



Ep. 147 - Guilt



WITH JEFF WILSON & DOREEN YAFFA

Jeff 00:00

Hello everybody out there. Today we're gonna be talking about how guilt can show up in divorce, and how it can complicate the process. So if you're ready, let's get started.

Doreen 00:21

Are you ready to create a life that's better than ever before? We are Doreen Yaffa and Jeff Wilson and we are here to give you the strategies you need to create the life after divorce that you deserve and desire. As partners both in marriage and coaching, we use our expertise as well as our own personal experiences to help you make the next chapter of your life the best chapter.

Jeff 00:51

Hello Doreen.

Doreen 00:52

Hey, Jeff.

Jeff 00:53

How are ya?

Doreen 00:54

Good, good. So I guess you know, summer is here and the kids are almost out of school.

Jeff 00:59

Yeah. 97 degrees yesterday.

Doreen 01:01

Yeah. Well, hello, welcome to -

Jeff 01:03

It's not even June yet.

Doreen 01:05

It's okay. This is like this almost every year.

Jeff 01:07

I'm not complaining. I love the heat. Give me the heat over you know, 30 degrees below zero.

Doreen 01:13

Absolutely. But you know, it's so funny because, yeah, it's like, I guess you know, it's hot in the summer.

Jeff 01:24

Yeah, it is. And it's hot, almost like every summer. Everybody's, no, it's hot. Because of course it is. It's supposed to be so

Doreen 01:33

It becomes a topic of discussion. It's very interesting here in South Florida, where we live, where we noticed that the heat comes in and the snowbirds go home, a lot of them go back to their other residences. So our roads, clear up a bit. And our restaurants aren't as difficult and challenging to get into. And we we have time with the locals.

Jeff 01:59

Like I love this summer.

Doreen 02:01

No, it's fun, it's fun, and then the kids are off at school. So that's always fun. I wonder what everybody has planned for their children for the summer. I remember when kids were, little camp, we always like okay, where are they going to go to camp this summer? Keep them busy. Keep them occupied. Right?

Jeff 02:16

Those are the days.

Doreen 02:18

Yeah, yeah, I think it's important, though. I think it's nice when the kids have something that they have goals on for the summer, you know, not just hanging out and doing what the kids do whatever it is nowadays, which probably involves a lot of computer use and things like this. But you know, it was nice having the structure still in the summer, I think might serve some greater benefit.

Jeff 02:40

I think it prepares them for the next school year.

Doreen 02:42

And you know, most of the camps that we used to involve them with were physical, like, they went to camps in which there was a lot going on, kept them fit and in shape.

Jeff 02:54

Well, it's just like life. I mean, we don't have this summer to chill and relax. We have structure every day. So I think that during the summer, you know, that's something to contemplate when you're thinking about an activity is what is going to prepare them for not only the next school year, but also what's going to prepare them for life.

Doreen 03:13

Yeah, and I think that that's true. And I also think it's night like I remember we used to tell the kids listen, you're off for the next like two weeks between whenever school was out and the summer camp or program started. So they had that like, Oh, I've got like, you know, this whole two weeks off to like, just kind of hang out and decompress and annoy us as my parents notice. Mom, I'm so bored. Flex. Yeah. Right. And then to get them right back in. And then they had a few weeks off before summer school is. And that summer school I'm sorry. School started again up for the next year. Right. Which in in South Florida starts early. We start like mid August. You know, I know a lot of places still start school after Labor Day. So cool. But let's talk about guilt.

Jeff 04:03

Oh, boy.

Doreen 04:04

Yeah. Lots of guilt going on in divorce. Yeah, yeah. I mean, it's just kind of goes along with it. Right.

Jeff 04:11

Sometimes. I mean, I think that's just one of those things, you can kind of look back and say, What did I do? Or what could I have done? And the guilt kind of sets in?

