

**AN INTERVENTION PROGRAMME TO
AUGMENT RESILIENCE IN DIVORCED
PARENTS**

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GOD MY CREATOR

Father, all this is in vain if it can not be to Your glory. Thank you for making it possible for me to do this.

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You were always friendly, always willing to help and very competent

SUMMARY

TITLE: An intervention programme to augment parental resilience following divorce.

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DEGREE: Philosophiae Doctor

DEPARTEMENT: Educational Psychology

UNIVERSITY: North West University – Vaal Triangle Campus

Divorce has become an ever-increasing phenomenon in our society. Due to the escalating divorce rate, a growing number of children are being raised in single parent- or restructured families.

The following consequences of divorce are of particular importance in this context: firstly, the emotional impact on the adults concerned, who are emotionally wounded and vulnerable as a result of the divorce. Secondly, divorced parents often feel unable to cope with their own emotional burden, let alone have the remaining resources with which to guide their children into adulthood. It follows that a divorce does not only wreak havoc on the lives of adults, but also on the children who are secondary victims.

This study will attempt an illumination of divorce in terms of firstly, the phenomenon of divorce itself and secondly, its impact on men, women and children.

A second objective of the study is the development of an intervention programme to augment resilience within the context of post-divorce. The aim is to assist the divorcee to recover emotionally to such an extent that she or he will be in a better position after the divorce than before it.

The aim of the study is therefore to develop a programme with which to augment the resilience of divorced parents in order to enhance their parenting skills. With this aim in mind, the risk- as well as protective factors within the context of divorce were identified. The programme was subsequently applied to enhance or increase the protective factors and eliminate the risk factors.

Two sub-hypotheses were formulated, tested and an alternative sub-hypothesis accepted, namely:

An intervention programme, which focuses on the augmentation of resilience in divorced parents will lead to increased resilient functioning and enhanced parenting skills.

When the experimental group was compared with the control group, results of the post-tests of the CYRM – A showed an improvement in scores after the intervention programme was done. This meant that the participants who completed the intervention programme, showed better resilience skills than those who did not complete the programme.

When the experimental group was compared with the control group, results of the post-tests of the Parenting Questionnaire showed an improvement in scores after the intervention programme was done. This meant that the participants who completed the intervention programme showed better parenting skills and were more democratic in their parenting than the participants of the control group.

The finding of this study is therefore that resilience within the context of divorce can be augmented and will in turn, lead to enhanced parenting skills.

OPSOMMING

TITEL: 'n Intervensieprogram om ouerskap veerkragtig te maak en te versterk na egskeiding.

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Egskeiding is 'n toenemende verskynsel in ons samelewing. Al hoe meer mense skei en die gevolg daarvan is dat al hoe meer kinders grootword in enkel-ouergesinne of her-saamgestelde gesinne.

In hierdie konteks is daar twee belangrike gevolge van egskeiding: eerstens laat dit volwassenes agter wat emosioneel stukkend en kwesbaar is. Tweedens sukkel hierdie volwassenes self om emosioneel die mas op te kom, en is hulle dikwels eenvoudig nie in staat om hulle kinders genoegsaam te begelei na volwassewording nie. 'n Egskeiding is dus dikwels nie net vir die betrokke volwassenes vernietigend nie, maar ook is kinders gewoonlik die indirekte slagoffers.

Hierdie studie poog om die verskynsel van egskeiding nader te belig. Daar word gekyk nie net na die fenomeen van egskeiding nie, maar ook na die effek wat dit op mans, vrouens en kinders het.

Tweedens word daar gekyk na die verskynsel van veerkragtigheid binne die konteks van egskeiding. Dit impliseer dat die geskeide persoon emosioneel so sal herstel na die egskeiding, dat hy of sy beter daartoe af sal wees, as voor die egskeiding.

Die doel van hierdie studie was dan om 'n program daar te stel wat geskeide persone help om veerkragtig te wees sodat hulle ook beter ouers kan wees vir hulle kinders. Om dit te kan doen is risiko- en beskermingsfaktore binne die konteks van egskeiding geïdentifiseer en met die program is gepoog om die beskermingsfaktore te vermeerder of versterk en die risiko faktore uit te skakel.

Twee sub-hipoteses is geformuleer, getoets en die alternatiewe sub-hipotese is aanvaar, naamlik:

'n Intervensie program gemik daarop om veerkragtige funksionering in geskeides te versterk, sal lei tot verhoogde veerkragtige funksionering en verbeterde ouerskapsvaardighede.

Toe die eksperimentele groep vergelyk is met die kontrole groep, het die resultate van die na-toetse van die CYRM – A verbeterde tellings na die intervensieprogram voltooi is aangedui. Dit het beteken dat die deelnemers wat die intervensieprogram voltooi het, beter veerkragtigheidsvaardighede gehad het as die wat nie die program voltooi het nie.

Toe die eksperimentele groep vergelyk is met die kontrole groep, het die resultate van die na-toetse van die Parenting Questionnaire ook 'n verbetering in die tellings aangedui na die implementering van die intervensieprogram. Dit impliseer dat die deelnemers wat die intervensieprogram voltooi het, beter ouerskapsvaardighede besit en meer demokratiese ouers is, as die deelnemers van die kontrole groep.

Die bevinding van hierdie studie is dus dat veerkragtigheid binne die konteks van egskeiding versterk kan word en dat dit tot beter ouerskapsvaardighede lei.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

***Two things are essential for a healthy mind: the ability
to love and the will to work.***

Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an orientation to the study and will deal firstly with the motivation for the study. It gives the background and context for the formulation of the problem statement and the purpose of the study. Research hypotheses will be formulated and the method of research will be shown. Essential literature sources will be indicated. To conclude the chapter, a definition of key terms will be given, as well as a grouping of the chapters.

Figure 1.1 below summarises Chapter 1:

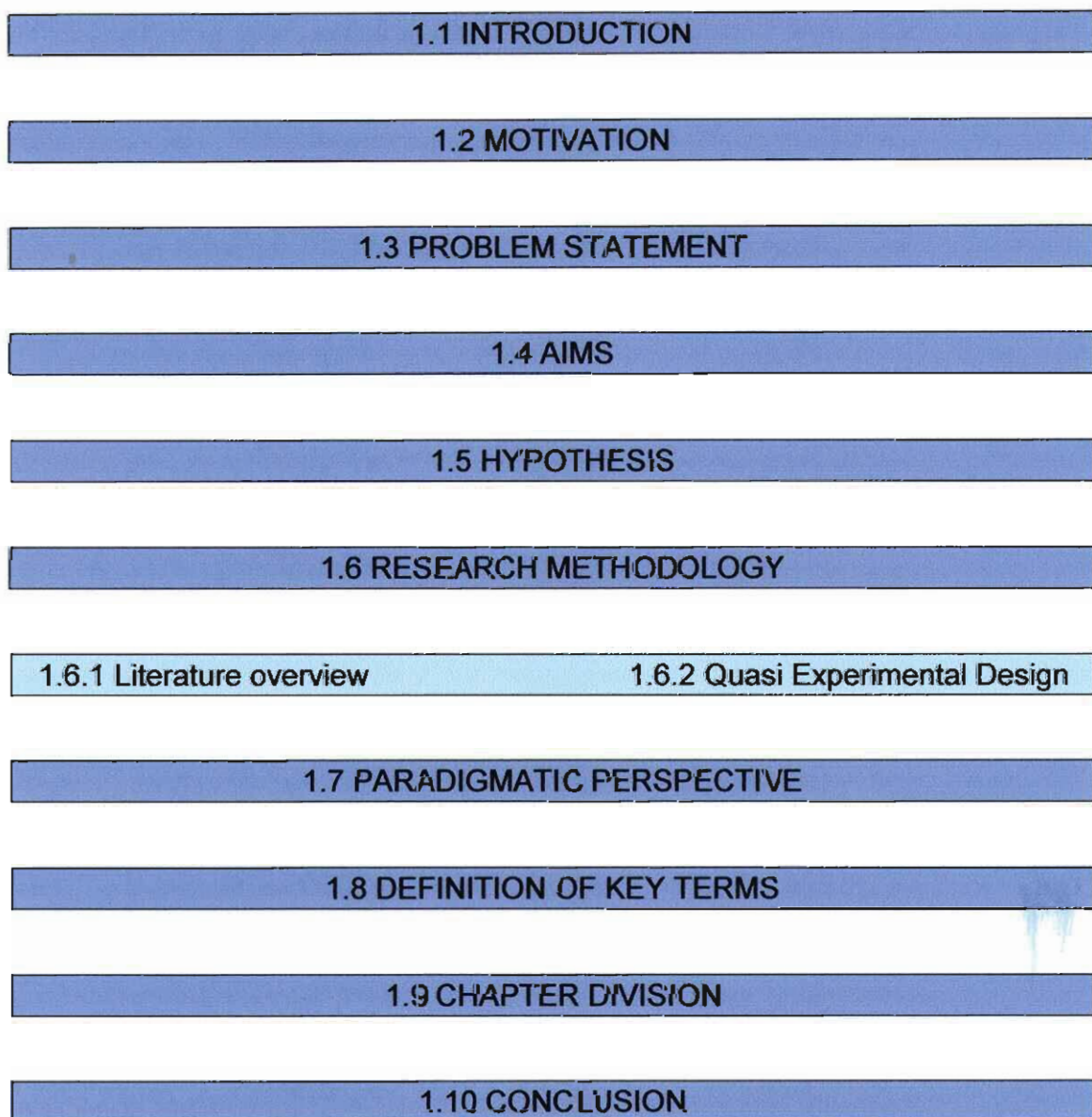


Figure 1.1: Summary of Chapter 1

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

“Of all the changes in family life during the 20th century, the most dramatic and the most far reaching in its implications was probably the increase in the rate of divorce” (Amato in Bezuidenhout, 2006: 15). As a psychologist in a private practice, the researcher has been confronted numerous times with the lasting negative impacts of divorce on both the parents and their children. The problem facing the researcher was to find an effective way to help divorcing and divorced parents deal with the divorce and become emotionally whole again, so that their lives and their parenting could continue resiliently. However, the literature speaks very little of WHAT divorcees have to do to heal and deal with issues such as getting rid of their anger and being efficient parents after their divorce, which can become huge stumbling blocks for overall resilient functioning.

When a marriage fails, it is not only the marriage partners that are hurt, but for the children it is very often even worse as they become the subject of contention between the divorcing parents. Sclater (1999: ix) states: “The coping strategies that many people adopt to enable them to weather the emotional storms of divorce often involve a ‘splitting’ at a psychological level, a defence strategy which places husband and wife on the opposite sides of a divide and which provides a psychological basis for conflict and bitterness.” Because individual development does not occur within a social vacuum, all lives linked to those of the couple getting a divorce are influenced (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 15; Schoon, 2006: 31). Thus, in the course of her practice, the researcher found that in order to optimally help the children to recover from their parents’ divorce, the parents themselves also required intervention.

Walker, McCathy and Corlyon (1994: 11) indicate that the social, emotional and economic realities of divorce present a formidable barrier to the achievement of co-operative post-divorce relationships. The long-term happiness of some divorced parents is dependent upon them having as little contact as possible with each other; clearly, the best interests of parents and children are not always in accord. Negative and destructive feelings are

typical both prior to and following the divorce (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 24). If a truly “civilised” divorce is to be found, divorcees need to find ways of integrating, accepting and owning negative and destructive emotions instead of relegating them to the realms of the pathological (Morgan & Coleman, 1997: 1; Shaub, 2002: 1; Wadsby & Sveden, 1992: 452-453). They also state that typically most divorcees would need supportive intervention to achieve this but it might just be possible to “accentuate the positive” in divorce and consider the barriers to achieving an idealised “harmonious” divorce and resilient post-divorce functioning. If divorced parents can be made aware of their strengths and resilience, they can be indirectly empowered to handle their children and the trauma of the divorce in a more constructive way.

Sclater (1999:14) sees divorce as “...a reorganisation of the family, not an end to the family”. This understanding depends upon the concept of “not being divorced ‘from’ someone, but being divorced ‘to’ them”. Although the spouses are divorced, they still have contact with each other and have to communicate, especially if they have children together. It often means that two or more families have to consult with each other to plan weekends, holidays and so forth to accommodate their children living with ex-spouses. One study shows that at least one fourth of ex-wives and ex-husbands have weekly contact and over one-half had monthly contact, regardless of whether there were children involved or not (Davidson & Moore 1996: 680). This suggests huge adaptations for all involved. In order to adapt effectively and to process the hurt and trauma of a divorce, divorcing parents need to be very resilient. If wounded divorcees acquired such resilience skills, their potential to reconstruct a meaningful life and to conduct healthy parenting would be encouraged.

When divorcees cope with the adversities inherent to divorce, they function resiliently. Resilience is defined as a positive conclusion, or continued positive functioning, or recovery when adverse life circumstances are encountered (Schoon, 2006:7; Wolin & Wolin, 1999: 11). Resilience is a complex, dynamic

phenomenon which is dependent on interaction between the individual and his* context (Schoon, 2006: 15).

A triad of protective factors support resilience. The triad is divided into personal protective factors (innate factors), familial protective factors (derived from the family) and extra-familial protective factors (derived from the environment). Protective factors ameliorate stressful experiences by providing a fortifying buffer that strengthens patterns of adaptation (Armstrong, Stroul & Boothroyd, 2005: 391-2; Barter, 2005: 345-348; Schoon, 2006: 8-11).

In her quest to provide effective therapeutic interventions within the context of divorce for both the children and the parents, the researcher began to consider whether there was a need for an intervention programme that would encourage resilient functioning among divorced parents. Benard (1995) states that we are all born with an innate capacity for resilience. For this reason it appeared feasible to the researcher to design an intervention programme to instruct divorced parents in resilience skills.

The challenge for this study was to try and develop a programme to help parents heal emotionally and to resolve the issues that accrued due to a broken marriage and the resultant divorce. Research suggests that the negative impacts of divorce on the family's functioning can be curtailed when divorcees adjust successfully. Successful adjustment includes working through divorce-related issues, functioning positively in a new family or at work and the development of a new lifestyle and identity (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 28). Protective factors moderate the impact of divorce and empower divorcees to function resiliently and adjust to their altered reality (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 28). According to Masten and Reed (2005: 85), the lessons learnt from studying resilience have resulted in three broad intervention approaches, namely:

- risk-focussed strategies (with a focus on risk reduction);

* The use of the male or female pronoun where both genders are implied is stylistic and does not exclude the other gender.

- asset-focussed strategies (with a focus on accessing socially available resources that moderate risk); and
- process-focussed strategies (with a focus on providing processes which inculcate resilient functioning).

A process-focussed strategy was chosen for this study as the aim of process-focussed strategies is to generate adaptive behaviour that will facilitate resilient functioning. The process chosen was a group intervention programme that would facilitate resolution of divorce-related issues, encourage positive functioning as parents and applaud the development of a new lifestyle and identity. For the purposes of this study personal protective factors were emphasised, because divorcees frequently find themselves without familial or social support structures (Davidson & Moore, 1996: 655). Although this study focussed on personal protective factors, it acknowledged the interaction of the individual and contextual protective factors by using the medium of a group intervention programme and by aiming to enhance effective parenting skills (i.e. the parental context of the participating individuals was not ignored).

The presumption then is that divorcees who can be encouraged to function resiliently, will evidence resilient adjustment following divorce, and thus fulfil their post-divorce parental roles more adequately.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Given this perspective, the following research questions arise:

- What is the scope and impact of divorce on parents?
- What is the nature of resilience?
- What would the impact be of a programme developed to augment resilience after the trauma of divorce on:
 - divorcee wellness; and
 - parenting skills following divorce.

The central problem which this study sought to address was therefore the following:

Would an intervention programme aimed at encouraging resilient functioning in divorcees lead to heightened resilient functioning and improved parenting skills, or not?

1.4 AIMS

The overall aim of this study was to develop an intervention programme for divorced parents to augment their resilience so that being more resilient, they can overcome the trauma of the divorce and, in doing so, improve their parenting and personal wellness.

The overall aim can be operationalised as follows:

- to determine the scope and impact of divorce on parents;
- to determine the nature of resilience;
- to develop a programme to augment resilient functioning and parenting skills in divorcees; and
- to employ a pre-test, post-test design to comment critically on the efficacy of the programme.

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

Two central hypotheses govern this study:

- Null hypothesis

An intervention programme aimed at encouraging resilient functioning in divorcees will not lead to heightened resilient functioning and improved parenting skills.

- Alternative hypothesis

An intervention programme aimed at encouraging resilient functioning in divorcees will lead to heightened resilient functioning and improved parenting skills.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology consisted of a literature overview and an empirical study.

1.6.1 Literature Overview

The literature sources which dominated the literature review are tabulated in Figure 1.2 below.

Theme	Bibliography
Marriage and Divorce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank, M.R. & Kain, E.L. 1995 • Buchanan, C.M., Maccoby, E.E. & Dornbusch, S.M. 1996 • Cohen, O. 1996 • Colburn, K., Lin, P.L. & Moore, M.C. 1992 • Davidson, J.K. Sr. & Moore, N.B. 1996 • Dickenson, G.E. & Leming, M.R. 1995 • Eshelman, J.R. 1994 • Ferreira, S. 1994 • Gelles, R.J. 1995 • Gottman, J.M. 1994 • Green, D. 1995 • Mc.Allister, F. (Ed). 1995 • Myers, M.F. 1989 • Nolen-Hoeksema, S., McBride, A. & Larson, J. 1997 • Propst, L.R. & Fries, L. 1994 • Schwartz, L.L. & Kaslow, F.W. 1997 • Schwartz, M. & Scott, B.M. 1994 • Sclater, S.D. 1999 • Smith, C. 1988 • Venter, C. 1999 • Wadsby, M. & Svedin, C.G. 1992 • Walker, J., Mc Cathy, P. & Corlyon, J. 1994 • Wallerstein, J.S. and Blakeslee, S. 1989 • Woudstra, M.R. 1997
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benard, B. 1995 • Bonanno, G.A. 2004 • Brooks, R. & Goldstein, S. 2002 • Buchanan, C.M. 2000 • Carson, D.K., Swanson, D.M., Cooney, M.H., Gillum, B.J. & Cunningham, D. 1992 • Carver, C.S. 1998 • Chiriboga, D.A., Catron, L.S. & Associates 1991 • Dalai Lama & Cutter, H.C. 1998 • Fergusson, D.M. & Lynskey, M.T. 1996

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frydenberg, E. (Ed). 1999 • Glantz, M.D. & Johnson, J.L. (Ed). 1999 • Gregory, L. W. 1995 • Gyatso, T. & Dalai Lama 2001 • Helmreich, W.B. 1992 • Malluccio, A.N. 2002 • Moller, A.T. 1980 • Myers, D.G. & Diener, E. 1995 • O'Leary, V.E. 1998 • Pennebaker, J.W. 1993 • Reivich, K. & Shatte, A. 2002 • Ryff, C.D. & Singer, B. 2000 • Saleeby, D. (Ed). 1997 • Schoeman, E.H. 2003 • Schoon, I. 2006 • Snyder, C.R. (Ed). 1999 • Strumpfer, D.J.W. 2001 • Theron, L.C. 2006 • Turner, S., Norman, E. & Zunz, S. 1995 • Ungar, M. 2005 • Waterman, A.S. 1993 • Wolin, S.J. & Wolin, S. 1993 • Wolin, W.J. & Wolin, S. 1999 • Wyman, P.A., Cowen, E.L., Work, W.C. & Kerley, J.H. 1993
Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antonovsky, A; Sourani, T. 1988 • Cronje, G.M. 1997 • Mash, E.J. & Wolfe, D. A. 2005 • Suran, B.G. & Rizzo, J. V. 1983 • Ungar, M. (Ed). 2005
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De Vos, A.S. (Ed). 1998 • Leedy, P.D. & Ormrod, J.E. 2001 • Lucasey, B. 2000 • Strumpfer, D.J.W. 2001
Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strydom, H. 1998 • Welman, C., Kruger, F., & Mitchell, B. 2005

Figure 1.2: Literature Overview

1.6.2 Empirical Research

A quasi experimental design formed the basis of the empirical research.

In some life situations it is just not possible to randomly select and assign participants to research experiments. In such instances, non-randomized participants form the research sample and this has implications for the interpretation of results: because the sample is not randomized, the researcher cannot control all confounding or nuisance variables and this must be acknowledged when data is interpreted (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001: 227; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005: 87). A quasi-experimental approach is a second best

approach to eliminating nuisance variables (Welman *et al.* 2005: 88). A quasi-experimental design was chosen for logistical reasons: the researcher had to work with divorced persons in her own geographical area.

An example of such a quasi-experimental design is the Nonrandomized Control Group Pre-test – Post-test Design. This involves two groups to which participants have not been randomly assigned (Fouché & De Vos, 2001: 124; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 236). The experimental group receives ‘treatment’ (in this study it means they participate in the intervention programme), whilst the control group does not.

Because the participants are not randomly assigned, the participants are probably not similar in every respect. However, an initial observation (a pre-test) can confirm that the participants of both groups are at least similar in terms of the dependent variable under investigation (level of resilient functioning). If, after one group has received the experimental treatment, the researcher then notes group differences with respect to the dependent variable, it might reasonably be concluded that the posttreatment differences are probably the result of that treatment (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 94-95).

In this study, the participants of the experimental and control groups comprised ten suitable persons who responded to the researcher’s invitation to participate in the study. Five participants were randomly assigned to each group. The control group received no intervention during the course of this study.

The empirical research is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

1.7 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

According to Venter (2000: 7) a paradigm is not a theory, but rather a network of beliefs that are shared by scientists. The paradigm originates from a certain world image and subsequent anticipatory theoretical viewpoints.

Divorce is an all too common phenomenon in our modern society. There are many different reasons why people get divorced, but the consequence of divorce is the same: people get hurt. It is not only the divorcees that get hurt

or are affected by the divorce, but also their parents, friends, family and especially their children.

As an educational psychologist, the researcher believes in intervention. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1999: 7), the biggest challenge of the educational psychologist is to prevent specific needs or risk factors in children. There is thus movement away from a perspective of treatment to a perspective of prevention.

There are three types of preventive interventions, namely:

- primary prevention which aims to reduce the frequency of the problem;
- secondary prevention which aims to identify the problem early and treat it effectively; and
- tertiary prevention which aims to adapt the educational/social environment to ensure optimal or quality functioning, despite the presence of risk factors (Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasiow, 2000: 183-184).

Prevention, in the case of this study, would be tertiary prevention or the prevention of further hurt and broken relationships after the divorce. Children are very often the victims of their parent's divorce. Because the parents are hurt and very often emotionally drained, they tend not to have the perspective needed to deal with their children in a positive and constructive way. If divorced parents can be taught resilience, they will be more balanced and hopefully better parents. Thus, by targeting parental resilience, secondary or further trauma to children from divorced homes can be prevented.

Inherent in any profound challenge is the potential for crisis or opportunity (O'Leary, 1998: 425). Sooner or later, everyone encounters adversity in life. Suffering is part of the human experience, and major hardships happen in everyone's life. The resilient person uses a crisis to better himself and change it into an opportunity. A resilient person understands that difficulties in life are normal and unavoidable, but that he has a choice in how he reacts to difficult

circumstances. How a person chooses to respond to a difficult situation will either make him resilient, or a victim.

Because of her central belief in prevention, the researcher hopes to help divorcees to become more resilient through the implementation of an intervention programme aimed at inculcating resilient functioning. The intervention programme highlights certain risk and protective factors that commonly occur after a divorce and strives to alleviate the risk factors and enhance the protective factors so that the divorcees can function more resiliently, both as individuals and as parents.

The paradigmatic perspective of the researcher is summarised in Figure 1.3 which follows.

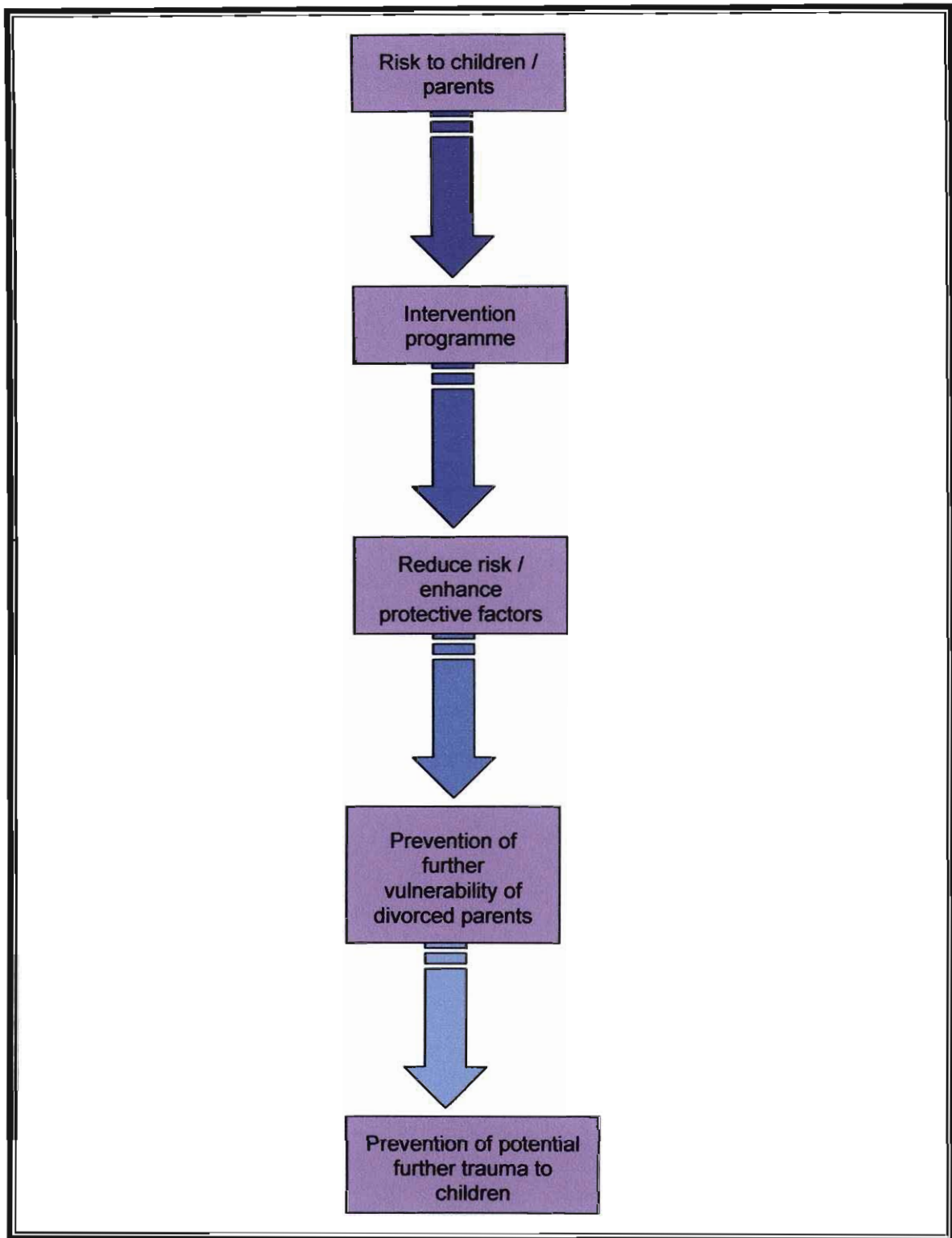


Figure 1.3: Paradigmatic perspective: the reduction of risk and enhancement of protective factors

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Marriage in the western world has traditionally been defined as a legal contract between a man and a woman who is at or above a specified age and who is not already married to someone else (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 2).

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Sixth Edition, 2001) gives the definition of **divorce** as a legal dissolution of a marriage; judicial separation of a married pair; decree of nullity of marriage. In the literature on divorce, the term refers only to the legal dissolution of a marriage.

Resilience can be defined as the ability to bounce back or cope well in the face of adversity (Turner, Norman & Zunz, 1995: 25). Wolin and Wolin (1999: 11) define resilience as the ability to overcome considerable hardship and the ravages of the past. It is also the process of persisting in the face of adversity.

Risk factors are those factors that render a certain situation difficult to cope with. In a marriage, risk factors could be poor communication, unrealistic expectations of spouses, power struggles and so on (Turner, Norman & Zunz, 1995: 31).

Protective factors, on the other hand, refer to those factors that protect individuals from failure or risk in certain situations. In marriage, protective factors could be good communication skills, a positive self-image, support of family and friends and so on (Turner, Norman & Zunz, 1995: 32).

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION

The division of chapters is as follows:

Chapter 2

In this chapter the phenomenon of marriage and of divorce is explored. Reasons why people marry and sometimes remain in unfulfilling marriages are explored. The causes of divorce and divorce statistics are discussed and, lastly, the impact of divorce on spouses and their children is noted.

Chapter 3

This chapter deals with the phenomenon of resilience. A definition is given; the fact that resilience is a choice is explained; the interplay between risk and protective factors is shown; and lastly the dynamics of resilience during divorce is discussed.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 explains the research method followed for this study and the aims of the study and hypotheses are given. The research design for this study, namely the quasi-experimental design, is discussed. Lastly, the ethical aspects relevant to the study are explained.

Chapter 5

This chapter contains the intervention programme. The programme consists of nine sessions. The aims and activities of each session are outlined in detail so the intervention programme can be duplicated by other researchers, or implemented by educational psychologists.

Chapter 6

The implementation of the programme is discussed in this chapter. The background of each participant is briefly set out and the process notes of each session are given. The impact of the programme on the participants is then discussed. A qualitative evaluation of the questionnaires filled in by each participant is given. The follow up discussions with the participants is given. The results of the control groups are discussed.

