

Divorce, Blended Families, and Cohabitation

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the topic of divorce and other types of relationships, through the definition and discussion of:

1. Causes of Divorce
2. Blended Families
3. Cohabitation

1. CAUSES OF DIVORCE

The United States has the highest **divorce** rate in the world. Why is this? Why do people divorce so much? Social scientists have come up with six general reasons as to why, though this is not an exhaustive list and not everybody definitively divorces for these six reasons.

- *Individualism:* People are increasingly focused on themselves. They are primarily concerned with their own careers, happiness, and lives, and these things come first. Secondly, they consider whether or not their partner is supportive of their goals, which is still an individualistic viewpoint. They ask themselves, “Does my partner fit with my own vision of personal happiness?” This is a relatively new luxury, this individualistic way to look at the world. Nonetheless, American society is a culture of individualism, so people tend to look at the world in terms of ‘me first.’
- *Romance fades:* The excitement of a new relationship wanes over time as people become familiar with each other. At the same time, the possibility of a new relationship is exciting, which can cause you to want to leave your current relationship. Perhaps some of you have experienced this in your life.
- *Women are less dependent:* Women have become less dependent on men economically. Because of this, women can financially afford to leave the marriage and support themselves if the marriage is bad. In the past, if women were more financially dependent on men, they might be trapped in an abusive relationship because they didn't really have another outlet. If they went out on their own, it would be very difficult for them.



THINK ABOUT IT

Why are women less dependent on men economically? Today, women are much more career-oriented. They have many more opportunities for lucrative careers than they did in the past.

Have you seen articles or books about the rise of women and the demise of men? Women are figuring out how to be more amenable to the new service economy than men, so are now succeeding in ways that historically they have not. Therefore, this enables women to leave men and bad relationships if they need to.

- *Stress:* Life is stressful, and so are relationships. Both partners are often working outside of the home and this puts a lot of demands on time, especially when you factor in children as well. You're dealing with multiple roles and statuses all at the same time. You could be wife, mother, and career-oriented, and these various statuses have roles attached to them that make it difficult to juggle all of these roles, so it is difficult to add romance into the mix and have it thrive.
- *Divorce is less stigmatized:* Divorce is less culturally stigmatized than in previous times. American culture supports divorce more so now than it did in the past.

➡ **EXAMPLE** You see your neighbor's situation and say to yourself, "Jerry got a divorce and now he's happy. Why can't I?" Society answers that you can. Divorce becomes more culturally accepted in this way, and divorce begets more divorce.

- *Divorce is easy to get:* Divorces are much easier legally to get than they were in the past. You no longer have to prove to an institutional bureaucratic board that your partner is cheating or abusive. In most states, you can get a divorce simply because you want one, so divorce has become much more easy to obtain.



TERM TO KNOW

Causes of Divorce

Though not exhaustive, social scientists identify six general reasons particular people divorce: 1) Individualism; 2) Romantic Love Fades; 3) Women are Less Dependent on Men; 4) Stress; 5) Divorce is More Culturally Accepted; 6) Divorces are Easier to Obtain Legally.

2. BLENDED FAMILIES

Often when people divorce, they remarry. Statistics show that three out of four people who divorce will remarry, and often within a short period of time, about four years. If children are involved in this process, it can often result in what is called a **blended family**, or a family composed of biological relationships and step relationships.

➡ **EXAMPLE** If your mother marries a new man after your parents get divorced, you might now have a blended family composed of your mom (biological relationship), your stepfather (step relationship), and any siblings you might have, both biological and new step siblings. It's an amalgamation of step and biological relationships.



TERM TO KNOW

Blended Families

Families composed of children and some combination of biological and step-parents.

3. COHABITATION

Cohabitation is another phenomenon which occurs when two non-married adults live together as part of a romantic relationship. For instance, two people who share a house or apartment together for various reasons as a result of their romantic union are cohabitating. They're not married, they're just choosing to cohabitate, or live together.



DID YOU KNOW

Certain psychiatrists have made a case against cohabitation, arguing that it can lead to divorce later on, even common opinion believes to the contrary--that if you live together as a trial, then you'll know if you want to get married or not, avoiding divorce down the road.

These psychiatrists, however, argue that what actually happens is that younger people cohabitate, thinking it's a sure path to a happy marriage, but instead potentially slide into a relationship that they don't necessarily want and compromise themselves, and eventually end up with a divorce.



TERM TO KNOW

Cohabitation

When two adults occupy the same dwelling as part of a romantic relationship (i.e. living together).



SUMMARY

Today you learned about **causes of divorce**, **blended families**, and **cohabitation**.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



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