Doreen 04:23

Well, the important thing is when you let the unchecked guilt cause havoc in the divorce process. And a generally, in my opinion, based on my experience, and research shows up in two different ways. So I think maybe that's a good place to start. Right? Especially it shows up a lot. I find when you're in the negotiating part of the, you know, the divorce process, which happens often, you know, obviously, you're usually running a parallel course in many cases where you're in the court system while you're litigating, but you're also trying to settle your case, right, and the judges imposed was settlement on you through mediation in most jurisdictions, but let's talk about the first way that I've seen. And the research that we've done has shown that guilt shows up. Okay, right. So the first way is it shows up when the guilty party is convinced that they are horrible, as a result of something that they did or maybe didn't do, that they're having a thought about. And that because of that guilt, they deserve less than what they're entitled to. So it shows up with the person who's experiencing the guilt, having a mindset that comes from their thoughts, that they deserve less than what they're entitled to legally. In the divorce. It's like self punishment, pretty much, you know, and the person's guilt in this circumstance tend to take over to overpower the thinking, and the results in them attempting to, to and the result is that they'll accept less than what they're entitled to. Right, right. And they base it on this this thought of past wrongdoing. Okay, so the issue with this way of feeling, and this guilt, is that when it subsides, and it generally will, that legally, this person who experiences guilt this way has taken has in many cases taken less than what they were entitled to. Gotcha. And then they end up dealing with the next feeling that comes with that, which would be regret, regret.

Jeff 06:44

Yeah, they look back at it and say, oh, man, I should have done something differently. And it's too late.

Doreen 06:50

Well, they say, you know, I gave up so much, because I was dealing with so much guilt, because I cheated or because I wanted out of the marriage or whatever it is, right? That they accepted less. And then they ended up kicking their self in the tushy. Because they're like, when that calms down, they realize which they will, that it wasn't necessarily all their fault, that maybe there was a semblance of circumstances in the marriage that each party bore some some level of responsibility on, then they get into that place of regret, of regret. So that part of being in that way, the first way, it shows up of taking lessons just dangerous to their overall best interest. So you have to deal with the guilt, and really come to peace with it when you're willing to give up less.

Jeff 07:43

Yeah, and I think what comes to my mind, comes to my mind instantly is that's why coaching is so important during those times to make sure that you're in the right mindset to be able to settle the case properly.

Doreen 07:56

Right? You know, it's not, and that's where we put, I'll say, you know, let's think of the divorce when you're in the legal process. And you're thinking about, let's say, settling, settling the case, what are you entitled to as a matter of law is a business decision, the law says, you will get X, she will, or he will get Y. This is what the various issues are. And let's say there's five different issues that the court will decide. And here is your baseline of what you should receive. It's a matter of typically went outside children issues, and even with children issues nowadays, but outside children issues, it's mostly a mathematical calculation.

Jeff 08:43

I think what you're saying is to keep emotions out of the courtroom, correct?

Doreen 08:47

We'll keep it out of the courtroom and the legal process process. Yes. So you really have to work on your mindset when you're dealing with guilt to get into that space, where what am I entitled to, as a matter of law, and you should have those discussions with your lawyer knowing always the best case and worst case scenario, what that spread is when we're talking money or dollars that usually numbers, and then putting the motions is behind you or aside for a moment dealing with a therapist or life coach, putting them where they belong when you come to the negotiating table, right? Okay? Doesn't mean that you're not willing to accept less, because there's lots of reasons to accept less, there might be the reason of you don't want to be in litigation, litigation is expensive, and you're willing to give up and give more because of that reason. And that makes sense. That's another mathematical calculation. How long is it going to take me if I don't concede to this and I pay a little more, take a little less. I'll be in the legal process. So the fees are going to cost me and your lawyer will tell you x so now you have a baseline there, but when you bring it in, I'm willing to take less because I'm so guilty that I wanted out of this marriage or I did whatever I did. That's where the problem lies.

Jeff 10:09

I would think that lawyer would recognize something like that and talk to them about it.

Doreen 10:13

I'll tell you what happens. You know, many times the lawyers don't know the whole picture. The lawyers try to get as much background and information as we need, about why the marriage is broken. One of the first questions I ask in a consultation, is your marriage irretrievably broken? And would you mind explaining a little about that circumstance? Like what happened? Because I know as a coach that whatever that circumstances, let's say it was adultery? isn't the only issue the couple has had? In very rare cases, would that be the case? Right? It's usually a long standing other proposition or thoughts about problems, right, that have led up to that one thing that now is like, that's the end. But I try to get into that. But a lot of a lot of clients don't talk about the real reasons behind it, which could lead to the guilt, which might lead the lawyer to understand that, oh, my clients willing to take so much less why. Right? Usually what I do is when I have a circumstance where a client is willing to take less, and I can't really pinpoint the reason why I do it, what I call CYA, you're entitled to XYZ. I've explained your upside, your downside, you're willing to take why, I advise against it, you're free to do what you want. Just let me know that you've read this letter, and let me hold it into my file, and then they're free to do what they want. But I will try to convince people not to do that. Because of the regret. Yeah, a lot of times, parents have regrets, guilt about the children. And so they're willing to concede certain positions because they want to get their children out of the pain of divorce, right, let me get this over with so that the children aren't having to deal with this. But then they regret it later, also, because children still are dealing with the divorce. Right? All right.

