

# Top 5 Regrets of Divorced People

## Study reveals 'marriage advice learned the hard way.'

by Kristin Wong Jul 31, 2012 3:53PM.

If you're looking for marriage advice, it might be wise to ask your divorced pals--why not avoid heartache by learning from someone else's?

According to a recent piece from the [Wall Street Journal](#), most divorced people can narrow their past relationship regrets down to five areas they would change. With the help of psychologist and researcher Terri Orbuch, some divorcees have shared their lessons learned.

"Divorced individuals who step back and say, 'This is what I've done wrong and this is what I will change,' have something powerful to teach others," research professor Terri Orbuch of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research says. "This is marriage advice learned the hard way."

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Orbuch has been conducting a study on 373 couples since 1986. When the study first started, the couples were between the ages of 25 and 37 and in their first year of marriage. But since then, 46 percent of them have divorced. Dr. Orbuch followed those couples as they entered new relationships—44 percent of them remarried.

The Wall Street Journal recently interviewed Dr. Orbuch about her past research in a piece titled, "[Divorce's Guide to Marriage](#)." Specifically, they were interested in what the couples she studied had learned from their past heartbreak. Dr. Orbuch found that most of them had five main areas of regret. Without further adieu, here are the lessons learned from the divorced:

1. Express love: Seems like a simple one, but 15 percent of divorced individuals said they regret not giving their spouse more affection. This includes compliments, cuddling and saying, "I love you."

"By expressing love and caring you build trust," Dr. Orbuch told the WSJ's Elizabeth Bernstein.

The divorcees listed four important components of affection: showing love often, making your partner feel good about who they are, making them feel good about having their own ideas, and making life interesting or exciting.

Dr. Orbuch agrees that it's important to make your spouse feel loved and appreciated every day— even a brief compliment can do the trick.

2. Talk About Money: It's no surprise that money was the top conflict in the majority of marriages Dr. Orbuch studied. 49 percent of those divorced said they fought so much over money in their past relationship, they're certain it will be a problem in their next one. The lesson learned? Thoroughly discuss your money plans and financial goals.

"Talk money more often— not just when it's tax time, when you have high debt, when bills come along," Dr. Orbuch says.

And here's an interesting statistic: in the study, six of 10 divorced people who started a new relationship chose not to combine finances the next time around.

3. Let go of the past: According to Dr. Orbuch, divorcees who still had strong feelings (whether it be love or hate) toward their ex were not as emotionally healthy as those who had moved on. In order to have a healthy current relationship, you can't be emotionally attached to your last one, Orbuch explains. For those who find it difficult to let go, Orbuch suggests writing a long letter to the person who has upset you, and then destroying the letter.

"This is an exercise for you, to get all the emotions out on paper so you can release them," she says.

4. Let go of blame. In the same vein as lesson number three, 65 percent of divorced people in the study blamed their ex-spouse for the divorce. Orbuch says holding on to the blame only makes it harder to move on, even if you're blaming yourself.

In order to avoid blame in your marriage, Orbuch suggests using "we," in discussions rather than "you" or "I."

"There are multiple ways of seeing a problem," Dr. Orbuch says. "By getting your partner's perspective, and marrying it with your perspective, you get the relationship perspective."

5. Open up about yourself. The top behavior divorced individuals said they would change in their next relationship is how they communicate, with 41 percent saying they would do it differently. According to Dr. Orbuch, in order to communicate effectively, it's important to open up about your thoughts and feelings  and not just when you're fighting.

"ou need to tell each other about your lives and see what makes you each tick," Dr. Orbuch suggests.

What are your thoughts  have you been through a divorce? What did you learn from it?