Chapter 7

In conclusion, an opinion about the results is given; shortcomings of the study are pointed out, and recommendations for further studies are made.

1.10 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction for the study. Chapters 2 and 3 are literature studies. Chapter 4 is the explanation of the research design used. Chapter 5 presents the intervention programme. Chapter 6 deals with the process notes of the participants and discusses the impact of the intervention programme on the participants. Chapter 7 is the summary and conclusion of the research results as interpreted by the researcher.

The phenomenon of divorce will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PHENOMENON OF DIVORCE

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times”

Charles Dickens

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will include a literature study on the phenomenon of divorce to gain information on the following aspects of divorce:

- i. What is divorce? The phenomenon of divorce will be researched to find a working definition for divorce.
- ii. What is the etiology of divorce? What are the reasons for people getting divorced? Have the reasons changed over the years?
- iii. What is the incidence of divorce?
- iv. What is the impact of divorce on:
 - a. both spouses
 - b. the husband
 - c. the wife
 - d. the children
 - e. the extended family
- v. What are the different post-divorce obstacles? After going through the hurt, disillusionment and trauma of divorce, what are the obstacles a divorcee has to face?

Figure 2.1 (which follows) summarises Chapter 2:

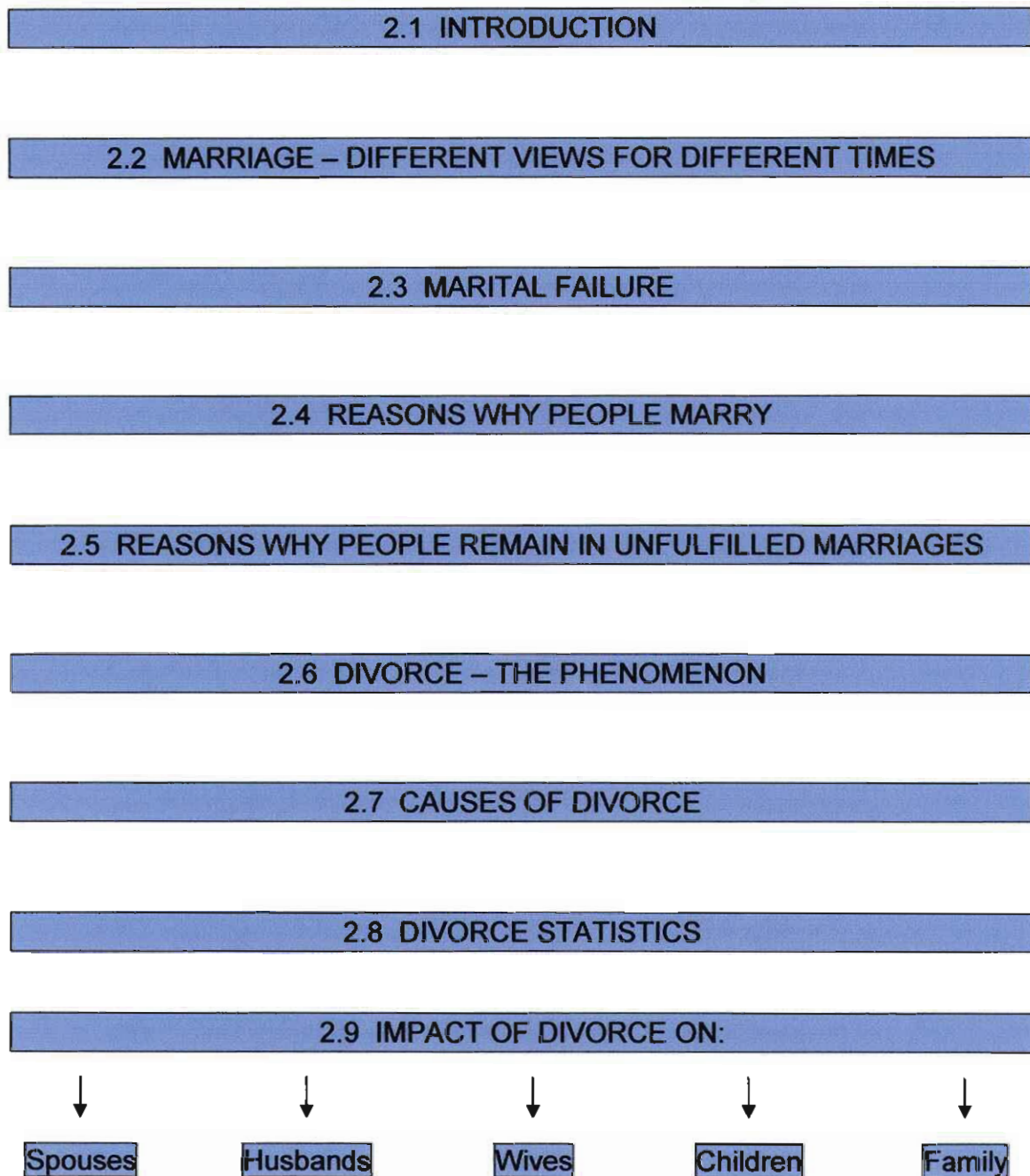


Figure 2.1 Summary of Chapter 2

2.2 MARRIAGE: DIFFERENT VIEWS FOR DIFFERENT TIMES

There would be no divorces if there were no marriages. It is only after a marriage has deteriorated into an irreparable relationship that divorce becomes

a reality in many people's lives. To understand the phenomenon of divorce, it is necessary to first look at marriage.

Marriage in the western world has traditionally been defined as a legal contract between a man and a woman who is at or above a specified age and who is not already married to someone else (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 2). This definition, however, excludes a variety of relationships such as some heterosexual and homosexual co-habitive relationships that function in much the same way as legally sanctioned marriages, albeit without the same legal protection. This opens up a much wider field for research, but for the purpose of this study, the traditional definition of a marriage will be adhered to.

In the researcher's professional experience, a good marriage is a relationship in which two people respect and like each other, become intimate friends and agree on mutual values and goals. They learn that crises are an important element within marriage, but also realize that it may be an opportunity for growth. They are willing to work together for a successful relationship that combines quality and stability. Schwartz and Scott (1994: 209) see marriage as a formal way for a couple to express their love, devotion and commitments to each other and share their lives with the person of their choice. Marriage offers sharing and commitment, but also space. In his book *The Prophet* (1955: 15-16), Kahlil Gibran expounds that in marriage partners will be together for eternity, but that even in their togetherness there must be room for each to be his or her own person.

The Western World, in general, agrees with Dickenson and Leming (1995: 234): a good marriage is seen as a relationship in which two people respect and like each other, are friends and have the same values and goals. Marriage partners learn that crises are not only part of marriage, but an important opportunity for growth. If a couple can overcome a crisis, the relationship is often strengthened. A couple that is willing to work together on their relationship, is sure to reap the benefits of quality and stability in that relationship.

Dickinson and Leming (1995: 233) and Gelles (1995: 389) state that our view of marriage has changed over the years. In the early eighteenth century, the purpose of marriage at all levels of society was to unite two families and to allow them to reproduce, rather than to gratify the love of two young people. By the early nineteenth century, however, it seemed commonplace for the young to marry whoever they chose, as long as they could demonstrate to parents that they did so out of genuine love for one another (Dickinson and Leming, 1995: 233; Schwartz and Scott, 1994: 14, 20).

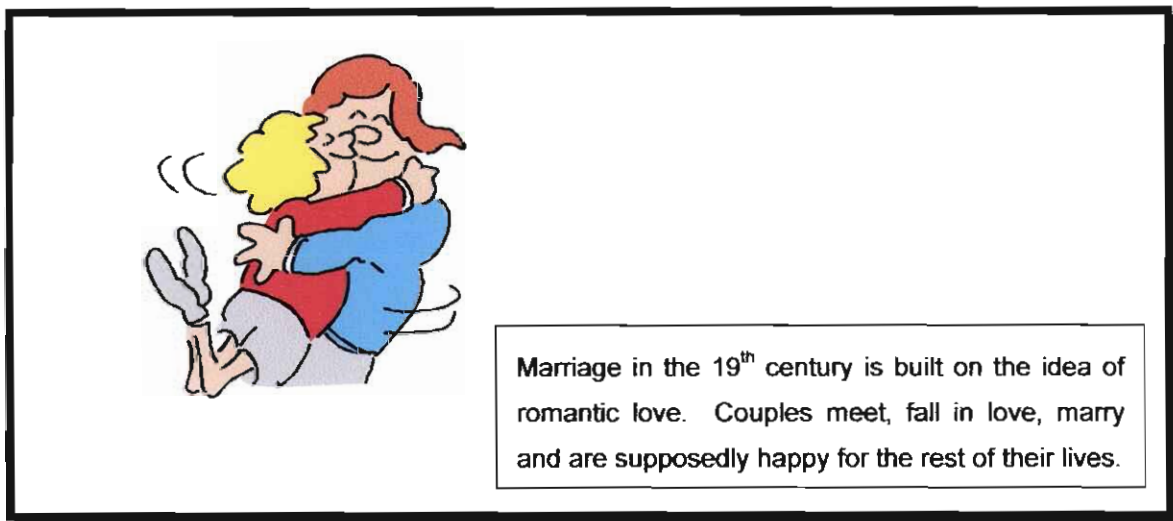


Figure 2.2: The romantic idea of love (Dickinson & Leming, 1995: 233; Gelles, 1995: 389; Schwartz and Scott, 1994: 14, 20)

In the 1950s, young people were expected to marry and have children as soon as economic circumstances permitted. They assumed that marriage would last forever. The roles of husband and wife were clearly defined and emotional stability went hand in hand with marriage (Frydenberg, 1999: 150).

In the 1960s, women were moving into the labour market in large numbers. Attitudes towards cohabitation began to change. It became more acceptable for couples to simply live together, without getting married. In the 1970s, the emphasis of marriage for some was on experimentation, freedom, open marriage and multiple options. Serial monogamy (a series of marriages) became more acceptable (Frydenberg, 1999: 150; Schwartz and Scott, 1994: 27, 349).

2.3 MARITAL FAILURE

In the researcher's own experience, many marriages nowadays end in separation or divorce, which is also well documented in literature (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2004: 1; Bezuidenhout, 2006: 15; Morgan & Coleman, 1997: 1). The number of couples getting divorced is not only rising in Western Civilization – the same tendency was also picked up in Eastern cultures. In 1980, an amendment to the Chinese marriage law was approved, saying that love was the most important element in marriage and stipulating that the deterioration of love was grounds for divorce. A wave of divorces resulted. According to Dickenson and Leming (1995: 389) centuries ago a wife in China, could divorce her husband only if he had denounced or killed someone in her family. Love, or the lack thereof, never entered the picture (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 351). Today divorce is beginning to change all that, particularly in the large cities where young people are taking a second look at what it means to love the person they marry (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 28).

People are again reviewing their values and are looking at marriage as an institution. Couples are deliberately choosing marriage as a life-style, knowing that it is riskier and more challenging today than in the past. Given this risk, it has now become very common for unmarried couples to live together. A sort of "trial marriage" or modern-day "going steady" gives a couple an opportunity to test the situation before possibly making a commitment to marriage (Davidson & Moore, 1996: 235).

2.4 REASONS WHY PEOPLE MARRY

People marry for innumerable reasons. One of these is that single persons are often viewed as socially deviant. Divorce rates might be lower if there were not so much pressure to get married (Dickenson & Lemming, 1995: 391).

Historically, people married for practical reasons: a man and a woman needed each other to meet the subsistence requirements of life and sexual division of labour within the home insured the survival of the family. Women attended to domestic chores and cared for children, while men provided the economic

means for survival and protected their families against the outside world. This is less true now than in the past (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 209).

With more democratic family structures and increased genderless divisions of labour, couples now marry for affective reasons: love, affection, encouragement, social support, and emotional wellbeing (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 209).

2.5 REASONS WHY PEOPLE REMAIN IN UNFULFILLED MARRIAGES

There are many reasons why people remain married long after the marriage has failed. They may see a failing marriage as a personal failure, or they may be afraid of what “the people” would say. Finances could also be an important reason for staying together, and many people stay together “for the sake of the children”. Another reason could be that divorce is against their religion, or they may feel guilty about the fact that people were bound to get hurt by their decision to get a divorce (Davidson & Moore, 1996: 657; Dickenson & Lemming, 1995:139).

In the researcher’s own professional experience, people perceived in the past that, even though divorce was an option, they were trapped in poor marriages by feelings of fear and insecurity. Many people feared the social stigma attached to a divorced person and of feeling a failure. Others believed that their present marriage was their only opportunity to be married and that even a bad marriage was better than no marriage at all - which again meant personal failure. Dependent women often felt that their lives and the lives of their children depended solely upon their economic ties to their husband and that divorce definitely meant a trip down poverty lane.

However, the reason for therefore not getting divorced, is not the focal point of this study and the topic will not be explored any further.

2.6 DIVORCE - THE PHENOMENON

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Sixth Edition, 2001) gives the definition of divorce as a legal dissolution of a marriage; judicial separation of a married

pair; decree of nullity of marriage. In the literature on divorce the term refers only to the legal dissolution of a marriage. However, divorce, like marriage, is a much more complex phenomenon – it is a drawn out psychological and social process that occurs over a long period of time (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 16-17).

Research has shown that the decision to get divorced is not a one-off occurrence, but a process that consists of phases (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 16-17; Ferreira, 1994: 44). It can be seen as a process that begins before physical separation and continues long thereafter (Venter, 1999: 47; Myers & Diener, 1995: 4, 5). Because divorce is a process, it is difficult to pinpoint the actual start and conclusion of the event. For some divorcees, the event does not come to a close.

In many marriages, the rift leading toward ultimate separation ferments year by year in someone's thoughts, often without conscious awareness on the part of spouse concerned or his partner. This process can be viewed as a "cumulative divorce" – a "slow-brewing and long-term gestation of conflict wherein the decision to divorce arises out of a long series of stresses" (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 20).

The process often starts with a feeling of boredom or unhappiness, which may be one-sided or not. Sometimes one of the potential pitfalls for divorce (as discussed in Cf. 2.7) results in a rift. One or both spouses may discuss this uneasy feeling with a close friend or a family member. Gottman (1994: 39) goes on to describe a process in which further incidents occur and resentment smolders; interests deviate; little conversation is made beyond ordinary questions and comments and formerly loving partners move on to having little or nothing in common. Gottman also calls this pre-divorce phase a time of deliberation and despair. If this process continues, divorce becomes inevitable.

According to Schwartz and Scott (1994: 361) and Gelles (1995: 402), the anthropologist, Paul Bohannon, has identified six facets of divorce that couples

experience in dissolving their marital relationship. These, as summarised in Figure 2.3, are called “stations of divorce”.

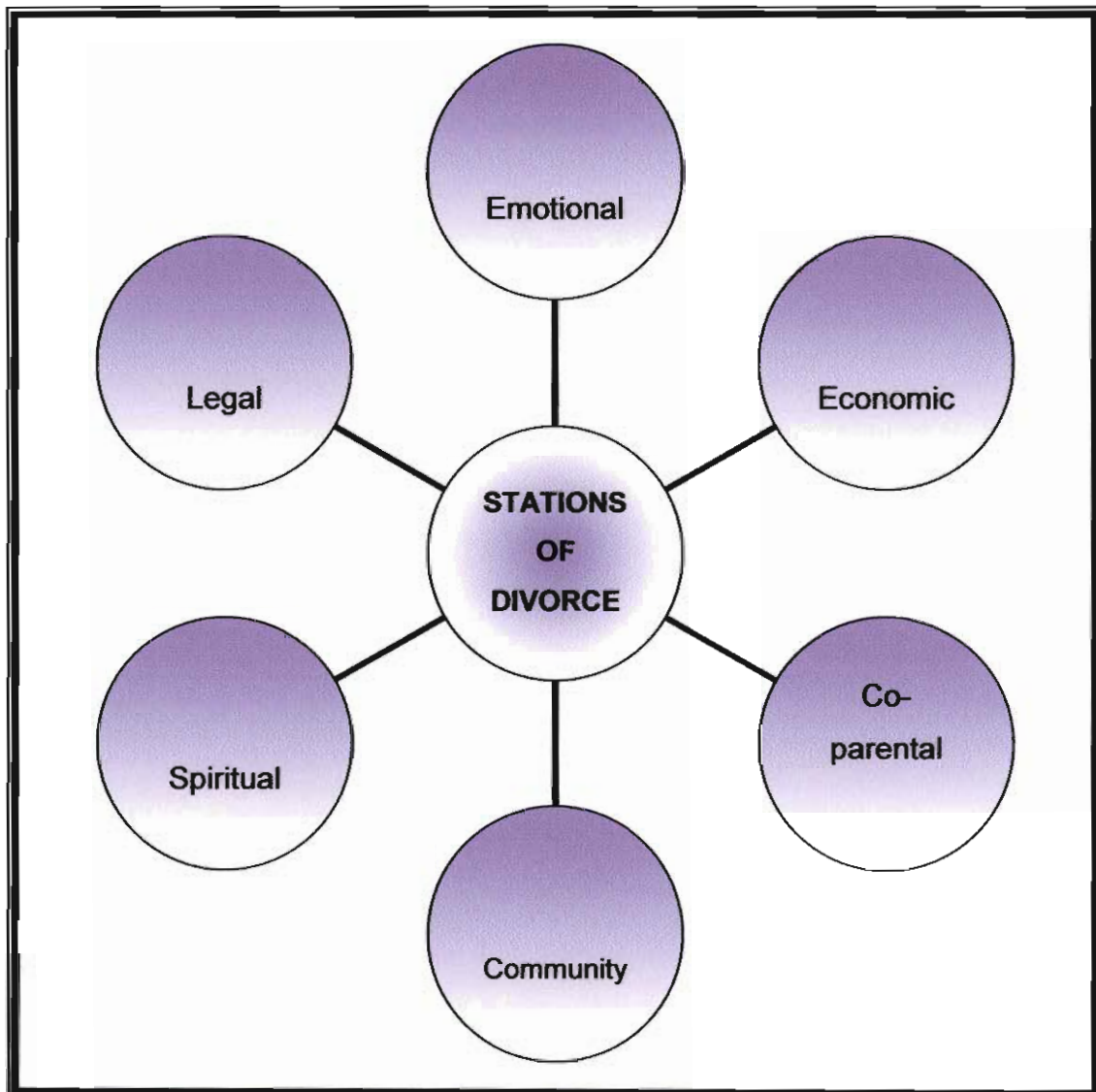


Figure 2.3: Stations of divorce (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 361; Gelles, 1995: 402)

Each of these stations will be discussed in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon of divorce.

- Emotional divorce

An emotional divorce can be present in a marriage for a long time before legal action is taken to end the relationship (or what Gottman refers to as the pre-divorce phase). Here, one or both spouses question the viability or

quality of the relationship, and at some point this view is shared with the other. There is often a period during which one or both partners withdraw emotionally from the relationship. A loss of mutual respect, trust and affection follows, and during this period most spouses may hurt or frustrate the other deliberately. Feelings of disillusionment, anxiety, despair, disbelief, dread, shock, emptiness, anger and depression are common during this phase (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 16; Morgan & Coleman, 1997; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 24).

- Economic divorce

The economic divorce involves the settlement of property and a financial settlement; a process that often involves considerable conflict. The couple is separating physically and could at this point be filing for legal divorce. If the couple have children, they have to decide on an economic settlement for care of the children. Common feelings in this phase are confusion, fury, sadness, loneliness and relief, or vindictiveness (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 24). In the circumstances where the woman was previously unemployed, she could now be forced to re-enter the labour market.

- Co-parental divorce

The co-parental divorce involves decisions concerning child custody, visitation rights and the financial and legal responsibilities of each parent. This station can also be a source of conflict, particularly when parents are engaged in a custody battle. This is also a time for grieving and mourning. Common feelings are the concern for the children, ambivalence, numbness, uncertainty and fear of loss (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 24).

- Community divorce

The couple tells relatives and friends of the divorce. This results in changing social relationships. It can involve a loss of relatives and friends who were previously shared by the couple. The withdrawal of friendship may occur for several reasons. Those who were friendly with both spouses may not want to be drawn into taking sides, while others may see the

divorce as a threat to their own relationships. The divorcees may be reaching out to new friends or undertaking new activities. During this phase divorcees are trying to settle into a new lifestyle and may experience feelings such as regret, sadness, resignation, optimism and excitement (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 25).

- Spiritual divorce

This is the time for making peace with the spiritual self. The feelings commonly observed during this period are self-doubt, a desire for church approval and the fear of God's displeasure or wrath (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 26). It also involves a redefinition of self, away from the togetherness of couplehood and back to a sense of singularity. This process takes time and involves a distancing from the failed marriage and an acceptance of the breakup. Many people go through a mourning process similar to that experienced by people who have lost a spouse to death. The time this takes and the degree of difficulty experienced while passing through this station varies considerably from individual to individual. When this phase is successfully negotiated, feelings common to this phase are acceptance, self-confidence, self-worth, wholeness, exhilaration and independence (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 26). Although the psychic separation phase could be the most difficult phase of the divorce process, it can also be the most constructive phase (Ferreirra, 1994: 44). When the divorcee fails to negotiate this phase successfully, or get stuck in it, the effect can be very destructive.

- Legal divorce

This officially ends the marriage and gives the spouses the right to remarry. Legal divorce generally follows a period of months or even years of deliberation. This is when they are consulting an attorney or mediator. They may experience strong feelings of self-pity, emotional trauma and/or helplessness (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 16; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997:24).

Figure 2.4 below summarises how Kaslow (in Ferreirra, 1994:29) showed the divorce process:

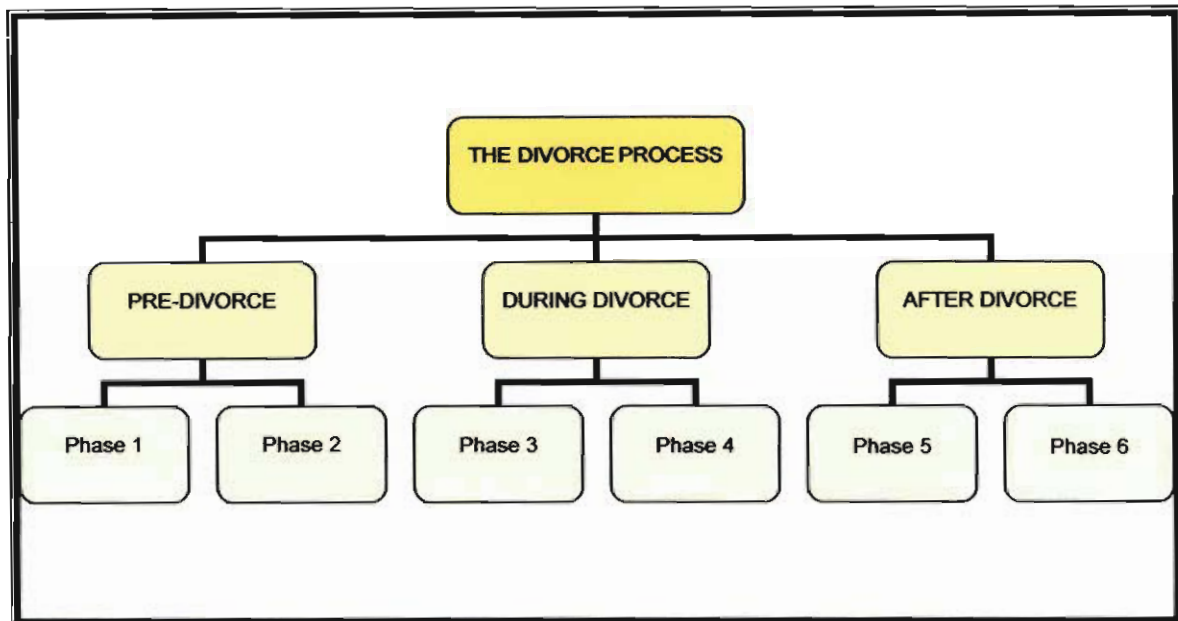


Figure 2.4: The divorce process (based on Kaslow in Ferreira, 1994: 29)

- Pre-divorce period

Phase 1: disillusionment, dissatisfaction and estrangement

Phase 2: feelings of fear, ambivalence, shock, emptiness, chaos, incompetence and a low self-esteem

- During divorce period

This period is also known as the lawsuit period:

Phase 3: depression, isolation, aggression, hopelessness and self-pity

Phase 4: confusion, anger, sorrow, loneliness and relief

- After-divorce period

Phase 5: optimism, resignation, excitement, curiosity and repentance

Phase 6: acceptance, energy, self-confidence, wholeness, autonomy, cheerfulness and independence.

Unfortunately, Phases 5 and 6 are not always true of every divorced person. Many divorcees fail to successfully steer through the last phases,

and this results in failure to adapt to the single life again, or to have meaningful relationships again.

Along with the death of a loved one, divorce is among the most stressful events a person can experience. It is a personal tragedy for the husband, wife, their children, family and friends (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 15; Buchannan, 1996: 14; Davidson & Moore, 1996: 9; Frydenburg, 1999: 11; Green, 1995: 4; Sclater, 1999: 9; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989: 14; Woudstra, 1997: 2).

To summarise the divorce process, one could say that no one is ever completely divorced from a person once truly loved. Fond memories, pleasant times together, unique personality traits of the other never totally fade away. Being able to cope with both painful and pleasant memories is part of a healthy emotional divorce (Ferreirra, 1994: 45).

2.7 CAUSES OF DIVORCE

2.7.1 Stages of the marriage

According to Smith (1988: 105), young couples getting married can expect to go through seven “levels” or stages, which may last for varying periods, may overlap to some extent, and sometimes can occur concurrently. In each of these stages, a couple’s marriage is at risk. Every new stage has its own potholes and the couple has to steer carefully around them. For example: if in the entry phase one partner fails to make certain concessions, but instead insists on having his own way, the conflict may become too great for the marriage to survive. Each stage offers its own problems, challenges and rewards, and if a couple cannot adapt to these changes, they may be in for some rough times, which may ultimately result in divorce (Figure 2.5).

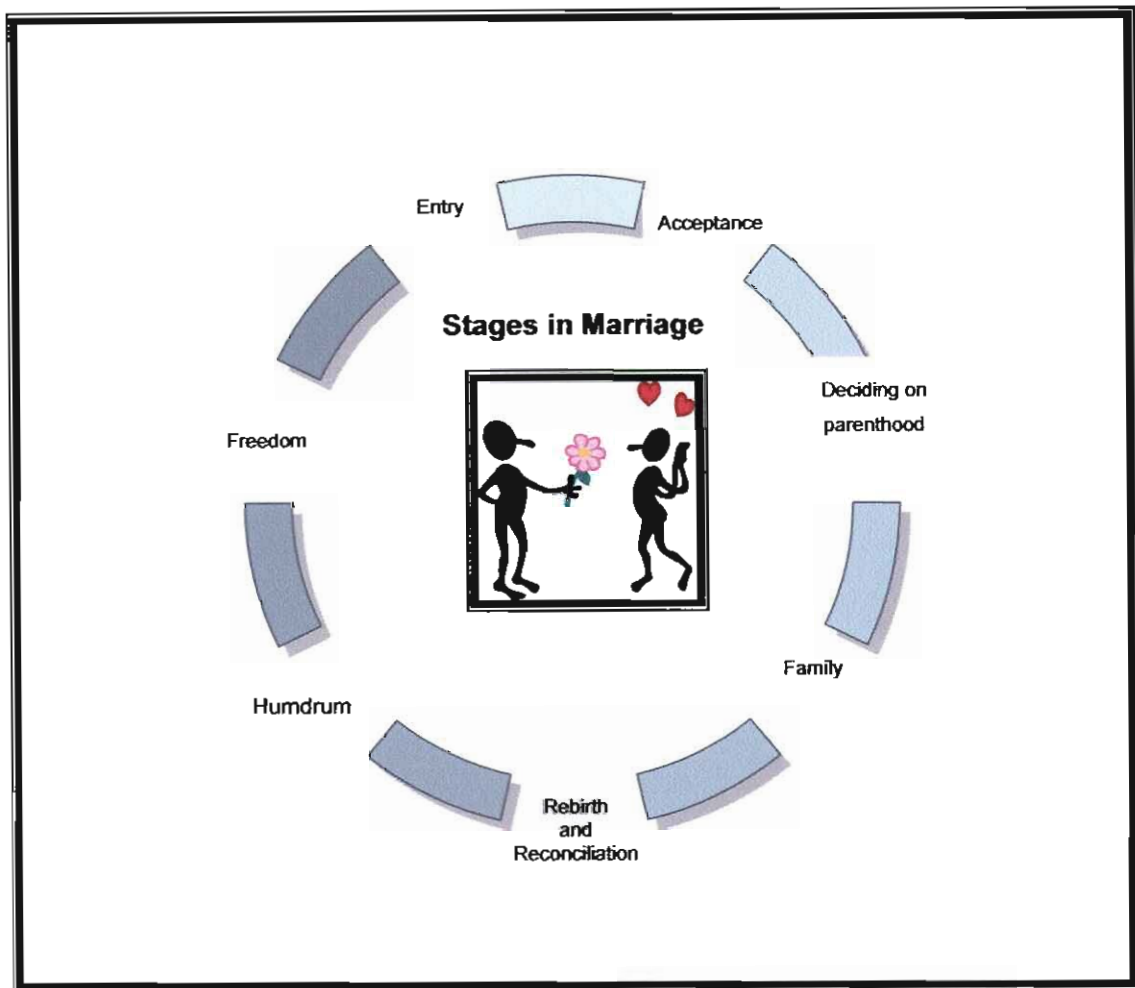


Figure 2.5: Stages in marriage (Smith, 1988: 105)

2.7.1.1 Entry

This is the initial phase of marriage during which the couple is still split between “you and me”, “my family and your family”. They struggle to reach unity. Major decisions have to be made, which may include where to live; whether to buy a house or to rent; how to merge hobbies and friends; how the finances are going to be handled; who is responsible for what, et cetera. It is a time of judgment and adjusting to new roles, which could be a pitfall.

