

Coping with Living Alone After a Separation

Objective

To identify ways to cope with living alone following separation and divorce.

What to Know

One major adjustment following divorce or separation is learning to live alone again. It takes time to adjust to living alone and managing loneliness. Perhaps the transition will be easy, or it might take months before your new place feels like home. Here are some tips for living alone after a divorce or separation.

Enjoy quiet time to yourself. Learn how to enjoy quiet time alone. Use this time to engage in a pleasurable solo activity, like watching a movie, solving a puzzle, journaling, or other activities. Living alone might involve extended periods of silence. Embrace the quiet. Research has shown that silence is essential for brain health. Just an hour of silence replenishes your cognitive resources, relieves stress, and helps you problem-solve.

Establish a routine. You might not be used to living your life by a schedule, but it is a helpful when you live alone. Being on your own involves freedom, but that can lead to neglecting certain parts of your life. Putting things off means tasks pile up, and those projects, errands, and duties will impact your mental health. So, write down all the tasks and chores you need to complete each week and designate a time and day for each.

Make your bed each day. This is an essential first step in your new daily routine, and you will start your day feeling like you accomplished one small task.

Avoid planning for what “might” happen. First, focus on necessities and what you need in your new home. Initially, try not to spend a lot of money on expensive furniture or items you might not need. Identify what living alone is like and adjust accordingly.

Learn to cook (if you do not already know how). You might be tempted to frequently eat out if you live alone. Learn how to make meals for a single person. You might watch cooking shows or search online for delicious recipes for one.

Say “yes” more often. You might be tempted to say “no” when people make requests for your time, or when you are asked to do things you do not really want to do. Start saying “yes” to events that get you out of the house.

Get social. Ask friends to stop by to see your new home or meet with co-workers for lunch. Volunteer, get a side job, exercise, join a local club, and put yourself in situations that require you to socialize.

Learn about yourself again. Identify ways you can improve yourself. Try a hobby you put off because you never had enough time. Start with something simple like reading, drawing, DIY hobbies, or even learning an instrument.

What else can you do to cope with living alone?

It will take time to get used to the added responsibilities, the quiet, and the sudden absence of your family. But it will get easier over time. This worksheet will help you identify ways to cope.

What to Do

First, answer the following questions.

What are some activities you can do to enjoy and appreciate quiet time?

Write down all the tasks and chores you need to complete each week, like food shopping, cleaning your home, or paying bills, and designate a time and day to do each task.

What are some necessities you need in your new home?

What are some things you can do for self-improvement?

What are some hobbies or other activities you put off doing when you were married? Are you interested in pursuing them now? Why or why not?

Use the following chart for the next two weeks. Write down the date and one thing you did each day to cope with living alone. Note whether you made your bed that day and if you followed your routine.

| Date | Activity | Made your bed? Y / N | Followed routine? Y / N |
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Did this activity help you begin to cope with living alone? Why or why not?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this activity?