Jeff 12:08

And, yeah, well, I think, also, as time goes, by reality sets in, and everything that you did is in the past, you can change what you did during the divorce.

Doreen 12:20

I think so many people, Jeff, the, you know, I'm not talking about cases like that we handle off a Yaffa Family Law Group that the people have substantial wealth generally, and they're going to be okay. I'm talking about cases where you know, money is truly an issue so that an extra \$1,000 a month or whatever it is, that you're willing to give up. And it's based on guilt, that makes a huge difference in the in the future, right, that makes a difference.

Jeff 12:49

Or like you were saying, You give up time with your children, right, that later on -

Doreen 12:56

is now etched in stone, it's not easy to come back and modify those because the burden of proof, at least in Florida, and most jurisdiction is a high level when you're trying to when you're in the middle of divorce, and you're looking at access or visitation, as many people know it. You know, whatever you decide, and whatever is agreed to. And once a court signs off on that your burden of proof coming back to unchanged that is much higher than during the divorce process. Does that make sense? Yeah, okay, sure. How's this? What's the second one?

Jeff 13:30

The second one is a little bit harder to understand and a little bit harder to recognize. And it's when people come at you or your spouse can will may come at you in a little bit more aggressive way more as a bully, or more as a blaming you, even though they're the one that's guilty, or the one at fault, or whatever the case might be, because they're trying to hide behind those emotions, right?

Doreen 14:02

In other words, the guilt presents in the second group, as projection on the other, they're dealing with the guilt. But instead of saying, I'm willing to concede and take less, they go the opposite way, which is projecting their guilt on you. And it's kind of like that, but you did this. And you're guilty of that. And, you know, whatever it is, it's that projection.

Jeff 14:25

Or maybe they're not dealing with the guilt, and they're trying to hide behind that, so that they're going to project it on you to cover up what they've done.

Doreen 14:34

Correct. Well, and what happens, I think the downside of that is that in those cases, they those people that are dealing with that guilty motion tend to have unreasonable positions, they go the extreme other way, where they want more than maybe they're entitled to they want to take less, give less, take more, and a lot of time that's because they're projecting their feelings of guilt.

Jeff 14:58

Yes.

Doreen 15:00

So let's talk about what the Webster defines guilt as I think it's kind of cute. It's interesting, right?

Jeff 15:06

Yeah, we usually do this in the beginning, but I think it's a great idea that we do it. So I think the first one is that it's typical, you're guilty, it's when the jury or the courts will decide whether you're guilty or innocent.

Doreen 15:22

And the other way that they describe it as a state of one who has committed an offense, especially consciously. And then the next definition was a feeling of deserving blame, especially for imagining, imagined defenses or from a sense of inadequacy. And then the other one is a feeling of deserving blame for offenses, right. So it actually this one actually says, wracked with by guilt, he confessed his affair. So guilt is a feeling that presents through a thought you have done something wrong, and offense of sorts against your spouse, or even your children, society, or family. It can stem a lot of times from, for example, religious beliefs. A lot of religions have thoughts and directives, you know.

Jeff 16:19

They maybe they feel guilty because the religion doesn't believe in divorce,

Doreen 16:24

Right? I didn't know if the word was believed, but they frown upon it. That's what I was stumbling for. And some of the thoughts that show up that you're going to hear in your brain that will trigger you or should trigger you that you're dealing with guilt or thoughts. Like, now my children will grow up in a home with two families, right? Okay. Divorce is a sin or against my religious belief. Another guilty thought might be I broke my vows to my spouse, you know, like death to a spot do us part or when it comes to infidelity. Maybe it could be something a thought is as simple as you know, I acted badly, I just did something wrong. And now he's leaving me or she's leaving me or, like we said, um, I've cheated, because my, you know, my spouse was unavailable, was engaged, there might be reasons to justify the guilt as well. So I think the first thing is recognizing the thoughts that are creating the guilt. As we, as we teach with any of the feelings that you're feeling, it comes from a thought the thought delivers the feeling, because the thought is what makes you feel happy, sad, angry, guilty, whatever it is, right? You don't say I love something, or have the thought this is amazing, and have a sad face, you're gonna say, This is amazing as a thought, and you're gonna probably have a happy face on and present happy, you're gonna have that feeling of happy.

