

**BETTER THAN
EVER AFTER DIVORCE**

PARENTING BOOK

**TWO EXPERTS ON PARENTING AND
INTERNATIONAL CHILD CENTERED DIVORCE**

Interviews by

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses

Founder/Host

Better Than Ever After Divorce World Healing Summit

HEALING AFTER DIVORCE

With 12 Expert Speakers

A Better Than Ever After Divorce World Healing Summit book

Hosted By

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Topic: Will it ever stop hurting? The 24 hour special therapy to completely get over heartache.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION



Dr. Dee Adio-Moses

Visionary, Author, Life Strategist, Educator.

Dear Friend,

Thank you for being here. This book is a transcription of the audio from our very successful teleseminar series. We thought you may want to have something tangible to read after listening to the audios. We hope you will enjoy these two amazing speakers, Rosalind Sedacca and Patrick McMillan. We have tried to edit for clarity without taking anything away from the message.

I am so proud of these Experts and feel very humbled interviewing them. I know you will feel their passion and commitment to helping people live a better life.

January is International Child-Centered Divorce Month. We are so proud to partner with Rosalind Sedacca and the Child-Centered Network in spreading the word and making tools available to parents all over the world.

I look forward to continuing our goal of providing high quality trainings and support for your journey to a better life.

God Bless You.

Love, Light and Healing

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses

Founder/Host
Betterthaneverafterdivorce.com

PARENTING THROUGH & AFTER YOUR DIVORCE



Rosalind Sedacca

Rosalind Sedacca, CCT. The Voice of Child-Centered Divorce, Author, Award Winner, Relationship Coach.

Author and founder of the Child-Centered Divorce Network, Rosalind Sedacca, CCT, shares her insights and advice about creating a positive and effective Child-Centered Divorce. Discover choices and decisions that can adversely affect your children in the months and years following a divorce. Learn about the most destructive divorce mistakes, key questions to ask yourself before making any parenting decisions, and concrete ways to support the emotional and psychological well-being of the children you love!

Recognized as The Voice of Child-Centered Divorce, Rosalind Sedacca, CCT, is a Relationship Coach and author of the internationally acclaimed, ***How Do I Tell the Kids About the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children – with Love!***

This easy-to-read ebook prepares parents for the challenges of telling their children about a pending separation or divorce. What makes her book unique is that it doesn't just tell you what to say. *It says it for you!* Rosalind uses fill-in-the-blank templates to create a storybook with family photos and history to convey, with love and compassion, the six key messages parents need to share.

Therapists, attorneys, mediators, educators, and other professionals throughout the world have endorsed Rosalind's book and innovative storybook concept. Her now-grown son, who was eleven when she divorced, wrote the book's foreword.

The 2008 National First-Place Winner of the Victorious Woman Award, Rosalind is an Advisor at ParentalWisdom.com, on the Board of Directors of ChildSharing, Inc. and *WE Magazine* for Women, a Contributing Expert for Divorce360.com and DivorceCures.com, on the Panel of Experts for the National Association of Divorce for Women and Children, and a Contributing Columnist for Exceptional People Magazine.

Rosalind is also a Certified Corporate Trainer, award-winning national speaker, and relationship workshop facilitator. She now shares her expertise through TV and radio programs, print interviews, newsletters, webinars, and articles. To learn more about her free weekly ezine, books, coaching services, blog and other valuable resources for parents, visit <http://www.childcentereddivorce.com>.

THE MOST DANGEROUS POST-DIVORCE PARENTING MISTAKES: ARE YOU GUILTY?

By Rosalind Sedacca, CCT

I'm going to talk about some of the most dangerous mistakes that parents make, most of them innocently without intention, but mistakes that are costly to the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of you and your children. The negative effect of some of these poor decisions not only will impact your life and your children's lives for the next few years ... but literally for decades to come -- and for the rest of your life.

So my purpose is to prevent these needless mistakes from being repeated again and again, decade after decade, generation after generation. There are so many lives that can be saved. More happy outcomes for families that have gone through the divorce experience.

Regarding my own story, I was traumatized by the thought of how to approach telling my own son, who was eleven years old, about the divorce. For weeks and weeks I didn't sleep because I couldn't figure out a good way to break the news to him. I knew he was going to be very devastated, as most children are, even when they have a sense that things aren't going right. The word divorce really creates a lot of emotional turmoil for children. I read many books that told me what to say. But no one really tells you how to say it.

Finally one night at four in the morning I came up with an idea and I followed through with it. It was like an inspiration for me. I came up with the concept of creating a storybook that included some of our family history and mentioned the tension in our home over the past several months. Wanting to safeguard and protect my son, I put my message in simple language and included key messages that I wanted him to hear. Then I pasted the text into a photo album and added family pictures. I presented it to my son at the time his dad and I broke the divorce news.

It really was a very effective tool because it created a script for us so that we made sure we said everything we wanted to say. It also became something that my son could read over and over again in the days, weeks and months that followed, reminding him of the clear messages we wanted him to receive.

It was more than a decade later that I actually wrote the book to share my experience with other people. I used a template format. That's why I created an e-book that you download and then select the age-

appropriate template for your child. You customize the text to fill in information about you and your family. So your children are reading an actual storybook about them and their parents.

The storybook is something they can relate to. It focuses on the six key messages every child needs to hear before, during and after the divorce process to reassure them and provide security at this difficult time.

The book is titled, *How Do I Tell the Kids About the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children – with Love!* It has taken off internationally. People are buying it in countries where I didn't even know they spoke English. I have received such rewarding compliments from these parents.

As a result I have also created the *Child-Centered Divorce Network* which provides resources, advice, tips, articles, coaching and all kinds of valuable information that parents can access when they need help in creating what I call a child-centered divorce.

I have the endorsement of divorce professionals around the world, experts that I refer to as “the good guys.” These are child-centered professionals who are therapists, attorneys, mediators, educators, financial planners, divorce coaches and others who are in alignment about putting your children's emotional and psychological needs first whenever divorce takes place. Our goal is to get parents out of litigation, out of the courts and taking back the power to control their own future. We provide wisdom, insights and a great deal of compassion for the plight of their innocent children. And that's the origin of how this became such a passion in my life.

Despite many personal challenges, my divorce worked out well. It had a particularly happy ending when my son became a young man in his early 20s. He came to me one day and said, “You know Mom, you and Dad handled the divorce so well and I am grateful because I have so many friends whose lives were devastated by their parents' divorce. I just want to thank you.”

I think that was one of the most gratifying moments in my life. There was my son, as an adult, acknowledging me as a parent. And that's what I want for everyone who is reading this ebook. I want them to have an outcome that is positive and happy -- despite the difficulties you may be facing now. Yes, I know divorce comes with enormous challenges. But parents need to understand that there are choices. There are better ways to approach every situation. There are skills you could learn and strategies you could use to make smarter moves and have the happy ending that every family deserves -- for the sake of their kids.

I also think it was one of the highlights in my life when, after I wrote the book many years later, my son offered to write the foreword for me. It was very special.

YOUR DECISIONS AFFECT YOUR OUTCOME

The most dangerous mistakes related to divorce are the repercussions of the decisions parents make, either when they begin the divorce, are going through it or after the divorce. The consequences of these decisions will affect your children for months, years, or decades to come throughout their lifetime.

There are many incidents of adult children of divorce who have severed relationships with both or one of their parents because they are still angry about certain situations that happened. Sometimes parents think they can fool their children into certain beliefs and that the truth will never come out. But ultimately in the long-term, it usually does.

You want to be in high integrity and you want to remember that you are a role model to your children. So if you are behaving in deceitful ways ... if you are manipulating your children ... if you're telling lies or making up stories ... consider what you are modeling to them.

