

Is 2014 going to be a **Year of Love** or a **Year of Loss?**

Will you be celebrating Valentine's day this year?

With the 14th looming some of us have a wonderful romantic evening to look forward to or a special day to spend with our partner.

Others will be alone wondering what went wrong, how they ended up here and are terrified at the prospect of playing the dating game again.

Where will you be this Valentines Day?

Mark Shields Investigates

Whenever Valentine's Day comes around it always reminds me of an interesting yet disturbing conversation I overheard a number of years ago at this time of year.

I wasn't earwigging but I couldn't help overhear the conversation that was taking place between a group of middle aged mums that were stood just a few feet from me in the playground, as I waited to pick up my son Tommy from school.

It appeared over the previous weekend another marriage had broken down and these ladies were trying to offer some comfort to the poor lady that seemed inconsolable and had to put a brave face on rather rapidly as her daughter was fast approaching from the classroom

Not another one I thought as I drove Tommy back to the house. That's six from the same school in just a month. It wouldn't be so bad but there were only 80 children that attended the school in total.

As the topic for my radio show this month was relationships I approached the research for the show this month with extra vigour and interest.

Upon studying the six couples in question they seemed to have a lot in common. They were all in their mid to late forties, had several children, all around 9 or ten.

In addition one of the partners seemed to be very career driven working long hours and staying away from home regularly.

As I continued with my research for the show it became apparent very quickly there seemed to be a profile for couples struggling in their marriage and the numbers supported my theory.

A growing private practice with 50% of our clients seeking help with relationships this just supported my thoughts even more.

The average age for women getting divorced in 2012 was 44 and for men 45. Overall 1 in 3 marriage end in divorce with numbers set to rise as we deal with current economic and financial pressures brought on with the recent economic downturn.

It is common that at least one partner works away and often the age range of children involved is between 9 and 13.

So what can you do, is there life after divorce or is life as you know it over?

It must be unimaginable. being on your own again, back out there in the jungle of unknown predators, speed dating, and singles clubs." That will never happen to "me or so you thought. Yet here you are, back out there playing the game once again.

So your relationship is over and it feels like your world is coming to an end. What next. Its human nature to close the curtains, call in to work sick and throw your own pity party on the sofa often with several glasses of wine and no guests, often with "our tune" belting out in the background.

Although it doesn't feel like it right now you will get over it. Our brilliant minds have a wonderful way of protecting us and time really does heal if you allow it. Things will look very differently in just three months from now.

It's interesting to note that the most common reason for relationship breakdown is Extra-marital affairs coming in as number one on the break up scale at 27%. This is followed closely by mid life crisis coming in a close number two at 20%, with the average life of a marriage equalling just eleven years.

Yet you knew all this didn't you. With such common heavily weighted causes it is likely you have been experiencing some strange behaviours by your partner for some time now.

Unexplained absences, unusual trips away from home, a new mobile phone, even sudden nights out with the pals which are becoming far too regular for comfort.

What's going on you think?

Well now you know as you sit there opening your second bottle of wine at your own pity party. Still no guests and still "our tune" belting out on the record player.

Perhaps it's time to put down the bottle before it becomes your third put a new tune on the stereo, and start moving on with your life.

In my time as a human potential coach I have come to believe anyone can bounce back from a broken relationship, no matter what the circumstances.

Your loss will seem insurmountable to begin with, but in time your brilliant mind will help you heal. Of course you have to help it along the way and not be deliberately obstructive, falling into a downward spiral of bitterness, blame and depression.

Follow my three simple steps to getting over your broken heart and move on with your life.

1. Don't play the blame game

Continually blaming your partner will eventually annoy the people around you, even new potential partners, if they here you moan and whinge all the time about how badly you were treated and what a victim you are.

Try to stick to the objective not subjective facts about what has happened and learn to accept where you are now to enable you to move on.

2. Acceptance

Accept you are now on your own for a while. Learn to live without your partner and start rebuilding your life on your own.

The sooner you realise you only have control over your own emotions and you are clear about your own emotional boundaries the easier you will mentally move on, on your own.

3. Learn to enjoy yourself

It may take a while to realise it but anything is now possible. Although you may still be experiencing a level of anxiety about facing life alone, the better you get at allowing yourself to have some fun that anxiety will get more heavily weighted with excitement. The more you focus on new and exciting things the happier and more fulfilled you will become.

The further you leave behind your old life the less attractive your old life looks with your new life looking far more interesting and exciting.

So this year whether you're enjoying a romantic for two, or you're out with your friends on Valentine day be thankful for what you have, enjoy yourself, never take anything for granted and work hard at all relationships. Happy Valentines Day 2014.

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