to treat a chemical imbalance (such as Lithium, Gabapentin or Depakote); or anabolic steroids;

(c) have considered suicide, self-harm or harm to yourself or another or have a history of depression (acute or chronic), whether or not this has ever been treated or diagnosed; are taking, have taken or been prescribed to take within the previous 18 months anti-depressants (such as Celexa, Cipram, Prothiaden, Elavil, Prozac, Zoloft, or others);

(d) have a history of any psychotic disorder (an example would be schizophrenia), (either yourself or within your family) whether or not you or your family are being or have ever been treated or hospitalised; are taking, have taken or been prescribed to take within the previous 18 months anti-anxiety drugs (such as Klonopin, Xanax, Dormicum, Librium, Ativan, or others); anti-psychotics (such as Stelazine, Risperdal, Zyprexa, Dogmatil or others);

(e) have a history of drug abuse (including steroids and cannabis) which has not been treated or have used any drugs or steroids in the past 12 months.