It is not always easiest to take the high road, but I firmly believe that in the long run the parents who do, who make the more conscious, more awareness decisions, will be rewarded in the long term -- even if in the short term it's not looking too favorable. These are parents who try harder to communicate with their former spouse, even if your ex is being a "you know what." There is a light at the end of the tunnel for people who understand that you have choices; some are smarter than others. As a parent you have to be responsible to your children and seek out the very best for them.

Unfortunately divorce is fueled by intense emotions. We are filled with anger and resentment, insecurities and shame, and our egos are filled with self-righteousness about being wronged by our ex. Sure, if you don't have children, go ahead and hate your ex ... and move on in your life. You don't have to see them again so fine, deal with it as you'd like. But when you have children, you have to stop and realize that whatever you are doing, if your children are caught up in the middle of it, you are creating consequences for them.

Parents understandably get so caught up in their own drama and we all know how painful, traumatic, hurtful and confusing divorce is for us as adults. Sometimes parents fail to realize what is going on in the minds of those young kids -- and even our teenagers. Teens often look like they are young adults and we talk to them as if they were. But they aren't. Children and teens get wounded, confused, hurt and caught up in intense emotional entanglement. That's where the problem lies and that's what we really want to talk about at this time.

THE WORST MISTAKES PARENTS MAKE

There are so many mistakes parents make, so let's go over many of them. In that way those who are preparing for divorce can prevent these errors. And those of you who may have made some of these mistakes can understand that you can reverse those behaviors. You can make different choices and apologize. Your children will appreciate that and forgive you.

Fighting In Front of Your Children

One of the absolutely worst errors you can make is fighting in front of your children. Studies have shown that it isn't divorce per se that harms and scars kids; it's the fighting and the battles surrounding the divorce that really hurts the kids. That's why for parents who stay together and don't get a divorce, but are still consumed with anger, tension and high emotion at home -- their children are still harmed -- as deeply and emotionally as children of divorce -- because of the fighting.

So the first agreement one has to make is that, whatever battles and disagreements we may have, we do not act them out in front of the children. This is because it pains children to hear the two people they love most fighting. Children feel they can do something about it, but they can't and that creates deep frustration and helplessness.

They also blame themselves and the more fighting they experience, the more they blame themselves. They may think, "if only I was better-behaved, if I didn't get in trouble at school, if I listened to daddy more, then maybe they wouldn't be getting this divorce."

Children don't have the sophistication to understand the complexities of what's going on and so their little minds come up with ways to fix things ... to make mom and dad love each other again. Of course, it's not going to work, and it fills the children with pain. Keep the fighting away from your kids.

Asking Children to Choose Sides

Another problem is asking your children to bear the weight of making decisions or choosing sides. Children feel very guilty if they have to choose between mom and dad. It's painful to know they are going to live in one house or another or that there are going to be changes in their normal routines. But if you ask them to make a decision regarding your divorce, no matter which way they go, they are going to feel guilty, hurt, embarrassed and ashamed.

It's much better to tell the children that mom and dad have decided this is what we're going to do following the divorce. Even if they are not pleased with the decision, your kids at least won't be feeling guilty and responsible. You want to keep them from experiencing that deep, emotional wound. It's fine to ask their opinions if they are old enough. But don't let them make ultimate decisions for you.

Using Your Children As Spies

An additional major mistake is using your children as spies between mom and dad's homes. Children are going to see dad sometimes, mom other times. When they come home and either parent starts asking, "What does daddy do after dinner? What did he feed you? Where did mommy take you? Did she have a friend over?" ... we forget the pressure that puts on children.

Naturally they want to be honest and tell you the truth. They also don't want to betray their other parent. So don't ask them to tell little white lies for you. If you say, "don't tell dad that this or that happened," they are caught in a painful situation no matter which way they go.

Using Your Children As Messengers

Same thing applies when using your children as messengers. That's another common mistake. Your children are not there to be reminding dad to pick them up at 2:30 after soccer practice, a party or some other activity. Those details must be determined between both parents. There is very sophisticated software on the Internet now which enables you to post parenting schedules. You can use e-mails and texts. You don't have to speak on the phone if you don't want. There are many ways to communicate that minimizes errors without depending on your children as messengers. Even your teens should be out of that loop. It's not their responsibility to communicate for you.

(Check out the services of Our Family Wizard at <http://bit.ly/tQ03Oo>)

We forget that it burdens children in ways they can't express. And your kids are not going to be able to tell you. They don't have the words or sophistication to say "this hurts me and confuses me and I don't feel good," especially when you are asking them to tell those little white lies. "Don't let dad know my friend Jim stopped by Sunday morning." Those kinds of requests are toxic. Don't impose that on your children and you will be giving them the relief of enjoying their lives.

One of the most important things you can remember when a divorce takes place is that your kids are in the midst of their childhood. As loving parents we want them to continue enjoying the childhood they deserve. You don't want to turn them into little adults long before their time because mom and dad are not mature enough to handle their own circumstances.

Confiding Adult Information To Your Children

Related to this is another parenting mistake that's very hurtful: confiding adult information and details to your children. Parents do this to elicit sympathy from their children. It's so tempting to talk to your kids and tell them that their other parent is bad because they had an affair, is an alcoholic or did some other thing, and that's why you're breaking up. That makes it dad's fault. It almost feels good to share those "secrets." But what we don't understand is that children are unprepared to hear or handle that kind of adult-level information. They feel torn and confused.

After all, kids love both mom and dad. And when mom tells them something bad about dad, and they care about dad, their minds don't know how to process that information. "Maybe there's something wrong or bad about me too. Maybe mom will divorce me!"

They don't know how to adapt to that kind of information. It is a tremendous burden on their shoulders, creates guilt and confusion. The last things children need in their lives are guilt and confusion.

Going through childhood is hard enough -- coping with school pressures, dealing with friends and all the normal stresses of being a kid. Your children don't need the burden of having your adult "secrets" weighing upon them. So don't look to them to be your confidants. Go to your friends, see a therapist, join a support group!

Mothers often do not understand that while it may be good for them to make their daughter a best friend, it is not good for the child. They are unconsciously hurting their child and she doesn't have the words to tell you -- if she was aware of it. Your child would never hurt you even if she could tell you.

Putting Down Your Ex in Front of Your Children

On another related note is this very common mistake: never put down, disrespect or alienate the other parent in front of your children. No matter how you feel about your former spouse, it is devastating and confusing to your children to hear you disparage them. As I mentioned before, they feel guilty for loving the parent that is being put down. They are very confused, ashamed ... and no good comes from this.

Lying to Your Children to Justify Your Decisions

Another mistake is lying to your children to justify the decisions you made. Often this happens when a parent wants to avoid questions from their kids such as: "How come we don't see dad more often?" or "How come we can't visit Grandma and Grandpa on Sunday like we used to?"

When you come up with lies to justify your decisions you're giving your children the opportunity to turn around when they grow up and really resent you. In the long term your children will usually find out the truth and be angry about decisions and behavior. You never want to lie to your children to save face in the short term.

At the same time, you don't want to be confiding adult information, as I mentioned previously, to the children. This isn't the time to be giving them the details of the divorce before they are adults. When they are twenty-five and you want to talk to them and tell the truth about what happened in more detail, then at least they have the awareness of an adult to handle that conversation. But burdening a seven year old or seventeen year old with that information is poor parenting -- and it's really psychologically abusive.

Parents can be very self-centered. I always coach my clients to put yourself in your child's shoes and see the world through their eyes. If they are five or nine or fifteen, you can feel what life is like in their heads. When you do, it clarifies a lot for you.

