

# Separated, But Not Divorced?



**I**t was a difficult phase for Amita Deshmukh when she was dating an office colleague who was going through a divorce, after being married for two years. Even though Amita loved her colleague, she was plagued by a whole lot of emotions: Was she doing the right thing? What if he backed out? What if he married her and then things didn't work out? Would things get messy?

In another case, Sheela Vijayan was attracted to her boss. Later through the office grapevine, she got to know that his marriage was crumbling and he had just decided to divorce his wife of 10 years. She was all ears about the pain and pangs of his separation. As a result, he began depending on her, made her into a sounding board, and

she felt herself being pulled into an affair. Initially, everything was fine, she felt wanted but after a couple of months, he was only complaining about his ex-wife, and seeking sympathy from others. It came as a shock to Sheela when she got to know by chance that he was also dating another office colleague besides her!





DATING A PARTNER WHOSE DIVORCE HAS NOT YET COME THROUGH? EVEN IF YOU ARE SERIOUS, MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO HOLD BACK A BIT, WAIT FOR THE DIVORCE TO HAPPEN BEFORE COMMITTING YOURSELF, SAYS **ARUNA RATHOD**.



### What to ask yourself and your partner

- Does he/she acknowledge his faults in the marriage breaking up?
- Was there any imbalance in the relationship or family issues?
- Does he solely blame his partner?
- In case he is not telling it all, be wary, chances are he is hiding something.
- Try and find out what you can about the timeline of how and why it ended. Does everything add up? This is in your own interest. You are not snooping.
- How long has he been separated?
- Why did they decide to separate?
- Does he and his wife still live together?
- Are he and his wife working towards reconciliation?
- How do they split parenting duties if they have children?

### Beware of the pitfalls

Dating a partner who is going through a divorce can throw up a lot of new emotions and issues. Since the wounds are raw, some issues unresolved and the 'relationship' difficult, it could go any way. Are you equipped for the barrage of emotions that could come your way if you are dating someone going through a divorce? The first question that must be answered is: Why is he/she getting a divorce and what is the timeline? Once you are satisfied with the answer and convinced that you are with the right person, you can tackle other doubts that come to your mind.

Counsellor Malini Shah, co-founder of Aastha Chrysalis explains, "Going through divorce is a very emotional and difficult phase for anyone due to the strong attachment and the feeling of loneliness at the thought of being without a companion. So, if you are dating a person going through divorce, it may sometimes stem from feeling bad for that person and offering your company (out of sympathy) or soft-cushioning the issue." Like what happened in the case of Sheela and her boss. In Amita's case, it would be best for her to take it easy and give the relationship time. Psychologist Shreya Poddar who is also a couple counsellor feels, in case, you would like to further the relationship into marriage, you need to give space and time to the partner. "Ideally, if you are attracted to someone who is in such a situation, don't date him/her right way; give it six months to a year. You don't want to be part of a rebound. Be a friend, spend time with them,





understand their expectations and see if that works for you. And once the person is comfortable make sure you don't impose yourself on them; that will only push them away from you. Ask your partner to be completely honest with you, as it would be very hurtful in case he springs some unpleasant details later."

It is always wise to continue to have your own life. Do not reschedule or put your life on hold for them. Meet your friends, spend time with yourself as self love will always help you be positive if things go sour.

### What about children

If the person you are dating has children, one needs to be doubly careful. "Men are drawn to women who are affectionate and can relate to their kids; but either of them may not want to marry," says Malini. Kalpana Menon was very affectionate towards Niranjana's children as she felt that they were suffering due to the divorce proceedings. She would spend time with them, take them out or be with them. Niranjana assumed that she loved his children but Kalpana was just being there for them. He mistook her care for love for him and children and wanted to settle down with her. When Menon refused his offer of marriage, he was heartbroken. In case, your relationship has gone really serious and towards marriage, if your partner has children, remember that



### Meeting the Ex

What if he/she still has feelings for her? What if he/she still talk and are close friends, where then do I fit into that picture? Feeling insecure when your partner is friendly with the ex may not be a wise thing to do...It may topple your relation as the person may feel restricted or assume you are unable to understand the context and being unnecessarily jealous. In case, you happen to meet the ex, here's what you need to keep in mind:

- Be nice to the ex when you meet them.
- It is also a good thing to not compare yourself with the ex. Remember, if your partner wanted a twin of the ex; they would have not been with you!
- If it has been an amicable separation, it is possible that your partner and their ex might get into discussing something you have no clue about.
- It is perfectly fine. You need to tell yourself that they have been together longer than you two as a couple.
- Don't pick up a fight later as it doesn't do anybody any good. You will lose some brownie points you may have accumulated.
- It's normal to be jealous but don't act out in public about it; just sit through it with a smile on your face—that says a lot about you as a person.

*Shreya Poddar, Psychologist*

they will always be the first priority, not you, so be prepared. "Never, never ask them to choose between their kids and you," advises Poddar.

### Understand a few odd days

"In one case, Suhail found Sharda

very uncommunicative during festivals or certain days in year which had special memories for her of her ex-husband. Initially, he didn't understand. But once she mentioned it to him, he handled it sensitively," reveals Malini.

Having a partner who is going through or has gone through divorce, they may feel low and down, during specific days which reminds them of their ex-partner or their memories and you'll have to handle this sensitively and unconditionally. "You may be the second person in their life and craving for that first love situation or wanting them to be exclusively yours may not always be possible."

### At a later stage

In case you are contemplating marriage, do a recap with yourself. Poddar feels, "If you have knowingly chosen to date a person going through a divorce, it is a choice you have made. The effects could be that as your partner is going through a divorce they will be really emotional and would need a shoulder to cry on. If you are looking for excitement and fun times during this period you may not get it and if you nag about that, you might come across as insensitive. You will have to be a giver in the initial part of the relationship so think twice before committing to anything. Re-evaluate your need and expectations." ❖