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[Divorces](#)

14 07 2011



By [Timothy D. Naegele\[1\]](#)

[The Wall Street Journal](#) had an interesting article about the effects of divorces on children entitled, “The Divorce Generation”—and subtitled, “Having survived their own family splits, Generation X parents are determined to keep their marriages together[, but it] doesn’t always work”—which is worth reading, including the comments relating to the article.[\[2\]](#) What is clear is that “no one size fits all,” and every family situation is different. However, the similarities are illuminating as well.

A divorce is the flip side of marriage, and hate is the flip side of love, and failure is the opposite of success. Ideally, marriages should be unions before God that last forever. They should be sacred and monogamous, and represent a compact between the participants *and* God—instead of being “disposable,” like a used tube of toothpaste or an empty bag of potato chips. Few couples begin their marriages anticipating a divorce; and adultery should be considered a crime against God. An “ideal” mate or spouse is difficult to find, via Internet dating or otherwise, in no small part because no one is perfect.

Perhaps the best summary ever written about the psychological tugs and pulls of divorces, from the standpoint of the spouses and their lawyers—which after all underpins the effects of such divorces on the

children—was set forth many years ago by one of [America](#)'s original celebrity lawyers, Louis Nizer, in his timeless book *My Life in Court*. He wrote that litigation between husbands and wives “exceed[s] in bitterness and hatred those of any other relationships.”

And he added:

I leave to the psychiatrists the explanation of the volatile transformation from love to hate. The chemical ingredients of rejection, jealousy and possessiveness certainly play a part in the explosive content. But there is something more, a mysterious element, which unbalances the mind, changes the personality, and distorts the character. It derives undoubtedly from the sexual ties which, if profound and ecstatic, can never be completely severed. The mutual enslavement of love will not tolerate unilateral freedom. Two people joined together in intimacy are often like Siamese twins, the separation of one causing the death of the other. . . . When one reads of a man of good repute and solid business judgment who has shot his wife and two children, or a woman of impeccable rearing and social status who has thrown acid in the eyes of her husband and then shot herself, the insanity of the rejected reaches its extreme manifestation.[\[3\]](#)

Regardless of whether a marriage and subsequent divorce ever approach such extremes, it is clear that once-loving feelings *often* turn to hate, or something very close to it. Just ask divorce lawyers who have spent years handling such matters. Indeed, one lawyer-friend who represented clients in more than 500 divorces vowed never to handle one again, *inter alia*, because of the bitterness and animosity that are present, which seldom go away.

Divorce is the worst thing that can happen to a family, aside from illnesses that tear a family apart as well. However, if a beloved parent who is ill survives, it often makes the family stronger and builds character. The emotional turmoil and toll of a divorce are staggering; and the scars never heal, years and decades later. The situation is compounded when lawyers are involved, who more often than not “stir the pot” and make things even worse[\[4\]](#)—because they are generating ever-increasing legal fees, and they are taught to be advocates and contentious—which only add to a couple's problems, whose relationship is strained already. They need care and love, not acrimony.

Obviously those who are hurt include the children and the parents, but also others who come in contact with them. Future spouses and even friends are subject to the effects of divorces, in ways that are incalculable. If a parent is genuinely caring, sensitive, loving and compassionate, a divorce often tears that person apart. It affects one's ability to work; and every time that the parent and child are apart, there are tears and anguish—and yes, anger too—that never seem to go away.

Forty or more years after a divorce, there can still be rancor among the parents, which is often intensified when the children favor one parent over another. If the divorce took place when the children were very young, they never knew fully what transpired between their parents, yet one parent can be blamed and judged by the children who only see things from their point of view—of sometimes spoiled, entitled lives. At best, they have heard bits and pieces, generally filtered through prisms of enormous bias, distortion and long-simmering hatred.

