

“You can always start over!”

When Deb Odell’s husband left her after 30 years of marriage, she didn’t know how she’d go on. Then she learned about something called Daisy Camp, and not only has she survived, but she’s living—and loving—every minute of her life!

As her husband spoke, Deb Odell’s heart pounded. Her head throbbed. She struggled to breathe.

The things he was saying . . . “I’m not happy. I’m not in love with you anymore.” He can’t mean it! Deb trembled.

Just four nights earlier, they’d gone out for a romantic dinner to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary, toasting to 30 more.

Yet now, Deb watched in disbelief as her husband packed a bag and walked out of their Anoka, Minnesota, house—walked out on her.

Oh, God, Deb gasped, tears welling in her eyes. How will I go on alone?

Deb had always considered herself happily married. In fact, after three decades together, she thought of her marriage like a wonderful old quilt: comforting, warm, a patchwork of love.

And she’d assumed her husband was as content as she was. But now he was telling Deb that he was unhappy; that he had been for some time.

“We could have talked!” Deb stammered. “We still can,” she blurted. “Let’s go for counseling.” “I just want out,” he replied.

He doesn’t even want to *try*, Deb sobbed. And, like a punch in the stomach, it hit her: He doesn’t love me anymore!

Lost in sadness

Heartbroken and ashamed, Deb wanted to hide from the world. But she needed her paycheck now more than ever. So she pushed herself to go to work. But the moment she got home, she’d crawl into bed and cry.

She couldn’t sleep; she couldn’t eat. Over the next several weeks, she lost 30 pounds.

“You need to take care of yourself,” concerned family and friends told her.

Deb knew they were right. She saw how rundown she looked. And so—hearing that exercise gives you a rush of endorphins, feel-good hormones—she dragged herself to the gym.

One day while working out, a woman came up to her and said, “I’ve seen you before, and wow, you’ve lost a lot of weight! What’s your secret?”

Without thinking, Deb blurted, “Just have your husband leave you.”

“Oh,” the woman stammered, embarrassed, “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Deb said.

But it wasn’t; the sadness in her voice made that clear. And later, as she left, the desk clerk handed Deb a note, explaining that another member had left it for her.

I overheard you talking and thought you might find this helpful, Deb read. *DaisyCampForYou.com.*

Curious, Deb logged on to the website as soon as she got home.

Named after the flower that symbolizes “new beginnings,” Daisy Camp was a retreat for women going through divorce, she learned. A place where they could learn “survival tips” from others who’d already endured the painful process.

And it was more than just emotional support: the campers also received expert advice about legal, financial and custody matters—all things Deb knew little about.

Whoever you are who wrote this note, thank you, Deb thought. And calling Daisy Camp, she booked a session.

Deb’s new beginning

Two weeks later, Deb headed to camp, actually a nice hotel in a nearby city. And there, she met 34 other women in the midst of divorce. Women whose husbands had walked out on them, too. Women who’d been hurt so badly, they felt they had no choice but to leave. Women desperate to go on but not sure how.

At first, as they introduced themselves, Deb’s stomach was in knots. But as they sat with counselors in a group therapy session, she felt her heart going out to these other women.

“My husband cheated on me,” several said.

“He left me with nothing,” another whispered through tears. And when Deb worked up the courage to admit, “I feel like a loser,” so many others nodded in understanding.

Over the next few days, Deb and the other women met with life coaches. She attended seminars on the financial nuts and bolts of divorce and the ABCs of real estate—every imaginable aspect of divorce.

But what inspired Deb most were the women who shared their stories of survival.

“I didn’t know how I’d support my kids at first,” one said. Then, after her divorce, she’d gone back to school—something she’d always

Did you know?
A recent poll reveals that three out of five American women report themselves as “happier than ever” five years after getting divorced!



“This is my ‘me’ time—and it’s a great time!” says Deb, with her new dog, Toby.

dreamed of—and was now earning more than her ex-husband!

“I didn’t think anyone could ever love me again,” another admitted. “But now I’m remarried to a great guy!”

Over and over, tears spilled down Deb’s cheeks. These women did it, she thought. They found the strength to pick up the pieces of their broken hearts and move on.

And by the time she went home, Deb believed she could, too. It won’t be easy, she knew. But *I can start over.*

Deb loved her house and had feared she’d have to sell it. But with advice she learned at Daisy Camp, she refinanced and bought out her ex!

Then, she transformed the bathroom into a feminine spa retreat. And on the living room wall, she hung a plaque that read: *Take pride in how far you’ve come and have faith in how far you can go.*

In fact, a year later, Deb had come so far she decided to go back to Daisy Camp—as a speaker!

“I went through some dark days,” she confided to a group of “campers.” “But I came out on the bright side, and you will, too.”

Today, Deb couldn’t be happier. “Daisy Camp showed me that just because my marriage was over didn’t mean my life was,” she says. “And now I’m living again and loving every minute!”

—Kathy Fitzpatrick



Is someone you love getting divorced?

Of course she’s hurting. But you can make this time a little easier by:

☑ **Just listening.** No one has all the answers. So try to resist offering advice. Instead, let her pour out her feelings to you. “Think *Sex and the City*,” says therapist Deb King, Ph.D. “That’s true friendship.”

☑ **Giving her a boost.** Her self-esteem is likely at a low, so remind her how great she is by saying something like, “You’re handling this with such grace.” Your words can provide hope.

☑ **Getting her out.** Invite her to dinner. Treat her to a manicure. It’ll help her forget the bad news.