

What You SHOULD and SHOULD NOT Say to a Person Going Through a Divorce

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By Wall Legal Solutions



As a marriage comes to an end, most persons will go through a series of emotional, mental, and physical stages. Sometimes there may be an adjustment to new living arrangements, reduced finances, and single or shared parenting. In addition to those real life adjustments, the estranged couple is also addressing the legalities of divorce. As a friend, co-worker, or family member – it can be difficult to know just what to say, and more importantly what not to say, when a person is going through a divorce.

The best advice is to ‘listen’, which can be difficult because those closest to the divorcing couple will often have their own views, advice, and opinions on past, present, and future events. Resist this urge to offer commentary that is not constructive and may actually add more stress to an already difficult situation. But, this can be easier said, than done. Watching someone close to you struggle with a major life disappointment can be emotionally challenging for all parties.

What You SHOULD Say to a Person Going Through a Divorce

Instead of Giving Advice, Be Supportive

Most persons experiencing the emotional permanence of ending a marriage would benefit more from **active listening, which gives them the time to vent – releasing built-up anger or frustration**. Statements such as, “You will be fine, give yourself time to adjust to your new life,” offer encouragement and positivity.

Make Special Efforts to Include the Divorcing Friend

Sometimes, it is what you do that is more important than what you say. Instead of focusing on your own uncomfortable emotions, encourage the person to maintain the same activities the two of you previously experienced together. Even offering to tag along for the ride if they need to seek counseling – is better than attempting to be a counselor.

Use Statements of Understanding

Since uncomfortable silences can also be nonconstructive, offer statements of understanding, share your own relatable emotions, or attempt to change the atmosphere; consider:

- I’ve been there and it *does* get better.
- Your feelings sound pretty normal.
- How’s that new decorating project going?
- Divorce is hard – I’m so proud of how you’re handling it.
- Let me treat for dinner out, so we can talk.

What Not to Say to People Going Through a Divorce

Knowing what *not* to say to persons going through a divorce can often be *more* difficult, because the desire to be helpful can be overwhelming. But there are statements that would be best to offer:

I Never Trusted or Liked Him/Her

Giving your honest opinion concerning the person’s character or habits is **not helpful at this stage**. Always consider that the two were once very much in love – and one or the other may still be. Also, consider if the two have children, venting about one of the parent’s character makes future co-parenting that much more difficult.

Well, You Get to Start Fresh

Possibly in some cases, a quick ending of the marriage is considered to offer a fresh leash on life. But, in the majority of cases, these types of statements are not helpful. This fresh start may include emotional confusion, physical separation, legal bills, child custody battles, and a decrease in financial resources.

Just Go Out, Drink, Have a Good Time

Implying that a quick fling or a night out on the town is the cure, may be offering a way to avoid facing reality. While it's not a bad idea to offer levity to the situation, presenting it as a cure-all or immediate fix would be short-sighted. Also, ***suggesting alternate means of coping other than allowing the person to go through the 5 stages of grief– is really minimizing the situation.***

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