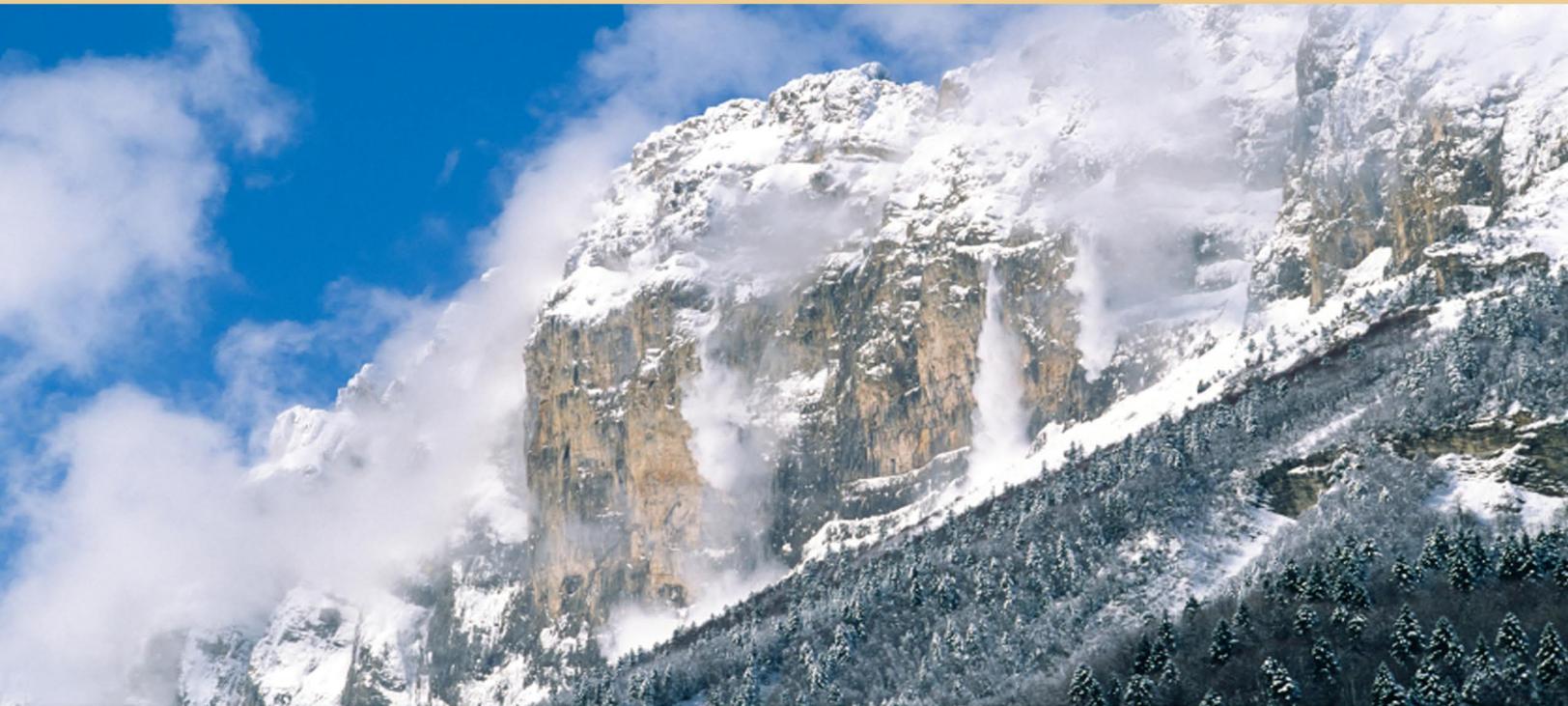


Sol Flower Wellness

# THE AVALANCHE:

4 Steps to Triumph  
through the Transformative  
Process of Divorce



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## **The Avalanche: 4 Steps to Triumph through the Transformative Process of Divorce**

Divorce is an intensely transformative process. As I went through my own divorce process and have counseled countless others along their journey through this experience, I developed the metaphor of “The Avalanche.” In this report, I share it with you as a way to validate your experience and let you know you are not alone in what you are feeling, no matter how complicated or confusing it may be. I have also laid out 4 concrete steps to follow that not only help you to survive your divorce, but move you towards triumphing through this experience and rejoicing in your life.

When we find that someone with whom we want to spend the rest of our lives, we join hands and begin to build a life together. We continue to walk the path of "US" and add to our lives: marriage, children, houses, in-laws, careers, assets, vacations, memories, sacrifices, compromises, and celebrations. Eventually we notice that we are standing on top of a mountain of our own creation and are able to see from where we have come and where we now stand together.