It helps you remember your own childhood and you realize that these little people don't have the sophisticated brain capacities that adults have. Their cognitive abilities have not evolved to that level. They can't make the same decisions that we make. They are confused and hold in their pain because they see you

hurting. They don't want to burden you and so they either turn inward and become depressed, detached and disconnected with life -- or they turn outward and display aggression or other behavioral problems. They carry that anger around and ultimately it expresses as problems at home or school, bullying, drug use and other behavior issues. Either way those are all consequences of divorce handled poorly.

I have a good friend who is a child psychiatrist and she says that 90% of the cases she sees are parents bringing in children because they have behavior problems. When she talks to these kids after a while she finds out that one, two, four, six or more years earlier there was a divorce that wasn't handled well. These inner issues slowly simmer within the child because they have not been attended to. Finally, by the time the therapist sees them, the children are severely depressed, or intensely acting out, dangerous and belligerent. Sadly, she finds it is usually because the parents did not handle the divorce well.

So this is something that should be taken seriously. Become aware of all the signs and signals in your children. Early on, if your children have problems with the divorce, that's the time to talk to them, bring in a professional, participate in a support group or get the school involved. There are many options that are available.

DOING DIVORCE RIGHT: KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK AS PARENTS

Now we just talked about the dark side of divorce and the worst mistakes parents make. But divorce doesn't always have to be dark. It can actually be a positive outcome for your children. In some cases divorce is really the best thing for a family. If the children were living for months or years with tension and stress at home, and the parents were fighting constantly, it's often a relief for children to have those parents living in two separate residences.

Mom and dad can move on to other relationships, hopefully healthier relationships in time, and life can be more peaceful. So the divorce doesn't have to be a crisis. It's just a matter of the decisions you make regarding with how you deal with the divorce – especially regarding the children. And there are some very important questions that in all of my coaching I advise parents to ask themselves. These are profound questions that can stop you in your tracks before you make some dangerous mistakes.

The first question is, **Do you love your children more than you hate your ex?**

Not everyone who gets divorced hates their former spouse. But in the extreme cases, in which one or both parents do, here's sound advice to keep in mind. When you are tempted to do things to hurt and get back at your ex, if you realize that loving your children is more important, hopefully that will stop you from doing things that inadvertently will hurt your children.

Often we think we are spiting or hurt our ex, but it turns out that everything we do is actually hurting our children. At the same time, you are also losing sight of what is really important following your divorce. That is your children's well-being as well as your own. So this question is very powerful and can get a parent to stop and think before they make decisions that are going to have negative consequences for the entire family.

Another question I really like my clients to think about is: **What will my children say to me when they are grown about the way I handled the divorce?**

That question can really sober you up. Because right now, if little Johnny is five, or nine, or thirteen or even eighteen it is hard to believe that he is ever going to be a grown young man. But he is – it's going to happen – he and she are going to grow up. And one day they are going to look at you and ask questions that you don't want to be answering.

So ask yourself, are my children going to understand the decisions I made regarding my divorce? Will they thank me for putting their best interest first? Or will they be angry about those decisions?

If you could be introspective about that now, it's going to keep you from doing things based on resentment or anger that's going to scar your children and hurt you and your entire family in the long run. Because even after divorce, if you're a parent, you still have a family unit, you still are connected on some level for the rest of your life. How that family unit works is very important.

Children have special occasions and celebrations continuously. They have school and sports events, graduations; there are birthday parties and holidays. They move into college and careers. There are weddings ahead and all of those wonderful occasions that families share together. Are you going to be mature and responsible in the way you handle those times together so that mom and dad can be in the same room during these celebrations? Or you are going to burden your children by creating all kinds of insanity?

I have spoken to people whose both parents could not attend their wedding at the same time, or who can't be in the same room for a child's graduation. Those parents are so selfish in their hatred they forget what it's like to be the children who have to cope with all of that craziness.

This is the time to think about your family's future and to make wise decisions on behalf of your children. You don't have to love your former spouse -- but you can certainly be a responsible, mature adult in the way you handle being with them on occasion.

There is another question I suggest parents ask themselves: **How can we make life better for our children after the divorce than it was before?**

We all know that life at home may not have been so great before the divorce and too often it was the kids who paid the price! So now both parents can get together and say, "Okay we are getting a divorce, we are going to make some changes, we're not going to see each other and be in each other's lives nearly as much -- but we still love the children. What can we do to make life better for them after the divorce than it was beforehand?"

Parents can realize, “There are things that we can do, most importantly: being mature and responsible in the way we interact with one another. What other things can we do?” That the beginning of finding workable ways that you can co-parent cooperatively and positively. And it makes such a difference in the outcome for your children.

MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITH YOUR EX AND CHILDREN

Children do not have the words to share with us about their hurt and pain. That is why those feelings get acted out in behaviors that slowly erupt from the core of their souls. We have to be really diligent as parents. We have to be closely watching our children. No one knows your children like you do. You can look for signs of distress and talk to them.

Children don’t want to be lectured. So sit with them and just ask, “How are you doing since the divorce? How are you feeling about all this?” We all know that children don’t usually want to talk about serious issues. The older they get, especially as teen-agers, the less they like those parent-child conversations. But there are times, and ways, to communicate with your children, ask questions and find out how they’re doing.

One of the best times is when you have them in the car and you are taking them to and from school, sports practice, a friend’s house or something like that. Maybe you have a 15 minute period and you can just start chatting about things. Start by asking open-ended questions.

Some of the best advice I can give you is to be a good listener as a parent -- because your kids are not always going to tell you straight out what they are feeling. But if you listen to their tone, intonation and watch the expression on their faces, their body language and posture, you can read a lot about them.

Listen closely and repeat what they are telling you back to them. That’s called “active listening.” You can say something like, “So you’re saying you are very frustrated with your math class?” They are more likely to respond and share more information. “Yeah, I am really frustrated and hate math this year because my teacher is ...”

The more you listen, the more they will be open to start talking about that frustration. That, in turn, may lead to talking about other frustrations, such as not getting to visit his friend Jeff last week ... or being angry that you didn’t let him invite dad to see his last game.

You want to listen without judgment, because judging will turn them off from further communication. Instead of telling them what to do or feel, acknowledge that they have the right to feel what they are feeling and thinking what they are thinking.

They may not always be happy with what is happening in their life, but it takes a big parent hear and validate that. You can, for example, say, “I understand you are disappointed about this. Dad and I tried our best to arrange things and at the moment that was the best we could do. But we really appreciate your giving me your opinion and we will take that into account next time we schedule things.”

So talk to the kids, really *hear* them and let them express. Let them vent and don’t make them wrong for feeling what they’re feeling -- even if it isn’t what you want to hear. And equally important: be able to acknowledge when you have made a mistake.

SAYING I’M SORRY TO THE KIDS

Every one of us has made mistakes. I made parenting mistakes after my divorce and learned the hard way. That’s why more than ten years after the divorce, when I wrote my book, I was able to put a lot of wisdom in it that I gained from my own mishaps. If you suddenly realize that you have been doing something that isn’t in your kids’ best interest, *apologize*. It takes a very big person to admit errors to their children, but it goes a long way toward healing and strengthening your relationship with them.

You can say something like, “You know, mom made a mistake. I shouldn’t have gotten angry at you for telling me how much you resent my inflexibility in changing our schedule last week. I should have been more understanding. It wasn’t right for me to keep you from seeing your dad when he requested that change.”

Whatever the situation is, if you could acknowledge that you made a mistake, not only are you being mature and responsible -- you are being a real role model for your children. You want them to realize that even when they do things that are awkward and wrong or didn’t work out well, they can give themselves permission to say, “I’m sorry, I made a mistake and I’m going to change.”