2.7.1.2 Acceptance

This is a time of shared experiences, of thinking as a team and developing the trust to be friends. The conflicts of the previous stage (or at least most of them) have been settled and the marriage partners are more at ease with their

roles. It has become more “we” than “I”. A lack of acceptance would pose a pitfall.

2.7.1.3 Deciding on parenthood

The decision to become parents is a bigger issue today than it was in previous generations, when parenthood almost always followed marriage. Because of the availability of contraception and abortion, parenthood has become a choice, not an inevitability. Other considerations are: how many children to have, the question of affordability is raised and an inability to reach a consensus on parenthood could be a possible pitfall.

2.7.1.4 Family

Living with – and paying for - babies and growing children can cause confusion, jealousy and strife. Having children puts more strain on any marriage than most people realise. Couples with different upbringings often struggle to find an acceptable way to deal with their children. Different value systems may come into play and cause huge conflict.

2.7.1.5 Rebirth (hers) and reconciliation (his)

This is the time of the potential midlife crisis. The children are old enough for the wife to start a new life, should she so wish and very often, this is the time for her to re-enter the job-market. The husband, on the other hand could be looking back at what he had achieved, and trying to accept the limitations of his career quest. This places the husband and wife in very different positions, which could result in disharmony and a potential pitfall.

2.7.1.6 Humdrum

During this stage, the usual state of affairs could have become boring and marriage partners might be looking for something to spice up their lives a bit. Various means of doing so may be considered, including either or both partners having an affair. During this phase, the danger is that partners can grow apart or hurt one another deeply.

2.7.1.7 Freedom

This is the phase in which the children have moved out and couples can consider vacations for just the two of them. If they had made it this far, it could be the grand finale. But there could also be problems – adult children might be returning home because things had gone awry in their own lives (like a divorce) or an illness might have had a crippling effect on their lives.

If crises are not resolved at any of the above stages, divorce may eventuate.

Causes of divorce may also differ depending on when in a marriage the divorce occurs. The three time periods during which divorce is most likely to occur are:

- The early-stage,
- mid-stage , and during the
- later stage of a marriage (Davidson & Moore, 1996: 654).

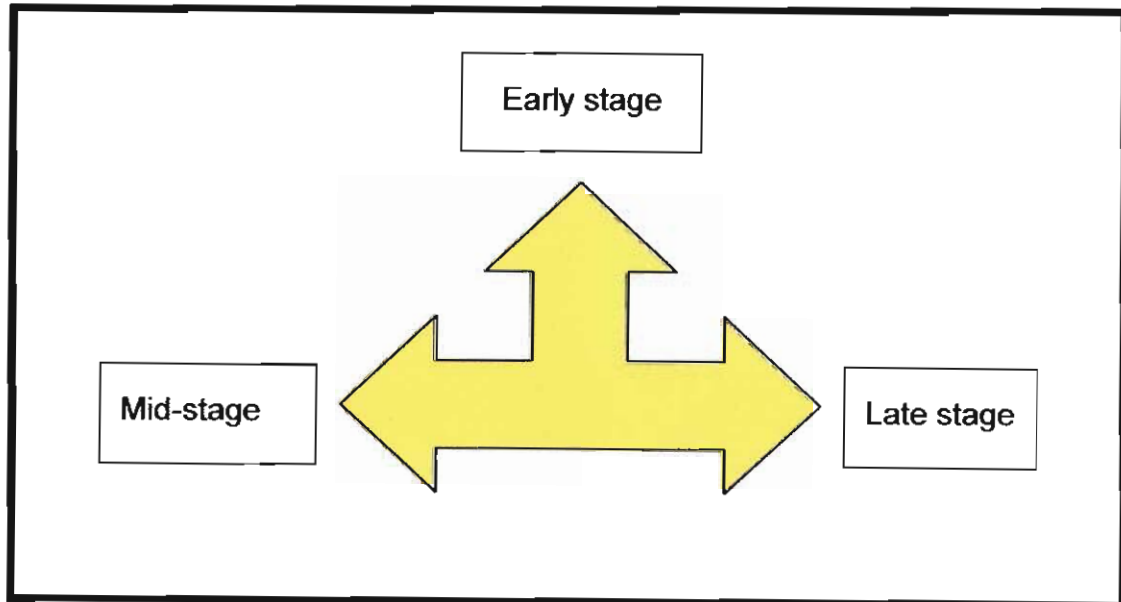


Figure 2.6: Likely periods for divorce (Davidson & Moore, 1996: 654)

- Early stage divorces

When the divorce occurs during the first few years of marriage, it may be that there was a wedding, but never a true marriage –the spouses were never

married emotionally. In the words of Dr. Bruce Wilkenson of Walk through the Bible Ministries (video-series *Biblical Portrait of a marriage*), there was no *cleaving*. In this stage, divorces are usually by mutual consent.

- Mid-stage divorces

Divorces in the mid-stage of a marriage (7 – 10 years) may result from a marriage that “neglected itself to death”. The marriage partners failed to realise that it takes hard work to make even the best marriages succeed. Women are likely to initiate mid-stage divorces, often to “discover themselves”. They try to establish a new identity in a career or professional role.

- Late-stage divorces

Late-stage divorces occur in the later years of marriage (after 20 years). As a rule the couple had grown apart and is facing the “empty nest” syndrome. While it is the woman who has sacrificed her own self-identity it is usually the husband who initiates a divorce during this stage.

2.7.2 Circumstances leading to divorce

Both internal and external factors have a huge influence on the marriage. Because our life expectancies have greatly increased since the turn of the century, divorce is surpassing death in bringing marriages to a premature close. Before the 19th century, the average marriage lasted only a dozen years before one or the other spouse died. Now, partners who do not divorce have marriages that on an average last four times longer. In the past, a patient spouse in a bad relationship needed only to wait a few years. Today, death is an unlikely deliverer.

Davidson and Moore (1996: 654) state that statistics reveal who divorces, but not always why. Even those endless compilations of causes provided by scientists who study the family may list symptoms, not reasons.

The reason most frequently cited by the men and women involved is that of spouses growing apart, or a lack of cohesion (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 22; Davidson & Moore, 1996: 655; Schwartz and Scott, 1994: 355). The

grandparents of today's young adults would seldom have divorced due to such emotional discontent, especially not if children were involved, because they usually expected less of marriage. Those who divorced were strongly condemned.

Another reason why marriages fail could, according to Davidson and Moore, (1996: 675) be that too much or too little is expected from marriage. There are two sets of assumptions regarding spouses:

- One set holds that their partners are their perfect complement – the person who will assist them in fulfilling their human potential. This person will be their soul mate, their sole partner in dialogue, their total means of sexual fulfillment and personal intimacy, their primary source of security, comfort and stability and their place of respite from a depersonalised, cold and competitive world.
- The other set of assumptions is that one's marriage partner is a fellow traveller on the road to developing personal potential; if one's life goals change or one perceives that the marriage relationship is no longer fulfilling and beneficial, one should then disengage from the relationship and consider affiliating with another traveller, or travel unaccompanied.

Both sets of assumptions make divorce more likely. The first is unrealistic. The second set of assumptions leads to a consumer mentality, where a product is used and when it is perceived as no longer of any value, it is discarded and/or replaced. Yet, because people believe that personal fulfilment is possible in marriage, they find it more difficult to justify remaining in an unsatisfactory marriage.

According to Schwartz and Scott (1994: 36), the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists identified ten areas that are problematic in marriages. (Figure 2.7). These are summarised in Figure 2.7 and they are rated from the most damaging to the least as:

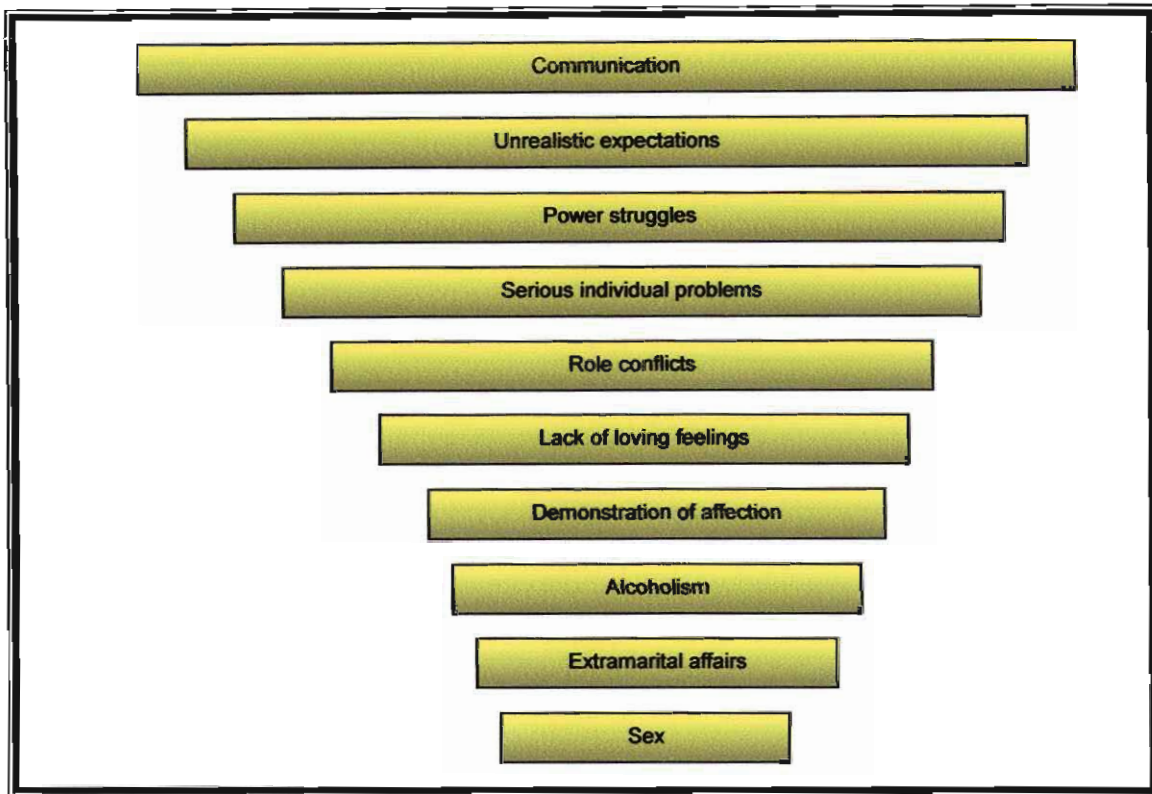


Figure 2.7: Problematic areas in marriages (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 36)

Each will be briefly discussed:

2.7.2.1 Communication

Communication can be seen as the act of transmitting information, news, facts or feelings from one person to another. It also implies that the person receiving this information, should have an understanding of what the first person intended. A lack of communication skills blocks out real emotional intimacy and leads to many misunderstandings of both the spouses and their emotions (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 36).

2.7.2.2 Unrealistic expectations of marriage or spouse

The husband may expect the wife to be a homemaker and mother, while she wishes to seek fulfilment in her career. If the dream of what people think marriage constitutes and the reality of what they get does not match, the marriage is in jeopardy. In the example stated, the husband may feel that his wife is letting him down because she is not fulfilling the role that he expected of

her. The wife, on the other hand, may feel that her husband does not understand her needs and desires and that he does not grant her the same opportunities that he has. Unrealistic expectations lead to major conflicts in a marriage (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 36).

2.7.2.3 Power struggles

The question here is who is the person in charge, who makes the decisions and who has the final say in matters. If the husband is traditionally the leader of the household, but the wife has a stronger personality, it creates conflict. The wife may be perceived as bossy, or the husband as a weakling. It may also include physical violence and abuse (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 36; Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 401)

2.7.2.4 Serious individual problems

Serious individual problems, including psychological and/or physical difficulties, cause strain within a marriage. For example, one spouse might be suffering from severe depression, which could influence their whole relationship. Another example would be the obsessive jealousy of one partner, which destroys trust and eventually the relationship itself (Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 401, Myers, 1989: 68).

2.7.2.5 Role conflicts

Partners have roles within a marriage and those roles are multiple. They include parenting, providing economically, care giving, decision-making, and so on. An important issue to resolve before or early in a marriage is who is responsible for what. If the wife is also working, the husband should help with the housework. They should decide beforehand how the workload should be divided. When the children come along, it becomes even more complicated. Traditionally the wife's role is helping the children with homework and taking them to their different extramural activities, but if she is also working fulltime, a new role that suits both partners will have to be created for her.

2.7.2.6 Lack of loving feelings

Some spouses state (even before the marriage) that they felt no love for their partner, and that they were simply marrying them for other (sometimes selfish) reasons. The other spouse may feel deeply rejected by such an attitude and may feel cheated out of a loving relationship (Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 401).

2.7.2.7 Demonstrations of affection

Some spouses (usually the husbands) may be unwilling or unable to express their affections and emotions for the other and the other spouse may also experience this as rejection (Colburn, Lin & Moore, 1992:19; Davidson and Moore 1996: 33).

2.7.2.8 Alcoholism

Alcoholism or any other form of drug abuse is devastating to any relationship and the emotional and financial hardship that the rest of the family has to endure, is very destructive. The misuse of such substances very often leads to the physical and emotional abuse of other members of the family (Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 401).

2.7.2.9 Extramarital affairs

If one spouse is having an extramarital affair, the other spouse could be extremely hurt in the process. Some marriages cannot be saved because of such an affair. The lack of trust in the transgressor may be just too much to overcome for the injured party (Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 401; Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbusch, 1996: 232).

2.7.2.10 Sex

The way spouses perceive their sexuality and different sexual needs place huge pressure on a marriage (Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 401).

This statement is supported by various other researchers (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 22-23; Davidson & Moore, 1996: 355; Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 355).

The probability of divorce is also influenced by other factors. Amongst others:

2.7.2.11 Age at first marriage

Bezuidenhout, (2006: 22-23) Davidson and Moore (1996: 656) and Schwartz and Scott (1994: 355) found that women who marry in their teens, marry after pre-marital birth, or conceive their first child prior to marriage are twice more likely than other women to have their marriages end in divorce.

2.7.2.12 Mother's age at first birth

Teenage mothers have less skills and knowledge on childrearing than older mothers. They often find the burden of childrearing and adapting to a marriage simply too heavy to bear. The whole idyllic idea of one happy family living together, doesn't measure up to the reality of life, and divorce is often the result.

2.7.2.13 Low family income

Schwartz and Scott (1994: 356) and Bezuidenhout (2006: 20) indicate that a low family income creates major stress in a family, and that stress is a huge contributing factor in the failure of marriages. When there is a lack of finances, it usually leads to more conflict in a marriage (Davidson and Moore, 1996:33).

2.7.2.14 The wife's work status and income level

Davidson and Moore (1996: 657) state that women who have higher levels of education have less stable marriages. They have concluded that when a wife has a high level of education, it substantially increases the probability that she will be employed outside the home in a position of responsibility and therefore, she may experience role overload, especially if her marriage also involves motherhood (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 21). It may also be that a woman returns to further studies in later marriage to acquire career skills because she desires alternatives to an already unhappy marriage. When both spouses are working, it may lead to job conflicts that are especially a problem if one partner tends to work away from the home and the other partner has to cope alone with the demands of the home and family (Ferreira, 1994: 123).

2.7.2.15 Number and ages of children in household

It has been said before that some spouses decide not to divorce because they do not want to harm the children in any way. Couples without dependent children divorce more easily (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 23).

2.7.2.16 Educational attainment of head in household

Persons who are less educated have a greater tendency to divorce than those who are better educated (Davidson & Moore 1996: 657). This may be linked to economic tensions: men with better education often earn higher incomes. Women married to men who earned well, were less likely to divorce (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 20).

2.7.2.17 Problems with in-laws

In-laws can cause severe problems in a marriage, especially when newly weds live with parents. In the researcher's private practice, her experience has been that the parents often won't allow their children to make their own mistakes and learn from their experiences, but constantly interferes in their lives. Sometimes the newly weds may also cling to the parents instead of to their partner (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 19-20; Schwartz and Scott 1994:355, Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 401).

2.7.2.18 Neglect of children

If one of the spouses is perceived by the other as not being adequately involved with the children, or of neglecting the children, it leads to conflict (Buchanan, *et. al.*, 1996:232; Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 401).

The above factors are summarised in Figure 2.8 below. CHAPTER ONE

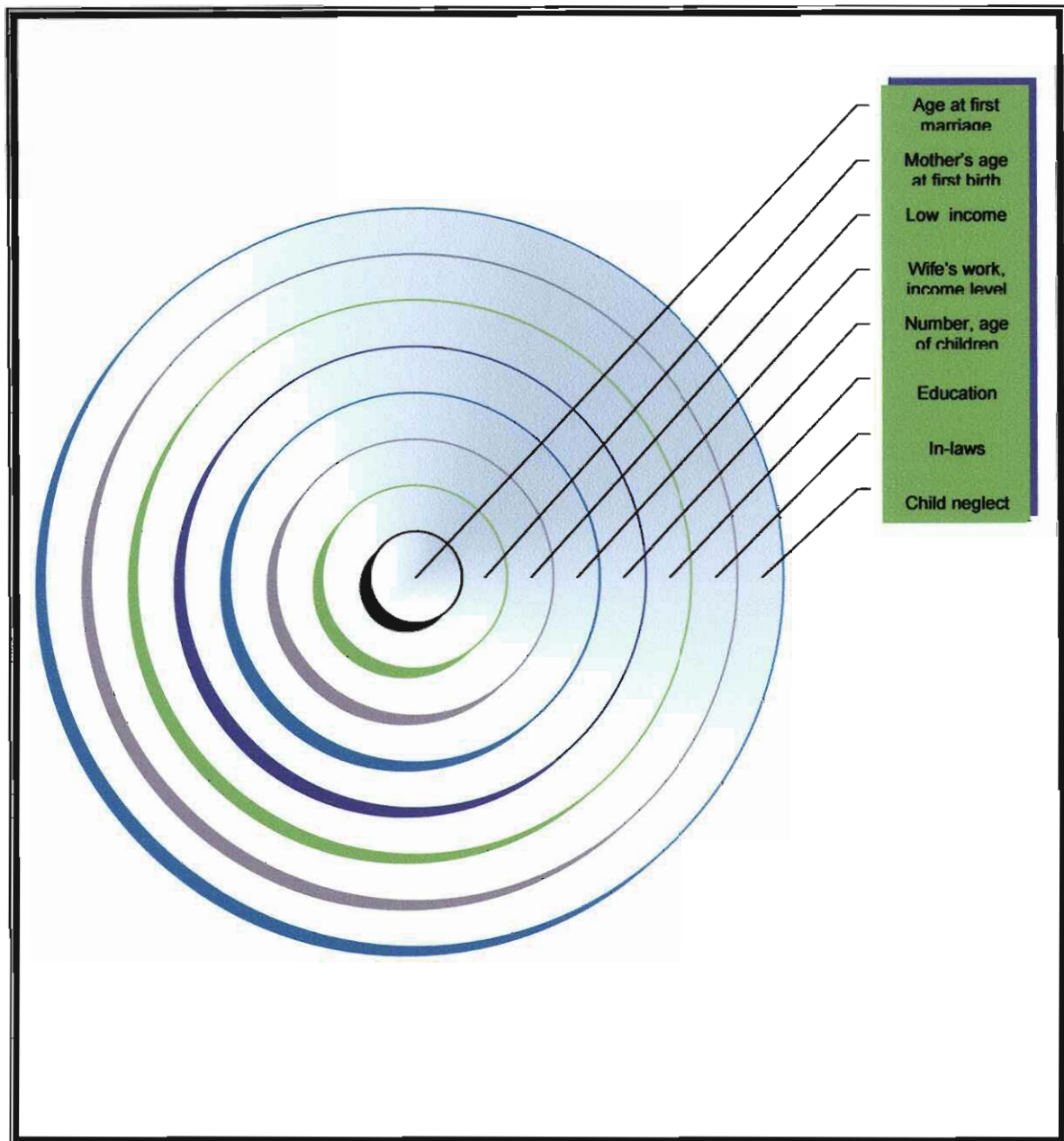


Figure 2.8: Additional factors that influence the probability of divorce (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 20-23; Davidson & Moore, 1996: 656-657; Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 356)

2.8 DIVORCE STATISTICS

There are a number of methods by which the chances of a person getting divorced can be calculated (Gelles, 1995: 390).

2.8.1 The Marriage-to-Divorce Ratio

The number of officially recorded marriages in South Africa during the year 1999 was 155 807. In the same year the number of divorces was 37 098 (Statistics South Africa, 2002). Almost a quarter of all marriages thus seem to end in divorce. Of all the possible ways of measuring the risk of divorce, the marriage-to-divorce ratio seems to be the most widely reported in the media, but also the most inaccurate and least valid (Gelles, 1995: 390). The problem with the statistical method is that the people, who got married in 1999, were not the same people who were getting divorced. The pool of potential divorces came from all those who were married, and not just those who were married during that year.

2.8.2 The Crude Divorce Rate

The crude divorce rate calculates the number of divorces per 100 000 people in the population (Gelles, 1995: 390). The crude rate for registered marriages in South Africa during 1999 was 354,8 per 100 000 of the population (Statistics South Africa, 2002). The crude divorce rate also has an important limitation. By calculating the rate per 100 000 people in the population, the statistics included people who were not married, as well as children, people who were obviously not at risk of being divorced, and so the picture is thus distorted.

Unfortunately, neither one of these two methods answers the question, "What are the chances of a marriage ending in divorce?" The most reliable and perhaps the best way to answer this question would be to follow a national sample of couples who got married in a given year, until these marriages ended either in divorce, or the death of a spouse. No investigator has as yet carried out this time-consuming and expensive study (Gelles 1995: 391).

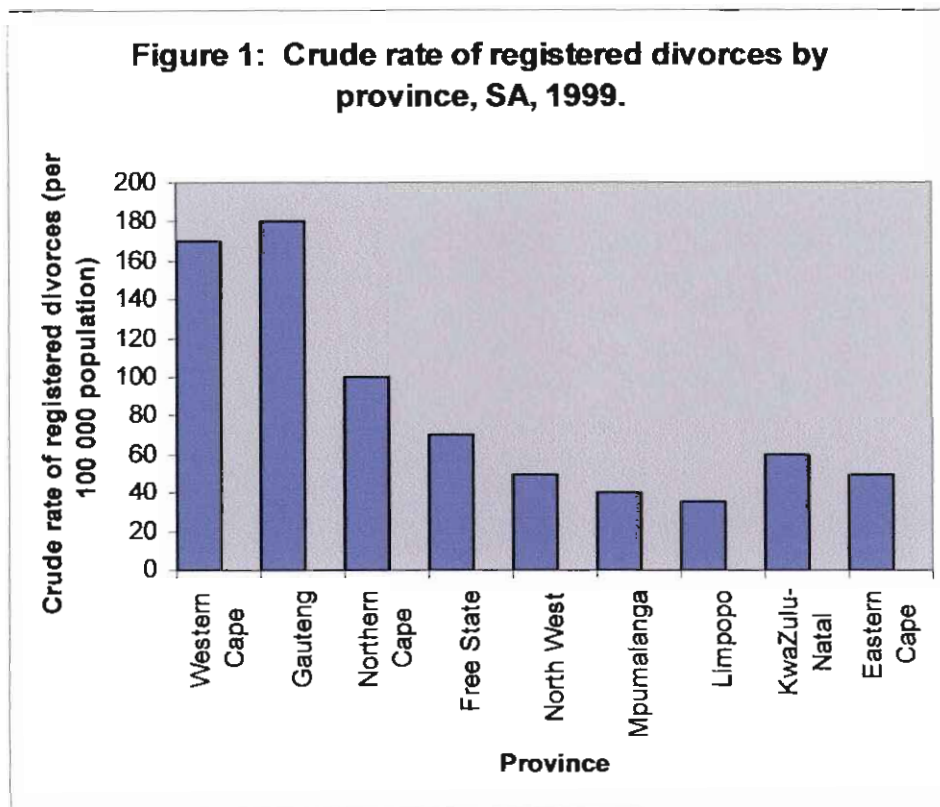


Figure 2.9: Crude rate of registered marriages by provinces, South Africa, 1999

Source: Department of Statistics South Africa (2003)

The following statistics show the current trend since 1999 to 2002 and the number of children involved:

Year	Divorces	Children involved
1999	37 098	45 331
2000	34 102	38 833
2001	34 045	37 803
2002	31 370	34 400

Figure 2.10: The number of children involved in divorces

Source: Department of Statistics South Africa (2003); (2004); (2005).

2.9 IMPACT OF DIVORCE

The impact of divorce is multifaceted and complex. Some of the consequences influence both spouses, but others are unique to husbands or wives.

2.9.1 The Impact of Divorce on both Spouses

Spouses may suffer from the same consequences of divorce. Events after a divorce are typically paradoxical. On the positive side, divorce can free people from unhappy, conflict-ridden, or unsatisfactory relationships. On the negative side, however, divorce can produce considerable pain, guilt and uncertainty (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 362). The divorced person still feels part of the past relationship, but is also looking towards the future.

The adjustment to being a divorced person is called re-singling (Dickenson & Leming, 1995: 404). As one returns to a single marital status, there is obviously a process of personal adjustment taking place. From a social-psychological point of view, this process is both an individual and a social experience. From a personal perspective, there is a sense of loss – not unlike the experience of bereavement associated with the death of a spouse. In the process, divorcees may experience many of the following feelings: shock and denial, disorganisation, anger or volatile emotions, guilt, loss, loneliness and relief. These attitudes and emotions are normal for people who are attempting to cope with the stress involved in the changing status of a relationship. While some have suggested that there is an inherent order to the experience of these feelings, divorced persons will attest to the fact that they have experienced many of these feelings at the same time and that they go back and forth between them. For example, guilt and anger are related feelings. Anger may be directed at a spouse, mistress, or former in-laws; guilt is typically anger turned inward (Shaub, 2002).

In the transition from married to single status, old roles are lost and have to be changed into new ones, or new ones have to be developed. Following marriage, individuals often lose the ability to see themselves as individuals and still see themselves as part of a couple (Ferreira, 1994: 29). This inhibits the development of new roles and the ability to adjust to an altered reality.

Divorce implies the loss of a primary relationship and the conscious and active rejection of one spouse by another. This loss of a union is the primary cause of the “fear of separation” syndrome (Ferreira, 1994: 29). It includes focusing attention on the image of the lost spouse; a desire to renew contact; anger against the ex-spouse; feelings of guilt because one or the other spouse may feel responsible for losing the other spouse; an over-awareness of any sign that the lost loved one may want to return; an extreme feeling of restlessness; and a feeling of fear or panic. In short, the impact of divorce can cause an emotional maelstrom (Bezuidenhout: 2006: 22).

Several problems may obviously arise because of a divorce, and adjustments have to be made by the parting disputants. They have to resolve economic and legal issues, as well as deal with the effects on their emotional and physical well-being and social lives. These effects vary according to gender, age, length of marriage, presence or absence of children, ethnicity, religion, stage in the life cycle, existence of social support and networks and post-divorce relationship post-divorce with their ex-spouses (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 157).

When a childless marriage dissolves, a major element of potential controversy – child custody – is absent. If it was a short marriage and the partners were quite young, they may recuperate rapidly and eventually see the marriage as a brief interlude (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 157). Childless couples have the advantage of being much more mobile. They can relocate anywhere without judicial restraints of child caretaking and visitation being imposed upon them. They also need never have contact with each other again, if they so chose.