Today, the issue of the parents' divorce many years before may be the 800-pound gorilla in the room. The parents and their grown children might never discuss it, yet it percolates just beneath the surface, like a boiling cauldron. It is always there, at least for a sensitive, loving parent. It is the pain that lingers and

never disappears, but gets fanned again and again when the children side with one parent or the other. It renews old hurts and hatreds among all concerned.

Even when both parents do their best at parenting, and do not move apart geographically, and share almost equal time with their kids, theirs is still never a family again—much less a happy one. At best, life becomes two families, separate and distinct; and there is nothing that one can do to change this. Vacations and holidays are often split; and the lives of all concerned are complicated even more when spouses of the children arrive, as well as children of their own.

Classes about marriage should be taught in colleges, high schools and before. No one tells us that it may be the most important decision we ever make; and if we make a mistake, we will live with it for the rest of our lives. It is like a bad dream that never goes away. Many times we think: if only we could reverse the clock, and not make that decision again. But it was made, years ago, and no one told us how important it would be. If we had *any* reservations before marrying (e.g., we were friends, but not in love—or there was something that just did not feel right), *someone* should have stopped us and told us to back off and not go through with it. The chances of things getting better after marriage are slim to none.

My great aunt died at 99, and her husband died at 92. They are my role models—above everyone else whom I have met, including my parents—with respect to a loving marriage. In the final years of her life, she told me many times how much she missed him, and how she looked forward to joining him. It was very loving, real and touching; and I have never seen love like theirs before or since. It was as if God had truly blessed them. They were friends; however, on a deeper level, he loved her and she loved him. He lit up when she came into the room; and both were very special, loving human beings. They never had any kids of their own though.^[5]

Perhaps the most important thing for any parent to do is to give his or her child unconditional love, and teach what genuine love and faith are all about. Divorce is an experience that many of us would not wish for our worst enemies; and we hope and pray that our children and their children never endure such catastrophes. Some people enter into marriage with the expectation that if it does not succeed, divorce is an easy answer. If children are involved, it is not easy or painless at all.

Lastly, there are enormous pressures on couples today; and many if not most are ill-equipped to cope. The economy, coupling itself, changing mores, religious and personal differences, illnesses and the like make Life challenging at best. Surely, this has been true since marriages first took place; however, the pace of our lives may be faster. Indeed, given the demands on couples today, it is a wonder that any marriages survive. Throw in kids—who are a blessing, but add a whole new dimension to the relationship—and marriages that survive and truly flourish are tantamount to miracles.

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University of California, Berkeley, and from Georgetown University. He is a member of the District of Columbia and California bars. He served as a Captain in the U.S. Army, assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency at the Pentagon, where he received the Joint Service Commendation Medal. Mr. Naegele is an Independent politically; and he is listed in Who's Who in America, Who's Who in American Law, and Who's Who in Finance and Business. He has written extensively over the years (*see, e.g., www.naegele.com/whats_new.html#articles*), and can be contacted directly at tdnaegele.associates@gmail.com; *see also* Google search: [Timothy D. Naegele](#)

[2] *See* http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303544604576430341393583056.html?mod=WSJ_hp_MIDDLENexttoWhatsNewsTop