Yet, for some, that higher perspective may bring a realization that you don't know each other anymore, that you don't know yourself anymore, or that this isn't the mountaintop you expected. So, you try everything you know to keep building the mountain. You may seek counseling, move, change jobs, have another baby, workout, have an affair, or research new ways to spice up your sex life, mistakenly thinking these things will make your marriage better or more bearable. You may continue to have repeated conversations about how unhappy you are, while you also promise each other you will work harder at the relationship. But ultimately, one or both of you may accept that no matter how hard you try there is nothing left to keep the mountain together and make a decision (mutual or otherwise) to end the marriage. With that acknowledgement, the surface beneath your feet starts to crumble, loosen up, and give way. You watch as the pebbles and rocks of your shared life begin to roll down the sharp incline. As you move further in the direction and process of divorce, eventually boulders crash down and whole chunks of the mountain fall off. The avalanche has begun.

Friends, houses, furniture, memories, pictures, holiday decorations, family members, the masks and roles you developed as a married person, careers, dreams, your beliefs in what life would, should, or could be, etc, etc, all come tumbling down along with you. In the midst of this time, nothing is clear and everything seems to be falling apart. It's hard to see, and all you can do is hold on for dear life and wonder if it will ever end. In this phase, living “one minute at a time” becomes a functional, comforting coping strategy.

Eventually, there is nothing left of the mountain as it once was. Through clouds of dust you can see the rubble of the mountain all around you, and you assess what surrounds you. If you have children, you gather them and pray that whatever measures you took to keep them safe allowed them to make it through with as few scratches as possible. It's from here that the process of divorce recovery begins. Divorce will cause you to go to the depths of your soul and give you the opportunity for self-inventory, reflection, and learning. No matter what you are feeling as you stand in the rubble, take advantage of this time to grow. You, your family, and your children will be so grateful that you did. Below are 4 concrete steps to help you along your path. You will survive your divorce. Use these steps to help you triumph!

## **Step 1: Get to know yourself again**

Standing amid the rubble, take some time to look around and assess what surrounds you. This is an opportunity to see yourself in a new light. You may reconnect with parts of your childhood, find clues about the person you were before you got married, anything that you personally developed while you were married (i.e., education, career, personal development, etc.), remaining friends, or any furniture or other material possessions that survived the fall. As you examine these pieces ask yourself, "What of any of this still fits for me going forward from here?" This sifting process goes on as long as it needs to, and, when you feel strong enough, and have incorporated the parts you want to bring along, you make your way to the outer edge of the rubble and rest.

From this place, the dust begins to settle and you can take a deep breath and pause for a moment. Now is a time to go inward for a bit and check in with the state of your heart. It may feel shattered in a million pieces or hardened into a steel shell created for protection. The healing of your heart is what will happen as you move through the next few steps. This is a good time for a practice such as meditation, yoga, prayer, or other healing modality to help soothe your wounded soul. Connecting to your spiritual source (however you define this) is very helpful for guidance and protection during this vulnerable period.

Use music, art, journaling, or other creative outlets to tap into your emotions and allow them to be expressed and released. Grieve the losses that occurred as the avalanche erupted. Therapy can be a wonderful support for you during this time. As you clear these painful emotions, your heart will begin to heal and you'll start to regain your strength. You may begin to lift your head and realize you are not going to stay in this space forever. You wonder what might be in store for you now that you've had a chance to gather yourself.

## **Step 2: Get clear about what you want**

Now that the dust has settled, you may notice that the land before you is expansive and wide open. From this spacious place, take another deep breath and ask yourself, "What do I really want?" This multi-layered question encompasses many aspects of your life. With the new insights you gained about yourself in step one, you may begin to research new activities or creative interests. You might branch out and make new friends or reconnect with old friends whom you lost touch with while you were married. You may move into a new home or apartment and have the opportunity to decorate it however you wish; what appeals to you?

Each time you have the opportunity to make a choice for yourself, check in with the question, "What do I want?" This will help you clarify what you like and don't like, what works for you and what doesn't work for you. Life is no longer about what someone else might want, or what others will think. This time is all about you! As time goes on and you begin to understand the parts of your marriage that contributed to its deconstruction, you may get clear about who you want to be in relationships moving forward and what qualities are foundationally important to you in a partner.

During this step, a vision board can be a great tool to help you develop clarity about what you want in your life. You can make a vision board out of poster board or a tri-fold board. Cut out pictures from magazines, use photographs that represent your true self or the people who are important to you, include colors and textures that you love, and write or cut out words and/or quotes that appeal to you. There is no right or wrong way to construct a vision board. The only

requirement is that it only includes what you truly want in your life. Do separate vision boards for each aspect of your life that you envision. For example, complete a vision board for your home, one for relationships, one for career, one for family, etc. Let your imagination run wild and take seriously the people, places, and things that you say you want in your life.