The most common problems experienced by both women and men as a result of divorce are summarised in Figure 2.9:

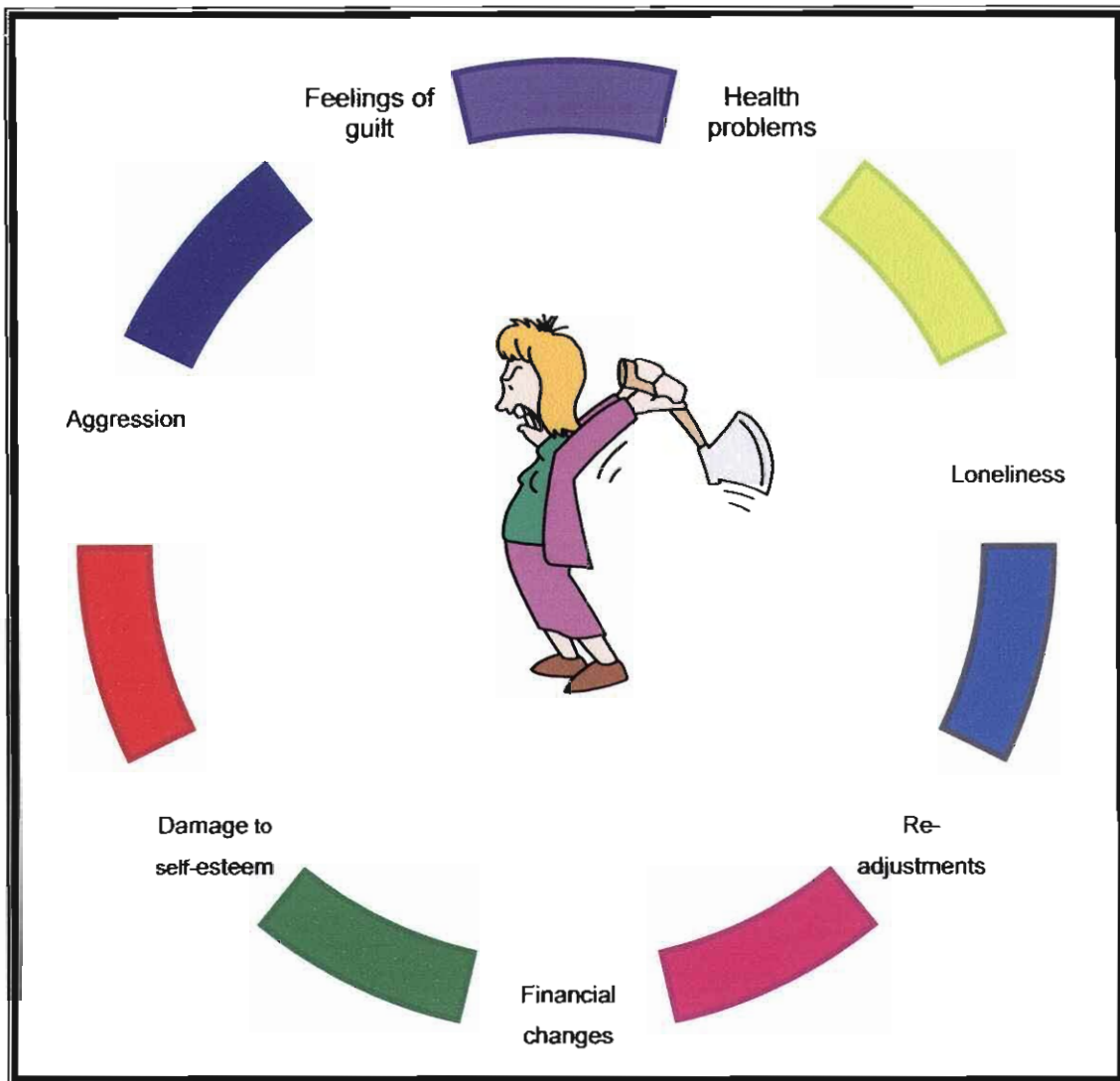


Figure 2.11: Problems commonly experienced by both men and women as a result of divorce (Bezuidenhout, 2005:22; Ferreira, 1999: 29; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 157; Shaub, 2002)

2.9.1.1 Health problems (both physical and psychological)

Research has shown a marked increase in feelings of ill health in recently divorced people (Ferreira, 1994: 30; Shaub, 2002). They tend to suffer more from physical illnesses such as problems with blood pressure and their immune systems, and they also tend to suffer more from stress and depression than people who are married. This tends to change over time.

Many people experience depression and sometimes despair in the wake of a divorce. This often stems from feelings of stress, hurt, anger and failure, and

sometimes their sorrow emanates from the continued strong affection they still feel for their ex-spouse even after experiencing much rejection (Ferreira, 1994: 30; Shaub, 2002).

2.9.1.2 Loneliness

Of all the negative feelings of the newly separated, none is more common or more overwhelming than loneliness. Loneliness comes from a void in social relationships. Only a minority fail to suffer from it, and even those who most keenly desired the end of a marriage, often find the initial loneliness excruciating (Ferreira, 1994: 30-31).

Loneliness often accompanies the transition from being part of a couple to being single again. Feelings of isolation and loneliness can lead to physical and psychological problems (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 363). Of all the supportive sources that divorcees have, friends and family are the most important ones. Their physical presence is like an antidote for loneliness. To restore their self-esteem, divorced people are therefore all advised to maintain friends and companions, or to seek new ones to offset the possible losses in their support network.

Feelings of loneliness and emotional trauma associated with divorce frequently lead to suicide among both men and women (although the frequency is higher among women) (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25).

2.9.1.3 The need for social and sexual readjustments

Contact with the spouse is a basic ingredient of marriage. This leads to a feeling of "being with someone". Divorce brings an end to this feeling of unity, even if it was only superficial. This is also true in terms of their sexual relationship, and this, in turn, brings feelings of uncertainty about the future and about the divorcee's role in social interaction (Shaub, 2002). Sexual adjustment is largely shaped by the importance attached to and experience of sex within the former marriage, as well as by gender, with men finding it easier to interact sexually outside of committed relationships (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25).

Friends and family are often unsure of how to react towards a divorcee. Friends often feel that they would have to make a choice in terms of their loyalty towards the couple, and divorcees thus often lose friends (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25; Ferreira, 1994: 32).

Another social problem for divorced persons is that since being re-singled, they have had to readjust to an adult world in which most people were married. Like other single people, they just do not fit into a coupled environment, but unlike other single people, they have a social history dominated by meaningful couple-orientated experiences (Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 406). This can complicate the adjustment process.

Furthermore, many divorced people feel so much discomfort in the social situations in which they formerly participated as married persons that they find it necessary to terminate these relationships and to make new friendships with other people. Divorcees may also withdraw of their own free will, because they fear rejection (Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 406).

Although the need for social and sexual readjustment is common to both spouses, attempts at fulfillment of these needs are gender specific. It is noted that women have a greater number of close relationships than men, see their relatives more often, are more likely to have a confidante or close friend and are more skilled in talking about relationships than men. Men tend to have a distinctive style of love that focuses on practical help, shared physical activities, spending time together and sex. Men seem to separate sex and love, while women connect them, but, paradoxically, sexual intercourse seems to be the most meaningful way of giving and receiving love for many men (Dickenson & Leming, 1996: 239). Mens' characteristic style makes social and emotional readjustment following a divorce more complex.

2.9.1.4 Financial changes in their lifestyles

Divorce has a huge impact on both of the divorcees' finances (Shaub, 2002). The same level of income now has to support two households.

Men are generally economically better off than women after a divorce. Traditionally, society has placed greater value on male workers and has therefore paid them higher wages (Dickenson & Leming, 1995: 233). This point is discussed further in 2.9.3. Nevertheless, men have to make financial adjustments when maintenance payments are required and this impacts financially on future permanent relationships. With the continual rising costs of living, women often find maintenance payments inadequate (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25).

2.9.1.5 Damage to self-esteem and self-image

The damage done to a divorcee's self-image and self-esteem, is huge. Many people view the fact of their divorce as a personal failure and see themselves as inadequate (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25). Sometimes they feel that they could not manage to keep the promises made to themselves, others and God and are therefore failures. Marriage is still seen by most people as a lifelong commitment and when things start falling apart, they blame themselves for it. Because they failed at marriage, they are unsure of themselves in other relationships. They often feel that they had failed at parenting as well, especially when they see their children suffering because of the divorce (Shaub, 2002).

2.9.1.6 Emotional lability

The divorcee is constantly reliving the failed marriage and tries to establish who is responsible for the split. Weiss (in Ferreirra, 1994: 42) calls this obsessive thought pattern "obsessive review". Both men and women relive experiences of hurt and rejection and, because it is very difficult to establish who was "at fault" for the breakup, they experience a lot of anger towards their ex-partners. Most divorcees feel that they had been treated unfairly. Because they feel deeply hurt and rejected, they experience antagonism towards their ex-partners and may even act out on this emotion.

Serious emotional problems (including aggression) are more typical of the partner who wanted to remain married despite the circumstances that led to the divorce (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25).

2.9.1.7 Feelings of guilt

The divorcee who initiated the divorce often feels guilty about the damage perceived done to the person left behind, and the person left behind, usually feels rejected and hurt (Ferreira, 1994: 46). Most divorcees feel that they might not have worked hard enough at their marriages, which leaves feelings of guilt and failure. These feelings of guilt the divorcee suffers, often have nothing to do with what they had done, but are often related to what they think they should have done. Even if the person was not responsible for the divorce, he may feel he was not successful in his marriage, and if spouses are religious and perceive their faith to be anti-divorce, their guilt will be exacerbated (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 26).

This feeling of guilt is also hugely related to the impact on their children, or the blame children might attach to their parents for getting divorced (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 26). Most parents realise the damage done to children when divorce occurs and because the children are viewed as innocent bystanders or casualties in the war between the parents, the parents feel guilty towards their children. These parents then often overcompensate for their feelings of guilt by trying to be “nice parents”, and buying them extravagant gifts, or becoming slack on discipline.

2.9.2 The impact of divorce on husbands

Traditionally, men tend not to have intimate friendships in the way that women do, and divorced men seldom, if ever, share the emotional experiences related to their divorce with somebody else. In a study (Ferreira, 1994: 57) divorced men admitted that they didn't know whom to talk to, as they figured that persons who had never been divorced, were unable to grasp a divorced person's experiences.

Although the number of single-parent fathers has increased slightly, divorced men typically do not get custody of their children, and whether they desire it or not, divorce frees them from child care (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 365). Because they have more discretionary money, they are freer than their ex-wives to pursue social and leisure activities. Their opportunities for remarriage

are also greater than that of their wives. Unencumbered by children, they are freer to date and to begin new relationships.

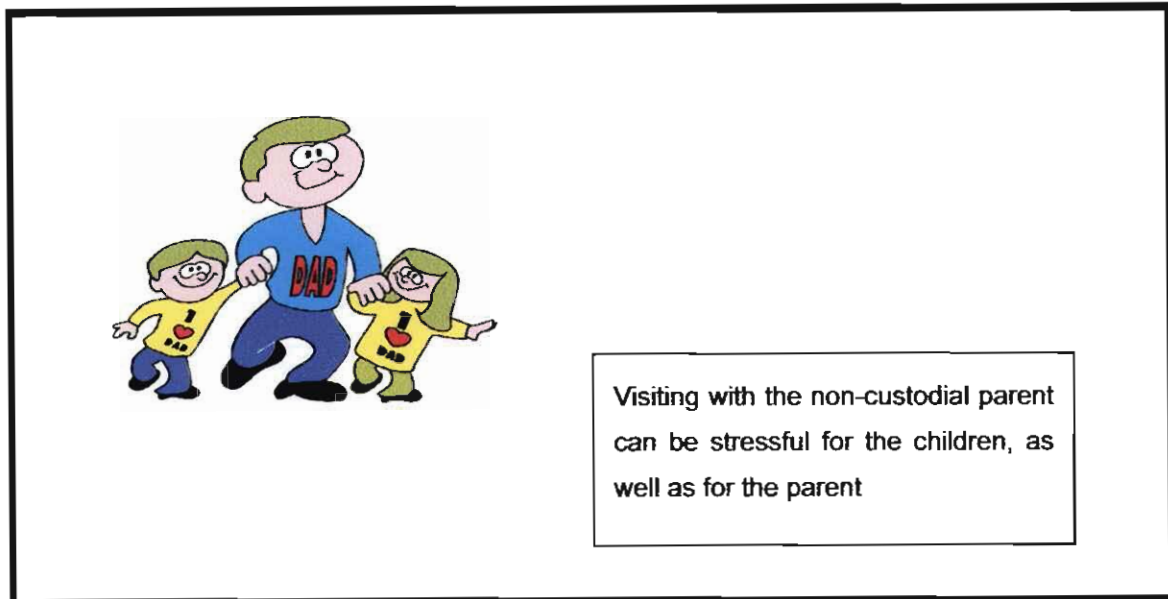


Figure 2.12: The divorced father (Ferreira, 1994: 57; Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 365)

Although loneliness can be a problem for both women and men, divorced fathers without custody may feel it more intensely. Even with visitation rights, they miss out on the day-to-day contact with their children and may miss the rituals of family celebrations, special events and holidays. Some non-custodial fathers exhibit a child-absence syndrome and feel depressed, anxious and cut off from their children's lives. For some divorced fathers, this triggers negative reactions. Visits with their children become more sporadic or stop all together, or the fathers become psychologically distant from their children (Benokraitis, 1996: 449; Furstenberg & Morgan, 1987: 127; Green, 1995: 26-29; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989: 224).

Divorce also has a negative effect on men's contact with their adult children and on their perceptions of their children as potential sources of emotional support (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 365).

Dating also poses a problem for divorced men. One major issue is their fear of rejection. Although they may have sexual relationships, they often choose fleeting sexual encounters which heightens their chances of contacting

sexually transmitted diseases (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25). They may have a fear of commitment and therefore experience such relationships as meaningless. However, it is also common for a man to get involved in a co-habitation relationship after his divorce. Some state clearly that they do not want to be involved in an emotional relationship, but only want the relationship to be on a physical level (Ferreira, 1994: 57).

Men often have sexual relationships shortly after their divorce and their wives, even if they initiated the divorce, become so angry and hurt that they immediately also get involved with someone else. The motives of these men regarding their behavior may differ: some men do it to bolster their emotional and sexual self-esteem, while others hope to make their wives jealous so that they will reconsider the separation (Ferreira, 1994: 63).

Many divorced men, especially those from traditional marriages, have trouble establishing a satisfying home environment and maintaining a household routine on their own (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25; Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 365). Because homemaking and household routines were considered their wife's domain, many ex-husbands feel overwhelmed by shopping, laundry, cleaning and cooking.

Although men appear to benefit more from divorce than women do, particularly economically, they also experience an emotional disconnectedness from the breakup, but typically such an emotion will be denied or rejected (Schwartz & Scott, 1994:366).

From the aforementioned it is clear that divorce can heighten the ex-husband's vulnerability levels, thereby suggesting that his resilience levels will also be threatened.

2.9.3 The impact of divorce on wives

The most striking difference between women and men following a divorce is a monetary one. According to researchers Duncan and Hoffman (1995), women on the average, suffer about a 30 percent decline in their income in the year following a separation, whereas men experience a 15 percent increase. The

general pattern found by different researchers was the same: that downward social mobility for women and children - often to the point of poverty - typically followed divorce (Arendell, 1986; Benokraitis, 1996: 451). The reason for this trend can be found in the fact that historically women were not in the labour force, or if they were, they received lower wages than men. If a couple gets divorced and marital property is simply divided equally without regard for the resources (professional degrees, skills) or the earning power of the respective spouses, it will put some women at a real disadvantage compared to men, albeit a lesser disadvantage now than in the past.

Traditionally, when marriages were dissolved, the shift in family responsibilities and family resources assumed a characteristic form. Women were typically awarded custody of the children and accordingly assumed most of the economic responsibility for their support. This led to a major disruption in the daily routine for at least the first year following divorce. Men became nonresidential parents and relinquished their principal responsibility for the support of their children.

Divorced and separated women who are raising children often find themselves in a deteriorated economic situation. Many of those who were not employed in the years preceding their separation have difficulty in re-entering the job-market, and those who are employed, find that their wages are too low to support a family. In theory, divorced fathers should continue to help support their children, but in practice only a minority does so adequately (Bank & Kain, 1995: 311).

As a result, single mothers and their children often experience a sharp decline in their standard of living after a separation. Economic pressure on the mother means that she has less time for child care and for her personal life. Harried and overburdened, some single mothers fail to provide the attention and care their children need, especially during the first year or two after the separation.

Three common sources of stress intrinsic to single parenthood have been identified (Bank & Kain, 1995: 311):

- One is **responsibility overload**: single parents must make all the decisions and provide for all the needs of their families, a responsibility that at times can be overwhelming.
- Another is **task overload**: many single parents simply have too much to do, what with working, housekeeping, and parenting and consequently there is no extra or free time to meet unexpected demands.
- A third is **emotional overload**: single parents are always on duty to provide emotional support for their children, whether or not their own emotional resources might be temporarily depleted.

Saddled with the sole or primary responsibility for supporting themselves and their children, single mothers frequently have too little time and too few resources to manage effectively (Bank & Kain, 1995: 311). Women with sole custody of children are often doubly burdened – they have to be full-time parents as well as economic providers, and in the process they have to watch their children doing without many of the things that were taken for granted. When they need to place their children in aftercare to accommodate their own professional or working demands, the financial and often the emotional burdens are augmented (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25).



Figure 2.13: The divorced mother (Bank & Kain, 1995: 311; Benokraitis, 1996: 451; Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25)

As the sole parent, a divorced woman may find little time for herself or for social activities with her peers. Because divorced women with children can seldom go out by themselves and typically live in a smaller dwelling, they often

become dependent on their children for company (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25). All of this exacts a toll. When interviewed, many divorcees spoke of recurring struggles with depression and despair. Many had lost their sense of a future and felt trapped by their economic circumstances (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 364). Suicide among divorced women is higher than among divorced men (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25).

For divorced women sexual readjustment is more complex than for men. They often do not have an active sex life following their divorce. When they do seek sexual satisfaction, they risk unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and social stigmatisation as 'loose' women (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25).

Although there is abundant evidence that women suffer more economic stress and experience greater post-divorce parenting responsibility than men, there is also evidence to suggest that women adjust better after a divorce than men do. According to Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989: 18), women improve the emotional and psychological quality of their lives more than men do. For example, women are more likely than men to experience a sense of growth in self-esteem after a divorce. One explanation for the different reactions of the sexes, may be that as women take on more instrumental roles such as becoming the sole provider and head of the family, they feel more confident about their abilities (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 365).

Nevertheless, increased monetary and parenting pressures following divorce, potentially leave the divorced woman vulnerable to failure in her personal and parental roles.

2.9.4 The impact of divorce on children

Like the death of a parent, divorce affects all the members of the family, and children will experience a similar bereavement and loss. Like death, divorce disrupts the everyday order of children's lives and changes the interaction patterns found within their homes. With the increased divorce rate, more and more children are being subjected to this painful process. A good number of children spend a part of their childhood in a single-parent household. Numerous social theorists have argued that an intact, two-parent family is

necessary for the normal development and well-being of children (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2004:1; Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 367). Divorce is therefore assumed to be contradictory to healthy child and youth development.

If children had lived in a home with open marital conflict and hostilities, they may experience a release of family tension after the divorce. Nevertheless, as time passes, children typically forget such disorganisation and they miss the absent parent. When children who were part of a patriarchal system are placed in the mother's custody after the divorce, much readjustment is needed. Visits to the non-custodial parent are also not without difficulty, and children often struggle to readjust and cope with the demands of a two-family home setting after such a visit (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 26-27).

Immediately before and after a divorce, parents often cope less well than their non-divorced counterparts on almost all measures of parenting (Brink, 2002). Because parents may struggle to control their once intense feelings for their former spouses and their emotions are not stable, their children may experience them as remote, unavailable and over-emotional. Children then often feel thrust aside (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2004: 1; Bezuidenhout, 2006: 26). It would truly be in the best interests of the children if parents could maintain warm and stable relationships with them in the face of divorce. Frequent visits between father and child(ren) have been found to have positive effects on the quality of father-child relationships (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 161).

Just like their parents, children encounter feelings of denial, anger, disorganisation, guilt, loneliness and relief in coping with the changes inherent to divorce (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2004: 1; Bezuidenhout, 2006: 26-28; Dickenson & Leming, 1995: 402).

There is an extensive body of literature on the effects of divorce on children. For the most part there is agreement about the short-term effects of divorce on children (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: 2004: 1; Brink, 2002). The short term effects include:

- Rejection and loss of trust because parents are unavailable, preoccupied and seemingly uncaring about their children's needs. They may feel emotionally abandoned by one or both parents, as one parent physically leaves the home and both parents become preoccupied with the process of personal adjustment to divorce (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 26-27; Brink, 2002; Dickenson & Leming, 1995: 408).
- Anger at the perceived betrayal and rejection by one or both parents. Such anger and blame are often projected onto the custodial parent (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 26). Boys are more likely to be aggressive following parental divorce (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 27).
- Denial: children frequently continue to express the wish that their parents should be reunited (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 27).
- Sadness and grief for the experienced loss of a home, lifestyle and friends. Many children report moderate to severe depression while others report alternating emotions of deprivation, sadness and disorganisation (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 27).
- Despair and feelings of depression as they feel their stability and known reality being eroded. Children living with divorced parents see themselves as less competent and exhibit more depression and withdrawal than children from intact families (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 27; Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 367)
- Confusion and guilt because of not understanding what is going on, where they belong and what is going to happen. Divorce is a very confusing time for children as they may feel responsible for their parents' divorce (Dickenson & Leming, 1995: 408). Children frequently feel guilty, blaming themselves for the divorce, especially if their parents had quarreled over them. They often entertain fantasies about reuniting the parents (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1980: 222).
- Isolation, especially where the parents are not capable of listening to and understanding them (Brink, 2002).

Just as with adults, these stresses can result in both psychological and physical health problems. Research ratings show that the physical health of children from divorced families are poorer than those of children from intact families (Guidubaldi & Cleminshaw, 1985). The increase in health problems can be attributed to the decline in their living standard, for example the lack of medical aid funds to cover medical expenses.

In contrast with the short-term impact, many of the findings of the long-term effects on children are not as consistent. It may be that the age of the children at the time of divorce has an impact on the degree to which they experience disruptions in their lives. The lives of younger children may remain more stable than those of older children, who may be more aware of changes in their family's economic and social status (Schwartz & Scott 1994: 368).

The emotional demands created by divorce often make parents less aware of their children's pain and stress and insensitive to their children's emotional needs. As a form of compensation, it is common for parents to indulge their children by placing fewer demands on them, creating a sense of marginality for many children (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2004).

Divorce often turns families into battlegrounds on which some of the most intense arguments and hostilities are experienced. In-laws and extended family members sometimes feel free to join the fight, and occasionally children are used by the participants to inflict pain upon "the enemy" – a former spouse and/or grandparents (Brink, 2002).

Many children feel that they are, at least occasionally, caught in the middle. They are sometimes asked to carry negative or inappropriate messages between their parents because the adults are unwilling to communicate with one another.

After a divorce the financial plight of children changes dramatically. Children will experience a 73 percent decline in their standard of living during the first year after divorce (Dickenson & Leming, 1995: 408).

Moving from the family home could also mean a change in schools, churches, and friendship groups, thus disrupting the entire social world of the child.

Not all research on the effects of divorce show negative results. In female-headed families, both mothers and children develop more androgynous behavior as they reorganise the household after the father has left. Additionally, assuming more responsibilities can make children to become more mature, and to inspire feelings of competence (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 368).

Finally, children may find relief in being out of a conflict-ridden and possibly abusive family situation. Children living in a stable single-parent family are emotionally better off than if they were to remain in a conflict-ridden two-parent family (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989:224).

The adjustment of children to divorce is best facilitated by a custodial parent who is adjusting well. The best thing adults can *do* for their children is to *be* well-adjusted, secure, and loving people. This requires resilience.

2.9.5 The impact of divorce on extended families

Like the proverbial pebble thrown in a pond, separation and divorce have substantial ripple effects on relationships with many other people significant to the parting pair. The couple's split may create a divisive wedge within the extended family. Relationships with former in-laws could be strained or severed completely. If the blood relatives choose to retain contact with the ex-spouse, especially against the wishes of their own kin, it creates social distance among family members (Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 363).

If there is a child-custody battle, grandparents on the side of the non-custodial parent may find themselves almost shut out of their grandchildren's lives – an experience which has the potential to cause both pain and acrimony (Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 166).

2.10 CONCLUSION

Although divorce follows a decision made between two adults, the results are much wider and sometimes devastating to all the parties involved. The severity of the impact varies among individuals and is often contingent on moderating or protective factors (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 28).

Divorced parents need to come to terms with the adversities associated with divorce in order to be healed and restored so that they can cope and also help their children cope. For that they need to be resilient – this is essentially reflected in the “Prayer for the divorced”, included below:

PRAYER FOR THE DIVORCED

*God, Master of Union and Disunion,
Teach me how I may now walk
Alone and strong.
Heal my wounds;
Let the scar tissue of Thy bounty
Cover these bruises and hurts
That I may again be a single person
Adjusted to new days.
Grant me a heart of wisdom,
Cleanse me of hostility, revenge and rancor,
Make me know the laughter which is not giddy,
The affection which is not frightened.
Keep far from me thoughts of evil and despair.
May I realize that the past chapter of my life
Is closed and will not open again.
The anticipated theme of my life has changed,
The expected story end will not come.
Shall I moan at the turn of the plot?*

*Rather, remembering without anger's thrust
Recalling without repetitive pain of regret,
Teach me again to write and read
That I may convert this unexpected epilogue
Into a new preface and a new poem.
Muddled gloom over,
Tension days past,
Let bitterness of thought fade
Harshness of memory attenuate
Make me move on in love and kindness.*

(Klackers, 1998).

CHAPTER THREE

RESILIENCE

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet.

Only through experience and suffering

Can the soul be strengthened, ambitions inspired,

And success achieved.

- Helen Kellerman

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will include a literature study on resilience. The goal will be to answer the following questions:

- i. Definition - what is resilience?
- ii. What are the dynamics of resilience?
- iii. Is resilience a choice and can it be augmented?
- iv. What are the risk factors for people in crisis situations and, more specifically, after divorce?
- v. What are the protective factors for people in crisis situations and, more specifically after divorce?
- vi. Resilience and divorced parents.

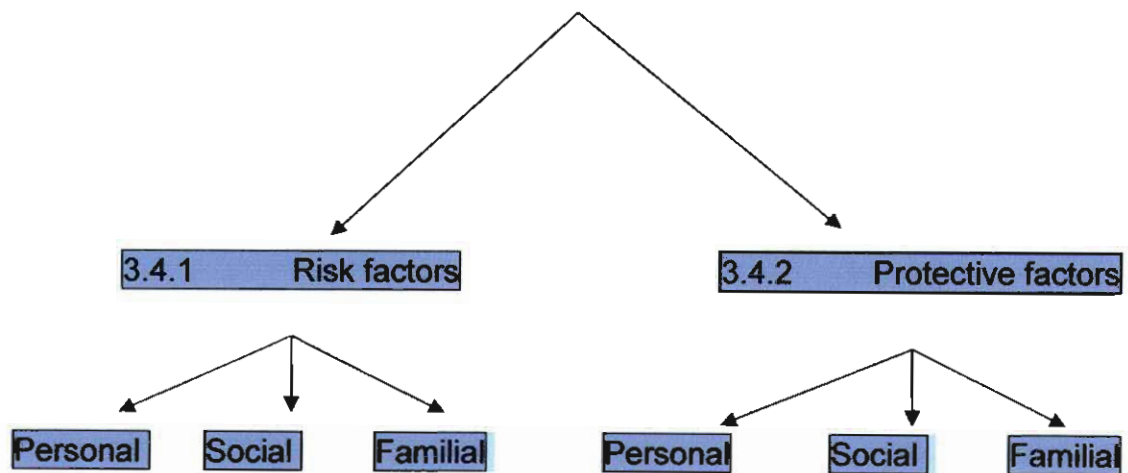
A summary of Chapter 3 is presented in Figure 3.1 which follows.

3.1. INTRODUCTION

3.2 DEFINITION - what is resilience?

3.3 RESILIENCE AS A CHOICE

3.4 THE DYNAMICS OF RESILIENCE



3.5 RESILIENCE IN DIVORCED PARENTS

Figure 3.1: Summary of Chapter 3

3.2 DEFINITION OF RESILIENCE

“It’s not how far you fall, but how high you bounce.” - Jackson Brown, Sr.

The whole world is filled with millions of men, women, and children who, with strength and courage, grace and humor, resolve and hard work, rise above their pain and live in the face of continued suffering. Bonanno (2004: 20) states that: “...large numbers of people manage to endure the temporary upheaval of loss or potentially traumatic events remarkably well, with no apparent disruption in their ability to function at work or in close relationships, and they seem to move on to new challenges with apparent ease.” This phenomenon is called resilience.

In our own lives we may know some of these special people. Occasionally someone comes along who uses personal experience which might have been crippling to inspire others towards resilience. Such a unique person becomes a modern-day hero for everyone (Wholey, 1992: 245). A good example would be ex-president Nelson Mandela, who, after spending 27 years in prison, became the leader of our country and has earned world wide recognition as a symbol for peace and reconciliation. He refused to succumb to the adversity which dominated his life, by rising above it, to emerge resilient.

Resilience can be defined as the ability to bounce back or cope well in the face of adversity, or the ability to overcome considerable hardship and the ravages of the past. It is also the process of persisting in the face of adversity (Turner, Norman & Zunz, 1995: 25; Wolin & Wolin, 1999: 11). Resilience points to the dynamic interaction between an individual, a given environment and available possibilities (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006: 445; Powers, 2002: 165; Richman & Fraser, 2001: 5), rather than a fixed attribute or personal trait (Rutter, 2001: 34; Ungar, 2005: xxvi). As such, resilient functioning is ascribed to a process or multitude of processes that vary according to the context in question (Rutter, 2001: 34; Ungar, 2005: xxvi).

Robert Louis Stevenson (Gregory, 1995: 134) described a key aspect of resilience when he wrote: “Life is not a matter of holding good cards, but of playing a poor hand well”. To be a resilient person it does not mean that the person is successful in life because life was easy, but rather that he was successful **in spite** of the various difficulties he had to overcome. Resilient individuals ‘play a poor hand well’ when they draw on protective resources within their environment and within themselves to counter risk factors which threaten their well-being.

In literature, different terms are often used for resilience. An example thereof is Strumpher (2001) who speaks of fortitude, and Snyder (1999: 4-5), who didn’t speak of resilience as such, but rather of coping. He defined coping as: “a response aimed at diminishing the physical, emotional and psychological burden linked to stressful life events and daily hassles”.

Common elements in the coping process are:

- i) perceiving an event as stressful (i.e. stretching one’s immediate resources);
- ii) feeling rather overwhelmed (i.e. stress as a mediating factor between environment and behaviour); and
- iii) reacting to the specific components of an event (i.e. a divorcee reacting in anger towards a former spouse after their divorce).

The resilient individual would react with hardiness and keep going.