There is useful information, provocative thinking, and wisdom in some of the comments that appeared at the Journal's Web site, in conjunction with the article, such as: (1) "spouses need to take care of each other and ensure each other's needs are met" (Trevor Denham); (2) "Couples need to understand that what's most important is their relationship with each other[, and if] that is well maintained, the kids will be fine" (M Mullen); (3) "Kids who grew up in divorced homes (like myself) often do not know how to recognize what a healthy relationship looks like and often make poor choices" (Sharon Brooks); (4) "I can tell you exactly what's made a good marriage for my wife and me for the last 28 years: the marriage is more important to us than anything else, we are totally committed to it, and we will do anything to make it work" (Gershon Ekman); (5) "Every guy i know who has a prenup is still married with an intact family, normal kids and.....a respectful wife! His pre-nup will put the same fear of divorce in her as his own fear of divorce. . . . If she wants to take it to court and you lose.....sue the attorney who wrote it up. Thats [sic] what his malpractice is for. Either way you win. . . . No wonder men have stopped asking women to get married!" (Don Mango); (6) "when a person who 'married their best friend' finds that their best friend has found a new best friend, that is more devastating than a lecherous husband screwing around" (James Burton); (7) "marriage is a sacramental covenant. It is not about being good roommates or even best friends" (Gerald Garcia); (8) "Your spouse isn't there to complete your life, just to share it" (Carol Sandor); (9) "mothers initiate nearly three times as many divorces as fathers. . . . Divorce is, essentially, a female phenomenon" (Mark Henricks); (10) "While a man may cheat and not intend to end his marriage[,] a woman almost always can't get past that violation and pursues divorce afterwards" (Michelle Madsen); (11) "I have learned after 4 decades of marraige [sic] that in fact, 'opposites do not attract'" (John Herman); (12) "the best parenting advice I have ever been given is actually marriage advice, 'The most important thing a father can do for his children, is love their mother'" (Brett Krieg); (13) "divorce sucks, & everyone is adversely affected" (Richard Dockery); (14) "Marriage is a Covenant with God, not a contract with [your] spouse. . . . There is no joy in serving yourself. It eventually leads to complete loneliness" (John Pater); (15) "The reason why divorce is so devastating to children is because they are supposed to personify the love between their mother and father; an act of loving union brought them into existence (or was supposed to). When we tamper with this design, [it] has profound psychological effects. Thus, counselors say the experience of divorce is like that of a death in the family and this is absolutely true: a part of them really has died. Beyond losing the familiar 'structure' of their home, when a child's father and mother split[,] it tells the child that the love that was supposed to bring them into being never existed or wasn't real – which strikes at their core" (Mike Day); (16) "Faith and religion, along with the institution of marriage, are becoming obsolete. Sorry if that offends the 'faithful' and 'believers' among us. The number of 'closet' atheists and agnostics is one of the fastest growing segments of the American populace" (Rhinnie Rohrback); (17) "When the husband and wife are devoted to each other[,] everything else follows including a stable family for the kids" (Rocco Papalia); (18) "At least the backward concept of giving sole custody to the mother is going away. This was always crazy, especially for boys. Boys after the age of maybe 2 or 3

