

**D**ivorce can be one of life's most stressful experiences. It can also be a time of creating new relationships, learning and growing. Understanding the emotional and physical stresses that often come with divorce is the first step in learning how to deal with them. When you accept your feelings, and learn ways to care for yourself during this stressful time, you'll find that you not only can cope with divorce, you can survive and even thrive.

## Emotional Stress

Separating from someone you had hoped would be your life partner is usually painful. You might feel like a failure. You miss the warmth, friendship, financial security and sex you had or hoped you would have.

Your job as a parent is suddenly that much bigger if you now have primary responsibility for your children. You may have less time to spend with them, yet their needs are greater. Whether

you wanted the separation, your resentment and anger may flare up around them, although it's not their fault. You and your former spouse may have conflicts about child support.

If you're a parent whose children are not living with you, you may feel guilty, lonely and resentful. You may worry that your children may forget you or be turned against you.

Divorce is especially painful if everyone you know seems to be happily married, or if you get little support from your own family.

## Physical Stress

As in any distressful situation, your body is affected. Ongoing stress can cause minor and major illnesses, including headaches, backaches, ulcers, flu and asthma. Even if you feel relieved by the divorce, you may have physical symptoms.

## Take Care

You may not be able to change your sit-

uation, but you can stay healthy during the transition if you take care of yourself.

■ Recognize your feelings. It's normal to feel lonely, frustrated or even hopeless. Pound on a bed or yell in the car, where no one can hear you, to release your feelings.

■ Reach out to others. Friends, relatives, support groups and therapists all can support you. A hug, phone call or letter can mean a great deal.

■ Take risks. Try a new activity. It will keep your mind off your problems and help you to meet new people.

■ Treat your body well. Cut down on alcohol and smoking. Eat healthy, tasty food. Take long baths and get exercise you enjoy.

Taking care of yourself and taking risks can have surprising benefits. Don't be surprised if eventually you are stronger, more confident and more content than before.

# Living With Divorce

## *Surviving the Changes in Your Life*



*Trying new activities can help you meet new people and raise your self-esteem.*

*It's normal to feel lonely, sad or resentful during a divorce.*

