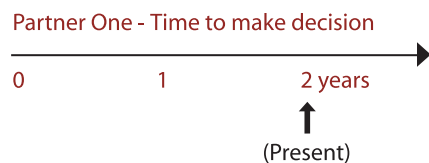


T IME AND THE DECISION TO DIVORCE

One of the most common experiences of divorce is that the decision to divorce is often made by one partner and one partner alone, and is therefore a non-mutual divorce. One partner wants it and the other does not.

Partner One has been thinking of separation and/or divorce for quite some time in one way or another. For some, it is a major preoccupation. For others, it is an idea that percolates, almost hidden, in the background of their lives and surfaces every now and then. It appears that in many cases this divorce “thinking” has been going on for at least two years. That is, for at least two years Partner One has been in a “place” where ending the marital contract and pursuing a divorce or separation is a possibility for them. This may or may not have been verbalized to the other.



When Partner One finally decides and informs Partner Two, Partner Two is almost always in some kind of shock. The shock may be because their partner told them “out of the blue” or it may be because an affair was discovered/revealed. Shock can also exist in relationships where divorce has been threatened or even discussed. Knowing that something is a possibility and having it actually take place are two different things.

ADDITIONAL READING: Time and the decision to divorce

Partner Two usually experiences such feelings as fear, anger, humiliation, depression. These feelings are usually intense, in part because Partner Two has no control over the situation. S/he usually does not want the divorce to happen. In fact, Partner Two often wants to go to marriage counseling to save the marriage.

Partner Two - Their place on time line



In looking at the time lines above, one can see that the difference in where each partner is on that line is HUGE. Partner One has had two years to think, to wonder, to agonize, to grieve, to plan, to adjust. Partner Two is just beginning.

As the couple begins to take the steps toward separation and divorce, it is extremely important to pay attention to and respect the gap between where each partner is.. This is especially true for Partner One, who is often ready to move forward, to separate now, to get the divorce done. This desire can result in demands, pushing, and frustration with the other's process. Such behavior adds to the trauma.

One final note on time lines and divorce. The initiator often has taken up to two years to reach the point of divorce. The legal divorce may take from 6 months to one year. The emotional, psychological, and social divorce can last 2-4 years after the legal process is completed.