Jeff 17:58

Yeah, they say that you can't even it's very difficult to say the word happy. Without smiling, right? It's kind of a cool trick to play. But then again, when you have those thoughts and feelings of guilt, what are the the those are gonna give you those actions that we talked about earlier, that are going to give you those results that we talked about. So we have to have intentional thoughts that are going to serve our goals and serve what we want after the divorce.

Doreen 18:29

I also want to bring up another thing that I think is, is important, we're talking about guilt right now in the divorce process. But a lot of times guilt shows up in a more subtle way, such as simply falling, when you fall out of love, when somebody falls out of love, they've grown apart, or they no longer enjoy spending time with their spouse, you know, maybe they don't have anything in common anymore, that for whatever reason, throughout the years of their marriage, they've just distant, you know, people don't always grow together. We always grow as individuals, maybe not group be growing in the right direction. Maybe we could be stagnant and growing in that stagnant position, right, or even reversing our growth. But people generally in a marriage do still evolve, right on levels. And hopefully, they're growing together, meaning that they're still a complement to each other. It still works. There's still a vibe there. The relationship is still you know, chemistry is it's still that philosophy that together you're better than separate, right? But sometimes that doesn't happen. And people just grow apart and it's something you hear, but it really is something that happens in reality. And so you know, the guilt of leaving someone because you fallen out of love or you're no longer connected or the relationship no longer is good for you or the other person. A lot of people, don't know how to deal with that guilt. And so they end up staying, in a relationship, in a marriage that isn't good for them or the other person, because they're dealing with a lot of guilt. But he's always been nice to me, he's a great provider, he's such a great guy, he really does try, you know, you'll cut your brain will come up with a lot of reasons why to stay, and something that you probably have decided, either consciously or you're working towards that decision is not a good partnership, any failure.

Jeff 20:36

Or guilt can be fueled by other people. You know, it could be those unsolicited opinions, either from your clergy, it could be your friends talking about how bad you should feel, or your family members or even your spouse, themselves.

Doreen 20:54

There's a lot of that, I think there's a lot of that, I see it where there's a lot of people in your ear. Don't do this, why are you doing that, you know, it could be a parent talking to you.

Jeff 21:07

Could be social media,

Doreen 21:09

It could be your friends, right? It could be society, societies, or your social groups expectations. That's something that a lot of people have to deal with, when it comes to guilt, is just, you know, are you staying in the relationship, because of what you're expected to do by others, as opposed what that to what's good, you know, for you. And if you are dealing with the guilt of deciding to leave a marriage, which you will deal with 100%, you're gonna feel that emotion at some point, whether it's as you're contemplating divorce, or during the process itself, you know, whether you wanted the divorce or another, you just, it's just one of the feelings that go along with divorce, you know.

Jeff 21:55

Usually does come with them.

Doreen 21:56

So what do we do with the guilt?

Jeff 21:59

What do you do with the guilt? Well, first, you have to first recognize it, you know, and be aware that it's there, it exist, and then make sure that you're addressing the fact that it doesn't serve you. The guilt is not serving the process of divorce, it's not serving your emotions properly, or the result that you want out of the divorce, right.

Doreen 22:22

And the next step is to separate who you are, from how you behaved. The integrity of the legal process should be driven by law and equity, not by feelings of guilt, regret, or shame, the law defines what each of the parties are entitled to. And so the legal standard is what should set the baseline of what you deserve. And what's a reasonable resolution of the case. The guilt just needs to be put in that compartment, somewhere on the side and brought up and dealt with separately.

Jeff 22:56

Yeah, you know, we've always said that in blame and guilt, there's the two sides to every story that that people take responsibility for themselves. So if your spouse is taking responsibility for part, you're taking responsibility for part, then there is no blame, and there's no blame. That's how you deal with the guilt. You have nothing to be guilty about. You may have regret, you know, sadness that you did something wrong. But there was an underlying reason why that action took place.

Doreen 23:31

And I'm gonna get a little woowoo on us for a minute, I want to talk about that you -

Jeff 23:35

-- Whoo, whoo, okay.

Doreen 23:37

I don't know. Woohoo.

Jeff 23:39
Go ahead.

Doreen 23:40
So it's the the thought process that you cannot or the reality, this is reality, you cannot change the past, can't change it, that it's done, it's gone, it's over with, and you equally cannot predict the future, you might have some thoughts on how you might predict it, but you never know. And so you really cannot predict the future. So what you have and when you're dealing with guilt, this is important to recognize you cannot undo what was done. You have the here and now the present, right? And if you're dealing with guilt coming to realize that we can't undo the past and coming to peace with this is empowering. So it's empowerment, empowerment in the sense of forgiving yourself forgiving potentially those around you and moving on freely. Free from as best as you can the guilt.

