

Choosing Peace

Choosing Peace by Lisa Mauri Thomas

Denial is a powerful thing. I am just as susceptible as anyone to this personal diversion, this thick woolen blanket designed to smother the voice in the soul. Why? Because deep down I know what is right for me and what is no longer working. I know that change is healthy and I recognize how denial prevents change. That doesn't mean I want to face it.

I had to confront denial head on when it was clear I was miserably unhappy in my marriage and that the change I needed to see in my husband wasn't going to happen. No, the change was going to have to come from me. But, at what a painful cost. Divorce is the very definition of loss. I lost my home, time with my daughter, financial stability; just to name a few. And I wasn't the only loser in the equation. The irony is that "breaking free" rarely has such an outcome in a divorce situation. My ex and I are still very tied to one another in terms of parenting and real estate. We have a young daughter to raise together and a house that won't sell in this market. We were together for eleven years and it took me over two years to grapple with my unhappiness, looking for solutions, and finally deciding to leave. We have been divorced for nearly two years now yet we don't see real separateness for a very long time.

Divorce is agony. How could I ever survive less time with my daughter? I work full-time as it is. There is laundry and grocery shopping and other petty but essential responsibilities that eat away at my precious time with her. How could I not be front and center for her bedtime routines, every night? How could I rip apart her sense in family and home by leaving? How could I possibly model problem-solving and commitment for her by moving out? I feared greatly for her sense of self, her ability to adjust, her capacity for resilience. She was my all-consuming concern. Never mind the loss of home, disposable income, his family, our friends, and someone with whom to build and share a life. I knew I could survive without those things. But I seriously doubted I would survive causing my daughter such pain. In the end, I had to trust that I could love her and guide her through the hurt and disappointment. I had to believe that my being with her, while less in terms of time, was more in terms of quality. I had to acknowledge that while my ex was a poor husband to me he is an excellent and devoted father to our daughter.

No one would get divorced if loss was the only outcome — there are gains to be made as well. For me, the number one gain was peace. It used to be dreadfully difficult to head home after work every day. I wanted to get home to my daughter. I couldn't stand going home to a husband who drank and yelled and yet brightened with every new insight he had about what was wrong with ME as good ways to pass the time. I cannot find peace in an unsettled, chaotic environment. It makes everything more difficult; even simple pleasures like playtime with my daughter, sleeping in on Saturday mornings, and a "just because" moment of shared affection with my mate wove themselves into the ever-widening battleground. Ironically, they became things I tried to live without in my effort to keep what little peace there was to be found. Real peace is quiet fulfillment and reflection, not tense and booming silence.

I have been learning to re-embrace all those simple pleasures. Waking up anytime after 7:00am on a Saturday morning with the sun streaming in through the windows and my cat curled up on my feet. Watching my daughter discover a beetle. Helping her catch a garden snake. Ensuring my time with her is "just us". Hearing from her first-grade teacher that she is excelling in both math and reading. Experiencing a spiritual re-awakening. Being recognized for my contributions at work. Facing my fears and the world, head on. Kissing the beautiful man in my life now who seems perfectly content with me just the way I am. These are the things that bring me peace. These are the things that strengthen me. I made the right choice, a change for the better.

About the Author

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Master's degree in Vocational Counseling, employed in higher education. Current projects include: 1) finding an editor and publisher for my book, and 2) launching an internet site to assist job-changers in seeking out a new path.

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