



CATHOLIC
CHARITIES
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GATHERINGS

A NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE SEPARATED OR DIVORCED | CCTWINCITIES.ORG

The Progression of Change

by Earnie Larsen

(This is part of an e-book by Earnie Larsen that can be downloaded free on his Web site: www.changeisachoice.com. Earnie died of pancreatic cancer on Jan. 11 of this year. His writings have influenced many people who are dealing with transition in their lives.)

The journey of change moves us from stress to integrity. Its momentum depends on two things:

- Understanding the principle of using our heads, not our hearts, to identify well-worn, destructive patterns.
- Understanding the relationship between these old patterns and today's pain.

Our hearts, our actual feelings have been in control for a long time. That control now fits like a custom-made suit of clothes. But if we continue being directed solely by our feelings, we can experience nothing new. All patterns as well as their consequences, become normal with practice. All behavior practiced enough, becomes habit.

Our current habits seem normal to us now and they will fight to the death to survive. But if what we have learned and practiced, then become and accepted as normal are neurotic and self-limiting behaviors, we must be willing to go to war with what we've come to think of as "normal."

At the beginning of this process of change we don't recognize the power of habits. It will be necessary to frequently reassess goals and behaviors to determine



Earnie Larsen

Whether we're still on target. The tendency is to reason, "If I understand it, I should be master of it." Then our old familiar habits of thought kick in to add, "and master of it now?" What we initially think is enormous insight is often only a weak glimpse at best. It may take months, even years, before we truly see ourselves with clarity. And even if we do see a pattern clearly, it doesn't necessarily mean that anything has changed. Old patterns cannot be torn out and over-thrown without a major fight that wages on several fronts.

Our feelings are one of the primary fronts we have to face in order to change. Old patterns often fight back with physical symptoms. When confronting an old pattern, perhaps by standing up for ourselves and asking for what we need, we may feel panicked, tired, depressed or confused. A side effect of our feelings may be a physical reaction. While in the grip of those feelings, our knees may shake, our stomachs may roll, our necks may tighten up and our hands may sweat.

Another defense is to hide our feelings behind rationalizations. On top of feeling panicky and shaky, we may conjure up compelling reasons to avoid following through with the actions required to create change in our lives. For example, in a relationship when

something needs to be said, we may tell ourselves, "They don't really care," followed quickly with "and I don't either." Or perhaps, "Tomorrow is a better time." Another example may be, "Why should I have to be the one to bring this up? It's not fair. I won't say anything till they do or I will lose my integrity."

Peace at any price can slide into the driver's seat with such thoughts as: "It really is a favor to them not to bring this up. It may hurt their feelings. Since I'm basically a nice person, I will, in the name of goodness, be doing the virtuous thing by keeping my mouth shut." We can expect to encounter what seems like perfectly logical reasoning when we attempt change. Such thoughts and feelings are just our old habits protecting themselves.

Another stumbling block to change is medicating our discomfort with more destructive, compulsive behavior. For example, rather than dealing directly with a time-rooted habit, some of us will go on a spending binge, while others delay buying things we desperately need. Some of us bury ourselves in our jobs or other forms of busyness, like excessive volunteer work when time for ourselves is already scarce. Some of us will do anything rather than stand still and face a newly dawning reality.

If we truly desire change and serenity, the ultimate stress relief, we need to be willing, for a while, to be led by our heads.

To Be Present to the Present

by Joan Chittister

Being where we are — immersed in it, aware of it, alert to it — may well be the secret to living well, to living fully. It is a lesson to be learned. In a



Joan Chittister

culture based on motion it is no small trick to allow ourselves to be present to the present, to see what is in front of us. We only think we're here. The problem is a perennial

one, common to every time, every tradition.