Jeff 24:39
I mean, I believe that the only way you can change the past is by your present thoughts of the past right so you can change your your your thoughts of the past today. That's the only way you can change anything that happened in the past right

Doreen 24:59
Let me clarify that because that's a little woohoo, too.

Jeff 25:02
Well, we're I thought we were going -

Doreen 25:06
I don't know what that means. I think fellow listeners know, they know, it's like, it gets deep. It's what I mean, is that you're right. You cannot we I, and I'm right, we cannot change the action. If it occurred, the words said, the infidelity that was done, the abuse that occurred, those are action items. In other words, they occurred, right, right, you can change your thoughts about those past actions that then can relieve you of the guilt, that is maybe stunting you or stopping you from moving forward. And that's where coaching comes in place. I would suggest that when you're dealing with the past, though, going back, a lot of that work, is more therapy driven, because it's dealing with past behaviors and how to how to undo those. But some of that is coaching that we do, because it's really restructuring your thoughts about your past, and that your story of your past is not really you, it's your story. But it can be changed into a different story.

Jeff 26:19
We call that rewriting the story.

Doreen 26:20
I could say, for example, that I came from a, you know, a background where my parents were divorced. My mom was a single mom, I didn't you know, we didn't have money, I had to work my safe south through school, you know, or I could say the story could be, I came from a from a family where there was a lot of love, even though it was a single household, family household. And I worked really hard. And because I had to, to build and really focus in it built who I am today, you understand the difference? Hopefully it's a good example.

Jeff 27:02
That's a good example.

Doreen 27:03
Let's talk about one last thing exercise that, that we like to us with our clients about guilt.

Jeff 27:08

Writing down everything that you think you've done wrong in the past or during the marriage, or that your spouse may think you've done wrong during the marriage -

Doreen 27:18

Or somebody else has told you.

Jeff 27:19

Yes, yes. And no matter how long the list is, take your time, write it down, look at each and ask yourself, can that act be undone?

Doreen 27:32

Well, and I want to suggest to them that that's a trick question.

Jeff 27:34

It is a trick question.

Doreen 27:35

They can't it can't be, it can't be undone. It exists only in the past. And then ask yourself, if you are allowing guilt around those acts, to control you, those around you, or the legal process, then consider how you can let go of what you cannot change and move into a place of acceptance, that you are human, right. And with being human comes both good and bad. And that includes good and bad behaviors. There is no perfect human that never did anything wrong. And I think a lot of people that deal with guilt, have such a thought that they need to act and be in this perfect little place. And it's impossible because we are, as I say, the human.

Doreen 28:24

And if you're dealing with staying in your marriage or not, you can do the same exercise. And just the difference is you're looking at do I stay? Or do I go? Do I end this marriage? And stop the guilt? And then try to deal with that so you can get some clarity? I think that might be something that you know, our listeners might be interested in, is, it seems recently we have a lot of people who are contacting us that are looking not about divorce. But really, are they going to stay in their marriage? Or is it time to leave? Either because they're dealing with falling out of love, like we just said or maybe they're just not convinced that whatever is going on with the marriage is who they want to be married to anymore, right? Behaviors and stuff like this. So that's some real soul searching and I think you know, is equally as important to, to really think about and give yourself that space and that coaching that you need to get through that.

Jeff 29:48

Yeah, our Thrive After Divorce program, deals a lot with emotions, and setting yourself up for success and life and dealing with other people. And when you're think about it, it's has not much to do with divorce. It just has something to do with life in general. So there's been marriages we've saved. There's been people that have enjoyed our coaching that have nothing to do with marriage or divorce and of course, life after divorce. So the Thrive After Divorce program. That's why I think it's for everybody. So if you're interested in finding out a little bit more about it, please look us up, book a call with me. It's complimentary. I'd love to talk to you about it, and get your feedback on what you're going through.

Doreen 30:38

Absolutely. I think they should take you up on it. All right, everybody, have an amazing week, and we will see you soon.

Doreen 30:46

See you next week.

Jeff 30:54

You have the vision of what you want your life to look like after divorce, but maybe you just don't know how to get there. So if you're ready to take control of your life and want to find out more about our coaching, visit us at LAD-coaching.com. That's LAD as in LAD-coaching.com.

Doreen 31:17

Until next time, have an amazing rest of your day. And remember, yes, you can..

Doreen & Jeff 31:23

Have an amazing life after divorce.