need their father more than their mother. Separating them from their father, especially by force if the father wants to be involved, is incredibly stupid and destructive to the child” (Christopher Grey); (19) “I was five when my parents called it quits and their break-up was the single most devastating event of my life” (Bill Kilpatrick); (20) “I do not recommend divorce for anyone ever, yet realize that sometimes it may be the only option left” (Annmarie Chereso); (21) “As a divorced man of a certain age, I will probably not marry again. Why? Two reasons :A) no possibility of children; and B) lawyers” (Alan Wells); (22) “At the end of the day in today’s anti-father culture and Family Court laws, a man is a fool to marry in America. After all, when he loses his children, 18 years of his income and over half his stuff, he moves into the apartment” (Terri Christopher); (23) “If you only love when it comes to you easily, then it simply isn’t true love—true love weathers storms” (Vladimir Bachynsky); (24) “If your only reason for staying together is a legal document, a vow, or a social stigma, your relationship is obviously dead, and you are better off finding someone who will love you for who you are, and who will be thrilled to be loved by you” (Jay Schwartz); (25) “As a society, we should not allow government to be invol[v]ed in marriage and families. Government should only have two purposes. To defend our country and our freedoms” (Philip Stanley); (26) “I read somewhere that in over 90% of divorce cases, the spouse wanting the divorce has a lover” (Michael Trian); (27) “My grandparents were married for more than 70 years. I watched them as I was growing up. They were partners and always did sweet things for one another. I think that is key—simply being thoughtful” (Kat A); (28) “No one has the correct answer. No one knows the secret to a lasting marriage. Like politics, if there was one clear and correct answer, we would all likely abide by it, but the debate rolls on” (Victor Vazquez); (29) “If our parents had not had kids, I think they would’ve moved on from their divorce happily and never looked back. We were a human chain that bonded two people who never wanted to see each other again. Fun role to play in life. Let me tell you” (Adam Hendricks); (30) “Love your spouse more than your kids and your kids will grow up happier” (Jim Beam); (31) “Children of divorce often spend 18 years or so, until they leave home, learning how to fail at marriage from their primary role-models. Reforming one’s self in spite of that amount of training in failure takes tremendous effort, loving self-examination, and a willingness to ‘leave home’ in the heart and mind. It requires scary interior trail-blazing to become someone that you weren’t formed to be. Scary because, the character that it takes to be successfully married won’t feel natural, doing what ends in divorce feels natural” (Vince White); (32) “I’ve . . . witnessed the Depression and what families were like then; I’m afraid too many of today’s folks lack the discipline that’s going to be needed very soon” (Aloysius Koller); (33) “As it says on the billboard, ‘Loved the wedding, now invite me to the marriage. – Signed God’” (Dan Pierce); (34) “In my view, men, in general, are not trained to negotiate or compromise – we are trained to be No.1, to win, at all costs and against all odds. Or, we are a loser. So, pair a man up with super woman who knows she too can be No.1 . . . and we wonder why there is conflict?” (Jeffrey Allen Miller); (35) “far too many unknowing Psychologists and therapists . . . still see a couple and even the family as a collection of individuals rather than an emotional/spiritual team that must learn to function as a team or lose as a team” (Gary Sweeten); (36) “Sure, it’s hard to learn to serve and love the other person when our parents gave us the worst examples. But with determination, and by not creating problems waiting for ‘shoes to drop’, and planning an escape route, it can be done. We’re happily celebrating our 30 anniversary this year, and we’re looking forward to many more happy anniversaries! Just remember to reach for each other when things get tough; don’t hide or reach for the door. It’s tough, but worth every minute!” (Lisa Eichman); (37) “The people I know, including my parents, my in-laws, my son’s in-laws, and even my husband and I, are all very distinct individuals who have found ways to stay married while staying individuals. I would argue . . . that people who try to subsume their individuality in a marriage wind up resenting the loss of their personhood, and that only a marriage that respects the differences of both people can endure” (Annag Chandler); (38) “There is no good way to do divorce anymore than there is a good way to cut your own arm off. There are simply bad ways and worse ways. . . . If we think that quitting on marriage is a viable option, then we do not understand

what marriage actually is—a picture of God’s unfailing love for us. . . .” (Nathan Howell); (39) “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV)).

[3] See <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/01/magazine/lives-well-lived-louis-nizer-legal-maxims-for-our-times.html>; see also <http://www.amazon.com/My-Life-Court-Louis-Nizer/dp/156849145X>

[4] As I have written: “[M]ale lawyers prey sexually on their distraught and vulnerable female clients, which should give rise to immediate disbarments but it does not.” I added: “[T]he lawyers involved should be disbarred automatically, but the American Bar Association and State bar associations ‘turn a blind eye’ and do little or nothing to curb such abuses.”



See <http://naegeleblog.wordpress.com/2011/01/03/the-american-legal-system-is-broken-can-it-be-fixed/>

[5] See Timothy D. Naegele, *A Journey Home*, which embodies recollections of a trip taken with Sally Collette to Hannibal, Missouri in 1979, when she was 92 years old. This book will be republished in the future, with the original photographs that were set forth in it.

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Rod R (20:46:46) : [edit](#)

Insight and encouragement appreciated. A wise friend told me...the 24hour rule..."you have 24 hours to confront the person that hurt you OR you lose the right to be hurt"...because others cannot read your mind And may not even be aware that they have hurt you. Without you doing all you can do to confront the situation...you are becoming part of the problem.

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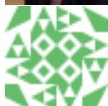
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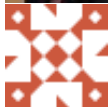
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