

Finding yourself when you're single again

By Christopher Guntz

cguntz@catholicreview.org

At age 41, I found myself in a place I had never expected. My wife and I separated and eventually divorced.

Single again for the first time in a couple of decades, there were many times in the months that followed that I felt a range of emotions: dejection, rejection, failure, insecurity and - at times - relief from the pressures of a relationship that didn't work out as planned.

Not only was I no longer in a relationship that I had treasured and valued, but I also moved to a new apartment (picked out with the help of my kids, and close enough to our family home so they could easily get back and forth between their mom's house and my place). Life was unstable for a while. Each day brought adaptations as I began to cope with the "new normal" of my life.

It took time - and a lot of help - to adjust. My pastor was a great sounding board, and the parish counseling service provided some great insights. My weekly men's prayer group helped me stay sane and heal. At one point, several months after my wife and I had separated and were working on divorce proceedings, I made the conscious decision to stop wearing my wedding ring and my men's group helped me with a ritual of closure for that.

I also joined a "Journey to Recovery" weekly class for separated and divorced that helped each of us examine who we were and what our role had been in the dissolution of our relationship. Each of us has faults, so no one in a relationship can get off scot-free. One of the texts we used was "How to Survive the Loss of a Love," written for those who have lost a loved one through death, separation or divorce. In reality, the grieving process for the loss of a spouse through divorce can be similar to dealing with death. A relationship built on love has been broken, and that brokenness must be healed so you can move on.

Retreats, inner healing workshops, good friends, family and a supportive parish community helped see me through. Over time, I finished the paperwork for my annulment, a process that can be “healing and painful, painful and healing,” as a friend told me. It was. Eventually, I found a woman to whom I am happily remarried and life is beautiful.

A daylong workshop for those in a similar situation will be held April 26 at Our Lady of the Fields in Millersville. “Journeying for the Healing Soul,” sponsored by the Catholic Single Again Conference of Baltimore, features keynotes and workshops for those newly hurting; for those a bit beyond newly hurting; and for longtime separated, divorced and bereaved. One such session, “Finding Your New Self” will help those adapting to their own “new normal” to find what helps them feel restored and find a “new self” not defined by their lost relationship.

If you are single again, you can survive this process and come through to the other side as a healthy, happy, whole person. At a time like this in your life, it helps to acknowledge the pain, and surround yourself with faith, family and friends who can help you heal.

For information or to register for the Single Again Conference, visit www.singleagain.itgo.com

Christopher Gunty is associate publisher/editor of the Catholic Review.

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