

Reasons for Divorce

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Lists of reasons that people give for getting a divorce are being compiled by family researchers and scholars, attorneys, marriage/family therapists, proponents of political agendas, and demographers. Some of the most frequently cited reasons listed include the following:

- Addiction
- Cheating/infidelity
- Control issues of partner
- Mental health problems
- Physical Violence
- Emotional Violence
- Mistreatment of the Children
- Lack of communication
- Chronic conflict and fighting
- Loss of trust
- Changes in behavior, interests, values
- Lack of commitment to the marriage
- Sexual Problems
- Money conflicts
- Growing apart, loss of closeness
- Decline in marital happiness

However, these simple lists do not reveal the complexity of motivation for divorce. The reasons that people cite for divorce are even varied among different groups of divorcing couples. Research finds different marital stages associated with reasons for divorce. Couples who divorce after being in a long term marriage cite the contribution of developmental stages and challenges over time--such as raising kids, marital boredom, changes in partner interests and attitudes, and erosion of marital happiness.

People who married younger or were married for a shorter time have been found to identify difficulties related to adjustment issues such as "settling down", or in conflicts over issues such as in-laws, sexual problems, and infidelity. Socio-economic status also makes a difference in reasons for divorce. Divorcing couples with more financial and social resources were more likely to identify relationship related reasons, such as lack of love and demanding/controlling behavior of spouse as divorce factors. Couples with lower resources tended to identify financial problems, physical abuse and drinking as major divorce factors. Men and women report different reasons for divorce. Women were more likely to identify relationship and emotional issues as causative factors, while men were more likely to view external factors like work or in-laws as factors (Research resource: Amato, P.R. and Previti, D., People's Reasons for Divorcing, Journal of Family Issues, July 2003).

"Facebook affairs" and virtual infidelity are reported by attorneys and divorce services to be frequently cited as reason for divorce in the last few years. If not an actual reason for divorce, such acts of betrayal and breaches of trust, create major marital problems and disharmony from which many couples do not recover.

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