

Divorce Isn't Always The Answer To Unhappiness

BY VAL FARMER

If you are in a bad marriage, you've got two choices, right? Stay married and be miserable or get a divorce and be happy. Wrong!

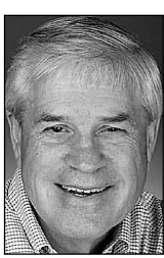
A study conducted by a team of leading family scholars headed by University of Chicago sociologist Linda Waite found no evidence that unhappily married adults who divorced were typically any happier than unhappily married people who stayed married.

Being unhappy is not forever. Divorce did not typically reduce symptoms of depression, raise self-esteem, or increase a sense of mastery. This was true even after taking into account race, age, gender, and income. Even unhappy spouses who had divorced and remarried were no happier on average than those who stayed married.

Almost three-quarters of those who divorced reported themselves as being happy five years earlier. Their unhappiness and decision to divorce wasn't based on long-standing marriage problems. This group showed the most dramatic declines in happiness and well-being compared to those who stayed married.

There was one exception. Twenty one percent of people who divorce because of a physically violent relationship reported more relief, fewer symptoms of depression and increases in happiness after divorce. Also couples who stayed together despite high conflict and domestic violence were less likely to be happy five years later.

Why doesn't divorce typically make adults happier? While eliminating some stresses and sources of potential harm, divorce may create oth-



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Why do unhappy marriages get happier? The researchers conducted focus group interviews with formerly unhappy husbands and wives who had turned their marriages around. They found that many currently happily married spouses have had extended periods of marital unhappiness, often for quite serious reasons - alcoholism, infidelity, verbal abuse, emotional neglect, depression, illness, and work reversals.

Their reasons for unhappiness were lumped into three categories.

- The first and most common reason was that marriages become unhappy due to outside pressures and stress. The relationship wasn't seen as the cause of problems but suffered as a result.
- The second category was called "men behaving badly." Men were more inclined to violate basic norms of family behavior or were more unsupportive of family commitments.
- The third reason was due to chronic conflict, poor communications and emotional neglect.

ers as well. The decision to divorce sets in motion a large number of processes and events over which the individual has little control. These include the response of one's spouse to divorce; the reactions of children; potential disappointments and aggravation in custody, child support, and visitation orders; new financial or health stresses for one or both parents; and new relationships or marriages.

Why did their marriages turn around? The focus groups gave three main answers: commitment, working on marriage problems and personal change.

Commitment. With commitment, the most common story couples reported to researchers, marriages got happier not because partners resolved problems, but because they stubbornly outlasted them. With the passage of time many sources of conflict and distress eased: financial problems, job reversals, depression, child problems, even infidelity.

In the focus groups, spouses whose marriages had turned around usually had a low opinion of the benefits of divorce. They had friends and family members who supported the importance of staying married.

Because of this intense commitment to marriage, these couples invested great effort in enduring or overcoming problems in their relationships. They minimized the importance of difficulties they couldn't resolve and actively worked to downplay the attractiveness of alternatives.

Working on marriage problems. Spouses shared stories of actively working to solve problems, change behavior, or improve communication. When the problem was solved, the marriage got happier. They improved their marriages by having dates or finding ways to spending more time together, enlisting the help and advice of their relatives or in-laws, consulting clergy or secular counselors, or threatening divorce and consulting attorneys.

Wives especially enlisted the help of others to help change their husband's bad behavior. Men

changed in an effort to improve the happiness and well being of their wives and children.

Personal change. These marriages didn't seem to change much. Formerly unhappy spouses told how they found alternative ways to improve their own happiness and build a good and happy life despite a mediocre marriage. They reported investing in their own careers, interests and friendships outside of marriage.

Were the marriages that ended in divorce much worse than those that did not?

There is some evidence for this point of view. Unhappy spouses who divorced reported more conflict and were about twice as likely to report violence in their marriage than unhappy spouses who stayed married. However, marital violence occurred in only a minority of unhappy marriages. Only 21 percent of unhappy spouses who divorced reported husband-to-wife violence, compared to nine percent of unhappy spouses who stayed married.

Implications of these findings. Marriages are not happy or unhappy - spouses are. With the exception of marriages with a history of high conflict and domestic violence, unhappy spouses don't stay unhappy when there is commitment, a willingness to work at marriage, or each spouse takes charge of his or her own happiness. If you think divorce is an answer to unhappiness, think again.