If you stick to your guns, hold fast to a bad decision and just say, “This is the decision I made and I cannot undo it,” then you are modeling poor behavior. You are going to get more negative consequences. Any mistake can be undone. It doesn’t matter how long ago it happened. You can undo a mistake. You can acknowledge a bad decision and you will be forgiven, because no one in the world loves you more than your children. Our children will tolerate amazing abuse and still love us. And we have to remember that underneath it all, we want to do well by them.

What if it’s a big topic you need to apologize for? It’s important that you pick the right time and the right place for delicate conversations with your kids: a time when you’re alone and there’s not a lot of pressure. You never want to bring up intensely sensitive situations in the midst of a fight or other disagreements. You want to also be careful not to start bringing up other unrelated issues or you’ll create a situation that distances you instead of bringing you closer together.

But if you are in a peaceful situation: taking a walk or drive together or sitting in the park, you can bring up the subject. “There is something that has been bothering me for a while and I just want to let you know that I have given this a lot of thought. I realized that I made a mistake when I decided to do x, y and z and I really regret that. You deserve better and I see that it really hurt you. It hurts the entire family. I did it because of this and that but I regret it. I just want to apologize to you and I hope you can forgive me. I hope you can understand.”

When anyone comes to you in that frame of mind, you are more likely to forgive. And if they don’t, let them vent. Acknowledge their right to be angry and vent because *behind anger is always hurt*. If your children are really angry, most likely they are deeply hurt and wounded as well. Acting out may be the only way they know how to behave. So you are giving them permission to express themselves and then modeling for them a more mature approach to dealing with anger and resentment -- communication. Show them that discussion can work.

DISCUSS WITHOUT PUTTING YOUR EX ON THE DEFENSIVE

Following a divorce, issues and challenges are going to take place. They happen in marriage and certainly are part of life post-divorce. So things are going to come up. But if you approach your communication in a way in which you are not putting your ex on the on the defensive, the outcomes will be far more positive. And this is what you want to model for your children.

Some important communication skill tips: Don’t use “you” language when in conflict. Don’t point your finger and say, “You did this; why do you always ...; you make me so angry when you ...”

Instead start using “I” language which focuses the responsibility for your feelings on you: “I was really hurt by what you said last week. I wish you wouldn’t be late when we are making appointments because the kids are really hurt when that happens. I felt angry when you didn’t remember to”

“I” language gets you “owning” your feelings and not adding fuel to a tender fire. Then you need to listen and give them an opportunity to share their feelings and perceptions in the same way. They are more likely to acknowledge your message or request and respond with something like, “Gee, I didn’t realize that’s how you felt about it. I was mistaken. I’m sorry I jumped to conclusions.”

If you are talking civilly, the less defensive the other person will be and the less likely to get in your face to escalate the tension. Even with an ex who you really think is an “S.O.B.,” or someone you know who is not an easy case, the more you step up to the plate and give them an opportunity through your communication skills to be more civil, the better the outcome.

The whole idea with communication skills is to de-escalate when the conversation gets intense and negative. Remember, it only takes one person to de-escalate the situation -- and it has to be you because you know better. You can't justify poor behavior by thinking, "The way she treats me is the way I'm going to treat her back," because chances are she is not going to change or learn anything. If the circumstances are creating stress for you and for your children, then something has to give.

Communication skills, learning how to say things effectively, how to phrase things, how to diffuse tension -- is wonderful in every phase of your life. It will take you far in getting along with your children, other relatives and the people at work. But this is especially important when you have a post-marital situation with your ex. You want that relationship to be as smooth as possible because on some level you are still a family.

KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUR CHILDREN

You will always be a family. And one of the major messages we want to give our children in the very beginning when we are breaking the news about divorce as well as long after, is reminding them **mom and dad will always love you**. Mom and dad will always be your mom and dad. Even if one or both parents remarry and there are other adult figures in your child's life, remind them that doesn't mean anyone is going to replace your mom or dad.

It's very important for children to know that. You also want to remind them that **they are going to be safe** because mom and dad are making mature, responsible decisions. And always remind them that **the divorce is not their fault**. No matter what's happening, even when parents are fighting about the kids, it's never their fault. Children didn't ask for this. They are innocent victims. And you have to keep telling them that mom and dad will always love you no matter how far away we may be. And regardless of how frequently we see you, our love for you never changes.

Another one of the most important messages is that **this about change and not about blame**. When you're talking to your children don't get into the dynamics and details of the divorce -- the adult information. Instead you talk about this as another chapter in your family's life. Life is filled with change. You grow older every year; you change your clothing styles, your hairstyles. You have a new teacher in school, enter a different grade, play different sports. Life is filled with those changes. Well this is another change which is like a new chapter in our life. And change doesn't have to be bad. We are looking forward to this new chapter to be even better for everyone in the family.

If you reinforce that and make mature decisions that will let your children have their childhood, they will be very, very grateful to you. In fact, they can look upon the divorce as a catalyst for something new, good and better in their lives. They can have a feeling of hope and security as opposed to dread, fear and anxiety that the world is ending. Sadly, that is the case for so many children because their parents are not giving them these supportive and healing messages.

FORGIVENESS & LEARNING LIFE LESSONS

I also want to remind everyone that forgiveness is another big piece of the puzzle. Yes, it is one of the hardest things to embrace, especially when you are filled with hurtful emotions and anger. But the result is worth the energy. To begin you have to do the inner work first -- and there are two levels of forgiveness.

First, forgive yourself for any mistakes you may have made: poor judgment, decisions that ended in bad consequences, questionable behavior, etc. Secondly, you need to work on forgiving the others in your world -- those you are blaming for creating your bad outcome. The important message here is that if you look for the lessons, rather than looking for the blame, you will be able to accelerate your personal growth. That's the key to moving on to a place of peace and positive anticipation of your future.

When we look for them, we find lessons in every life experience. Wouldn't it be wonderful to teach your children some of your lessons so that they don't repeat them? You can role-model ways of handling awareness of these new lessons rather than bitching and feeling sorry for yourself. You don't have to indulge in self-pity or anxiety because you expect the world to end. You have the responsibility to transform your life following your divorce. Heal your emotional wounds and you can create a new you that you want to step into and become. All of that is possible. The opportunities are there and many people look back on their divorce and think: "Thank God; that was a blessing in transforming my life."

THE CHILD-CENTERED DIVORCE NETWORK

At the Child-Centered Divorce Network, we provide answers to all the questions that parents ask. We also provide a free weekly newsletter with advice, tips, insights and articles plus teleseminars, interviews and other special events.

The Network is comprised of a caring and trustworthy team of experts to align yourself with. So if you're looking for help with any divorce and parenting-related issues, you know you can depend on the people, websites, books and other resources at the Child-Centered Divorce Network to steer you in a direction that's supportive for you and your family.

I'm also available for personal coaching and have my 8-hour audio-coaching program as well. It is very important to know that you are not alone; you are a part of a huge community worldwide. The Child-Centered Divorce Network is aligned with a multitude of other divorce professionals around the world who are sharing this message.

MASTERING CHILD-CENTERED DIVORCE

8-HR AUDIO COACHING PROGRAM

One of my newest programs is “Mastering Child Centered Divorce.” It’s an 8-hour audio coaching program. I am very proud of it. It’s just been launched and I’m very excited to make it available to those reading this ebook. It gives you information on how to diffuse conflict with your ex while maintaining positive communication. It also covers how to best handle questions, depression, tension, arguments and other troubling behaviors from your children. In addition, what you can expect from children of different ages --from toddlers through teens -- because they react differently and have different expectations related to divorce.

