

Out of the Frying Pan and into the Fire

By April Westfall, Ph.D.

Remarriages that occur soon after the dissolution of the last marriage – less than a year after separation from the previous spouse – are apt to conclude in a similar way, namely, in a divorce. What would lead someone to behave in such a foolhardy manner after so recently going through the sobering ordeal of divorce: several factors may account for such imprudent action. The person may attempt to escape the loneliness of his or her newly appointed single state, including the isolation from former friends and exclusion from social gatherings that often accompanies such a single status. Sometimes it is the burden of single parenting that provides the impetus to partner again so soon. Alternatively, there may have been several years of marital unhappiness leading up to the final decision to divorce, and the person is interested in making up for lost time after squandering precious years in this sorry situation. If the new spouse happens also to have been the extramarital partner in an ongoing affair, there may be the added pressure from this person to make good on an earlier promise of marriage.

The desire to get on with one's life is surely understandable, as is the feeling of exhilaration that accompanies the state of

being “in love” again after years of numbing conflict or deadly indifference in the earlier marriage. Unfortunately, this all too human state may not lead to the best choice for a lasting marital partner, as seen so clearly once the initial headlines of romance has worn off. Relationships entered into soon after separations are apt to compensate for precious deficits in the marriage. Although not wrong in itself, the person may bring a blind eye to or otherwise minimize potential problems along the way. Even when the person has known the partner for several years, and the underlying connection between the pair appears more solid, a decision to remarry so soon after divorce may create hardship for other friends and family. Parents and children may feel pressured to embrace the new spouse wholeheartedly at a time when they are still grieving over the loss of the former family. In this instance, they may feel resentful and respond more antagonistically toward the new partner than they would have if allowed a longer grace period. Greater sensitivity on the part of the new couple to the needs of other family members at this time is apt to result in more support from them over the long term.

