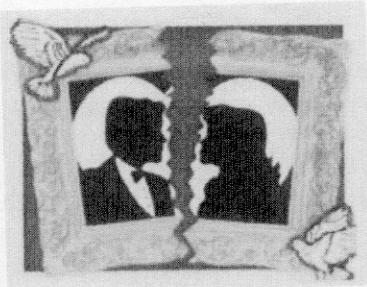


Divorce, the civilized way

Sometimes getting the upper hand means keeping control. By HILLARY RHODES.

Thursday, 5 January, 2006, 18:24 EST, US

By HILLARY RHODES



Take control: Don't let your divorce tear you apart. (AP Photo Illustration/Siobhan Dooley)

If you are contemplating or going through a divorce, you might have the feeling that your lawyer, the judge, your soon-to-be ex-husband, your children, your emotions, your drinking problem, your sexual urges, your god, the powers of fate, and everything else around you all have what you don't: control.

The sense of control over your life that you once knew has suddenly disappeared. Or maybe it's on overdrive -- you are feeling a need to micromanage things you were once able to leave alone. But either way, it's all about issues of control when it comes to splitting with your spouse.

That's what a family law specialist in Los Angeles began to notice -- a distinctive pattern that emerged among her clients' stories.

Whether it's a psychological, emotional or legal battle, the challenges of divorce require people to take control or give up control in new ways and find a healthy approach to gaining the upper hand in what is often an unsettling process, Stacy D. Phillips discovered.

"This is going to be the first time where you're not going to be in control, and it's going to drive you batty," says Phillips, who just wrote the book "Divorce: It's All About Control."

In it, she includes anecdotes from her own practice, helpful advice for people going through similar experiences, cartoons, worksheets and quizzes to help you understand yourself better and figure out what you're going through -- a healthy way of taking control of your life during a turbulent time.

Among younger divorcees, the issues are often different. Rather than walking away from dozens of years of cohabitation and raising children together, they are often wrestling away from what Phillips calls an "oops" marriage, of one or two years.

Phillips spoke with *asap* about ...

LOSING CONTROL: "It is not unusual -- and this is far more, I believe, apt to happen with the younger person -- where they go into excess, like drinking too much, doing drugs, indiscriminate sex, because they're young and ... I can't tell you how many times people, more typically men will say to me after they get divorced and they're young, that they'll sleep with anything that walks, and then they realize that that's not what life is all about."

TAKING CONTROL: "Younger people tend to think their life is over when their life is just beginning, and they have the opportunity to make other choices and not make the same mistakes, like picking the same type of person that doesn't work for them. ... A young person can really gain, if they go through divorce and want to reassert their control or take their control back or their power back, to go to a therapist and learn from the experience."

Hillary Rhodes is an *asap* reporter.