The Audio Coaching program also discusses how to stay centered within yourself and take care of your emotions and needs during this crazy time of transition. And how to best take advantage of the resources available to you and find the “good guy” attorneys, mediators, therapist and coaches -- without being ‘taken’ so that you’re making smart decisions.

I also focus on how to handle the weekly routines, scheduling activities, parenting plans and other responsibilities without losing your cool. Another topic: how to cope with co-parenting skills, being a single parent and the variety of other complex challenges that come with divorce. And we spend lots of time on how to talk to your children and communicate most effectively with them.

So there’s six hours of audio coaching plus bonus interviews, one with an outstanding collaborative divorce attorney who wrote a wonderful book that I highly recommend called “*Stop Fighting Over the Kids: Resolving Day-to-Day Custody and Divorce Situations*.” His name is Michael Mastracci, and I have a fabulous interview with him that’s part of this program. There’s also another bonus: an interview with me that talks about some other facets of co-parenting and single parenting that we didn’t cover here.

Plus you get a workbook that includes assignments and questions on issues of major concern to divorced parents. Best of all I have included a full one hour **one-on-one personal telephone coaching session** with me so we can really get down to the nitty-gritty of whatever is most troubling for you. You can talk to me directly and together we can come up with some strategic solutions that really work. This session can make an immediate difference in moving you in a direction that is more successful and satisfying for you and your children.

So this comprehensive program includes eight hours of audio, the work book and the one hour personal coaching session with me. To learn more about this valuable audio coaching program and bonuses, visit: <http://www.childcentereddivorce.com/coaching>.

A VALUABLE REMINDER

Coaching is not only valuable for your children. It can be a gift to you as well. When you learn how to relax, let go, diffuse tensions, and give yourself the respect you deserve, you get an additional benefit. You can look at your divorce experience as a life lesson that can transform you into another level of self-confidence, achievement and happiness in the future.

You will look back upon your divorce, not with regret, but as another significant chapter in your life. If you can do that for yourself and then inspire your children to look at it that way, you are going to have a future that's bright. And I promise you there are wonderful experiences awaiting you -- no matter how depressed, frustrated or angry you may feel at the moment.

There can be happiness ahead for you. You just have to open the door and allow yourself to step into that possibility. Don't do it alone. Be aware that you have the support of so many of us in this community who really care about helping you through the transition. You are not alone. I know you are dealing with many challenges that are not black and white, not simple. These issues won't be taken care of in an hour or a week, but your attitude goes a long way toward moving ahead successfully.

How are you going to see your own future and how are you going to role-model the future for your children? You have power and, with the support that you are getting from this community, you will be able to accomplish wonderful things. So never give up. And I look forward to interacting with you.

1. Free Bonus Gift from Rosalind Sedacca

Post-Divorce Parenting: Success Strategies for Doing It Right!

Concerned about the effect of divorce on your kids? If you're transitioning through and past divorce, this valuable ebook is for you. It's written by internationally acclaimed author, Rosalind Sedacca, CCT, founder of the Child-Centered Divorce Network for parents. Learn how to minimize the emotional and physical impact of divorce on your children with tips you can immediately put to use. Your children can be happy, secure, self-confident, accepting and loving after your divorce – if you follow these guidelines for success.

To get your Bonus Gift ebook, visit ChildCenteredDivorce.com and enter your email address at the top right column.

2. Special Offer: Mastering Child-Centered Divorce 8-hr Audio Coaching Program

This comprehensive, content-rich audio course helps you resolve the day-to-day challenges of being a divorced parent. You'll discover the warning signs your children are having problems, behaviors to avoid, the path to peaceful resolution, effective communication skills, resources available to you, proven parenting success strategies, stress-reduction tips and much more – including a Coaching Workbook and Special Bonuses. Plus, you also get a free 60-minute one-on-one Personal Telephone Coaching Session with

Rosalind Sedacca, CCT, acclaimed author and founder of the Child-Centered Divorce Network, to help you get started on the right track for your family.

This program, valued at \$297, has been discounted for our readers at just \$197! Grab it today at: <http://www.childcentereddivorce.com/coaching>



Patrick McMillan

Patrick McMillan: Author, Coach, Science of Happy Kids Expert

Patrick McMillan, first and foremost, is a passionate, loving father of two wonderful young boys, who are 13 and 10 years old. He is an author, Happiness Coach for Kids and Parent, and a speaker on the science of happiness as it pertains to children and parenting. He is the co-founder of HappierKidsNow.com and has authored “An Exercise in Happiness,” an emotional fitness program for children in the 3rd to 5th grade, which is used in classrooms and homes around the world. Patrick recently developed the Science of Happy Kids and Joyful Parenting Program to introduce the strategies of happiness to teachers and parents. Patrick was a stay-at-home dad for over seven years, and for the past three years a single dad living in Colorado with his two boys.

TOPIC:

The Science of Happy Kids and Joyful SINGLE Parenting

Divorce sucks the emotional wind out of us, and in doing so, our children become starved of “emotional oxygen,” which during childhood and adolescence they need desperately to develop the ability to cope and respond to adversity in their own life. Patrick will share techniques to focus on our own emotional wellbeing and happiness in order to ensure the same for our kids during this highly emotional event. He believes every child is negatively affected by divorce to some degree, and for some the scars will last a lifetime and affect their own relationships in life. To what degree this is true is entirely up to us, their moms and dads. But even despite a difficult or challenging ex, we can rise above it all and create the new life we want and deserve for ourselves and our kids.

- A lesson from the airline industry about single parenting during tough times.
- What does the ending of your marriage “mean” to you and to your kids?

- How your divorce affects your kids is entirely up to YOU!
- How to focus on happiness in the midst of divorce (Really!).

Free gift

Download FREE “The Ultimate Kids” Guide to Happiness www.happierkidsnow.com, and that’s where they can download “The Ultimate Kids’ Guide to Happiness.” It’s a little ebook that they can download and print off, and enjoy with their kids.

Published book, “An Exercise in Happiness,” can be found at www.KidsCanDoAnything.com.

Now with my story, you know, it’s a really interesting story. I grew up with a deep, deep fear of becoming a father. I went through a childhood that was quite painful, especially when it came to my connection to my father. There was really no emotional connection with my father; certainly there was no positive connection. He was very emotionally abusive, and at times physically abusive, which led me to leave home at a very early age. I started leaving home at 13 and left for good at 15.

I spent almost the first year homeless, as a young teenager, and it was really quite interesting how that adverse experience ultimately led to my finding of my purpose in life. Throughout my life, until my late 20s, I was convinced I just wouldn’t get married because of this deep fear of becoming a father. I was absolutely convinced I would repeat the cycle of the abuse, the neglect. I was absolutely convinced, especially when I discovered that my father was doing exactly that. He was repeating the cycle that he’d experienced. I was just living my life as though marriage was not in the cards for me. It was just not going to happen.

My experience of leaving home—I don’t call myself a runaway, I call myself an escapee—I was escaping the deep unhappiness that I was feeling, and I knew that I deserved it. I felt I had to search for it, and I felt I would never find it if I remained where I was. So that was what really motivated me to leave home. Ultimately, I was taken under the wing—at the time I was 16, and he was about 40 years old. He introduced me to his wife and his children, he brought me into his home and really got me on my feet. I started to regain faith in marriage, in family, and it was because of that experience with this man. That allowed me to then move on and pursue my dreams in terms of what I wanted to do with my life.