Resilient people seem to continue forwards in spite of the hardship and trauma they face. In fact, the most resilient people seek out new and challenging experiences because they’ve learned that it’s only through struggle, through pushing themselves to their limits, that they will expand their horizons (Reivich & Shatte, 2002: 3). They understand that failures are not an end point. They do not feel shame when they don’t succeed. Instead, resilient people are able to derive meaning from failure, and they use this knowledge to climb higher than they otherwise would. Resilient people have found a system to galvanise themselves and tackle problems thoughtfully, thoroughly, and energetically.



Figure 3.2: Resilient people seek out new challenges (Reivich & Shatte, 2002: 3)

Boosting resilience is all about the way adversity is perceived. Resilient people feel anxious and have doubts, but they have learned how to stop their anxiety and doubts from overwhelming them. They don't necessarily do so on their own: They have learnt to access and use all protective resources at their disposal (Masten & Reed, 2005: 85-6).

Very little research has been done on the effect of resilience on adults as resilience studies focus on youth (Schoon, 2006:155). Most of the research done on resilience was focused on factors that enable youth to remain competent in the face of adversity (Boyden & Mann, 2005: 5). In this study, the researcher wishes to focus more on resilience in adults, and specifically, to find means to enhance resilience in recently divorced adults.

3.3 RESILIENCE AS A CHOICE

Resilience is not a fixed attribute, but a process, and the choices one makes at important points in life can greatly influence this process. Resilience currently is not an either/or trait. It's a continuum, and no matter where individuals fall on that continuum, they can increase their ability to rise to tomorrow's challenges with persistence and courage (Reivich & Shatte, 2002: 184).

Resilience is of vital importance when making quick and tough decisions in moments of chaos. It grants a person the ability to adapt with grace, humor

and optimism (Reivich & Shatte, 2002: 4; Schoon, 2006: 6). For this reason it is vital for divorcees to be resilient, as their lives and emotions are in turmoil during and after the divorce.

According to Reivich and Shatte (2002: 4), resilience transforms. It transforms hardships into challenge, failure into success and helplessness into power. Resilience turns victims into survivors and allows survivors to thrive. A person can increase his resilience by learning to understand his thinking styles and developing skills to steer clear of negative thought processes, so that he can see the true causes of adversity and its effect on his life. When persons can be assisted to understand that resilience is dependent on how they interact with their environment, potential risk for pathology following adversity is curtailed (Schoon, 2006: 169).

In a study of students who were at risk because of various background problems, Gregory (1995: 136) tells of a process that the students described as the motivation to change. They called it the "Aha!" experience, an experience during which they had suddenly realised that they "were going nowhere" and had to take steps to change. The "Aha!" experience can be defined as the moment at which the person experiences a new awareness or clarity concerning what he had been doing and how it had to change. The importance of this is to note that those people all made the decision to stop being at risk. Resilience in this sense is then also the ability to choose to make a life altering decision. This also relates to Snyder's perception of coping (Cf. 3.2).



Figure 3.3: The “AHA!” experience (Gregory, 1995: 136)

The decision to change one's circumstances or reaction to circumstances is not limited to a specific group of people, but applies to anyone who is willing to take responsibility for his own fate. In the case of people getting divorced, divorcees have to recognise the damage done by their failing marriages and the divorce process, and find a way to overcome it.

Inherent in any profound challenge is the potential for crisis or opportunity (O'Leary 1998: 425). Sooner or later everyone encounters adversity in life. Suffering is part of the human experience and major hardships happen in everyone's life. The resilient person uses crisis to better himself and change it into an opportunity. A resilient person understands that difficulties in life are normal and inevitable, but that he has a choice in how to react to difficult circumstances. How a person chooses to respond to a difficult situation will make him resilient or a victim. The choice to be resilient implies an “Aha!” moment.

Strumpher (2001: 3) supports this view. He states that the first assumption of the paradigm of positive psychology is of central importance: that stressors, adversity and other unwarranted demands are inherent to the human condition. The second central assumption, however is, that there are also sources of strength through which this condition can be endured and even transcended. This he calls the “strengths perspective”. From it flows a third assumption, that physical, emotional and social trials and troubles can, for many, be positive — inspiring continuous growth and strengthening, as products of the discovery of

capacities, insights, and even qualities that the person may not have been aware of.

3.3.1 Optimum resilience

Carver (1998: 245) supports the statement that the experience of adversity (serious stress or trauma, physical or psychological hardship) can sometimes yield benefits to the person who experiences it. Such individuals experience optimum resilience or thriving. Not all individuals thrive, however: according to Carver (1998: 246), when individuals are confronted with challenge or adversity, they may respond in one of four ways: They may succumb, survive, recover or thrive (as set out in Figure 3.4 below). Figure 3.4 is followed by a brief explanation of these four reactions.

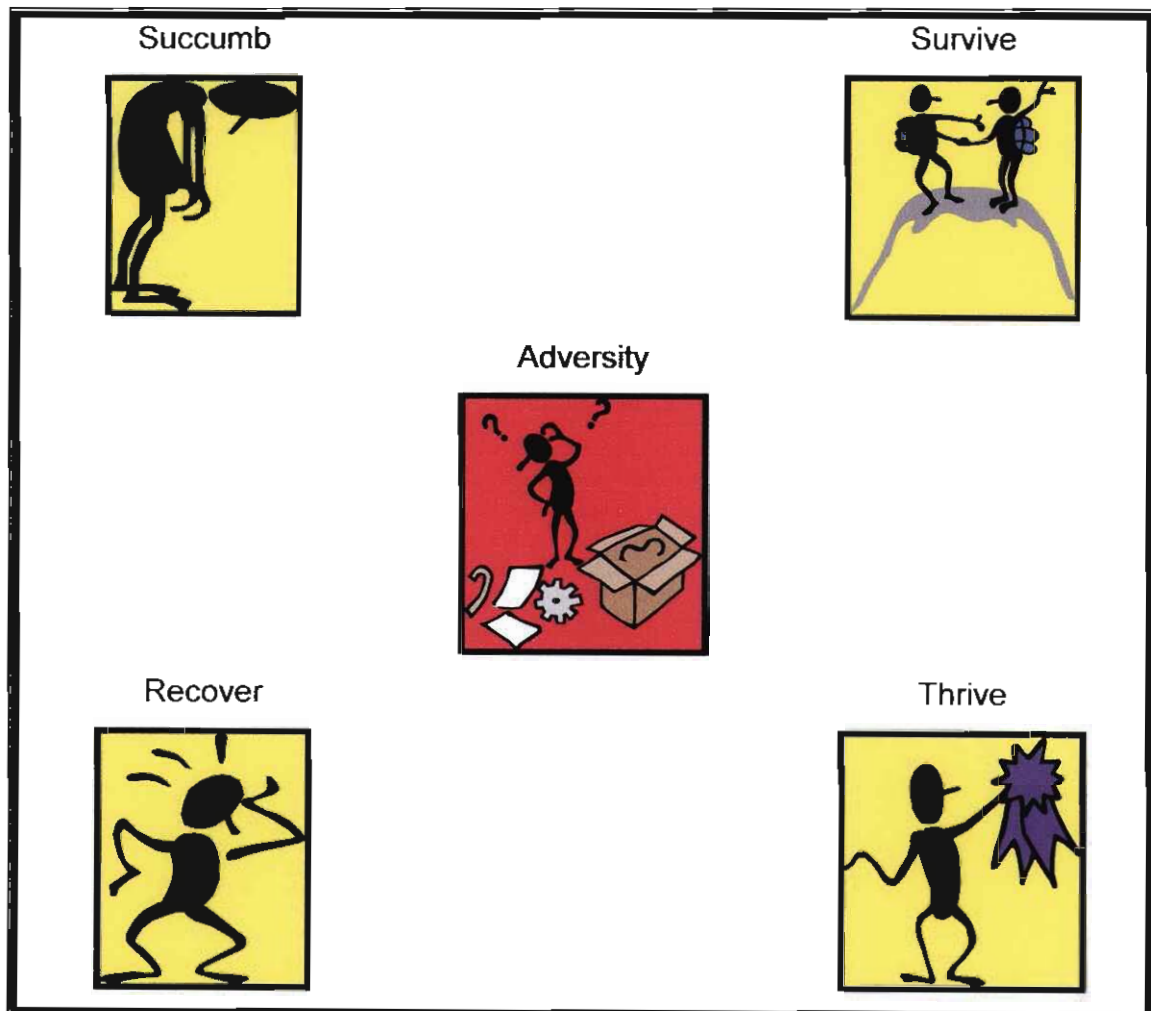


Figure 3.4: Reactions to adversity (Based on Carver, 1998:245- 246)

- *Succumbing* is a continued backward slide in which the initial harmful effect of the adversity is compounded and the individual eventually succumbs or

gives in to his circumstances. An example could be an individual who, once divorced, never gets over the pain of the experience and chooses to lead a reclusive life of substance abuse.

- *Survival* implies that the individual affected by a stressor continues to function, albeit in an impaired fashion. The person survives, but is diminished or impaired in some respect. An example is a divorcee who remarries, but spends every day expecting a second divorce, despite every indication that the new partner is faithful and committed.
- *Recovery* indicates a return to baseline. After the relapse associated with an initial challenge, the individual is able to return to previous levels of social and psychological functioning. In the case of divorce, the individual's energy returns and he or she is able to resume his or her daily personal and professional activities much as before. A return to the previous level of functioning can be either rapid or more gradual. Recovery indicates a path in which normal functioning gives way to interim threshold or sub-threshold psychopathology, but does not remain there.
- *Thriving* represents the ability to go beyond the original level of psychosocial functioning, to grow vigorously and to flourish. Through the interactive process of confronting and coping with challenge, a makeover occurs. The individual does not merely return to a previous state, but rather grows beyond it, and in the process adds value to life. An example would be a young woman who, following her divorce, was violently attacked by her ex-spouse and left to die. She survived the incident and went on to become an internationally acclaimed motivational speaker.

These reactions may be time-related and process-oriented. Figure 3.5 schematically represents the process of challenge and outcome for a single hypothetical stressor or adverse event. Each alternative or reaction represents a potential psychological outcome as outlined above.

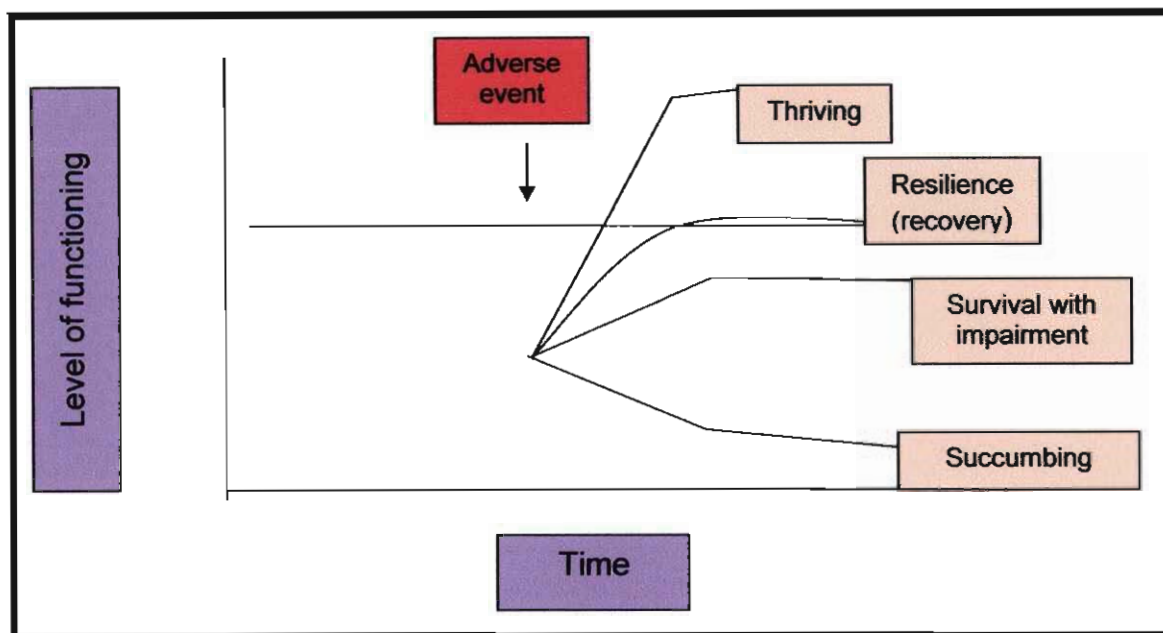


Figure 3.5: Possible outcomes in response to adversity (O’Leary 1998: 427)

Thriving is transformative (O’Leary 1998: 427). It is dependent on a cognitive shift or the ability to change in response to a challenge. Challenge provides the opportunity for change because it forces individuals to confront themselves and their priorities and to re-examine their sense of self. It can change social roles, resulting in the acquisition of a new role, loss of an old role, or a reordering of role priorities.

For such a transformation to occur, the challenge must be profound, an event such as facing a fatal illness, a severe traumatic accident, serious victimisation, a great loss, or an existential crisis – events that shake the foundations of one’s life, calling into question one’s sense of purpose, meaning, or identity. Divorce sometimes has such a severe traumatic effect on individuals (Cf. 2.9), and the challenge would be to recover emotionally from the hurt of a failed marriage. When a person recovers from the emotional damage of a divorce, the recovery can be completely transformative in that the divorcee discovers in himself new strengths and abilities to overcome difficult situations he was probably unaware of previously.

3.3.2 Functions of resilience

Rutter (1995) quoted by O'Leary (1998: 427) described four functions of resilience:

3.3.2.1 Resilience reduces risk impact

In the case of divorced persons, resilience would minimise the potential negative effects of divorce. For instance, resilience skills which can lead to the more effective use of accessible protective measures such as enlarging or strengthening the social support system, or finding a suitable job, could lessen emotional and financial stress.

3.3.2.2 Resilience reduces negative chain reactions

An example of a negative chain reaction would be emotional stress caused by multiple interlinked events: If the divorcee does not have the necessary resources to support himself, he could very soon become depressed and also develop a negative self-esteem by believing that he was a failure, not only in his personal life (because of the divorce), but also as a provider for his children. This may influence other aspects of his life, such as personal relationships, and he may withdraw from social activities. This would then lead to more loneliness and depression. Should the divorcee be resilient, the chain reaction could be limited.

3.3.2.3 Resilience establishes and maintains self-identity and self-efficacy

Resilience helps a person to maintain a positive identity in spite of difficulties in life. It helps a person to be positive, although circumstances around him may be less desirable.

3.3.2.4 Resilience enhances opportunities

Being resilient also includes being positive, and a positive person is more likely to see and use the opportunities that come his way. A divorced person

realises that the end of his marriage does not mean an end to happiness, but rather that a new door of opportunity has opened in his personal relationships.

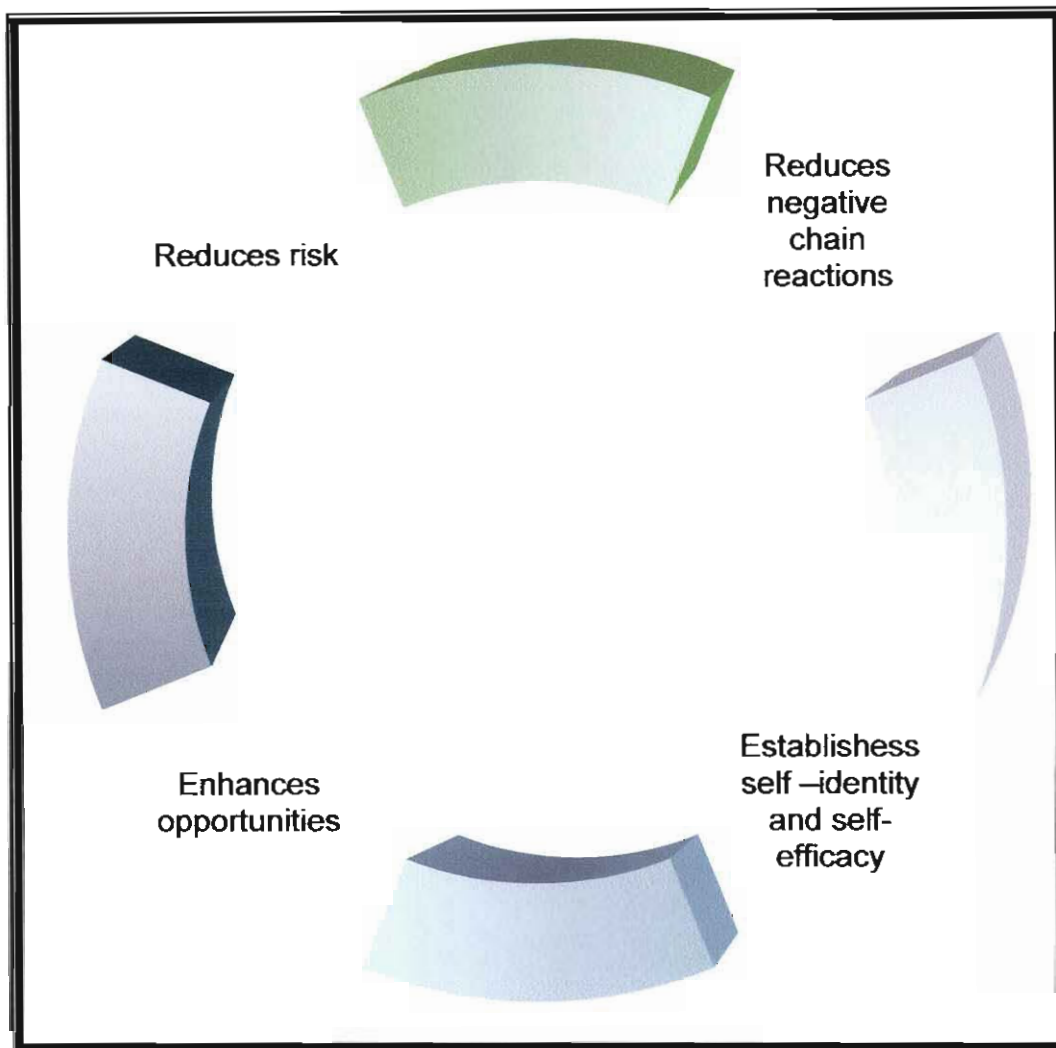


Figure 3.6: Four functions of resilience (Rutter as quoted in O’Leary, 1998: 427)

3.4 DYNAMICS OF RESILIENCE

When President Clinton said in his inaugural address that “there is nothing wrong with America that cannot be fixed by what is right with America” he was expressing the philosophy behind the resiliency approach. The shifting of the emphasis from targeting what is wrong and trying to fix it, to looking for what is right and trying to sustain and protect it (as expressed by Clinton) represents a dramatic shift from the traditional psychological direction of prevention efforts in the past (Turner *et al.*, 1995: 27).

In the past psychologists focused on the origin of problematic behavior when attempting to explain individual and communal behavior in response to major stressors. They recently called for a move away from vulnerability/deficit models to focus instead on triumphs in the face of adversity. The potential significance of the paradigm shift from illness to health, from vulnerability to thriving, from deficiency to protection and beyond ought not to be underestimated (Turner *et. al.*, 1995: 27). By focusing on protective factors, risk factors can be ameliorated and positive mental health championed.

In understanding how the dynamics of resilience work, researchers have identified certain **risk factors** as opposed to **protective factors**. Risk factors are those factors that render a certain situation difficult to cope with. In a marriage risk factors could be poor communication, unrealistic expectations of spouses, power struggles, and so on (Cf. 2.7.1).

Protective factors, on the other hand, refer to those factors that protect individuals from failure in certain situations. Some researchers argue that protective factors are simply the inverse of risk factors (Schoon, 2006: 15). For example, in marriage, protective factors could be good communication skills, a positive self-image, support of family and friends, and so on.

Resilience is a phenomenon that has to be seen in context because the dynamics differ according to individuals and specific context.

Risk and protective factors, first in general and then in the context of divorce, will be discussed in more detail below.

3.4.1 Risk factors

If resilience is seen as the ability to bounce back after adversity, then risk factors are what the resilient individual needs to “bounce back” from (Turner, *et. al.*, 1995: 27). Risk factors are those factors that augment the chances of individuals experiencing difficulties during and shortly after adverse events (for example: divorce entails potential risk for the divorcee as he may fail to adapt successfully to his changed circumstances after the divorce).

Risk factors are thought to have a cumulative effect and interactive nature (Carson, Swanson, Cooney, Gillum & Cunningham, 1992: 275; Schoon, 2006: 143-144), in that if only one of the factors were present, the risk of failure would not be as high as if two or more factors were present.

Researchers in several disciplines are discovering differences not only in how males and females develop, both emotionally and psychologically, but also in their vulnerability to stress and situations of risk and in their ability to cope with the different stressful situations they encounter at varying times in their lives (Boyden & Mann, 2005: 6; O’Leary, 1988: 427; Rutter, 2001: 166). Traditionally, men are considered to be more vulnerable than women. Men and women are also likely to differ in the ways in which they adapt and cope with strain. Men tend to withdraw and try to cope with stress by doing things like playing sports, drinking, and so on, while women are more likely seek the company of a special friend or friends to discuss their stressful situations.

The origin of risk factors can be either personal, familial, or environmental, and includes genetic conditions, developmental risk, familial circumstances, socio-economic conditions and cultural experiences (Shaub, 2002; Theron, 2006: 201).

A summary of documented general risk factors (Armstrong, Stroul & Boothroyd, 2005: 391-2; Barter, 2005: 345-348; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Schoon, 2006: 8-11; Shaub, 2002) is provided in Figure 3.7 below:

Personal risk factors	Psychosocial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self-esteem • Low motivation • Low intelligence • Inability to relate • Poor attachment
	Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Low birth weight / premature birth

Environmental factors	Community factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Violence • Unhealthy community norms • Neighbourhood disorganisation • Poor role models • Racism • Bias • School factors
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Figure 3.7: General risk factors

Each of the afore mentioned can be itemised in detail, but for the sake of this study, the focus will be on the most predominant risk factors for divorced persons, as this is the scope of this study. These risk factors are summarised in Figure 3.8 below and are identical to those discussed in Figure 2.5 in Chapter 2. In Chapter 2 these factors were discussed in terms of the impact of divorce on both spouses. Now the emphasis will be on the inherent risk of these factors to divorcees.

Possible risk factors in the context of divorce are shown in Figure 3.8 below.

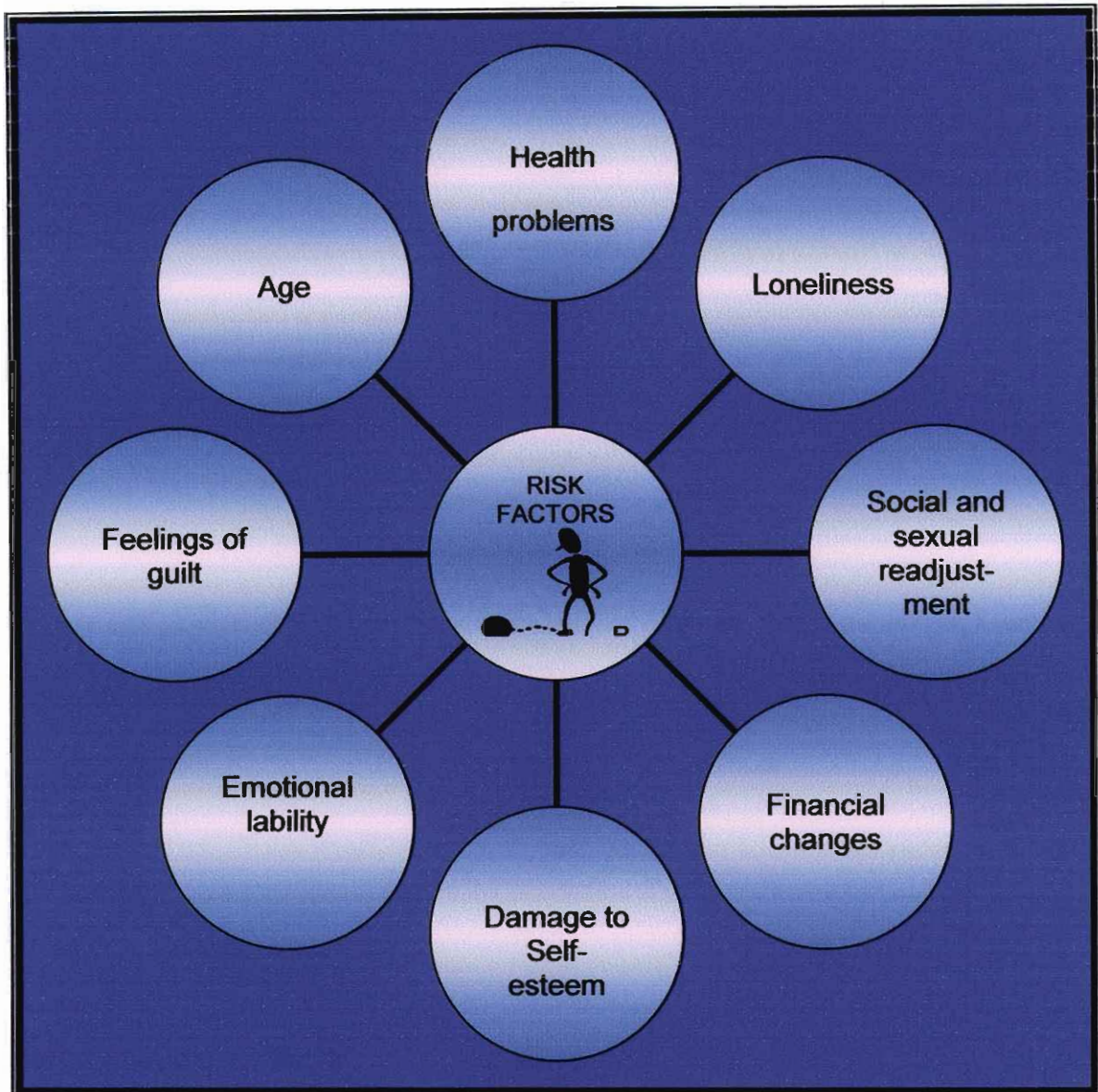


Figure 3.8: Possible risk factors for divorcees: an integration of resilience and divorce theory (Bezuidenhout, 2005: 22; Ferreira, 1999: 29; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 157; Shaub, 2002)

Garvin, Kalter and Hansen (1993) argue that rather than divorce *per se* being responsible for higher levels of depression and poorer social adjustment, it is the effects of “economic hardship, social isolation, and increased work and parenting responsibilities that single parents are both more exposed to and more vulnerable to”. This implies that divorce entails multiple risk. Therefore, although each of the risk factors outlined in Figure 3.8 will be discussed

individually, it must be emphasised that their collective effect poses greater risk.

3.4.1.1 Health problems (both physical and psychological)

People who are going through a divorce report physical and psychological health problems. Symptoms of irritability and anxiety predominate. Sleep disturbances, and problems with concentration and decision taking are also common. Physical ill-health is often attributed to stress, which is part and parcel of the divorce process. Divorcees have listed various ailments, including pains, tiredness, illness, depression, migraine and weariness (Cf. 2.9.1.1). Men undergoing divorce or separation are 9.3 times more likely to experience major depression than married men. Because of this, divorce is a risk factor for their health. This figure is significantly higher than the corresponding figure for women, with the prevalence of major depression in women who experienced marital disruption being 3.1 times higher than those of women who were happily married. It would thus appear that whilst marital trouble leads to higher levels of major depression in both men and women, it is men who are substantially more likely to suffer the first onset of depression due to separation or divorce (Sclater, 1999: 84-85).

In addition to separation and divorce being linked to depressive episodes, many studies have highlighted the increased risk of suicide of those undergoing divorce. McAllister (1995: 24) points out that relationship disintegration is one of the major causes of suicide worldwide, and that the mortality rates are correlated with marital status. As such, people are at risk of committing suicide when they divorce, and childless women who divorce are at even greater risk when emotional adjustment does not follow divorce (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 25).

From the above it is clear that health problems associated with divorce place divorcees at risk (Cf. Figure 3.7).

3.4.1.2 Loneliness

Stack (in Sclater, 1999: 86) argues that because social support is a major factor influencing the risk of suicide, the differences between the suicide rates for men and women could reflect the fact that women are more likely to maintain family and social relationships after divorce. It thus seems as though the lack of social support and the concomitant loneliness are risk factors that lead to increased suicide rates after divorce.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989: 245) found that while women who were over 40 years of age when they divorced had no regrets 10 years later, 50% of those over 40 who had not wanted the divorce found it very difficult to establish a new identity and still felt intensely lonely even if the marriage had been a bad one. However, they also discovered that men over 40 followed a similar pattern and that even though they had a higher rate of remarriage than women, 50% had not remarried 10 years later and felt isolated, lonely and socially deprived. Younger women were reported to be more at risk because of their inability to form a new identity, which resulted in loneliness.

From the above it can be concluded that loneliness associated with the aftermath of divorce puts divorcees at risk as their self-esteem and social support decline (Cf. Figure 3.7).

3.4.1.3 The need for social and sexual readjustments

The creation of an identity separate from that of their ex-spouse makes the post-divorce process even more complicated when children are involved. Not only do those divorcing have to untangle ongoing parental roles from truncated spousal roles, but, in order to move forward, they have to be able to mourn the death of their relationship and come to grips with the challenges of their identity. Separating spousal roles from parental roles is difficult. This is a risk factor in establishing a new role as a single parent and also in the forming of future relationships (Shaub, 2002).

