

# Dear Caring Heart

– Social Work Team at HELP FSC

*I am 42 years old and have three children, ages 3, 7 and 9. I just realised that my husband is having an extra-marital relationship. He has moved out of our home. He wants to initiate divorce. I believe that this marriage cannot be worked out even though I want to. I am lost not knowing what to do now and how to take care of my children and my needs. How can I rebuild my family? Where can I start?*

*Madam Wong*

\* \* \*

It must be shocking for you to know about the extra-marital relationship of your husband and his intent to initiate the divorce. If you are unsure about saving the marriage or proceeding to divorce, you should seek marital counselling to help you clarify the doubts and make the decision. Even when both of you decide to divorce, it would be ideal if you and your husband can discuss about the divorce matters and family transitions together.

Divorce is an end to the marital relationship, but not an end in itself. It gives rise to transition s and adjustments for both yourself and your three children. While there may be many changes in the family, it would be easier if you can take one step at a time.

Here are some suggestions as to where and how you can start rebuilding your family:

## **Acknowledge the impact of separation or divorce on yourself and on your children.**

When a separation or divorce takes place, it is important to identify potential changes and transitions, and allow reaction time for yourself and your children to make sense of the whole matter. When this happens, a sense of loss emerges. Feelings of loneliness, anger, sadness and helplessness often overwhelm one who is coming to terms with the loss, including your children. It is necessary to know the impact of these emotions on family's adjustments, your parenting and the parent-child relationships.

## **Prioritise your needs**

Be it physical, emotional or legal, separation and divorce involve time and energy. While it is ideal that many things can be settled at the quickest time, you need to set realistic expectations on yourself and on your children. Focus on what you and your family want to achieve. You may need to draw out a plan, giving priorities to what may need to be attended first.

## **Tap on the family's strength and resilience**

rebuilding could be a period of self-awareness and self-discovery. Remind yourself how you have been coping with previous challenges, and how you have 'survived' various adversities. Having overcome these past challenges, you will have the resources. To handle new challenges which can lead to different outcomes. The core idea is to tap on your strength and to cope with the challenges together with your family.

### **Look for support from external resources**

In times of crisis and challenges, support from relatives, friends and neighbours can be very helpful in the period of adjustments. Building support networks and forming support groups for you and your children are some ways to expand resources. You may want to seek professional help to journey with you in the separation or divorce. You are not alone in this situation.

### **Make meaning of the separation or divorce**

Divorce can create a sense of loss, and yet it can be a learning and growing experience. Perhaps it may be helpful if the family members can share their stories and perceptions about divorce with one another. Together, the family can make and share the meanings of separation or divorce. Making sense of the loss and the divorce can facilitate more effective adjustments and transitions.

*Life is like a long non-ending highway.  
There are twists and turns and  
sometimes you can take the wrong road  
but somehow we manage to get back on track.  
Sometimes we go through dark tunnels and  
the only thing that keeps us moving forward is  
knowing there is a light at the end.  
That's life, ever changing life*

*Author Unknown*

For more Exclusive Newsletters, please visit  
<http://helpfsc.org.sg/exclusivenewsletters>