

Divorce invariably causes suffering!

Divorcing hurts. The tension between partners and children – sometimes rising to a boiling point – are a huge part of this suffering.

Partners who say goodbye to each other are also saying goodbye to an entire way of life. They go through a grieving process and are, at the same time, forced to make important decisions regarding the practical organization of their life. On top of that, their social network shrinks significantly. The family is often reduced by half and friends and neighbors choose sides.

A logical consequence of a divorce is that partners move to two different houses, which means that the day-to-day upbringing of the children becomes a single partner's responsibility. Or, worse, parents can turn out to be competitors: who do the children prefer to live with, who do they prefer to be with... In the worst case scenario the divorce does not only cause a communication crisis between partners but a serious communication conflict. We often see that part of processing a divorce is counteracting each other – even as parents. The boundaries and house rules that children so badly crave become unclear or even completely fade.

It's not unusual that under these circumstances parents start to lean on their children. They feel dispirited, helpless, exhausted, lonely, deprived of their strength which reverses the roles and forces the children to be the 'strong' ones.

Children and certainly young adults often feel victimized and / or rebel (stronger) against the situation they feel forced into. Sometimes they simply have to move or have to go live in another house part of the time. Other times it turns into a loyalty conflict and they are confronted with fierce quarrels or even violence.

For teenagers it is not obvious to do as they are told and the extra pressure often is the proverbial drop. Just when having clearly set boundaries is crucial, just when they need role models to make

important choices in their life, they get lost and out of control.

And then, in many cases, these children and teenagers are sent to therapists because their parents cannot cope with their problems on top of the personal issues. Divorcing parents are quicker to seek third party help.

But is that the right course of action? The young adult is 'forced' to tackle his/her problem, he / she has to go easy on the parents and outsiders are involved to deal with him / her. And this when the fading relationship with their parents is at the root of their behavior.

Personally, I have often found that these therapist sessions further deteriorate the relationship between parents and children. Children revolt against the stigma. They feel they cannot accept that they have to work on their behavior while they feel their parents are the cause of all their pain; that they are being told to change while their parents are fighting, get downhearted or even depressed.

Research has shown that *difficult* behavior during or after a divorce can disappear as soon as the situation between or with the parents stabilizes.

That is where the **New Authority model** comes in. The oxygen this model can provide is highly necessary. Everyone who is going through a divorce can use the empowerment this model gives, regardless of them being a parent. Every divorcee can use help to repair or broaden his / her social network to feel stronger. And only strong parents will be able to guide their children through their rebellion against the changes in their lives and will be able do that caringly, vigilantly and in a non-violent way.

In an ideal world – one without divorces - parents would learn about the **New Authority model** pre-emptively. In the real world it would be great if partners going through a divorce crisis would be given this model's basic tools.

The tutors, coaches, family mediators helping families go through this type of transition, could play a key role in staying in tune with the parent-child relationship. As it is their job to always bear in mind the children's needs and to provide parenting support, it would be highly rewarding to see the New Authority oxygen mask be included in the educational-toolbox.

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