Complex marital bonds must be severed – this presents a difficult task since the partner was initially viewed as a ‘good choice’ and not all of the marriage

was bad. Following divorce, both society and the law expect couples to maintain a civil (meaning both 'civilized' and 'legal') relationship until their children reach a minimum age of 18. This expectation asks a lot of people who could not tolerate living together and places the divorcee at risk for continued failure (Sclater, 1999: 89). Divorced fathers reported higher levels of parental role-strain than married fathers, and also exhibited higher rates of psychological distress, alcohol consumption and mortality. This strain is a risk factor as it leads to higher rates of psychological distress (Shaub, 2002).

Because there is no culturally shared framework for post-divorce relationships, the first months after divorce is a period during which the ex-partners have to actively negotiate new boundaries. The problems associated with defining these boundaries are, however, highlighted by Colburn, Lin, and Moore (1992) who, in their study, found that 22% of men and 21% of women reported having had sexual relations with their ex-spouses after the divorce had been finalized. This lead to much confusion and potential guilt, which the ex-partners will then have to deal with.

When social and sexual adjustment is not forthcoming, divorcees are at risk because they have limited social support and interaction and unfulfilled needs (Cf. Figure 3.7).

3.4.1.4 Financial changes in lifestyles

Cohen (1996: 22) found that the economic situation was a strong predictor of family well-being. Divorce can have adverse economic effects for both men and women. It was found that single-parent families with a good economic situation actually had a higher sense of family well-being than two-parent families. Two-parent families are thus at greater risk of not experiencing family well-being.

Work identity was positively associated with higher self-esteem and low levels of distress. Employment not only involves greater social interaction and support, but also leads to a sense of meaningfulness and productivity, which can be a positive distraction from the emotional problems caused by a divorce

(Sclater, 1999: 94). When divorcees struggle financially and at work, they are more at risk of not coping with situations that may arise.

Socio-economic adversity has long been identified as a risk factor (Schoon, 2006: 9) and divorce clearly heightens the potential of this. Thus the financial changes concomitant with divorce pose risk (Cf. Figure 3.7).

3.4.1.5 Damage to self-esteem and self-image

Because divorce constitutes a process rather than a single event, Sclater (1999: 86) defines part of the 'adjustment' process as the development of an autonomous identity that is not linked to the status of being married, or to the ex-spouse. When marriage breaks down, there is a loss, not only of a partner, but also of self. This can lead to an emotional breakdown in a divorcee.

Although the process of coming to terms with the breakdown of a marriage involves the creation of a separate identity for both men and women, Sclater (1999: 87) argues that because a woman is more likely to see marriage and the home as a source of identity and feel responsible for making it a happy home, she not only loses that identity, but also sees herself as a failure, when her marriage fails. This affects her self-image negatively.

Historically, a woman's role has always been equated with marriage. Divorced women are therefore faced with the difficulties of forging a new identity and of making sense of a world which disparages them as single women (Cf. 2.9.1). One of the main tasks associated with divorce is the renegotiation of relationships and the redefinition of boundaries. If this cannot be done effectively, new relationships are bound to fail.

Males and females do differ in their ways of constructing a new identity. Males are more likely to externalise the problem of adjustment through a romantic solution, and females are more likely to cite changes in themselves and the experience of independence as the basis for a new identity. Men appear to create new identities through participation in new intimate relationships (Colburn *et al.*, 1992: 103). This means that divorced men could end up in new

relationships without having constructed a new identity apart from their ex-spouses.

Poor self-esteem and inadequate identity are factors which threaten resilient functioning (Theron, 2006: 200). Clearly the process and aftermath of divorce heightens this risk (Cf. Figure 3.7).

3.4.1.6 Emotional lability



Figure 3.9: Uncontrolled emotion is a risk factor (Saarni, 2006: 23; Sclater, 1999: 142)

Expressing emotion (such as angry feelings) can serve a positive function in constructing and maintaining strategies for psychological survival. However, unbridled emotion can be a risk factor.

Loss, anger, upset and sadness were the strongest feelings reported to be associated with divorce, closely followed by trauma, numbness and loneliness. Other feelings, such as guilt, hatred, viciousness, loss of trust, a desire for vengeance, self-pity and a sense of injustice, were also spontaneously mentioned (Sclater, 1999: 142). All these are negative emotions that could contribute to a person feeling that he was not coping at all. Because emotional experience and expression cannot be separated from interpersonal contexts (Saarni, 2006: 23), divorce and its aftermath put divorcees at risk (Cf. Figure 3.7).

3.4.1.7 Feelings of guilt

It was found that loss and guilt were the predominant emotions experienced, and that many divorcees (especially women) felt overburdened by the responsibilities of single parenthood. Both men and women experienced guilt about their failed marriages and the impact it had on their offspring and extended families (Cf. 2.9.3).

Guilt erodes people's sense of an internal locus of control, which leaves them feeling out of control and feeds a negative attitude. Both of these factors threaten resilient functioning (Theron, 2006: 206).

3.4.1.8 Age

Chiriboga, Catron and Associates (1991:113), found that whilst women over 40 were initially more stressed by the divorce, they actually coped better later on than younger women or men. Younger women were more at risk for failing to adjust after divorce. Thus, depending on the age at which divorce occurs, potential risk for poor adaptation can be heightened.

3.4.2 Protective factors

The discussion of the above eight risk factors indicates that there are a range of psychological adjustments that have to be made during the divorce process, all of which entail potential risk. The divorce process unleashes a sense of dislocation and anxiety, which may last for differing periods of time, with differing consequences, depending on an individual's specific personality, biography and material and social circumstances. The impact of these risk factors can be ameliorated by protective factors intrinsic to the individual's specific personality, biography and material and social circumstances, or personal and environmental context.

Protective factors are thought to ameliorate risk in three ways:

- Firstly, the compensatory model suggests that a protective factor can compensate for risk factors by neutralising the effect of the risk factor (Donald *et al.*, 1999: 222). For example, when a divorcee has a good

support system, they (friends or family) can help that person through emotional turmoil, or even assist them by cooking a meal, or picking the children up from school.

- Secondly, the challenge model suggests that moderate risk factors strengthen the individual's ability to cope with stress later in life (Cook & Du Toit, 2005: 249). For example, the divorcee who experienced difficulty in her childhood and thus learnt to cope with moderate amounts of stress, may cope better with divorce, because she was already familiar with adversity.
- Thirdly, the protective factor model suggests that protective factors form an interactive process which moderates the effect of the risk factor and modifies response to risk (Cook & Du Toit, 2005: 250). For instance, many studies have documented that the presence of one supportive, stable caregiver (i.e. a protective factor) was sufficient to buffer traumatic experiences (Friesen & Brennan, 2005: 298). An example could be that when a couple is divorced and the children have a caregiver other than the overstressed parent (a grandparent or teacher), they may be better buffered against the traumatic effects of the divorce.

Protective factors are numerous and can be found in the individual, the family and/or the individual's social context (Theron, 2006).

Because this study is focussing on augmenting personal protective factors because divorcees frequently are without adequate social or familial support (Davidson & Moore, 1996: 655), only personal protective factors will be discussed further.

There are a number of core protective factors that augment the potential for resilience as set out in Figure 3.10 below (Boyden & Mann, 2005: 6-8; Schoon, 2006: 14-15; Shaub, 2002; Theron, 2006: 200-201; Turner *et. al.*, 1995: 26-27):



Figure 3.10: Personal protective factors in the context of divorce

3.4.2.1 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a self-perception that one has the ability to successfully perform specific tasks. People who have a high degree of self-efficacy believe that they can master difficult tasks, and they will expend the necessary effort in dealing with stressful situations. As such, they will believe that they can handle a divorce and all its demands successfully.

3.4.2.2 High self-esteem

People with high self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy have positive feelings about themselves, their social environment, and their ability to deal with life's challenges and to control what happens to them. They do not feel a victim in the divorce situation, but can actively deal with the situation.

3.4.2.3 Intellectual capabilities

Possessing intellectual capabilities, (especially good verbal and communications skills) is necessary for resilience. This is also supported by Fergusson and Lynskey (1996: 281), who stated that resilient people appeared to be characterised by higher intelligence or problem-solving skills than their non-resilient peers. The more intelligent divorcee has more problem solving skills and can possibly verbalise certain feelings resulting from the divorce more articulately.

3.4.2.4 Temperament

Having an easy temperament (generally a genetic or biological trait) which helps to attract the positive regard of others is also a protective factor. The divorcee with an easy temperament deals with problems and stressors more easily and probably manages to secure more social support.

3.4.2.5 Good social and problem-solving skills

Acquiring good social- and problem-solving skills is a protective factor. Divorcees with these skills can overcome obstacles more easily and garner support more readily.

3.4.2.6 A sense of humor

Having a sense of humor that enables a person to laugh when things do not go exactly as planned, or in times of frustration and upset, is a protective factor. It not only relieves stress, but helps the divorcee to see things in perspective.

3.4.2.7 The ability to separate self from situation

Being able to separate yourself from “toxic” situations and environments – especially a “toxic” relationship - is another protective factor. It helps the divorcee to distinguish between noxious and risk-free relationships and makes the decision to end a negative relationship easier.

3.4.2.8 Empathy

Being able to empathise, and experience true compassion and understanding for others, will help a divorcee to not only focus on his own problems, but to see and understand other people's problems as well. The divorcee thus gets to see the bigger picture, which helps him to get his own situation into perspective.

3.4.2.9 Hope

If there is hope, there is a future. This helps the divorcee to look into the future, even if the present is a complete mess.

3.4.2.10 Being emotionally competent

This could be defined as "the demonstration of self-efficacy in the context of emotion-eliciting social transactions" (Saarni in Snyder, 1999: 5). According to Saarni (2006: 20-21) the following skills comprise emotional competence:

Personal emotional competence:

- awareness of one's emotional state;
- ability to use the vocabulary of emotion;
- understanding that one's emotionally expressive behavior may affect others;
- capacity for coping with aversive or upsetting emotions by using self-regulatory strategies; and
- the capacity for emotional self-efficacy.

Familial emotional competence:

- ability to have empathy with other's emotional experiences;
- ability to take into account unique personal information about individuals and apply it when inferring about emotional states; and

- awareness that the structure and nature of relationships are partly defined by the extent of emotional nearness or genuineness of expression and by the degree of give-and-take or sympathy within the relationship.

Extra-familial emotional competence:

- ability to discern other people's emotions based on situational and expressive cues that have some degree of cultural consensus;
- ability to realise that inner emotional states need not correspond to outer expression, both in oneself and others; and
- awareness of cultural display rules.

Emotional competence fuels resilient functioning.

All of the above protective factors have the power to ameliorate risk. The dynamics associated with this amelioration are, however, complex and context-specific (Schoon, 2006: 169).

Although it is possible to delineate risk and protective factors that contribute to the process of resilience, the process of resilience is not as simple as just considering risk and protective factors: "Resilience is a relative phenomenon, depending on complex interactions between constitutional factors and life circumstances" (Schoon, 2006: 15). Thus to truly understand the dynamics of resilience, a deeper understanding of the interaction between an individual and his life circumstances is needed. When an individual is in the process of a divorce, or already divorced, his life circumstances reflect turmoil. These life circumstances impact on parenting.

3.4.3 Resilience in divorced parents

In the researcher's professional experience, many parents who are divorced struggle to function resiliently, which impacts negatively on parenting. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989: 124) state that we must acknowledge that there is a close link between the marital bond and the parent-child relationship. When a marriage is working and the couple is content, the parent-child

relationship is nourished and rewarded by the parents' love and approval for one another, and is supported by their teamwork. But when the tie is severed, the break sends messages of diminished parenting to the children. At this stage, each of the adults is on his own, and occupied with building separate lives.

Shaub (2002) states that the greatest disruptions in the children's lives were those that stemmed from all-encompassing changes in parental mood, attitude and behavior. Bitter and explosive exchanges between parents were, for most of the youngsters, the trademark of the divorce experience. Four-fifths of all the men and an even higher proportion of the women expressed anger and bitterness toward their spouses. In almost every family there was thus at least one, if not two, angry parents (Shaub, 2002)

In the wake of separation and divorce, parents often become physically and emotionally absent. Parents who are themselves struggling, often lack the emotional stamina to provide their children with the attention, caring and supervision that they need. Following a divorce, many children become more emotional, often angry at the parent who moved out, and sad and more difficult to comfort at home. For a parent who already feels emotionally depleted, the child's emotional needs may be too much to bear. Research demonstrates that the most important aspects of divorce are predicting how children will cope and the quality of the relationship they will have with the parent they subsequently will live with (Reivich & Shatte, 2002:17).

Although the residential parent (typically the mother) often works hard to preserve close relationships with her children, disruptions in child rearing during the first few years following divorce can be referred to as a time of "diminished parenting" (Reivich & Shatte, 2002: 17). This results from unintentional poor communication and care and not enough outward expression of love and affection by the parents to the children.

A number of interacting factors make it difficult for the mother to remain as engaged and attentive as she once was. Following a divorce, it is not uncommon for one or both parents to experience symptoms of depression that

interfere with good parenting (Shaub, 2002). It is nearly impossible to be genuinely interested in your child and to respond with love and patience when you yourself are fighting the demons of depression. Real-world changes also contribute to changes in parenting practices. The routines of the family typically change after a divorce. A full-time mother might have to go back to work, and those already employed, might need to work longer hours. A parent's change in schedule usually means periods of less supervision for the child or more time spent in the company of babysitters, which makes for less consistency in styles of play, discipline, and the overall quality of interaction. To put it simply, it is difficult to remain in tune with your child and responsive to his needs when every ounce of your resilience is being used to get yourself through a painful divorce and the surge of life changes it brings (Shaub, 2002).

From the above it can be deduced that following divorce, there are many pitfalls for parents and children which heighten their vulnerability. If parents were to be more resilient they might cope better with these risks which in turn would make it easier for children to function resiliently following divorce.

With reference to resilient parenting, parents who have been divorced need to be cognizant of the need for emotionally competent parenting. Part of being a good parent is the ability to be a role model of emotional intelligence (Stern & Elias, 2006: 41).

Parents need to help their children achieve a sense of:

- appreciation;
- belonging;
- confidence;
- competence; and
- involvement in family decision making (Stern & Elias, 2006:52).

This may be difficult for parents to achieve following divorce and so they require support and intervention aimed at resilience.

3.5 CONCLUSION

While Chapter 2 has dealt with the phenomenon of marriage and divorce, Chapter 3 focus on resilience. It is clear that there are certain risk and protective factors inherent in divorce.

Although this chapter has listed risk and protective factors intrinsic to the process and experience of divorce, such lists do not adequately explain the complex dynamics of the resilience process, also for divorcees.

In Chapter 5 the Intervention Programme is delineated. This programme strives to facilitate a resilience process which integrates various protective factors in order to empower divorcees to overcome the multiple risks intrinsic to divorce, as outlined in Figure 3.11 below.

Risk factor linked to divorce (Cf. Figure 2.11)	Linked theoretical risk factor (Cf. Figure 3.7)	Potential protective factor (Cf. Figure 3.10)
(Bezuidenhout, 2005:22; Ferreira, 1999: 29; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 157; Shaub, 2002)	(Armstrong <i>et al.</i> , 2005: 391-2; Barter, 2005: 345-348; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Schoon, 2006: 8-11; Shaub, 2002)	(Boyden & Mann, 2005:6-8; Theron, 2006: 200-201; Turner <i>et al.</i> , 1995:26-27; Schoon, 2006: 14-15)
Health problems	Personal risk factor (physical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to be emotionally competent • Empathy (also to the self)
Loneliness	Personal risk factor (psychosocial: inability to relate / poor attachment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being emotionally competent • Good social skills (learning to ask for help / support)
Social- and sexual	Personal risk factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even temperament

readjustment	(psychosocial: inability to relate; behavioural: social isolation) Familial risk (poor support / separation from family)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good social skills • Good problem solving skills • A sense of humour • Empathy • Being emotionally competent
Financial changes	Family socioeconomic status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-efficacy • Good problem solving skills
Damage to self-esteem	Personal risk factor (psychosocial: low self-esteem) Familial risk (fragmented family structure / divorce; abuse / violence in family context; family conflict)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope • A sense of humour
Emotional lability	Personal risk factor (psychosocial: low self-esteem; behavioural: aggressive behaviour) Familial risk (poor support; conflict; abuse / violence; family disorganization).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to separate self from situation • Learning to be emotionally competent • Good social skills (asking for help / support)
Feelings of guilt	Familial risk (fragmented family structure / divorce;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope • The ability to separate

	<p>conflict / abuse / violence in family context; poor parent-child relationships)</p>	<p>self from situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to be emotionally competent • Developing empathy
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Figure 3.11: Overview of the risk and personal protective factors intrinsic to the context of divorce

In Chapter 1 the researcher indicated that she works within a paradigm of tertiary prevention. To prevent further risk and vulnerability in divorcees and their children, the complex process of resilience must be encouraged. To do so, the researcher engaged in a process-focussed strategy through the medium of a group intervention programme. Chapter 4 will outline the design which facilitated this.

CHAPTER FOUR

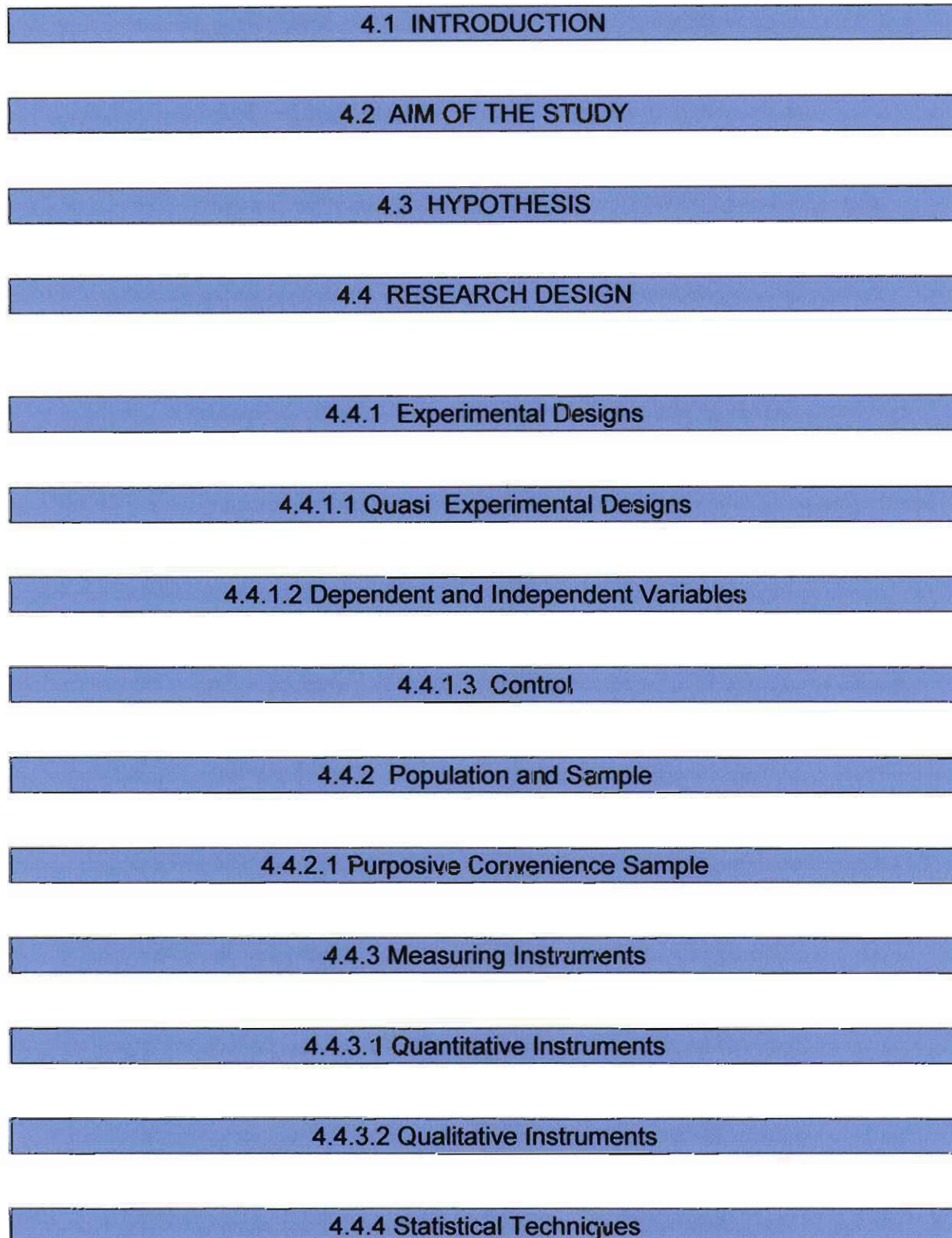
RESEARCH DESIGN

To behold is to look beyond the fact; to observe, to go beyond the observation. Look at the world of people, and you will be overwhelmed by what you see. But select from the mass of humanity a well-chosen few, and observe them with insight, and they will tell you more than all the multitudes.

Paul Leedy and Jeanne Ormrod

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will describe the empirical research method by presenting the proposed research as a quasi-experimental design. An overview of Chapter 4 is presented in Figure 4.1 below.



4.4.5 Data Collection Procedure
4.5 ETHICAL ASPECTS
4.5.1 Harm to Participants
4.5.2 Informed Consent
4.5.3 Deception of Participants
4.5.4 Violation of Privacy
4.5.5 Restoration of Participants
4.5.6 Release of Findings
4.6 CONCLUSION

Figure 4.1: Summary of Chapter 4

4.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of this study is to develop an intervention programme for divorced parents to augment their resilience so that being more resilient, they can overcome the trauma of the divorce and in doing so, improve their personal and parenting wellness.

The overall aim can be implemented as follows:

- by determination of the scope and impact of divorce on parents;
- by determination of the nature of resilience;
- by developing a programme to augment resilient functioning and parenting skills in divorcees; and

- by employing a pre-test, post-test design to comment critically on the efficacy of the programme.

4.3 HYPOTHESIS

One central hypothesis governs this study:

- Null hypothesis

An intervention programme aimed at encouraging resilient functioning in divorcees will not lead to heightened resilient functioning and improved parenting skills.

- Alternative hypothesis

An intervention programme aimed at encouraging resilient functioning in divorcees will lead to heightened resilient functioning and improved parenting skills.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Traditionally, experimental research (which is the broad research design chosen for this study) falls within the gambit of quantitative research methodologies. Quantitative research provides explanations (especially with regard to cause and effect phenomena) and allows for predictions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 94-95). Qualitative research, on the other hand, aims to provide a better or deeper understanding of a complex situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 94-95). Whilst the primary research design for this study is experimental, qualitative research methods will also be employed to comment meaningfully on the efficacy of the intervention programme.

Qualitative researchers believe that a researcher's ability to interpret and make sense of what he sees, is critical for an understanding of any social phenomenon. In this sense, the researcher is an instrument in much the same way as a measuring instrument or measuring scale. In addition to the researcher's observations, in-depth interviews will also be held with the

participants to gauge the impact of the intervention programme on their resilient functioning.

4.4.1 Experimental Designs

The basic purpose of an experimental study is to examine the possible influences that one factor or condition may have on another factor or condition, in other words, it examines cause-and-affect relationships (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 217). In this research project the researcher will use a quasi-experimental design to determine whether the intervention programme succeeds in encouraging resilient participant functioning as individuals and parents after the trauma of their divorce.

4.4.1.1 Quasi experimental designs

In some life situations it is just not possible to randomly select and assign participants to research experiments. In such instances, non-randomised participants form the research sample, which has implications for the interpretation of the results: because the sample is not randomised, the researcher cannot control all confounding or nuisance variables and this must be acknowledged when data is interpreted (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 227; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005: 87). A quasi-experimental approach is a second best approach to eliminating nuisance variables (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 88). A quasi-experimental design was chosen for logistical reasons: the researcher needed to work with divorced persons in her own geographical area.

An example of such a quasi-experimental design is the Non-randomized Control Group Pre-test – Post-test Design. This involves 2 groups to which participants have not been randomly assigned (Fouché & De Vos, 2001: 124; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:236). The experimental group receives ‘treatment’ (in this study it means they participate in the intervention programme), while the control group does not. It can be depicted as follows:

Group	Time →		
	Group 1 (Experimental group)	Observation	Treatment
Group 2 (Control group)	Observation		Observation

Figure 4.2: Non-Randomized control group Pre-test – Post-test design

Because the participants are not randomly assigned, the participants are probably not similar in every respect. However, an initial observation (a pre-test), can confirm that the participants of both groups are at least similar in terms of the dependent variable under investigation (level of resilient functioning). If, after one group has received the experimental treatment, the researcher notes group differences with respect to the dependent variable, it might reasonably be assumed that the post-treatment differences are probably the result of that treatment.

In this study, the participants of the experimental and control group comprised ten suitable persons, who responded to the researcher’s invitation to participate in the study. Five participants were randomly assigned to each group and the control group received no intervention during the course of this study.

4.4.1.2 Dependent and independent variables in the quasi-experimental design

The investigation of cause-and-effect relationships focuses on determining the extent to which one variable (the cause) influences another variable (the effect). The first (the cause) is called the independent variable and the second (the effect) is called the dependent variable (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 218). In a quasi-experimental study, the researcher, in some way, changes or manipulates one or more variables in the environment (the independent

variable) and then measures the effects of this change on another variable (the dependent variable).

In this study the variables focused on are summarised in Figure 4.3 below:

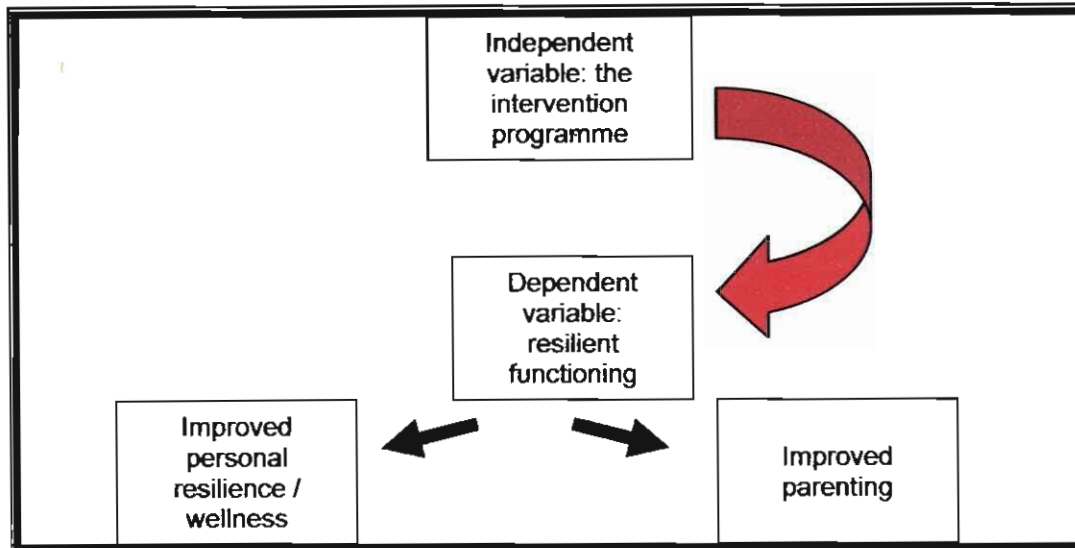


Figure 4.3: Variables

In a quasi-experimental design, participants are not randomly selected or assigned. Because of this, it was impossible to control for all nuisance variables which might have impacted on the dependent variable. For example, amongst others, gender, socio-economic circumstances and extended family relationships might have impacted positively or negatively on the dependent variable. This was taken into account in the final data analysis.

The independent variable, namely the intervention programme, is delineated in detail in Chapter 5.

4.4.1.3 Control in the quasi-experimental design

Control refers to the manner in which an experiment is conducted: when control is ensured, alternative explanations for the research results are regulated (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 5). The extent to which a research design and the data that it yields allows the researcher to draw accurate conclusions about cause-and-effect and other relationships within the data is linked to control (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 219).

Control is linked to the internal validity of a study. To maximise the internal validity of an experimental study, the researcher needs to control nuisance variables so that these variables can be ruled out as explanations for any of the effects observed. Any of the following control measures (as summarised in Figure 4.4) can be used:



Figure 4.4: Measures to maximise control (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 219-222)

Not all of the measures recommended could be used because of the quasi-experimental design. The following measures were used:

- Keep things constant

All participants were divorcees. All participants were parents with children (albeit children of different ages). The geographical area from which participants came was the same (which meant that their socio-economic status was similar).

- Include a control group

The control group consisted of divorcees from the same geographical area. All the members of this group also had children of different ages. The control group received no intervention during the course of this study.

- Randomly assign people to groups

Participants were randomly assigned to the control and experimental groups: the first five participants who responded, were assigned to the experimental group.

4.4.2 Population and sample

The population refers to all persons about whom the researcher would like to draw conclusions (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 52). In this study, population refers to all persons who were both divorced and parents. A sample was drawn from the population. Samples can either be probability or non-probability samples. For logistical reasons, a non-probability sample was used in this study – this means that not all members of the greater population had a chance of being included in the research (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 56).

4.4.2.1 Purposive convenience sample

The researcher invited divorced parents in her immediate vicinity to participate. The principal of the primary school and local churches helped the researcher to find participants. This made the sample both purposive and convenient, as summarised in Figure 4.5 below:



Figure 4.5: Study sample

4.4.3 Measuring instruments

Both qualitative and quantitative instruments were used.

4.4.3.1 Quantitative instruments

Two questionnaires were used.