In too many instances, we are really more likely to be on our way to somewhere else than present to the moment. We go through life watching our watches. We leave one party early in order to go to another

one and by the end of the night we have enjoyed neither. We live with one foot in tomorrow at all times. We plan for tomorrow and prepare

Too often, while we wait for life, it passes us by, leaves us up to our hearts in dissatisfaction, and over our heads in wanting.

for tomorrow and fear tomorrow and wait for tomorrow with distracting fitfulness. Here is never good enough. What is not important to a people on the go. What is coming is always what really counts. What is yet to be had, yet

to be seen, yet to be done, yet to be accomplished becomes the essence of life.

But life is every grain of sand in the hourglass. And it is running. And once run it is gone forever.

Too often, while we wait for life, it passes us by, leaves us up to our hearts in dissatisfaction and over our heads in wanting. We live overcome by losses and dissolved in spiritual ruin or wasted by a death of spirit, by a diminishment of enthusiasm, by the dissipation of hope. Yet all the while the present moment lies truly dormant within us.

The fundamental problem of life, obviously, is not a lack of opportunity. It is a lack of soul, what Confucians call "righteousness," of what Buddhists call "awareness," of what Jews call "tsedakah," of what Christians call "contemplative consciousness."

—from *There Is a Season* by Joan Chittister

Divorce Dos and Don'ts

Oct. 25, 2011, 7 to 9 p.m.

Catholic Charities, 1276 University Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104

\$10 (financial assistance available)

Is divorce on the horizon for you or someone you care for? Learn from a team of divorce professionals about a.) the pros and cons of the five models of divorce, b.) common mistakes to avoid, c.) financial planning strategies available, d.) the realities of co-parenting, and e.) creating a plan for self-care.

Presented by Dr. Jeff Dorman of Dorman Mediation and Adam Landvik, CFP CDFA of Divorce Settlement Specialists

To register call 651-647-3126 or email adaire.lassonde@cctwincities.org (so we can have enough handouts)

"What is being transfigured here is your mind, And it is difficult and slow to become new. The more faithfully you can endure here, The more refined your heart will become For your arrival in the new dawn."

—JOHN O'DONOHUE

"Life is a process of becoming, a combination of states we have to go through. Where people fail is that they wish to elect a state and remain in it. This is a kind of death."

—ANAIS NIN

SPEAKERS YOU MAY WANT TO HEAR

Some presentations are free while others request a fee—will offering. Call to confirm the speaker for the evening.

CHURCH OF ST. TIMOTHY 7 to 8:30 p.m.
707 89th Ave. NE, Blaine, MN 55434
763-784-1329

Sept. 12, 2011

John Gray: DVD—“How to Get What You Want and Want What You Have: Removing the 12 Emotional Blocks”

Sept. 19, 2011

John Gray: DVD—“How to Get What You Want and Want What You Have: Healing and Meditation”

Sept. 26, 2011

Wayne Dyer: DVD—“Inspiration: Your Ultimate Calling”

CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS BECKET 7 to 8 p.m.
4455 S. Robert Trail, Eagan, MN 55123
651-683-9808

Oct. 3, 2011

Brenda DeMotte: “End of the Union”

Oct. 10, 2011

Brenda DeMotte: “The New Me”

OUR LADY OF GRACE 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
5071 Eden Ave, Edina, MN 55436
952-929-3317

Sept. 26, 2011

Paula Bidle: “Reconnecting Our Hopes and Dreams: Spirituality and Divorce.”

Oct. 3, 2011

Paula Bidle: “Demystifying the Stress Response: From Monkey Brain to Mindfulness”

Oct. 10, 2011

Zara Renander: “Choosing a Healing Path: Labyrinth as a Path of Prayer and Healing”

Best Help for Children of Any Age

(At the Time of Separation or Divorce)