Once your board is complete, hang or display it in a prominent place in your home where you will see it every day. Begin to visualize all of the aspects on the board existing in your life, right now. Imagine how it feels to have those things in your life (as if they are already here). The more clear and specific you are about these pieces, the more likely your life will align with your desires and the life you once imagined can become your reality.

### **Step 3: Gather your strength and inner resources as you prepare to move forward**

With a better understanding of who you are at your core, and a clear vision of what you want, the next logical question is, "What's next for me?" In the expansive space before you, you may search for a clearly marked path. But, all you see is wide open space. That is because this time, the path is not pre-dreamed, or pre-set, or clearly marked. This time, you will carve your OWN path, one step at a time. You do this by using all the resources you have accumulated, tuning into your heart, getting clear about what works for you and what you want, and developing a strong connection to your spiritual source for faith, prayer, and guidance along the way. This spiritual "hand" is the one you will hold for the time-being.

Be careful of distractions that thwart your recovery period and be gentle with yourself. Now is not the time for a new relationship, excessive use of substances, diving completely into work, or obsessing about your children or other family members (or your ex). While these distractions may tempt you with the promise of temporary comfort, know that engaging in them will only lengthen your recovery time.

Develop and enlist a support team (outside of your family and friends) for your mind, body, and spirit: therapy, divorce-recovery support groups, yoga/exercise, meditation, prayer, a supportive community group, creative outlets, nutrition, adequate sleep, and optimizing your health are all important ingredients in your healing.

### **Step 4: Walk forward one step at a time.**

With all of these resources at hand, begin to take steps to bring the vision that you created in step 2 to life. You may feel a bit overwhelmed at this thought and ask, "How do I create the life that I want?" Take as much time as you need. Though you may want to, remember that there is no need to rush. What we imagine to be a reasonable amount of time is usually much too short to consider what a complete life transformation entails. There is a very effective formula that is commonly used in divorce recovery to determine the amount of time considered for full recovery from a divorce. It's not an easy one to digest, but proves fairly accurate a majority of the time. It may serve to relieve pressure that you are placing on yourself to hurry up and be through with this already.

The formula is 1 year of recovery for every 5 years that you were married. So for example, if you were married for 20 years, it is not unreasonable to take approximately 4 years to make your complete transition. This does not mean you do nothing to move your life forward in this amount of time. Instead, allow yourself at least that amount of time to do what you need to do to

make the full transition from being married to embracing a new way of life. This is a long-haul, so take good care of yourself, and allow space to feel what you are feeling.

Your steps forward may include moving, going back to school and/or work, starting a new job, or enhancing the one that you have. If you are co-parenting, you may try creating a business-like relationship with your ex-spouse that enables you to parent your children from a place of peace. Sign up for those new activities you researched in Step 2, implement a solid self-care practice, try something different, challenge yourself a bit. Get out of your comfort zone. Spend time with your friends. Maybe you have the opportunity to go on a date. Have fun. Laugh. Find the good in this transformation. Enjoy your own company. Know that you are never truly alone because you are always *with yourself*.

After a while you may start to notice that you are on your way to building your own mountain, or whatever structure you want to build this time. That choice is totally up to you! And one day, a ways down the path, you may meet another who has built their own mountain or compatible structure, and you decide to join the two together... but in the meantime.... congratulate yourself for embarking on this powerful process of transformation. Affirm your growth and revel in the effects of your triumph. You are strong, resilient, capable, and ready to embrace the life that you are creating with each new day!

### **You don't have to go through this by yourself, Sol Flower Wellness can help**

As you proceed through the steps outlined above, you may benefit from the support and awareness created within the structure of therapy. Talking through this process with an objective person can be helpful. Getting clear about who you are and what you want sometimes requires trial and error, or includes getting caught up in distractions in spite of your best efforts. Talking these challenges through and processing the emotions that come up along the way help to keep you moving forward, rather than allowing a distraction to take you too far off course.

You might find a meditation class or private yoga session helpful as you walk your recovery path. These services are also offered through Sol Flower Wellness. Utilize all the services available to round out your healing. Or you might like to explore hypnotherapy to address deeper-seated patterns that keep you from engaging in healthy relationships.

Using different modalities helps to address your divorce recovery from a holistic perspective. Sol Flower Wellness is here for you. Work through the steps outlined above. When you are ready to go deeper, or would like to take advantage of the self-care services offered, you are invited to take the next step. Call (407) 739-4267 or email [wendy@solflowerwellness.com](mailto:wendy@solflowerwellness.com) to set up an appointment for yourself to receive the support you deserve.