- The child and youth resilience measure - Adapted (CYRM - A)

The CYRM is a close-ended questionnaire that was designed for the International Resilience Study (Ungar, 2005). It was designed to be used

for youths, but as it covers the basic constructs which inspires resilience and as there is currently no questionnaire available to assess resilience in divorced parents, it was adapted for this study (for example: questions which pertain specifically to youth, such as schooling issues, were omitted). Permission was obtained to adapt the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 49 statements which participants were asked to rate using a rating scale with five possible answers ranging from “Not at all” to “A lot”. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Addendum A.

- **The Parenting Questionnaire (Gottman, 1997)**

The parenting questionnaire is a close-ended questionnaire that was designed to measure the participant’s method of parenting. The questionnaire contained 40 statements which participants had to agree or disagree with. Four different methods of parenting were measured: the dismissing, disapproving, laissez faire and emotion coaching parent. A copy of this questionnaire is included in Addendum B.

4.4.3.2 Qualitative instruments

Interviews (semi structured and unstructured) were conducted with participants prior to and following the intervention programme. Unstructured interviews were used to informally explore areas of resilient functioning in depth, while semi structured interviews did the same. The semi structured interviews revolved around pre-determined resilience themes, as gleaned from the literature overview (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 166). Participants were also contacted telephonically approximately 8 weeks after the conclusion of the intervention to ascertain their perception of the impact of the programme on their functioning after the programme had ended.

4.4.4 Statistical techniques

The quantitative measures were scored according to test specifications and then interpreted qualitatively. The qualitative interpretation was discussed with a practising psychologist to ensure validity of interpretation.

The contents of the qualitative data were content analysed. The analysis was also discussed with a practising psychologist to ensure validity of interpretation.

4.4.5 Data collection procedure

The intervention took place over a period of nine weeks. The participants took part as a group. The group sessions were held at the researcher's practice, and followed the session format as described in Chapter 5. Each session was summarised by means of process notes.

4.5 ETHICAL ASPECTS

Ethical considerations are very important during the following three phases of research:

- when participants are enlisted;
- during the intervention; and
- in the documentation of research results (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 181).

The researcher used the ethical principals suggested by the Professional Board for Psychology (2002: 1-44). However, ethical codes and professional guidelines cannot make moral decisions for researchers. The final responsibility for an ethical approach to research lies with the researcher herself (Strydom, 1998:23). The ethical issues to which the researcher adhered are summarised in Figure 4.6 below.

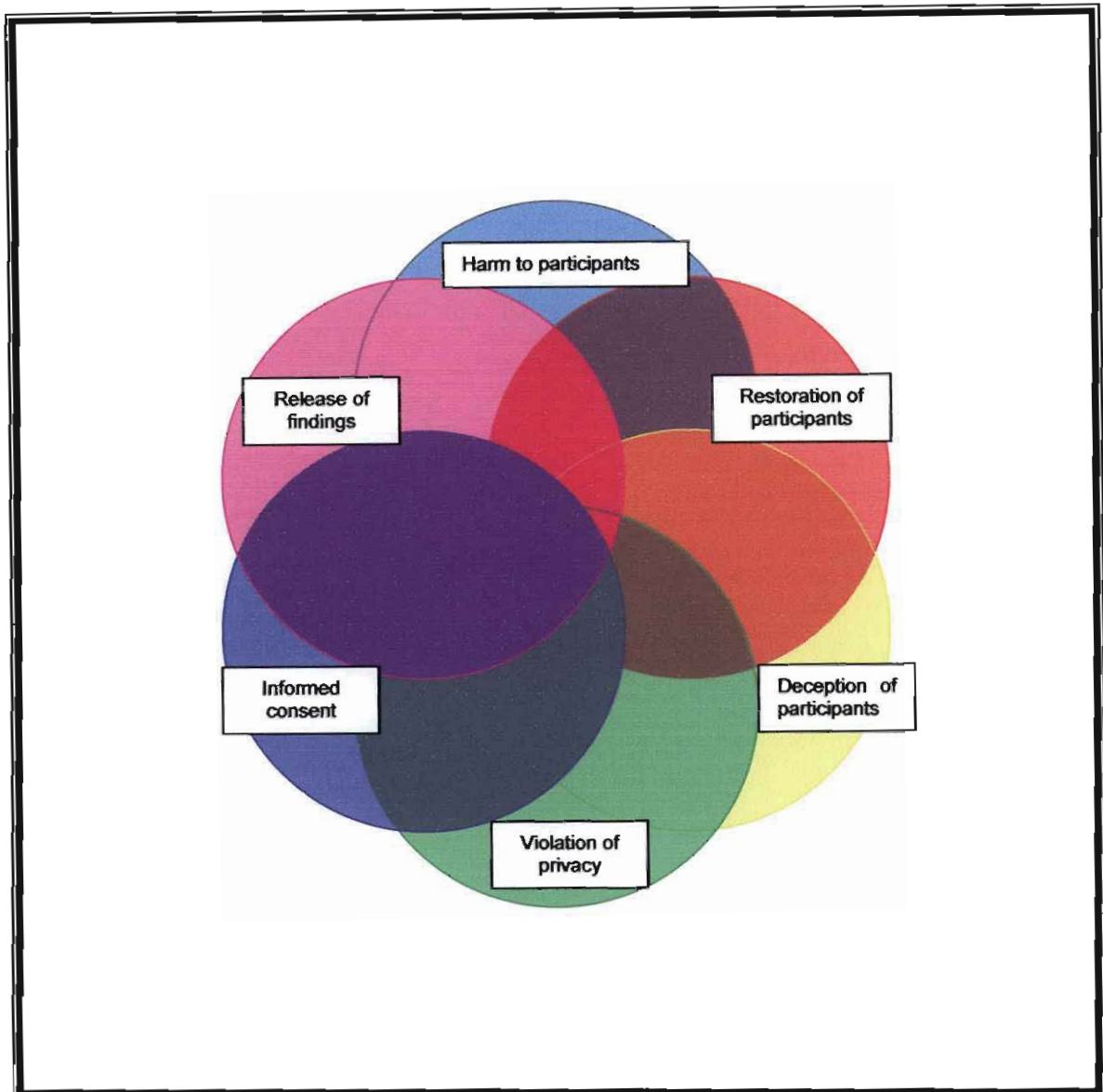


Figure 4.6: Ethical issues adhered to in this study

4.5.1 Harm to participants

The ethical obligation rests with the researcher to protect participants against any form of physical or emotional discomfort that may result from the research project. Researchers should also identify participants who could possibly prove vulnerable during the investigation and preferably not include them (Strydom, 1998: 25). Furthermore, researchers must guard against manipulating participants (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 201).

In this research, physical harm was not a consideration. The potential for emotional harm was controlled by means of:

- giving the participants prior information about the potential impact of participation in the intervention programme; and
- offering participants an opportunity to withdraw following this delineation.

Furthermore, the potential for harm was controlled by the researcher's competence: she is a registered and practising educational psychologist. Competence minimises the risk of harm (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 182).

4.5.2 Informed consent

According to Strydom (1998: 25-26), obtaining informed consent implies that accurate and complete information on the goal of the investigation, the process of the investigation, the possible benefits, drawbacks and risks to which participants may be exposed, and the credibility of the researcher should also be made known to possible participants.

Participants must be legally and psychologically competent to give consent and they must be aware that they can withdraw from the investigation at any time. There must be sufficient opportunities for the participants to ask questions before the study commences, as well as during the investigation.

In this research:

- all participants consented following detailed information given about the goals, process and potential impact of the intervention programme; and
- all participants were eager to participate.

4.5.3 Deception of participants

This could be defined as “deliberately misrepresenting facts in order to make another person believe what is not true, violating the respect to which every person is entitled” (Strydom, 1998: 27). Dishonesty and disrespect are obviously unethical behaviours and cannot be condoned in any way.

In this research, deception was avoided by truthfully outlining the goal, process and possible participant experiences prior to initiation of the intervention programme.

4.5.4 Violation of privacy

The privacy of participants (including their identity) should be protected (Henning, 2005: 73). In this research the participants' anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms and by not documenting information which might provide clues to their identity.

4.5.5 Restoration of participants

One manner of minimising possible harm to participants is to provide them with an opportunity to discuss their experience following the intervention (Strydom, 1998: 33-34).

In this research the termination of the group sessions was handled sensitively and participants were contacted eight weeks after the completion of the intervention programme to determine whether further restoration work was necessary. The control group was offered the opportunity to complete the programme.

4.5.6 Release of findings

When the findings of a research project are released, the findings must be documented with accuracy, objectivity and unambiguity. Limitations of the findings must be noted and plagiarism or bias avoided.

The findings of this study are reported in the prescribed PhD dissertation format and the researcher took pains to ensure that ambiguity, subjectivity, bias, plagiarism and inaccuracies were avoided. The limitations of this study are noted in Chapter 7.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter provided an overview of the entire research process. In the following chapter, the intervention programme (or independent variable) will be described in detail.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

If I were asked to give what I consider the single most useful bit of advice for all humanity, it would be this: Expect trouble as an inevitable part of life, and when it comes, hold your head high. Look it squarely in the eye, and say, 'I will be bigger than you. You cannot defeat me.'

Ann Landers

American Advice Columnist

5.1 INTRODUCTION

It is necessary to preface this programme by emphasising that this intervention programme is not intended to be a generic panacea. Effective programmes are context- and group-specific (Mash & Wolfe, 2005: 98; Theron, 2006: 211; Ungar, 2005: xxxiii).

For this reason, the activities included in this programme are suited to divorcees who are struggling to function resiliently as individuals and as parents following their divorce. No programme is absolutely suited to each individual. For that reason, this programme contains many general activities. It is stressed that these should be implemented according to the needs or context of the individual who is struggling to function resiliently after divorce.

5.2 SUMMARY OF INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The intervention programme is summarised in Figure 5.1 below. The programme consisted of 9 weekly sessions. Each session was 2 hours long. The venue for the intervention was the researcher's practice in the Vaal Triangle area of Gauteng.

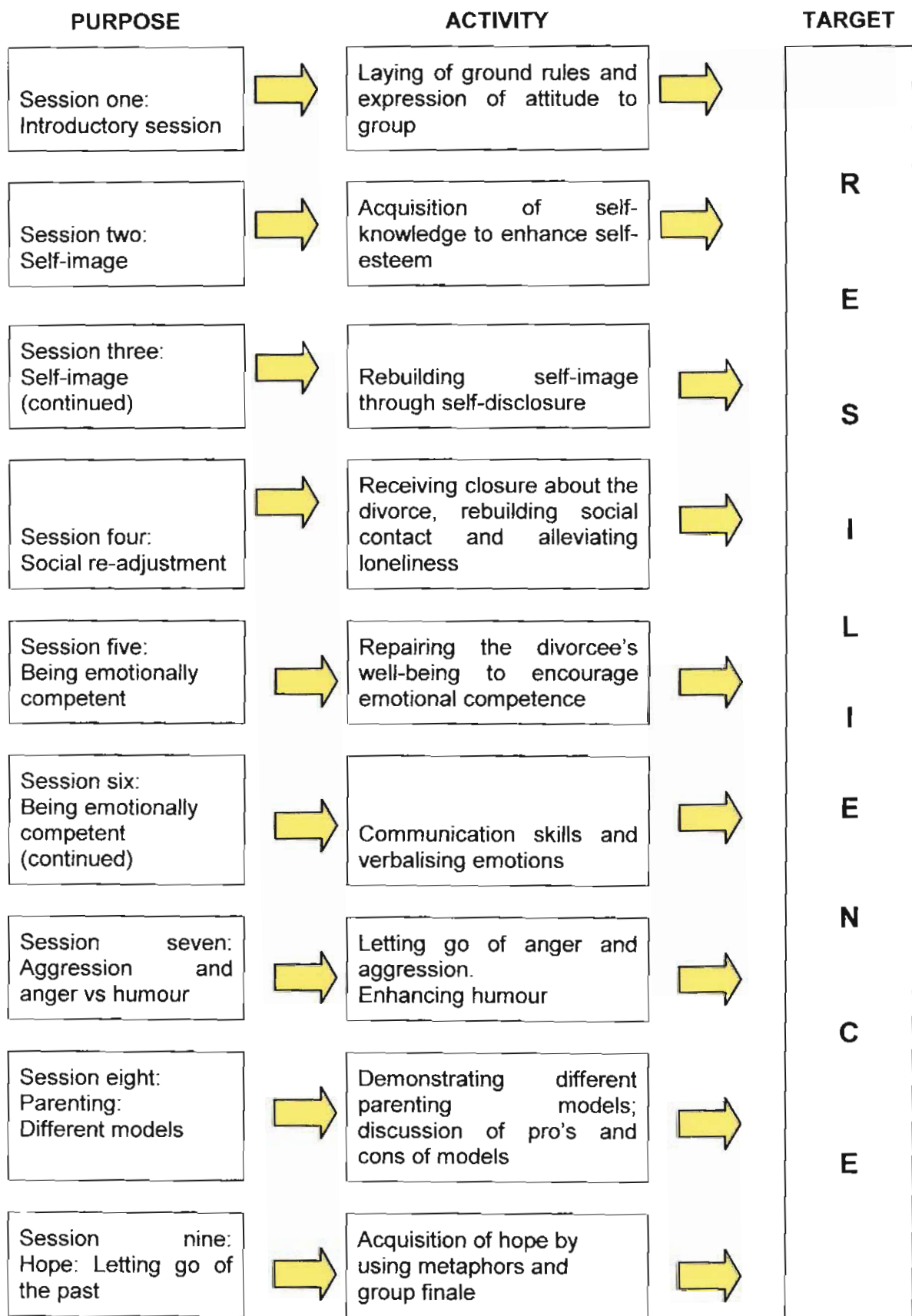


Figure 5.1: Summary of intervention programme

According to Carver (see Chapter 3.3.1), adversity can yield benefits for the person who experiences it. Divorcees have generally experienced adversity which can be harnessed to yield benefits, even if they are not aware that the survival of adversity can be harnessed to encourage personal wellness. The purpose of this programme is to enhance resilience so that the divorcee can thrive. An allied purpose is to improve parenting skills (given the potential insidious impact of divorce on parenting).

5.3 INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The 9 sessions of the intervention programme will now be outlined. Please note that all inserts in coloured blocks are part of the handouts that will be given to participants to frame each activity.

5.3.1 Session 1: Introduction

5.3.1.1 Objectives

The object of this session is primarily to introduce the participants.

5.3.1.2 Activities

- The therapist introduces herself to the participants and explains the aim and format of the study. Handout 5.1 is handed out to the participants as part of the explanation of what the therapist's studies are about.
- The participants were then asked to describe themselves metaphorically.

Handout 5.1

*We can let the circumstances of our lives harden us
so that we become increasingly resentful and afraid,
or we can let them soften us, and make us kinder.
We always have the choice.*

*Tenzin Gyatso
14th Dalai Lama*

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- Each participant is asked to explain his/her feelings when asked to join the group.
- Each participant is asked to discuss what he/she expects to gain from being part of the group.
- The group rules are negotiated. These include:
 - confidentiality is the foremost ground rule;
 - commitment is expected for the full nine weeks;
 - punctuality is required;
 - when a group member wants to make a comment about another group member, the comment should be addressed directly to the member in question; and
 - members are expected not to interrupt when another member is talking.

5.3.1.3 Homework

The participants were asked to reflect on the metaphors they identified with. The aim of this activity would be to create a sense of awareness of their self and how each participant saw himself at that moment in time. It is also connected to the theme of the next session.

5.3.2 Session 2: Self-image / Self-esteem

Handout 5.2

Believing in yourself is not just for you; it's for every person who has touched your life in a significant way and for every person your life will touch the same way five minutes from now, or five centuries from now.

Jaye Miller
www.inspirationpeak.com

5.3.2.1 Objectives

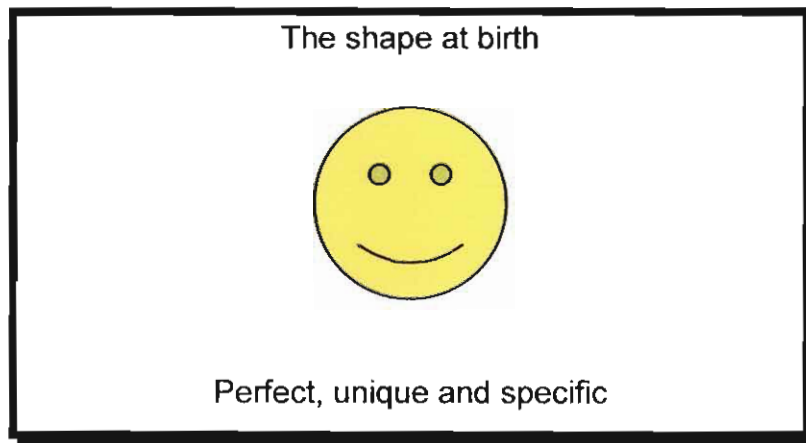
- To provide participants with knowledge about their fellow group members.
- To augment and enhance their damaged self-esteem (Cf. 3.4.1.5, Cf. 3.4.2). For this, self-knowledge is a pre-requisite (Suran and Rizzo, 1983: 150).
- Participants are helped to see themselves in a realistic way – their positive as well as negative attributes. A realistic self-image is necessary to shore up resilience (Kaplan, 1999: 54)

5.3.2.2 Activities

- Each participant is asked to reveal to the group what object he or she had chosen to identify themselves with, and to then talk about him/herself for three minutes. They are encouraged to ignore superficial details and to focus on their past/failed marriages. They have to divide their commentary into what they think they did right to contribute to the good in their previous marriage and what mistakes they made. The group is asked to comment.
- In order to remediate the current self-image, basic knowledge of how each person's self-image was formed, is required (Kent, 2002: 25-29). For the purpose of this programme, such basic knowledge was summarised in Handout 5.3.
- Discuss the pressures that each group member experienced and then how they think it influenced them in their marriages.

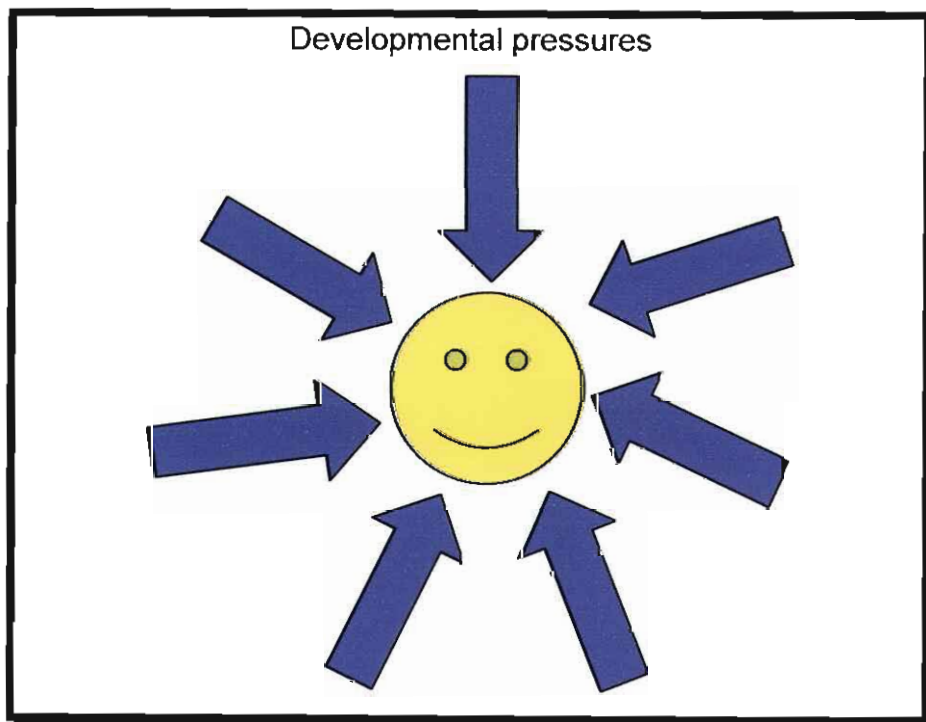
Handout 5.3

The influence of the environment on the forming of self-image:



Developmental pressures

- Parental role modeling - Home
- Peer pressures – Friends
- Value programming – School and church
- Successes and failures – Achievement
- Socio-economic forces – Class
- Other environmental pressures (in this case divorce)



5.3.2.3 Homework

- The following story (Handout 5.4) was handed out to all participants for homework. Having read the story, they will be asked in the following session to discuss with the group which of their characteristics they previously had thought of as negative, but could now be reframed in a positive way.
- The participants were asked to write down everything they thought had a huge influence on their self-image – both positive and negative. They were also asked to write a short passage on the effects the divorce had on their self-image. They were urged to be specific in their reflections.

Handout 5.4

The Cracked Pot

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on the end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots was perfectly made and never leaked. The other pot had a crack in it and by the time the water bearer reached his master's house it had leaked much of its water and was only half full.

For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you." "Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?" "I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again the pot apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, God will use our flaws to grace his table. In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste. Don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and you too can be the cause of beauty. Know that in our weakness we find our strength.

Author Unknown

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5.3.3 Session 3: Self-image / Self-esteem (continued)

The following handout summarises the essence of Session 3. This handout was given to the participants at the start of the session.

Handout 5.5

*Acceptance is a magic key. Accept yourself as you are!
And in that acceptance, intelligence arises. Why does intelligence
arise? Because whenever you accept, you are no more divided.*

Osho, 1931-1990

www.inspirationpeak.com

5.3.3.1 Objective

- To help rebuild the self-image of the participants by encouraging awareness of thought processes. Burns (1993: 44) emphasises the power that thought (especially rational thought) has over wellbeing. If a person has irrational thoughts about himself (e.g. “because I failed in my marriage, I am a failure”), it contaminates his perception of himself and leads to a poor self-image. Divorcees often have such irrational thoughts (Cf.2.9.1).

5.3.3.2 Activities

- Referring to the homework of the previous session, each participant was given time to discuss what he/she discovered about him/herself with regard to his/her self-image. The group was asked to comment.
- To each group member the question is asked: “What can/should I change about myself to enhance my self-esteem?”
- The focus was on thought processes. The therapist’s role is to point out negative thought processes and reframe them (with the aid of the other participants). Questions will be asked to achieve awareness of thought

processes. These questions will include: "Is that an accurate suggestion / perception? Would the group agree with the perception the person has of himself? Is that a rational thought? If not, how can we change it?"

5.3.4 Session 4: Social re-adjustment

The following handouts summarise the essence of Session 4. These handouts were given to participants at the start of the session.

Handout 5.6

You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.

*Winnie the Pooh
As Written by British Author A. A. Milne*

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Handout 5.7

We need others. We need others to love and we need to be loved by them. There is no doubt that without it, we too, like the infant left alone, would cease to grow, cease to develop, choose madness and even death.

*Dr. Leo Buscaglia, 1924-1998
American Author and Professor of 'Love'*

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5.3.4.1 Objectives

This session has the following objectives:

- To help the divorcee to make the necessary social adjustments after divorce (Cf.3.4.1.3). They need to form a new and separate identity from the one they displayed while they were still with their former spouses. For them to be able to do that, closure regarding the end of the former marriage is necessary.
- To help alleviate loneliness after divorce (Cf. 3.4.1.2).

5.3.4.2 Activities

- Each participant was asked to give reasons why they got married. This was done so that everyone could realise that they all existed in a social framework and that as humans they were social beings – this link will be emphasised by the therapist. The therapist initiated the exercise, thereby modeling the self-disclosure process.
- Because we are social beings, support systems are valuable to us and positive support systems promote resilience (Masten & Reed, 2005: 83). Handout 5.8 was given as an illustration of how people could influence other people's lives. Each participant was then asked to give examples of people who could be part of their support system. They had to name at least two persons (family members or friends) and explain to the group why they thought these people would be a good support system.

Handout 5.8

How many times have we walked by someone on the street or in a hallway and instead of saying hello we pretend we don't see them? The truth is that all of us, deep down inside, have a need to be seen, acknowledged and appreciated. We are on a spiritual journey that can at times be very lonely. And one of the simplest and most effective ways to help our fellow traveler is to smile and say hello.

Ron Atchison

www.inspirationpeak.com

- This list could be extended to the following people: family, friends, work colleagues, people who went through the same troubles, people from church or other religious institutions, support groups (also available on the internet) and so on.
- The group will be asked to expand the list if necessary.
- Participants were asked when they felt would be a good time to start socialising again. (Handout 5.9 will be used as an illustration). The discussion will include questions like: Is it OK to start dating again? When is too soon to start dating again?

Handout 5.9



5.3.5 Session 5: Being emotionally competent

The following handout summarises the essence of Session 5. This handout was given to participants at the start of the session.

Handout 5.10

Everything you need you already have. You are complete right now, you are a whole, total person, not an apprentice person on the way to someplace else. Your completeness must be understood by you and experienced in your thoughts as your own personal reality.

*Dr. Wayne Dyer
American Author and Motivational Speaker*

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5.3.5.1 Objectives

One of the biggest effects of divorce is the damage done to a person's well-being (Cf. 2.9.1). The aim of this session is to repair emotional damage done by the divorce and to help the divorcee to be emotionally competent.

5.3.5.2 Activities

Following Saarni's model of emotional competency, personal, familial and extra-familial competency will be dealt with (Cf. 3.4.2).

A vocabulary of emotions was given (taken from http://www.sonoma.edu/users/s/swijtink/teaching/philosophy_101/paper1/listemotions.htm) This vocabulary is summarised in Handout 5.11 below.

Handout 5.11

Afraid:	abandoned, alarmed, anxious, apprehensive, cautious, concerned, desperate, fearful, frightened, hesitant, horrified, hysterical, nervous, panicked, petrified, scared, shocked, threatened, terrified, timid, troubled, worried
Angry:	apathetic, bitter, contemptuous, cross, cruel, defiant, disobedient, enraged, fuming, furious, hateful, heated, hostile, incensed, indignant, infuriated, irate, jealous, livid, mad, mean, outraged, raging, raving, resentful, spiteful, stubborn, unforgiving, vengeful
Confident:	amazed, ambitious, brave, calm, certain, convinced, courageous, determined, empowered, enthusiastic, exhilarated, hopeful, independent, loyal, positive, proud, respectful, secure, strong, triumphant, trusting
Doubtful:	bewildered, bored, cautious, confused, despairing, distant, distrustful, dubious, hesitant, evasive, indecisive, indifferent, insecure, powerless, preoccupied, puzzled, sceptical, suspicious, timid, torn, uncertain, uninformed, wavering
Happy:	calm, carefree, cheerful, comfortable, complacent, contented, ecstatic, elated, enthusiastic, exalted, excited, festive, glad, grateful, inspired, joyous, jubilant, light hearted, optimistic, peaceful, playful, pleased, relaxed, relieved, satisfied, serene, thrilled
Hurt:	abandoned, crushed, disappointed, disillusioned, disregarded, heartbroken, helpless, misunderstood, offended, rejected, shocked, unnoticed, unwanted

Interested:	absorbed, amazed, ambitious, attracted, awed, concerned, curious, eager, earnest, engrossed, enthusiastic, excited, involved, fascinated, inquisitive, intent, intrigued, sympathetic, pitying
Irritated:	annoyed, exasperated, frustrated, goaded, grumpy, impatient, offended, provoked, shaky, tense, upset
Loving:	accepting, admiring, adoring, affectionate, awed, close, compassionate, considerate, fond, humble, passionate, pitying, sharing, tender, understanding, warm
Sad:	cheerless, defeated, depressed, despairing, dismal, dreary, dull, gloomy, grieving, helpless, hopeless, lonely, low, melancholic, miserable, moody, pessimistic, regretful, remorseful, sombre, sorrowful, sulky
Shamed:	disgraced, dishonoured, embarrassed, helpless, humiliated, mortified, regretful, remorseful, stupid, ugly, uncomfortable, weak

- Group discussion: the awareness of one's emotional state forms the focus of the group discussion.
- Each participant got the opportunity to verbalise their emotional state, using the vocabulary list given. This encourages emotional awareness and enables them to confront their emotions and discourages denial.
- The participants were asked to discuss how they thought their emotionally expressive behaviour might affect other persons. The focus of this discussion was to be specifically on children.
- The following handout (Handout 5.12) was given to each participant.

Handout 5.12

Coping with aversive or upsetting emotions



- Be aware of the upsetting emotions.
- Find the cause of these emotions. If it is an event, try to find a new way of reacting toward the event.
- Understand that you cannot control certain events, but that your reaction towards these events can be controlled.
- You have control over your emotions.

Anger will be dealt with in a later session.

5.3.6 Session 6: Being emotionally competent (continued)

The following handout summarises the essence of Session 5 and 6. This handout was given to participants at the start of the session.

Handout 5.13

Books about relationships talk about how to 'get' the love you need, how to 'keep' love, and so on. But the right question to ask is 'How do I become a more loving human being?'

Sam Keen

American Author, Professor and Philosopher

5.3.6.1 Objectives

- The participants should understand and learn the skills of empathy and good communication to strengthen their interpersonal relationships. Communication is the backbone of any relationship. Without the skills of empathy and good communication, a relationship is almost certainly doomed (Cf. 3.4.2).
- The participants were made aware that the structure and nature of relationships were in part defined by the degree of emotional immediacy or

genuineness of expressive display, and by the degree of reciprocity or sympathy within a relationship. This gives them an understanding of how relationships work, and what can be expected of them in a relationship.

- Participants must learn that to avoid conflict, does not solve the problem. Conflict is part of any relationship. If it is not handled in a proper way it is destructive and relationships suffer and fail. Rather learn to use good skills to dissolve conflict.

5.3.6.2 Activities

- A definition of “empathy” (Moller, 1980: 180, Handout 5.14) is given.