However, the deep fear of becoming a father was still there. It was when I was 29 years old, so that was almost 20 years ago. I met somebody whom I fell in love with. It scared me, and ultimately we ended up getting married. What I did was I really sent that fear of fatherhood away; I set it in the back of my mind. But whenever we would start to talk about having children, I could feel it in my gut. I could feel that discomfort resurfacing. There were times when, after we would have a discussion and I would be by myself, I would actually break down, knowing that it was inevitable. At some point, I was going to have to face my deepest fear. I felt that at some point, I was going to become a father. That scared the daylights out of me, and I knew I had to do something. I just had to.

So that’s when I started really researching everything I could get my hands on—metaphysics, everything about personal development, how to replace negative beliefs, all this stuff. And then five years into my marriage, my wife came to me and said, “We’re pregnant.” My reaction actually startled me—it was a feeling of joy that I had never ever expected to feel when I heard those words.

So what I realized was, all the effort I had put into changing my beliefs and changing the way I was thinking and feeling, it had paid off. I embraced fatherhood like I never ever expected to. A year and a half after my first son was born, my wife asked me if I would like to be the stay-at-home parent. Instantly, the word *yes* just fell right out of my mouth. Yes, I'd love to. That was the start of everything, and I remained a stay-at-home parent, like you mentioned, for seven years.

When it comes to the divorce aspect, that was a whole new chapter that occurred 15 years into our marriage.

When something like divorce happens, we get filled with negative chatter in our mind, and our mind just takes over. I equate that feeling with being starved of emotional oxygen—that source, those thoughts and feelings that are going to help you move up and beyond and be better than ever after divorce. We get starved of that oxygen because of the way we're thinking. We get so wrapped up in it, and it's almost suffocating at times. I know that the first year and a half after my separation, I couldn't stop the negative chatter. We went 50-50 custody of the children, so they lived one week with me and one week with my ex. The weeks that I was alone, for the first year and a half, I couldn't sleep. I was basically an insomniac. The negative chatter in my mind was just horrifying.

It's funny, it's almost as though because I took on the role of stay-at-home parent, which is generally—men feel like that's the women's position, to be the nurturer, to be the homemaker, you know—I took on that role. Not only did I take it on, I embraced it. What ended up happening was, my wife worked 65 hours a week. I was very trusting in my relationship with my wife; I had no feelings of jealousy that she had a life outside of our home and I didn't. I was the 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week parent. Especially after our second child came along three years later, it was a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week thing, and she had a life. She would go out after work with her friends, all this sort of thing.

Toward the end, I started to really see the writing on the wall that probably for the last five years of our marriage, our intimacy level had plummeted. If there ever was any romance or intimacy, it always seemed to be initiated by me, so I was always the one who would get rejected. She had other things going on, and I just experienced this rejection time after time after time. I remember saying to myself, I just want to be happy. I just want me and my kids to be happy. That's all I want.

So it's almost as though I put that out there into the universe—that's what I want. I visualized just being happy with my children. A few years later, the rejection and all that, it just fell out of my mouth one day. I said, "We need to separate. We need to divorce or do something, because this is just not working."

It apparently caught her off-guard. It was the last thing she expected to hear from me. What ultimately ended up happening was, we ended up going to counseling. We only went for two sessions; she threw in the towel. She didn't want to try. She didn't want to work on our marriage. It was at that point, when I started to put all the dots together, that I discovered not only had she been dating already, but she had jumped into two different relationships as I was moving out. It's been three years, and this was the real hurtful part: that she sought that intimacy elsewhere and was unable to do it in our marriage. The stories are huge, and I won't get into those, but they were the root cause of a lot of my negative chatter and how I couldn't stop my mind from racing.

I'm not convinced she's going to be the kind of mindful parent our children deserve, because she's so hugely into her life. Into her new life, I guess. Again, I was being starved of emotional oxygen. I knew I

had to do something. When there's children involved, you can almost equate it to flying on a plane. When the flight attendant starts to explain how the oxygen masks will fall in the case of loss of cabin pressure, loss of oxygen, you're advised to put your oxygen mask on first if you're traveling with children. Obviously, if you become disoriented, you'll be unable to help your child.

So that was kind of a big light that went off, and I thought, wow. I have to pull this together. I have to do this for me in order for my children to make it through this in a positive way. All children are going to be affected by divorce, no matter what. They're all going to be affected. However, how deeply they're affected, and to what degree, really depends on us and how we react and behave. And that has been, over the last three years, the best decision I've ever made. My children are happy and flourishing, and how I got there—that is what I really want to share. It is so worth the effort. I realized that my children are such an incredible source of positive energy, and when I really started to see that—what I really did was, prior to having any interaction with my ex-wife, I would think to myself, how is this reaction to my ex-wife going to affect my children?

I don't know if this is a guy thing, but do you remember those old “your mama” jokes? You know, “Your mama's so blah, blah, blah. . . .” Well, I think the root of those jokes is, you don't diss my mother. I don't care who you are, don't say anything bad about my mom. I don't even care if I don't get along with my mom. You don't get to say anything bad to me about my mom, or the result will be I'm not going to like you very much. So I started thinking, I have a laundry list of negative things I could say about their mom. It's huge. But the reality is, if I was to say any of those things or even have that in my energy, my kids are going to feel it and I'm going to pay the price. Ultimately, I'd be shooting myself in the foot if I want a relationship with my children. They wouldn't like me if I was to say anything bad about their mom.

So in terms of my children, that's how they were such a source for me. I know that if I feel those toxic feelings, those toxic thoughts about my children's mother, they're going to pick up on it. Not only do I not want them to feel that way, but I don't want them to feel that way toward me. It's kind of that “speak no evil” about your ex around your children. One of the biggest things that helped me get to that place was really understanding the effect that negative thoughts and those feelings of anger and jealousy and disdain for your ex—no matter what they've done—when you have those feelings, I equate it to drinking poison and expecting them to feel the effect of it. It's kind of like I'm going to sip on this poison, and I'm hoping that she's going to feel the effect of it. Because I'm thinking these toxic, horrible thoughts, just—ugh. I can't stand it.

And then I started thinking, boy, these are really making me feel awful. The way I'm thinking is making me feel horrible. And they're having zero effect on her. So I thought, that's kind of crazy. Why would I do that? So then I started looking into ways I could change those thoughts—how I could switch them. Well, I'd been studying emotional development for over a decade, so I have the tools, I have the knowledge. I think it's high time I started putting them to use. I started to really look into gratitude and forgiveness. Huge. Huge. There was one thought that I instantly came to. I thought, “How can I look at my relationship with my ex, and what do I have to be grateful for? Do I have anything in my relationship to be grateful for?” I felt so betrayed. I felt betrayed for the 15 years of my marriage. I felt it was all a lie. So I said, “What do I have to be grateful for?”

Well obviously, I looked at my two boys. I can't help but be grateful to her for giving me those two boys. For carrying them, for giving birth to them. What she went through, physically and emotionally, to have

those children. So I have to be grateful to her for that. And as soon as I came up with the first thought of gratitude, another one came, and then another one. I got to the point where I'm so grateful to her—I'll always be grateful to her—for bringing these children into the world with me. The fact that our marriage is over, it doesn't mean that I have to now be her best friend, or we have to have the Bruce and Demi relationship—it's not going to happen. However, when I look at the reaction that my children have when I can consciously be amicable to their mother when we're together, I can see how happy my children are.

In fact, my 10-year-old, about a year ago he was at my house and out of the blue he said, "Dad, you know what really makes me happy?"

I said, "What's that?"

And he said, "Seeing you and Mom happy."

My heart just smiled. Him saying that made all the effort that I'd put in worth it. What it did for me was it allowed me to really find my own power. This is funny, because this is where I can relate to so many women who go through this. You feel like your power has just been taken away. The title of this event is just amazing—Better Than Ever After Divorce. For so many people, though, I know their thought process is, how am I ever going to become better than ever after divorce?

