



Divorce: Riding the Roller-Coaster: Relief from Loneliness After Divorce by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Q: Dear Susie, I'm a little embarrassed to admit this as an accomplished 47 year-old professional, but even though I am relieved to be finalizing our divorce, I think some of the stress I'm experiencing since our separation is actually loneliness. How can I get past that?

A: Every journey through divorce seems to come with an individualized roller-coaster, and stress can be an annoying traveling companion. *(Even though one's spouse may have been an annoying traveling companion too, the adjustment to living without a one feels a little lonesome for everyone sometimes.)* So whether chugging uphill or free-falling through a canyon, it's wise to invite a few good friends along for the ride.

"I get by with a little help from my friends." -The Beatles

Over a lifetime, we weave a safety net of friends. They make us laugh, cry with us, remind us of our worth, and help us re-balance on days when everything feels new and some of it feels lonely. Life's transitions always leave human beings reassessing what they value most. Trusted friends and loved ones carry us along. Some just listen, and some speak their own hearts. Sometimes there are no words. *[And brace yourself: Some people will say incredibly stupid things.]* The truth is, some people don't know what to say. They usually mean well, even when it comes out all wrong. If their advice is unwelcome, shift the conversation to focus on their own "stuff." That usually helps.

We can forge new friendships at any stage of life. Some sit at the next desk, others have kids our children's ages. Some childhood friendships abide over decades anchoring our lives. Our friendships have a great deal to do with our long-term ability to cope. The degrees to which we love, laugh, connect, forgive (or don't), impact our stress levels, overall wellness, and quality of life.

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*"In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out
It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being.
We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit." -- Nobel Laureate Albert Schweitzer*

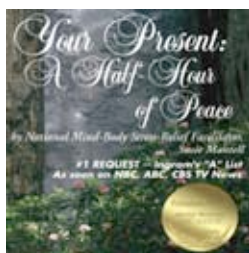
As you read that quotation by Albert Schweitzer you were likely either recalling a cherished friend, or perhaps you sensed a quiet longing for new friends to share this next chapter of your life. It's never too late to discover comfort, humor, and mutual interests with others. Decades of studies confirm that people who maintain close, positive relationships tend to enjoy more robust coping skills and optimism, enhanced self-esteem, and report substantially less day-to-day stress. Many people could use some help creating and maintaining such relationships, so let's take a look at your own healthy friendships, and see if the exercise below might be helpful:

Remember Johnny Carson's Old TV Show, "Who Do You Trust?"

1. Which friends calm and comfort you?
2. Which make you laugh out loud?
3. Which can you trust with your heart and with your mistakes.
4. When can you next spend time with 1, 2 and 3?
5. This week, make a date to see each.

BONUS: This month, strike up a conversation with at least one person you might like to know better. See how it goes!

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