

Divorce is a Gift

By Illana Berger, Ph.D.

Remember the film “War of the Roses?” Remember how appalling Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner’s relationship with each other was? Does your divorce resemble this film depiction? Is your home a battlefield? Are the kids (or pets) swirling in the tumult of anger, sadness, fear and confusion?

So many people divorce because they find that the differences between themselves and their spouse have become so vast that they cannot find a common direction to walk in together. Often when this realization becomes apparent to one or the other in the marriage or partnership it begins to create a rise in negativity and resentment and civility becomes more difficult to access. What happens for most people at this juncture is that the two begin to engage in a continual battle until a kind of tornado is created and the two are torn apart. Life then becomes a battlefield with the children caught in the middle.

When the relationship is fraught with conflict, disagreement, judgment and ridicule, each person becomes pre-occupied with what is said, done and imagined by their spouse or partner. The feelings of anger, resentment and frustration then make it possible to leave the marriage or relationship. What is most uncommon in a divorce or dissolution is any consideration or realization that the couple has crossed the threshold of what is called an initiative journey, or a journey of personal transformation.

In chemistry *initiation* is a chemical reaction that triggers one or more secondary reactions. In this technical definition the initiation or beginning reaction instigates a reactive response from what was a stable molecule that is then moved toward secondary reactions. Isn’t this true of divorce? One person decides they want out of the marriage or partnership that then forces the other partner to react and what has been a continual challenge in the relationship is now a divorce or separation proceeding.

We have all had something happen in our life that left us feeling that we could not survive; a divorce, an illness, a diagnosis of a terminal disease, an ending of a relationship, or the loss of a beloved, to name a few. Each one of these experiences has the potential to be an initiatory or transformative journey designed to expand your consciousness and to catalyze your life. What if you embraced these times, these experiences as teachings, opportunities or guideposts leading you toward your destiny, your growth and perhaps your transformation, rather than an absolute tragedy? How then might you experience this time in your life?

Most of us experience these times as painful, depressing, overwhelming, frustrating, scary, and lonely disasters. We tend to dive deeply into our pain, our loss, and thoughts that place blame and hurt on those whom we believe are responsible for our situation. We try desperately to define what it all means and who we now are or are not. What takes place in this moment of “sorting” determines whether this experience will inspire our lives or destroy it. It is in this moment that the experience becomes one of initiation or months and years of conflict. You actually have a choice!

There are four stages to initiation. The first stage is defined as “*naming the old.*” This stage invites you to see who you think you are, what defines you? You begin to notice that what has always worked in your relationship is now no longer working. How did you get here? If you are aware that your life is in a transformative moment and you take the time to examine your life up to and including this moment, you will be able to embrace the power of the moment and the opportunity

you are being given. With this new awareness, you can look at the life you have been living and see what has brought you to this moment in time.

The second stage is defined as “*acknowledging the old.*” In this stage you recognize what has given form to your life. It may be many things, your house, your car, or job, your children, or your lifestyle. All these have served to concretize the concept of your selfhood through their manifestation in the physical world. They carry the contents of your identity. In this stage of initiation you recognize what you have created that holds the images and ideas of your identity. You can stand back and begin to imagine the larger story you are a part of.

The third stage is defined as “*destroying the old.*” This is a kind of death. It is the time of letting go. At this stage the vessel(s) you have created that acknowledge whom you think you are, are destroyed or taken away. In reality the death of your marriage or partnership, the loss of your home or your health are in this stage of the process. In your life, when you feel as if what you value and cherish is taken from you, the loss can be overwhelming. You are being asked in this stage to give everything you have been given back to Creation. Just as in death, you give your body (your vessel) back to the earth, so too in the initiation process, you are asked to sacrifice it all. You are now naked in the same way that you were when you were born; unformed and filled with potential.

The final state is called “*the GAP.*” You are neither here nor there. This is often referred to as the *Bardo* of your life. It is here in your emptiness, in your vulnerability and openness, in which vision and insight come to you. The possibility exists that you will be guided by Spirit; by your higher Self, by your Ancestors, and your dreams to move toward the path you have been walking all your life.

If you embrace this time as inspiring, then the moment becomes something profound, something holy, a possibility that God or Spirit has entered and in this moment of your life, then your experience becomes important; even blessed.

When you react negatively to the chaos in your life, you deny the possibility of the underlying design and purpose of Creation and the design and purpose of your very life. Your attitude then, either prolongs or transforms your suffering.

The moment you realize and accept your hardships, your obstacles and challenges as opportunities for spiritual growth and change, your pain and doubt will transform and diminish or disappear entirely. Life will have meaning in a way you could not have imagined. It will catalyze something new and deliver you on the path you have lived your whole life to walk upon.

Be aware however, the Ego will continually attempt to slow or sabotage the process so that you cannot discern the divine order or the holiness in the experience even if it is right there in front of your eyes.

The ego exists in order to keep your body alive. Over the millennia of human evolution we have had a great expansion of human consciousness. At the same time the ego has also expanded. The voices we hear in our head are the voices of ego. It will always lead you away from spiritual growth. As the ancient teachings tell us, Self Realization or Enlightenment is the death of the ego. So, the ego will do all it can to keep you from that awakened state. The opportunity you have is to shine the light of your awareness on the voices in order to move through this time with an expanded awareness rather than limited beliefs and conditioning.

You can now embrace your experiences knowing that it is wisdom in action, and transform your life experiences, your divorce, your illness into something that can serve your life, serve your awakening and your wholeness.

In order to move on with your life it is essential that you reclaim what you have given away. In a marriage you give away both your higher self and your shadow or lower self. What you love in your partner and what you are challenged by in your partner is essentially that which is beautiful and challenging in yourself. You must cut the tendrils that wrapped themselves around the other in order to prevent yourself from remaining stuck in the negativity of your union rather than in the gratitude and love of that union. Moving into and embracing the lessons and the gift of your relationship is the greatest part of the journey. Without recognizing your part in the dissolution you cannot move forward in your life or if you do, you are doomed to repeat your story. The final stage, *the celebration*, cannot take place if you do not claim all of who you are.

When Divorce, Separation & Illness are understood in this way, your life experiences, challenges and obstacles become profound moments in your life and serve as a catalyst to propel you onto the path toward your own unique destiny.

Take the leap – cross the threshold. Celebrate. Trust that there is a net beneath you!