I think the reality, though, is that you *will* become better than ever if you focus on becoming better than ever. You know? And the power to do so, there has to be the understanding that the power that you need to do that, to rise above it and be better than ever, and actually live your absolute best life ever? That power to do that already exists. You already have it. The only way to put any power to use is to first understand that the power's there. Then you can go, oh, you know what? I do have it in me! I do have the power to live an amazing life for me and my kids.

But one of the things, too, when a negative thought pops in you eventually start to develop this habit of replacing that negative thought really quickly. When it comes to my ex, I started thinking, you know what? I want her to be happy. I want her to be happy, and I want her to succeed. And then I thought to myself, whoa, what am I saying? Do I? Yes, I really do want that for her! And it was challenging to get to that place, to say that. I don't even like to use the word *difficult*, because it wasn't difficult. It was challenging.

The truth of the matter is, you're going to experience what you focus your thoughts and attention on. Your thoughts and your feelings. You're going to experience more in your life of what you're focusing on. If you're focusing on the bad or wrong aspects of your ex-wife or husband, that's what you're going to wind up seeing more of. So when you start to see that there is some good in them, there are things to be grateful for, you can get to that place of forgiveness.

I think one of the big issues, too, is there's this perception of that word, *forgiveness*. Initially, I thought the same. I thought, how can I forgive her for all of that, all of the feelings she's put me through? How can I actually be forgiving? Well, I realized, you know what? If I forgive her, it's for me, not for her. Forgiveness is a self-serving act. You don't do it for the other person. You forgive for yourself. That's exactly it. I thought, wow! That's right! It's like don't drink the poison, you know, because they're not going to feel it. For as long as I didn't forgive her, it had zero effect on her life. So if I can get to that place of forgiveness, it's going to enhance my life and my children's lives. And it's done exactly that.

It's just getting to that place where you become filled with emotional oxygen. You're empowered now to do what it takes. For yourself first, and then your kids automatically see and feel your power. And the wonderful thing is that they will inherit that power. They're going to start to see that they have it in them too. I've been working with children for years, and one of the first things that you do is, you want to become an emotional coach to your kids. You model for your kids how to become emotionally literate.

So when you can do that for yourself, your kids automatically inherit it. It's just a wonderful, wonderful thing. When you start to implement these strategies, they become simpler. Eventually they become part of your being, part of who you are. That affects every other aspect and every other relationship in your life—the people you work with, friends—it's a remarkable thing. Another thing, too, is when you're starved of emotional oxygen in that divorce, it affects everyone around you. Really what it comes down to is, happiness is a way of thinking. Your way of being is dependent upon your way of thinking. So regardless of a difficult ex, going through a challenging divorce, you still have that power to succeed when you see all you have to be grateful for. You start to understand what forgiveness really means, and then you are in a position where you can replace those limiting beliefs and those self-doubts with limitless beliefs. You learn how to avoid that over-thinking, that mental chatter. The volume gradually goes down, and then it changes. It's so worth the effort.

That question of how am I supposed to think about or focus on being happy in the midst of a divorce—it sounds ludicrous to think that. You know, divorce ranks right up there with grieving the loss of a loved one—it's a huge thing. It's a traumatic life event. How could you possibly focus on being happy? But the reality, for most people, isn't that really what you want more than anything else for yourself and for your kids? You want to be happy. You want your kids to be happy.

I couldn't shake the hurt or make that mental chatter stop, but the hurt starts to subside when you let it. The mental chatter subsides and then stops when you learn to fill your thoughts with that emotional oxygen. There are scientifically proven strategies to increase your level of emotional wellbeing. There are strategies that you can implement right away. The first one is gratitude. The first, easiest, and fastest way to change your thoughts and emotions is to find something to be grateful for. There's studies that have shown—Dr. Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough have been researching gratitude and forgiveness for 30-plus years. The results of their research have proven that just a thought of gratitude can have incredible psychological and physiological effects. People live longer, those who keep gratitude journals, and they experience less illness. They experience longer-lasting and more meaningful relationships. There are such wonderful effects in a person's life.

When it comes to having children, when you start to do these things with your children—I've been gratitude journaling with my children now for six years, I think now. We've been gratitude journaling every day. The effects have been truly amazing.

In getting the children involved, the very first thing that I personally did was I wrote a little booklet. Kind of like a happiness booklet for me and my kids to do. In the mornings at breakfast and in the evening, we'd have these little written activities—like gratitude journaling, for example. That's ultimately how I ended up publishing my first book, “An Exercise in Happiness,” because it was that book, that little thing that I developed just for me and my kids, it started to have such an effect on them that their teachers at school started to notice. I got a call from my oldest boy's third-grade teacher asking me what was I teaching him, and would I mind teaching it to the whole school. That's how my book “An Exercise in Happiness” started.

Then I wrote another one—I felt compelled to share more of these things. On our website, www.happierkidsnow.com, people can download a free booklet that they can do with their kids. It's just a small booklet that talks about the power of gratitude, about setting goals—it's just a fun little ebook that helps you sit with your kids and gratitude journal with them. It's wonderful! It's absolutely wonderful. What a great way to start the day, let me tell you what. Here's another little tip: If there are any single parents out there who have multiple children—you know how our children will sometimes get into scuffles and head-butting and yelling and screaming—I've used gratitude for years to get rid of these little arguments and stuff, and it works amazingly.

What I do is, I separate my kids—I started by sitting with the younger one—and I'll say, "I can absolutely see that you're upset." The idea is to acknowledge their emotions, acknowledge how they're feeling, validate them—it's OK to feel the way you're feeling about your brother. "I can see that you're really angry." What I'll do is, I'll say, "You know, that feeling of being angry isn't very good. We don't really like that feeling at all. What we want to do is try to change that as quick as we can. So I want to ask you something. Can you think of three reasons why you're grateful you have a brother?"

It may take a few minutes to get them thinking. I may even make the first suggestion—he lets you play with his stuff, he lets you play with his video games, whatever. He'll say yeah, OK, and he'll say, well, I'm also grateful for something else, and he'll think of something else, and by the time he gets to that third reason for being grateful he has a brother, he has forgotten what he's angry about. Same with his older brother; I'll do the same with him. With his older brother, I'll ask him to write out three reasons he's grateful he has a brother. And it just dispels it. Gratitude is so incredibly powerful.

It has a huge effect, and again, you will get more of what you focus your attention on. So if we're so focused on bullying, we can't help but see more of it. By taking this approach, by having kids focus on what's right and what's positive rather than what's wrong, they're more likely to develop those feelings of compassion and forgiveness and gratitude. So yes, it does have that effect. Absolutely.

You know, here's something that happened last night. They got into a little scuffle. I did not have to intervene at all, and I would say within moments after their little scuffle, my youngest approached his big brother to say he was sorry. They ended up hugging each other. They were hugging moments later. I'm extremely proud of them.

My oldest boy, he's in eighth grade, he's now the go-to guy amongst all his friends when they're having problems. He's the guy they talk to. In fact, he was telling me that a girl in his circle of friends actually credits my son with saving her life. She had thoughts of suicide because her parents were going through a horrifyingly mean, ugly divorce. So there's how it affects kids. It can affect them on the most extreme level, where they almost want to take their own life because they can't take it anymore, or parents can actually put effort into being happy. The result is happy kids, and it's so worth it when you think that there are children out there who are so broken up by their parents' divorce and how they are to one another that they're almost ready to take their own life. There's something really wrong there.

Really, all it takes is thinking properly. That's all it comes down to, is how we think. How we think determines how we feel and then ultimately that determines what we do and who we are and who we want to see our children grow up to be. It's so worth the effort.

Your children can actually be better than ever after divorce. They can!

