

# Advice from the Trenches: Dealing with the new wife

Dear C and Dr. B;

I've been divorced for about 20 years now. It was totally demoralizing - he left me for another woman. I don't ever want to see him again, especially not with his new wife.

My daughter has come to her own understanding with Dad and includes him in most milestone events and holidays. He always brings his wife. My daughter says they are always decent and respectful to her, so I accept her decision. But there's no way in hell I will ever sit through an event with the two of them.

The problem now is that I'm starting to realize that this is isolating me over time. I've dated, but I can't trust another man enough to form a relationship. I've been with men who were dumped by their partners too - you'd think we'd be able to understand each other, but two neurotics usually just make for a neurotic mess.

I want to get past my suspicion and distrust. But I just can't. Talking to a therapist just makes me feel like I'm a job on their schedule. I just can't get into it.

I know I have to do something or I'll wind up like my spinster sister who lives with her cat and bitches at everyone. Help! - Constance

C says: If you are at the point where you can see that your behavior is isolating you, then you're ready to do something about it, Constance. Here are some tips that will make it easier.

First, there's no reason you should face down your ex alone. He has it easy - he always comes with his partner to support him. Walking in alone sucks. Bring a friend and he won't have you at an unfair advantage. If you don't have a male date, bring a girlfriend. Then let them guess. It's fun.

Here's a great secret for keeping it together when you feel vulnerable: Deliberately put a warm smile on your face, even if you have to make yourself do it, and your mood will immediately brighten. Things will seem easier to handle. There is scientific research to back this up! The facial muscular activity that produces a smile mysteriously increases levels of dopamine and serotonin, our feel-good hormones. Try it out in front of a mirror and see for yourself. It's like wearing a Happy Face that tells everyone that you're a nice person to be around and you feel good about yourself.

There isn't a human being on the face of this earth who wouldn't rather hide in an empty garbage can than get seated across from an ex and new partner at a dinner party. But girl - if you can look them both in the face and just smile back - then you can move on.

Dr. B says: When you experience a break up or the loss of a loved one, there is serious oxytocin withdrawal. We call this grief, and it can feel like heroin withdrawal. It can feel like you are dying. People often focus this loss into anger or blame because it's less painful to deal with; but a state like this can go on forever. Letting go of the anger and blame will rekindle the loss and sorrow, but that seldom lasts. Time may seem to drag on forever with sorrow...but life stops under anger.

We can't control life, but that's what you are trying to do. It turns life into a win-lose game; but the way you are playing, he's already won. You are living your life with a competitive philosophy, it's why many couples break up - one of them is trying to make things perfect and makes sacrifices for the other. The partner on the receiving end starts feeling like they're living in a cage. They often escape.

You have to let go and learn to go with the flow or you will grow old alone. If you want to control life there really can't be anyone else in it. Real people are full of messy imperfections..

The crazy thing is that husbands often leave one marriage only to pair off with another version of the wife they just left. By the time everyone gets old, the ex-wife and new wife might find they have a lot in common. They might even become best friends.

*You can visit Dr. B's blog at [drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com](http://drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com)*