For more information on marriage, visit Val Farmer's website at www.valfarmer.com.

Val Farmer is a clinical psychologist specializing in family business consultation and mediation with farm families. He lives in Wildwood, Missouri and can be contacted through his website. This column is sponsored by Lewis & Clark Behavioral Health.

Oceans Of Fun At The Yankton Public Library

BY KATHY JACOBS
Yankton Public Library

What has a friendly smile, two very tired feet, and is exhausted when she goes home from work each night? Give up? It's a Library Lady!! Our summer reading program is in full swing and that's what keeps the Library Ladies so busy! Patrons are here from opening until closing every day, and we love it! Here are some statistics from our first two weeks of the program, June 7-19:

- 570 people are registered and actively participating in our summer program
- 17 programs were held
- 906 children attended our programs
- 240 adults attended our programs
- 7,495 items were checked out
- 1,664 computer uses have been recorded
- 7,941 people walked through our doors

Wow! We are so excited about these stats! They are the reason that we are all going home very tired every night, but we still have smiles on our faces and are excited that both children and adults are having so much fun as they read and participate in our programs.

In July, we will continue with story hours on Monday evenings as well as Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Each story time is different, so you can attend all three and hear different stories and songs and make a new craft each time. Every Tuesday is family movie night and Fridays are design and game days.

Special presentations during July include water safety, a KCAU weather personality, a cheerleading workshop, the Great Plains Zoo Mobile, "Superhero Movies & You," Missouri National Recreational River, and the fish hatchery. We'll have a second "Pirate Week" when we welcome all



JACOBS

pirates to "walk the plank" to the library! We will close our summer festivities by participating in the Great Day of Play on July 31. That is also the last day that the Coral Read Store will be open so you will want to make sure that you gather your book bucks and spend them at the store prior to Saturday, July 31.

It's not too late to register and get started reading and attending activities. Our program runs through the end of July. We'd love to have you join if you haven't already done so.

Once again, thanks to those businesses, organizations and individuals who are helping to make our program a success through your donations. Both the library and our readers appreciate your support. All who enter the library can see our donor list on the east entry bulletin board.

Readers Anonymous will discuss The Birth House by Ami McKay on July 13. This club, which is always open to new members, meets the second Tuesday of each month, at the library, at 1 p.m.

The evening book club meets the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. On July 20, they will discuss The Year of Fog by Michelle Richmond.

Our patrons were extremely generous during our Food for Fines week. In June, we collected 54 jars of peanut butter and 33 jars of jelly for the Contact Center. Thanks! During July 10-17, we will collect ketchup, mustard and mayo/Miracle Whip.

If you are planning a trip to Ireland, Spain or Italy, you might want to check out our newly catalogued books from the Eyewitness Travel Series entitled Back Roads Ireland, Back Roads Spain and Back Roads Italy. They have great information on all of the countries' regions, including tidbits that will help you have a unique experience at local attractions.

Inaugural Buhler Scholar At The U Named

VERMILLION — An endowment established by Walter A. and Lucy Yoshioka Buhler will provide one full scholarship opportunity for a College of Fine Arts student at The University of South Dakota.

Lacey Semansky of Sioux Falls, S.D., a recent graduate of Sioux Falls Lincoln High School, is the inaugural recipient of the 2010 Walter A. and Lucy Yoshioka Buhler Endowed Scholarship at USD. As a Buhler Scholar, Semansky will receive an academic award that provides full in-state tuition and fees and an international study abroad opportunity as long as she maintains qualifications for the scholarship.

One Buhler Scholar will be awarded each year alternating between a student enrolled in the College of Fine Arts and the Beacom School of Business. Semansky is an incoming USD freshman who will major in music this fall. In addition to academic performance, the Buhler Scholarship is renewable for a maximum of four years as long as the recipient meets the guidelines

established by the endowment, including a 3.5 GPA and demonstrating an ongoing financial need to remain eligible for scholarship support.

For more information about the Walter A. and Lucy Yoshioka Buhler Endowed Scholarship, please contact Dr. Larry Schou, Dean of the College of Fine Arts, via e-mail at Larry.Schou@usd.edu or call (605) 677-5713.