I'm extremely proud of my children, and you know, it took effort on my part. I'm not asking for a pat on the back; I'm just saying if other people can really focus on their children during the traumatic experience of divorce, you almost can't help but be better than ever after divorce.

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses: There's a question that somebody sent before we started. This is from Tonya in Kentucky, and she said, I'm a 37-year-old mother with two boys, and I just want to thank you for this. For those who have no children, how do you find that place with your ex? How do you find that place of being able to be cordial to each other when there are no children? Because really, I don't know.

Patrick McMillan: That's a wonderful question. I've certainly been talking about how your kids can empower you, but if you don't have children there to empower you and you've just gone through this with the other individual, the same rules apply. The same rules apply in terms of those toxic thoughts. When you have toxic thoughts, when you have those negative thoughts about your ex, you're likely to experience more and more of that. The same principle applies: find something about your relationship to be grateful for. And also be grateful that now you have the opportunity—especially if you were in a relationship that was restricting and not allowing you to be who you want to be—if that relationship was constricting, then certainly now you have something to be grateful for. You're out of that relationship, and now you have the opportunity to spread your wings.

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses: That is a big one. And you know, Patrick, another thing I think when there's no children, is that everybody who comes into our lives, they are our teacher or our student.

Patrick McMillan: I love that you said that.

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses: When we look at what they came to teach us, and we really understand and appreciate that, we can say "Thank you for the growth. Thank you."

Patrick McMillan: Yes! When I first learned that strategy—and that is a strategy when anyone crosses your path or hurts you or harms you or says something to try to influence your feelings in some way—when I first learned to react with a thank you—thank you for being my teacher. Thank you for teaching me that I have the choice of how to react. Thank you for that opportunity. So that's what it is. I look at every single adversity—certainly everything that seems like adversity—as an opportunity. First saying, "Thank you for being my teacher," is an amazing strategy, and it works.

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses: Yes. It really works. Another one that works is that, because we're not in their shoes, it's very difficult—even though we were married to that person—to know what they have been going through since their childhood. Sometimes, when we now put ourselves in those shoes and think, "I know that anybody who is behaving like this must have something in their childhood or in their life before that has brought them to this place." Soon you will find some warmth inside of you—not pity, you don't need to pity anybody—but you will be able to understand that.

Patrick McMillan: That's enormous. In fact, that is exactly what I wanted to instill in my children, and it's exactly what happened. When my oldest boy was in third grade, he was being bullied. It was a verbal bullying, it wasn't a physical thing, but some boy was saying some mean things to him. I had always encouraged him to speak to his teacher or to let an adult know that was going on. He went to his teacher, and the first thing he said was, "I'm not mad at him. I think he might need some help because he might be having some problems."

Patrick McMillan: It's enormous. To understand that sometimes people act the way they do because of challenging things in their own life that they've not been able to deal with. So you develop that sense of empathy, that sense of compassion, which opens the door to forgiveness. That's powerful.

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses: Very powerful. And for children! Many children, they can't even see through anybody's needs or anybody's pain because they're so into themselves. And what you are doing with yours is that you are taking them out of themselves so that they are really feeling and knowing and seeing what is around them.

Patrick McMillan: How we model for our children is amazing. The one thing I've always said, too, when it comes to my children—or anybody and their children—is that I need to be who I want to see in my children. It's almost like the Gandhi quote of “Be the change you want to see in the world.” You need to be who you want to see in your children.

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses: Yes, and I always say, “Be the sermon, don't speak the sermon.” Many parents, they talk, talk, talk. ... Children don't hear all that chatter, all that talk. They model after what they see, even when you think they're not looking.

Patrick McMillan: That's exactly it. We can read all the books and listen to all the seminars, and fill ourselves with all this knowledge, but in order to turn that knowledge into wisdom, it needs to be put into action. And it's actions that your children observe. It's those actions that your children pick up on. You're just modeling exactly how to be happy. How to choose to be happy. Because that's the ultimate goal—Aristotle said it's the beginning or the end of all goals, I can't recall the quote offhand, but we all want to be happy.

The reality is that we all have that happiness inside us. It's there. We don't need to go searching for it. It's already inside, and we release it by the way we think.

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses: If parents can get that, that it all starts from there, and the responsibility is with them. Not by talking, not by saying, “I told them not to do that.” It's really by looking within yourself and doing all these things for your emotional oxygen.

Patrick McMillan: Exactly, and that's exactly why I wrote “The Science of Joyful Kids and Happy Parenting” program. It's a big emotional oxygen tank that you can carry around with you.

Dr. Dee Adio-Moses: You know, people say it takes so many years for many people to get over it? Then you just need to carry it around for as many years as it takes you to get over it.

Patrick McMillan: That's right! Just have it with you. A habit is formed within 30 to 60 days. You can develop a habit of thinking properly, too. And within 30 to 60 days, it's virtually effortless to think the right way. You know, it's by putting on that oxygen mask and developing those habits of thinking. And it can change your life. It can change your kids' life.

My website is www.happierkidsnow.com, and that's where participants can download "The Ultimate Kids' Guide to Happiness." It's a little ebook that they can download and print off, and enjoy with their kids. And of course my published book, "An Exercise in Happiness," can be found at www.KidsCanDoAnything.com. And we are going to put out the link for "The Science of Happy Kids and Joyful Parenting" program?

Patrick McMillan: Well, I just recently started a parent-child coaching program, so if people want to find out anything about coaching, one of the bonuses that I've included with the "Science of Happy Kids and Joyful Parenting" program is two months of group coaching. Every Wednesday, starting in December, I'm going to do an hour-long group coaching session. Anyone who takes advantage of the program gets two months of coaching for free. And then I'm also going to introduce individualized coaching as well. If people want to find out about that, they can certainly send me an email at Patrick@happierkidsnow.com. And with the "Science of Happy Kids and Joyful Parenting" program, in addition to the coaching bonus, there are meditation audios for parents and children that come along with it. So yeah, I encourage people to go check it out.

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ABOUT THE FOUNDER AND HOST



Dr. Dee Adio-Moses is a Visionary, Author, Life Strategist and Educator. An ordained Minister with a PhD in Philosophy specializing in Holistic Life and Spiritual Counselling. Dr. Dee is the Founder and Spiritual Leader of Healing Centre of Christ International and Better than Ever After Divorce Community, (part of her 501(c)(3) Non Profit organization). She is also the Host of the very popular Radio Show “Spiritual Laws of the Universe with Dr. Dee”.

Dr. Dee is a modern day key proponent of Oneness Consciousness as a healing strategy, and provides step by step programs to help you on your oneness journey, teaching you to master your emotions, your body, your relationships, your finances, and your life. She teaches that “Overflowing abundance (which includes peace, love and good health) is

your birthright and your life must reflect this, if not, the awakening of the soul to the realization of the Divinity within and thus the greatness is the work that needs to be done.”

A passionate and committed spiritual teacher and mentor, her passion, her innate gift and her ability to take the spiritual and translate it into the practical, have been the foundation of the success of her ministry.

She is the acclaimed author of many life changing books, e-books, home-study programs and audio books, including “You Are Enough-12 healing steps to your Wealth, Health, Love, and Happiness” She has travelled extensively all over Europe, Africa and North America, helping women to discover their inner power and create the life they desire, even after the terrible experience of divorce.

Dr. Dee’s personal devastating divorce experience and her journey of overcoming as a single mother of three sons is the reason why she is in the forefront of mentoring and empowering divorced women and their kids end the trauma and devastation of divorce, and how they can pick up the pieces and create a “Better than Ever After Divorce” lives for themselves.

Dr. Dee is now re-married with three adult children and grandchildren

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