

Divorce Camp: This Weekend Retreat, Actually Called 'Daisy Camp' to Signify a Fresh Start, is Intended As a Place Where Those in the Throes Can Learn From Ones Who Have Gone Before.

By Kay Harvey, Pioneer Press, St. Paul, Minn.

Mar. 25--It was a simple divorce, Jennifer Morris says. No kids. No custody battle. Not even a fight over who got what stuff.

"Even in my simple situation, it was overwhelming," Morris says of the divorce experience. She didn't feel OK. She found the legal process mind-boggling. She thought she had no friends she could talk with about what was happening. And in a divorce group at her church, she heard stories of people struggling in many other ways.

Next weekend (Friday-April 2), she will host a retreat that puts resources for people in the throes of divorce under one roof. The event is her brainchild, and she calls it the Daisy Camp.

"D is for divorce. D is for daisy," she explains. "Who would want to go to Divorce Camp?"

Like a daisy, divorce can signal a fresh start, she says. The retreat is designed to move that process along. The idea for a divorce retreat came to her after months on "a meandering journey," she says. "There are plenty of wedding-planning kits out there," says Morris, a former event planner who now works as a Realtor. But she knew of nothing that zeroes in on untying the knot.

Her husband asked for the divorce, finalized eight months ago.

"At first, I felt I was wearing a big 'D' on my forehead," she says. "The emotional part is very heavy. I was really just putting one foot in front of the other to get through the day."

The next step was seeking out services in what felt to her like foreign territory. Her divorce lawyer spoke legalese, she says. Morris learned there were many approaches to divorce, such as mediation and collaboration, along with the traditional route she and her ex-husband took. But she avoided asking many questions to keep her billable minutes under control.

In the church divorce group, she learned about other complexities, such as child custody and child support. She learned how divorce can take a toll on people's health. And she saw how divorce displaces family members who must figure out where to live and what those options could be. Another thing happened in the group. She made friends. "Finding people in the same boat was big," she says.

One day she asked herself, "What would really have helped me?" She forged ahead to contact experts with answers to questions she wishes she'd known enough to ask.

Several of them will speak at the weekend retreat in Belle Plaine. The program features topics ranging from nutrition, health and sexuality to legal school 101, custody and child support and creative home ownership.

"Knowledge is power," Morris says. "The more you know ahead of time, the more comfortable you'll be."

Other sessions are designed to inspire passion, purpose, possibilities and creating your "ever-expanding life." That describes the life she's living now, says Morris, 36, of Eden Prairie.

A year ago, she says, she wouldn't have believed it. Along with selling houses and creating a retreat, she does volunteer work, asks more questions than before and explores more adventurous possibilities.

"Divorce isn't the end of the world. I tell people, 'You're going to be OK,' " she says excitedly, shaking two fists rimmed by the red power suit she's wearing.

"When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. That's what I'm doing."

Kay Harvey can be reached at kharvey@pioneerpress.com or 651-228-5468. The retreat

What: "Daisy Camp for You: For Your Ever-Expanding Life," a retreat for women and men considering divorce, in the process or recently divorced.

When: 4 p.m. Friday to 1 p.m. April 2.

Where: AmericInn Lodge and Suites, Belle Plaine, Minn.

Cost: \$125 for sessions and meals; \$125 for two nights' lodging.

Topics: Legal issues, custody and child support, home ownership, finances, health, personal inspiration. Weekend includes relaxation and leisure activities.

For information or to register: Go to www.DaisyCampForYou.com, call 952-937-8600 or send an e-mail to Jennifer@DaisyCampForYou.com. The Web site also contains links to topic-related resources.

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