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Relational Shifts: A Family Doesn't Have To End Because A Marriage Does

by Julie Rappaport and Lee Liberman

from the August 2006 issue

The newest cyberspace place to visit if you are contemplating or involved in Relational ShiftsSM is www.E-ZineDivorce.com, co-authored by us -- a divorced couple, along with our child. We've created a new book and website to offer families a place to turn to during their shift. With more than 50 percent of marriages ending in divorce, this website monthly magazine (e-zine) and e-book are quite timely.

We coined the term Relational ShiftsSM in an effort to describe a defined relationship becoming something else. New parents are no longer newlyweds, refugees no longer have a homeland and the jobless no longer have "security." Our attachments to those definitions cloud our clarity of the truth that those defined relationships will shift when experienced from another perspective.

Divorce is a perfect analogy of this concept. Divorce is generally viewed as something horrible that happens to a family, but we have created a better family through divorce. The website offers a smorgasbord of resources, articles, advice and a forum to share personal stories of empowerment to others going through the same situations, plus more.

Relationships are part of our overall health. Each affects the other.

Relationships are made up of habits -- good ones and not-so-good ones. Relationships are with people, places, possessions, ideas and beliefs, situations, habits and even life, itself. As relationships grow, we acquire new habits that mingle with or diverge from our old, established habits. Life is described by our relationships. Just listen to any eulogy.

Relationships help us evolve. As our relationships evolve, so then do we, and the relationship shifts from what it was to something else. Sometimes relationships evolve and turn sour or putrid; a nourishing fruit eventually will rot. The natural suffering that life offers begins at birth, when to stay in that warm, quiet, safe womb beyond the right time would eventually shift the womb to a tomb.

Ruth Kaiser explains "*refuah schleima*" (as found in all Hebrew get-well cards) means not just "get well" physically, but *complete healing*: mentally, emotionally, spiritually, socially, sexually, economically...not just healing the components of the body, but also of the soul and of our lives. Many traditions and languages offer a similar phrase of well-being on all levels.

Many of us suffer as we witness the inevitable shifts in our relationships with our bodies, our capabilities, our memories, our loved ones, our ideologies, our perspectives. Accepting that our perspectives and relationships will change, or shift, (as we experience life from different longitudes or latitudes, heights and depths, achievements and failures,) lessens the stress in our lives when inevitable shifts occur.

Yoga teaches the theory of non-attachment to ease suffering when the inevitable shift of a life happens. But Yoga, like life, is *all practice*, and practices, which are habits, ebb and flow.

For ways to not only survive, but thrive, www.e-zinedivorce.com is not about purporting divorce, but about supporting families through their Relational Shifts. Divorce is a dissolution of a contract, but its Relational Shifts are found on every level of our lives: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, sexual, economical, familial and communal, just to name a few.

Divorce is a perfect example of a Relational Shift, and in the book it is compared to a major LIFE SURGERY. Like surgery, shifting can help the patient (relationship) survive and live with quality of life, or, if haphazardly done, it can cripple or even kill the patient (relationship). Much of the success depends on the patient's overall health coming into surgery.

When our relationships suffer, it manifests itself in some form in our health. Our issues are in our tissues. When our health suffers enough, it affects those relationships that define our life. Conscientiously cultivating our relationships reinforces tending to our health.

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On our website, we offer an excerpt of our upcoming book, a radio interview with us and a link to our production company, which will offer podcasts of a reality-based show regarding a divorced family becoming a better family, called "Abnormally Normal." The pilot episode, which will be available in September, addresses how the couple came to marry and how they came to divorce. We will begin production of a feature-length film of our personal story in 2007, which also will be available by podcast. Podcasting allows independent film producers the ability to get their work out without having to market to major distributors. It is the wave of the future in cyberspace and will change the way people choose their programming and entertainment.

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