- Reassure your child that this separation is not his or her fault.
- Don't talk negatively or with anger about your spouse to your children on a regular basis. If you can't talk positively, limit what you say. It's okay to acknowledge your anger as long as your children understand they can and do have feelings that are different than yours.
- Try to avoid arguing bitterly in front of the kids so they won't feel that differences are resolved by yelling and fighting. Remember, too, that retreat and silence are just quieter forms of anger and are just as destructive.
- See if you can agree with your spouse about disciplinary matters, at least in the presence of your children.
- Make special efforts to maintain individual relationships with each child.
- Assure your child that it's okay to love the absent parent. A child who wants to be like Mom or Dad isn't being disloyal to you.
- Don't compare your child to your ex-spouse, even when similarities are poignantly striking and painful to observe.
- Don't blame your child's anxieties, fears, or problems at this difficult time on the absent parent — either to the child or the absent parent.
- Help your children not to feel shame about your divorce. If you feel shame and shut your children out, they, too, will be ashamed and worry about facing their friends and schoolmates. A divorce doesn't make you a failure.
- Don't make your child a messenger between you and your ex. Children will not enjoy being in the middle but they will probably not tell you that.
- Do let your children's teachers know about the change in your family's structure so they can help your child.
- Don't make too many changes in your child's life at once.
- Allocate family chores in such a way as to not overburden each child. Find ways to get house chores completed despite the absence of the one who always mowed the lawn, washed the car, and so on. Kids should not have to do all of Daddy's or Mommy's jobs around the house.
- Don't ask a child who she or he wants to live with or loves more...directly or indirectly.
- Encourage your child to resume normal activities.
- Acknowledge children's deep-seated wish for a reunited family without offering false hope or angry denials.
- Include a child in any appropriate discussions with a parent who will be making a long-distance move.
- Try to maintain as much emotional control as you can. If you repeatedly fall apart, your children may, too, or they may feel obligated to take over adult roles that are beyond them.
- Don't turn your child into your adult confidante.

And for yourself, forgive yourself if you haven't scored 100 percent on this list. No one does.

Reprinted with permission from Vicki Lansky's Divorce Book for Parents



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Counseling Services
Support for Separated and Divorced
1276 University Ave, St. Paul, MN 55104

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ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
PERMIT NO. 4482



Contains Dated Material

Supported through private contributions, United Way and Annual Services Appeal. Accredited by Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children.

Catholic Charities' Counseling Services Support for Separated and Divorced include information and referral, free newsletter, support group facilitator training, short-term counseling, divorce education, pre-marriage seminar for second marriages and assistance to parishes.

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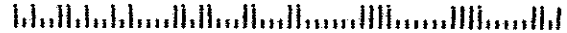
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Gatherings is published four times a year.

For information, name and address updates or to be put on the mailing list call **651-647-3126** or e-mail: separated.divorced@cctwincities.org www.cctwincities.org/sepdiv_resources



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PARISH SUPPORT GROUPS

Call the contact person for time, day and place:

MINNEAPOLIS AND SUBURBS

- St. Timothy, Blaine, Shawn Phillips, **763-784-1329**
- St. Vincent De Paul, Brooklyn Park, Okey Anyanwu, **763-425-2210 x417**
- St. Michael, St. Michael, Deacon Greg Steele, **763 263-2450**, or **612-219-9088**.
- St. Hubert, Chanhassen, Diane Potts, **952-374-5049**
- St. Wenceslaus, New Prague, Deacon Bob Wagner, **952-758-3225**
- St. Mary, Shakopee, Sr. Mary Antonice Delury, ofc, **952-445-1319**
- Catholic Charities, St. Cloud, Caritas Family Services, **320-529-0427**

ST. PAUL AND SUBURBS

- Sagrado Corazon de Jesus, Sacred Heart, St. Paul, (Spanish Speaking) Luz Marina Amaya, **651-770-0059**
- Guardian Angels, Oakdale, Deacon Terry Beer, **651-789-7173**
- St. Thomas Becket, Karen Maza, **651-683-9808**
- St. Joseph, Red Wing, Dar Reeck, **651-388-1133**
- St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Hastings, Jill Skaife, **651-437-4254 x225**

"To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly."

—HENRI BERGSON

Reminder: Any changes, please call Support for Separated and Divorced at 651-647-3126.