We will soon start receiving the following "July Blockbusters": Glass Rainbow by James Lee Burke. Whispers by John Connolly. Live to Tell by Lisa Gardner. Ice Cold by Tess Gerritsen. Island by Elin Hilderbrand. They're Watching by Greg Andrew Hurwitz. As Husbands Go by Susan Isaacs. Queen of the Night by J.A. Jance. Shadow Zone by Iris Johanssen. Damaged by Alex Kava. Dragongirl by Todd McCaffrey. Corduroy Mansions by Alexander McCall Smith. Rules of Betrayal by Christopher Reich. Search by Nora Roberts. Rembrandt Affair by Daniel Silva. Betrayed by Robert Tanenbaum, and Fly Away Home by Jennifer Weiner.

Due to the Fourth of July holiday, Friends of the Library will have a book sale on July 3. However, join them on August 7, between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., to shop at their monthly sale. They have received some great donations of both hardcover and paperback bestsellers this past month. As always, they continue to accept donations of gently used books to stock their shelves. The Friends' sale is the first Saturday of each month.

Did you know that in 2009, 50,937 adult fiction books and 25,119 adult nonfiction books were checked out, for a total of 76,056 adult books checked out at the Yankton Community Library?

You can reach the library at 605-668-5275 or e-mail me at kjacobs@sdln.net. View us online at <http://www.yanktonsd.org/yankton/library/index.php>.

VISITING HOURS: Safely Celebrate The Fourth Of July

BY MICHAEL SCHURRER, MD
ASHH Emergency Department
Medical Director



Schurrer

As we celebrate the Fourth of July, one of the aspects of this holiday we all need to keep in the front of our minds is fireworks safety. Every year, we see an increase in burns in the Emergency Department from accidents with fireworks - and there are several more that occur annually that don't warrant emergency attention, but are still highly preventable.

To help you celebrate safely this Fourth of July, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the National Council on Fireworks Safety have offered the following safety tips:

- Always read and follow label directions.
- Have an adult present.
- Buy from reliable sellers.
- Use outdoors only.
- Always have water handy (a garden hose and a bucket).
- Never experiment or make your own fireworks.

- Light only one firework at a time.
- Never re-light a "dud" firework (wait 15 to 20 minutes and then soak it in a bucket of water).
- Never give fireworks to small children.
- If necessary, store fireworks in a cool, dry place.
- Dispose of fireworks properly by soaking them in water and then disposing of them in your trashcan.
- Never throw or point fireworks at other people.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Never shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.
- The shooter should always wear eye protection and never have any part of the body over the firework.
- Stay away from illegal explosives.

It is extremely important to know the difference between a legal consumer firework and a dangerous explosive device. Items such as M-80s, M-100s and blockbusters are not fireworks, they are federally-banned explosives that can cause serious injury or even death. Although I've treated numerous injuries caused by illegal fireworks over the years, the most common injuries come from legal fireworks used in an unsafe manner - often with children who weren't supervised while playing with the fireworks.

It's important for parents to know that fireworks should NEVER be given to young children without close, adult supervision. Even sparklers can cause severe burns if not used properly.

We hope you have a safe, enjoyable Fourth of July this year and every year.

This weekly column is produced by the public relations office at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital to promote healthy lifestyles and provide useful medical information to our community.

Chamber, Library Closed For Holiday

The Yankton Chamber & Visitors Center will be closed July 2-5 in observance of the Fourth of July holiday. Normal office hours will resume July 6. Also, the Yankton Community Library will close at 5 p.m. Saturday, July 3, and will be closed July 4-5 in honor of the Independence Day holiday. The library will reopen at 10 a.m. Tuesday, July 6.

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50th Wedding Anniversary



Mr. and Mrs. Ervin Ptak

Ervin and Jean (Koupal) Ptak will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on July 2, 2010 with an open house from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at The Beer Garden in Menno, SD. All friends and relatives of the couple are invited to attend.

The couple has 4 children: Dan (Rhonda) Ptak, Allen, TX; Sally O'Borsky (Mike), Buffalo, MN; Gary (Amy) Ptak, Sioux Falls, SD; and Kevin (Kristen) Ptak, Prior Lake, MN. They also have 12 grandchildren.

Their family is requesting a card shower in their honor. Cards may be sent to: Box 52, 212 Pearl St., Menno, SD 57045.

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