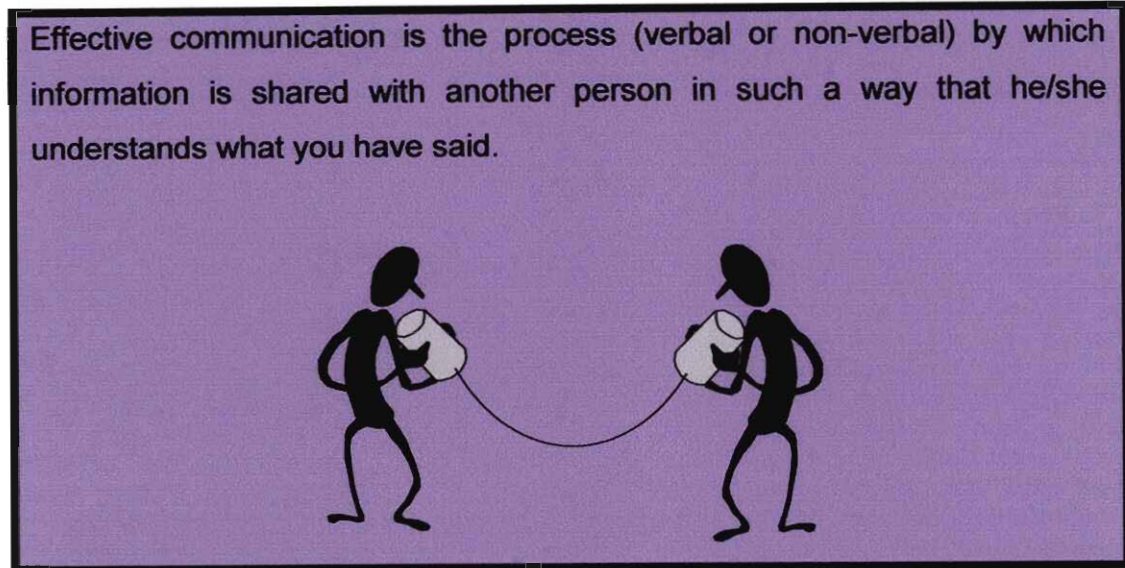
Handout 5.14

Empathy is the ability to put yourself in the other person’s shoes; to understand their emotions as if you were experiencing them yourself. It differs from sympathy.

Empathy is a skill that can help you to understand people and their emotions better. It thus helps to improve interpersonal skills. Empathy can be used as a communication skill to listen effectively to your children.

- A definition of communication skills is given using Handout 5.15.

Handout 5.15



- Participants will then be asked to reflect on what level of communication they function at in their intimate relationships. Their reflection will be aided by the following handout (Handout 5.16).

Handout 5.16

Different levels of communication		
1. Cliché	-	shares nothing
2. Facts	-	share what you <u>know</u>
3. Opinion	-	share what you <u>think</u>
4. Emotions	-	share what you <u>feel</u>
5. Openness	-	share <u>yourself</u> : complete transparency

Communication is superficial when a person uses clichés and facts. Only when a person starts to share what he thinks and feels, is there a deeper level of communication. Openness is a level of communication that is not often reached. Following this reflection, the therapist will encourage group members to practice deeper levels of communication skills on each other using role-play. They will be urged to use examples that demonstrate their communication with

their children. This role-play will be used to show them how to use empathy and open ended questions to help their children to communicate their emotions and to be transparent.

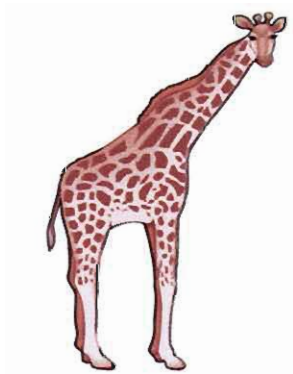
- **Conflict management**

The participants were asked to each choose an animal (from Handout 5.17) with which they could identify to show them how they handled conflict.

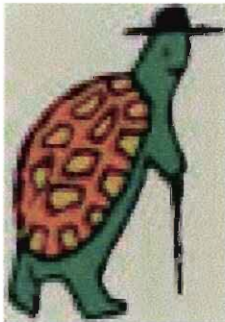
Handout 5.17

SELF IMAGE: THE HANDLING OF CONFLICT

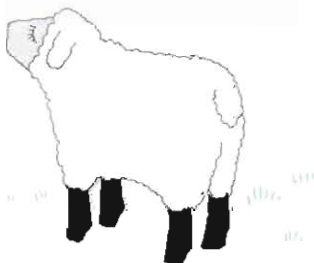
Which one of the following are you?



GIRAFFE: Here, where I am, nothing happens! Feels that he is too high up for confrontation.



TORTOISE: Let me get away! Withdraws to avoid conflict.



SHEEP: Conforms. Will rather go with the group than with his own feelings.



OSTRICH: No problem!! Just denies conflict.



CROCODILE: Don't hurt me! Manipulates and hides behind tears.



CAT: I'll meet you halfway; I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine. He makes creative compromises.



GORILLA: You have to believe me because I am right! Dominates through aggression and pressure.



OWL: I think... Hides his emotions and feelings.



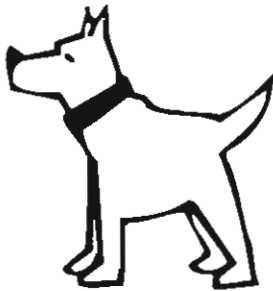
SKUNK: Easy!! He rationalises



DONKEY: I am right and you are wrong!. He is dogmatic, judgemental and self-righteous.



Hyena: Ha, ha. Avoids conflict by laughing.



DOG: I care enough to confront you. I may not like what you do, but I still appreciate you. The dog is looking for an open and honest relationship. He sees conflict as natural and normal.

- Group discussion: Once the participants had identified their particular communication style, they were encouraged to use the communication skills they had just learned to help them develop better conflict-handling skills.
- Once empathy, communication skills and the participant's own way of handling conflict had been discussed, it was put into context with the quote from Handout 5.18:

Handout 5.18

We must take time to fight and to feel conflict and anger, not to try to fix it or "be nice" or be-friends-again-no-matter-what.

Sark

- Verbalising emotions: Participants were then taught to verbalise emotions by using the list of emotions and their own examples (Handout 5.11). The following tips can be used for verbalising emotions:

Handout 5.19

-Admit it

-Define it

-Share it

5.3.7 Session 7: Aggression and anger vs humour

Handout 5.20 summarises the essence of the damage done through aggression in a person's life. This handout was given to participants at the start of the session.

Handout 5.20

***We can judge others or we can love others -
but we can't do both at the same time.***

*Author Unknown
But Greatly Appreciated!*

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5.3.7.1 Objectives

- To make the participants aware of anger and aggression still resulting from the divorce (Cf.3.4.1.6). Aggression, if not dealt with, will contaminate not

only possible future relationships and social relationships, but also the relationships with their children.

- To deal with the anger and to help the participants to let go of it, especially with the help of humor.

5.3.7.2 Activities:

- A number of ways to deal with anger was handed out (Cf. Handout 5.21). Group members were asked to add their own creative ways of handling anger to the list.

Handout 5.21

CHOOSE TO DEAL WITH ANGER ...

- Do not blame God.
- Keep a "Divorce Journal". Write down all those angry feelings and review your progress months later. It is therapeutic and affirming.
- Take responsibility for your anger and deal with it.
- Admit to yourself that you are angry and that you feel bitter. "I am so angry that..."
- Tell the Lord about your anger. He loves you and understands how you feel.
- Cry. It is a release.
- Join a Divorce Restoration support group. You need someone who has experienced the same feelings of anger to talk to.
- Write a letter to your ex-spouse, expressing all your angry feelings, but never post the letter. Destroy it.
- Pray for peace in your heart.
- Don't take revenge.

Lathicia Klackers

- All participants were then asked to write a letter to their ex-spouses. In the letter they were asked to express all their feelings of anger, hurt, rejection, frustration or any other negative feelings they might be experiencing. A formal burial service would then be held where they would be asked to place their letters - as a metaphor of all their negative feelings - in a toy coffin

provided by the therapist. In this way they were encouraged to put their anger behind them.

Handout 5.22 summarises the essence of the importance of humor, and was handed out at the beginning of the discussion on humor.

Handout 5.22

There is hope for any woman who can look in the mirror and laugh at what she sees.

Barbara Johnson

www.inspirationpeak.com

- Participants were encouraged to celebrate the termination of an old life and to celebrate the beginning of a new one. The things they could do to celebrate were unlimited. Three examples of inexpensive ideas that could be used to create their own celebrations were handed out. They were also encouraged to create their own ideas (examples are provided in Handout 5.23 below).

Handout 5.23

- Get the children together in the kitchen to help you bake cookies or make candy with you. Then gift wrap what you make and take it to someone who would really appreciate it.
- Forget the hassle. Celebrate Saturday as a day off from your regular workweek. Have a celebration breakfast. Fix specialties your family likes, or you may even want to invite friends over for waffles, pancakes or special omelets.
- Select a rainy day and invite a friend over for tea (or wine!), or make it for lunch, if you like. Set the table with white linen, flowers, and your favorite tea things. If you have a fireplace, why not set up a table in front of the fire.

Barbara Johnson

- The participants were encouraged to develop a sense of humor. Handout 5.24 was handed out to stress the importance of a sense of humor. There were many ways to do this. They were encouraged to spend time with people who had a quick sense of humor, read humorous books by writers such as Barbara Johnson, to have a good belly laugh, as they watch comedies, and so on. Participants were asked to add to the list of things to do to develop a sense of humor.

Handout 5.24

A sense of humour can help you overlook the unattractive, tolerate the unpleasant, cope with the unexpected, and smile through the unbearable.

Barbara Johnson

5.3.8 Session 8: Parenting: Different parenting models

Handout 5.25 summarises the essence of Session 8. This handout was given to participants at the start of the session.

Handout 5.25

Life is the first gift,
love is the second,
and understanding the third.

Author Unknown

www.inspirationspeak.com

5.3.8.1 Objectives

- To teach participants different styles of parenting. People are often not aware of their own parenting style and the effect it has on themselves and their children. If they have knowledge of the different styles of parenting, they can make informed choices.
- To make participants aware of the consequences of each parenting style.

- To explain the needs of children. Adults are often ignorant of the needs of children, especially when it comes to their emotional needs.
- To make participants aware of the different emotions that children experience during and after a divorce, so that as parents they can be more aware, empathic and understanding towards their children.
- As parents struggle to control their intense emotions during and following a divorce, their children may experience them as remote, unavailable and over-emotional (Cf. 2.9.4). The objective of this session is to help parents to - in the best interests of the children - maintain warm and stable relationships with them, which would help the youngsters to enjoy life and to mature in a healthy fashion.
- Parents need to be made aware of their children's feelings in general, and have to learn to deal with these feelings.
- Conflict between the divorced parents needs to be handled in such a way that the children's best interest is served. Parents need to be made aware that frequent visits between the non-custodial parent and the child(ren) have been found to have positive effects on the quality of relationships (Cf. 2.9.4).

5.3.8.2 Activities

- Disseminate information on different parenting styles (using Handout 5.26). Discuss the different parenting styles with participants: find out which parenting style participants identified with. What he thought needed changing. What mistakes had been made unknowingly, and which they would like to change.

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING STYLE

TRAITS	RESULTS
1. The child is told what to do and is not allowed to make his/her own decisions or choices.	Feelings of fear, incompetence, unworthiness, tension, an unwillingness to take responsibility.
2. Parent tends to be a tyrant in his/her behavior. Children are forced to behave in a prescribed way.	No initiative, fear and tension to act independently. Child wants to leave home as soon as possible, good relationships are hindered.
3. Impatience and a lack of sympathy. Impolite and intolerant attitude.	Results are very negative, especially for the oldest child. The youngest child seems to be less affected, possibly because the parent is less focused on the youngest child.
4. Harsh judgment and threatening. Terrorisation that sometimes resembles sadism.	Defensive flight-posture is taken. Rebelliousness, doesn't believe in the parent's values, fear, tension, poor socialising.

PERMISSIVE PARENTING STYLE

TRAITS	RESULTS
1. Parents let the children question their discipline. Discipline disappears.	Inconsistency, fickleness, chaos, insecurity, no understanding or trust in the family; the parent has no involvement with the child; it is not expected of the child to be responsible; and the child shows no accountability.
Stress the child's natural goodness, needs and talents. The parent closes his/her eyes to the child's negative traits and follows the way of least resistance.	The child stays excluded from responsibilities at home and at school; wastes time; uses the least effort; learning problems; the child makes poor career choices.

Stressing happiness of the here and now.	Focus on the future fades away; frivolous; work and virtue become too much effort.
Excessive trust in the child's ability for self-growth.	The child does not learn critical evaluation. The gathering of knowledge is not important and the child just plods on.

DEMOCRATIC (BALANCED) PARENTING STYLE

TRAITS	RESULTS
1. Acceptance of the child's unique traits.	Child shows initiative and boldness, self-confidence, positive identity forming and good self-concept.
2. Communicates understanding, acceptance and respect for the child's thoughts, feelings and behaviour.	Content to be together and do things together strengthens discipline. Child is calm and relaxed; can act independently; gets along fine with other people; is spontaneous and shows respect for other people's worthiness as humans.
3. Sexual guidance is sympathetic and there is mutual respect.	Child trusts the parent's judgment; is spontaneous because of the surety to accept the parent's authority. His maturity in judgment grows and he displays good problem solving behaviour.
4. Parent is very involved with the child, but focused on guidance of independent choices.	The child is willing to think for himself and to accept responsibility. Independent self-judgement followed by understanding, making choices and acting follows on this.
5. Guidance aimed at values. Adult is leading.	Identifies with the parent's values. The child forms a reasonable and independent conception of life.

Source: Parent enrichment course. Pretoria child and family care society.

The participants were reminded that there was a fourth parenting style, namely the absent parent. This speaks for itself and as such was only mentioned in the session.

- Discuss the needs of children according to handout 5.27. Do this first in general and then ask participants to identify the specific needs of their children.

Handout 5.27

Children's needs:



Three legs to stand on: Love, Security, and Discipline

- Discuss with the group the following emotions or feelings (Handout 5.28) that their children may be experiencing. Ask each participant to identify the emotions he/she thinks his/her child may be struggling with. Ask the group for ideas they think the members could apply to help.

Handout 5.28

Feelings that children may experience during and after their parents' divorce:

- Anger at the perceived betrayal and rejection by one or both parents.
- Sadness and grief for the experienced loss of a home, lifestyle and friends.
- Despair and feelings of depression as they feel their stability come crushing down on them.
- Confusion and disorganisation because of not understanding what is going on, where they belong and what is going to happen.
- Isolation and loneliness, especially where the parents are not capable of listening and understanding.
- Denial, when children continue to express the wish that their parents should be reunited.
- Guilt, because they feel they are the reason why their parents got divorced.
- Rejection and loss of trust, since the parents are unavailable, pro-occupied and seemingly not caring about the children's needs.

Handout 5.29 is read to give the participants some information on children's feelings after their parents' divorce.

Handout 5.29

Divorce is a very confusing time for children. They may feel responsible for their parents' divorce, and they may also feel emotionally abandoned by one or both parents, as one parent physically leaves the home and both parents become preoccupied with the process of personally adjusting to divorce (Dickenson 1995: 408).

Children frequently feel guilty, blaming themselves for the divorce, especially if their parents have quarrelled over them. They often entertain fantasies about reuniting the parents (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Children living with divorced parents see themselves as less competent and exhibit more depression and withdrawal than children from intact families (Schwartz and Scott, 1996: 367).

Not all research on the effects of divorce have found negative effects. In female-headed families, both mothers and children develop more androgynous behaviour as they reorganise the household after the father has left. Additionally, assuming more responsibilities leads children to greater maturity and feelings of competence. (Schwartz and Scott, 1995:368).

The emotional demands created by divorce often make parents less aware of their children's pain and stress and insensitive to their emotional needs. As a form of compensation, it is common for parents to indulge their children by placing fewer demands on them, creating a sense of marginality for many children.

Many children feel that they are, at least occasionally, caught in the middle. They are sometimes asked to carry negative or inappropriate messages between their parents, because the adults are unwilling to communicate with each other.

The adjustment of children to divorce is best facilitated by a custodial parent who is adjusting well. The best adults can *do* for children is to *be* well-adjusted, secure, and loving people.

Handout 5.30 is handed out and read as an inspirational story for parents.

Handout 5.30



A Little Boy At A Big Piano

Wishing to encourage her young son's progress on the piano, a mother took her boy to a Paderewski concert. After they were seated, the mother spotted a friend in the audience and walked down the aisle to greet her.

Seizing the opportunity to explore the wonders of the concert hall, the little boy rose and eventually explored his way through a door marked "NO ADMITTANCE." When the house lights dimmed and the concert was about to begin, the mother returned to her seat and discovered that the child was missing.

Suddenly, the curtains parted and spotlights focused on the impressive Steinway on stage. In horror, the mother saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano, and whispered in the boy's ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing."

Then leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child and he added a running obbligato. Together, the old master and the young novice transformed a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience. The audience was mesmerized.

That's the way it is in life. What we can accomplish on our own is hardly noteworthy. We try our best, but the results aren't exactly graceful flowing music. But when we trust in the hands of a *Greater Power*, our life's work truly can be beautiful.

Next time you set out to accomplish great feats, listen carefully. You can hear the voice of the *Master*, whispering in your ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing."

Author Unknown

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- The session is ended with a reminder that the next session would be the last. They were asked to take time during the next week to think about the programme and the previous sessions and to make a mental list of positive and negative experiences during these sessions.

5.3.9 Session 9: Hope: Letting go of the past and reaching out to the future

The following handout summarises the essence of Session 9. This handout was given to participants at the start of the session.

Handout 5.31

*The most authentic thing about us
Is our capacity to create, to overcome,
To endure, to transform, to love,
And to be greater than our suffering.*

Ben Okri

Nigerian Poet and Novelist

www.inspirationpeak.com

5.3.9.1 Objectives

- In this session, the aim is to re-establish hope in the group members' lives. Hope that, although their marriages were over, it did not mean their lives were failures. It was the beginning of new things (Cf.3.4.2).

5.3.9.2 Activities

- Providing hope was done by using metaphors (found in Handouts 5.32 - 5.34). They were read and discussed. Participants applied metaphors relevant to their own lives. Questions were asked such as: "Do you have hope for your future? Do you have goals? What does the future have in store for you where relationships are concerned?"

Handout 5.32

Expect hope to be rekindled.

Expect your prayers to be answered in wondrous ways.

The dry seasons in life do not last.

The spring rains will come again.

Sarah Ban Breathnach

American Author of 'Simple Abundance'

www.inspirationpeak.com

Handout 5.33

Failing and Flying

by Jack Gilbert

Everyone forgets that Icarus also flew.
It's the same when love comes to an end,
or the marriage fails and people say
they knew it was a mistake, that everybody
said it would never work. That she was
old enough to know better. But anything
worth doing is worth doing badly.
Like being there by that summer ocean
on the other side of the island while
love was fading out of her, the stars
burning so extravagantly those nights that
anyone could tell you they would never last.
Every morning she was asleep in my bed
like a visitation, the gentleness in her
like antelope standing in the dawn mist.
Each afternoon I watched her coming back
through the hot stony field after swimming,
the sea light behind her and the huge sky
on the other side of that. Listened to her
while we ate lunch. How can they say
the marriage failed? Like the people who
came back from Provence (when it was Provence)
and said it was pretty but the food was greasy.
I believe Icarus was not failing as he fell,
but just coming to the end of his triumph.

This metaphor was adapted for the men by substituting the word "woman" with "man".

Handout 5.34

Imagine a woman who believes it is right and good that she is a woman.
A woman who honours her experience and tells her stories.
Who refuses to carry the burdens of others within her body and her life.
Imagine a woman who trusts and respects herself.
A woman who listens to her needs and desires.
Who meets them with tenderness and grace.
Imagine a woman who has acknowledged the past's influence on the present.
A woman who has walked through her past.
Who has healed into the present.
Imagine a woman who authors her own life.
A woman who exerts, initiates and moves on her own behalf.
Who refuses to surrender, except to her truest self and her wisest voice.
Imagine a woman who names her own gods.
A woman who believes her body is enough just as it is.
Who celebrates her body's rhythms and cycles as an exquisite resource.
Imagine yourself as this woman.

Sark

For closure of the sessions, Handouts 5.33 – 5.35 were given to the participants to read.

5.3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter the nine sessions of the Intervention Programme are summarised. The following chapter documents how the participants experienced the Intervention Programme.

Handout 5.35

Life, I am the new year.

I am an unspoilt page in your book of time.

I am your next chance at the art of living.

I am your opportunity to practise
what you have learned about life
during the last twelve months.

All that you sought
and didn't find is hidden in me,
waiting for you to search it out
with more determination.

All the good that you tried for
and didn't achieve
is mine to grant
when you have fewer conflicting desires.

All that you dreamed but didn't dare to do,
all that you hoped but did not will,
all the faith that you claimed but did not have -
these slumber lightly,
waiting to be awakened
by the touch of a strong purpose.

I am your opportunity
to renew your allegiance to Him who said,
'behold, I make all things new.'

I am the new year.

Author Unknown

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CHAPTER SIX

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS OF INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

There are only two reasons why people change: Inspiration or Desperation.

Anonymous

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the chapter is to provide a detailed description of the program implementation and its impact on the group members. Before doing so, backgrounds of each of the five participants in the experimental group will be provided.

6.2 BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

6.2.1 Participant A

Age: 42

Gender: Female

Profession: Nurse

When divorced: 2001

Circumstances leading to divorce: Her husband was unfaithful.

Children: Two Ages: 6 (Twins)

Current circumstances: Remarried

6.2.2 Participant B

Age: 42

Gender: Female

Profession: Medical representative

When divorced: December 2005

Circumstances leading to divorce: Husband was abusive, both physically and emotionally. He also had several extramarital affairs.

Children: Two Ages: 16, 11

Current circumstances: Single. Good financial income.

6.2.3 Participant C

Age: 45

Gender: Female

Profession: Admin. clerk

When divorced: February 2005

Circumstances leading to divorce: Husband had an affair with her best friend.

Children: Four Ages: 23, 21, 17, 13

Current circumstances: In a committed relationship, but struggling financially.

Ex-husband does not pay alimony.

6.2.4 Participant D

Age: 39

Gender: Male

Profession: Computer programmer

When divorced: 2004

Circumstances leading to divorce: Wife was a lesbian and already in a new relationship.

Children: Two Ages: 14, 12

Current circumstances: Remarried shortly after the divorce. New wife also has two children.

6.2.5 Participant E

Age: 43

Gender: Male

Profession: Electrical engineer

When divorced: 2004

Circumstances leading to divorce: Wife had a longstanding affair.

Children: Two Ages: 14, 9

Current circumstances: Single. Financially strong.

6.3 PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The process of each session will be described in detail.

6.3.1 Session 1: Introduction

The aim and activities relating to Session 1 are outlined in Chapter 5. What follows is a description of what happened during Session 1.

In this session the researcher introduced herself as a psychologist and group facilitator. The participants were all welcomed and thanked for their participation in the study. The aims and format of the study were explained. The group rules as listed in Chapter 5 were introduced and discussed.

The group members were asked to introduce themselves and were then asked to describe themselves metaphorically. The researcher gave examples. "I am a chair. I am made of wood. I am sturdy and comfortable to sit on. I am a useful article to have," or: "I am a dog. Every-one in the family loves me and likes to have me around. I am not aggressive and especially good with children".

When they introduced themselves, the group members spontaneously shared their failed marriages and even gave details that were not expected of them at such an early stage. It was obvious that each situation was unique and that each of the participants were experiencing their hurt in a very unique way. The quotation (Cf. Handout 5.1) was given and discussed.

Participant A was very quiet. She said that sometimes she struggled to cope with the children. She had remarried and described herself as a ball –

bouncing here and there – touched by different hands and pushed in different directions.

Participant B was obviously an extrovert. She said that she was desperate to find help to handle her children. She talked about the loss of her support system after her divorce and that it was very difficult for her to cope alone. She stated that she was abused in her marriage and had no regrets about the divorce. She also used the metaphor of a ball, more in the sense that it referred to her personality (bouncy), but also in that she felt a loss of direction in her life.

Participant C laughed about the loss of a support system and stated bitterly that she had no friends, as her best friend had eloped with her husband. She was very angry and expressed feelings of hopelessness concerning her ex-husband, especially as she was battling financially. Her ex-husband refused to pay alimony. She stated that she has become hardened and described herself as a tree. She saw herself as strong with deep roots, but hard and tough on the outside. She was engaged, but this new relationship was also founded on rocky ground.

Participant D was married for 16 years before his wife became involved in a lesbian relationship. He has remarried and his main concern was how to handle the children – his own children as opposed his new wife's children. He said that he felt like a wheelbarrow – being used and pushed around by everyone.

Participant E was still very angry about his divorce, even after two years. His wife had been in a relationship for 12 years and he felt hurt, betrayed and used. He distrusted people. He was an extremely introverted person and a perfectionist in his work and relationships. He said that he felt like a Duracell battery – he just had to keep on going.

The group showed a surprising amount of empathy towards each other. Participant C spontaneously hugged participant B when she told of her physical and emotional abuse. Even the nonverbal communication was telling. The men could be seen bristling when this small woman told of her abuse.

There was also a lot of sympathy for the participant who lost his wife to a lesbian relationship. Shock and outrage was expressed by all the group members. Participant C said that she thought that her divorce was hurtful and humiliating, but compared to the other peoples' stories, hers felt that hers was less significant in comparison. Participant E echoed this.

The group all agreed that the group therapy setup, although threatening to begin with, was very significant in helping them to gain perspective on their own situations. They also stressed the benefits of having a group that was made up out of both male and female participants, because they appreciated hearing the other side of the story from somebody of the opposite sex.

The session ended with the group members being in high spirits. They were relieved that the first session was over and with it the anxiety and uncertainty of what to expect. Participant E was especially relieved because, he stated clearly, that he was a very private person who wanted to keep his affairs private. He was pleasantly surprised by the interaction and cohesion experienced in the group. The pain and rejection which they had all experienced during their divorces were definitely binding them together. They expressed an eagerness to come together again and to learn from each other in the subsequent sessions.

6.3.2 Session 2: Self-image

This session started with a discussion on their reflections of the metaphors that were used in the first session. The discussion of the objects that they could identify with for homework in the first session was incorporated in this discussion. This was done as a means of self-expression and so that the group members could explore their own feelings, and also as 'n way of them getting to know each other. They had to discuss their marriages – both the positive and negative aspects - and the roles they played in them. This was done so that the negative experiences could be reframed where possible, and the participants could feel more positive and less like failures.

Participant A said that the most positive thing about her first marriage was her children. The fact that there was much suffering helped her to find a deeper

religious meaning in her life, and was also a big positive to find that she could cope with difficult situations. It made her feel strong. She also stated that she forgave her ex-husband his wrong doings and that this unburdened her. On the negative side, she said that she still experienced rejection.

Participant B said the positive thing for her was that she was now much stronger than previously. She had also made the decision 'to be her own person'. In her own words: "I will be my own person. I will make my own decisions." The negative aspects were that she felt used and abused - despite her decision to become the author of her own life, the abuse in her previous relationship stayed with her.

Participant C said that she was very young and naïve when she got married. She remembered that finances were always tight. On the positive side she said that she found that she could make it on her own. She also discovered a softness and caring in herself for people, even in her own ex-husband. She said: "Shame, it must have been hard for him to have to make the choice only to realise he was wrong, and then he couldn't change it." (The latter part was said with a lot of spite, but she didn't seem to realise it.)

Participant D said that due to his parents' influence, he had a poor self-image from a young age. This was reinforced by his divorce. The fact that he felt the need for reassurance and support was a very negative experience for him. He felt positive about the fact that he could be supportive towards his children during and after the divorce, and also about having learned better communication and conflict handling skills.

Participant E struggled to find anything positive in his failed marriage. He was still very much focussed on the negative and still extremely angry at his ex-wife. He said that he sought counselling shortly after his divorce and that the counsellor had told him to focus on the negative things that he remembered from his marriage, because it would help him to get over his divorce sooner. Participant C could identify with his response, and said that she also could find very little that was positive in her failed marriage. When he thought about it, participant E said that he probably could handle conflict better - that he was not

afraid of conflict any more and that he was more assertive. He also thought that he would be able to communicate better.

The influence of the environment on the forming of self-image was explained according to the diagrams handed out (Cf. Handout 5.3) and this was briefly discussed in the group. They all agreed that the environment had an influence on the forming of their self-image. Participant D mentioned to the group that he was emotionally abused as a child by his very strict and domineering father which made him decide he would not be a strict disciplinarian (like his father), but rather a loving and caring “daddy”. He was very involved in his children’s lives. Participant E then said he followed his father’s example of parenting, which meant that he was very strict with his children, but he also felt that he was always there to guide and lead them.

These two examples were used to show the group that a person always has a choice - also in parenting styles and even after a divorce. (Parenting was discussed further in Session 8). Circumstances could be act as a catalyst, but a person could choose how to react to the circumstances. Participant D chose to do the opposite of what his father had done and Participant E chose to do the same. This drew forth a response from Participant C, who said that she could not quite agree with such a viewpoint, because the circumstances sometimes dictated your choices. She clearly felt trapped in her present situation and thus left without any choice. For her, her circumstances were an insurmountable obstacle.

The story of the cracked pot (Cf. Handout 5.4) was handed out to the group members. They were asked to read it and reflect on it so that they could discuss it during the next session.

6.3.3 Session 3: Self-image (Continued)

The discussion of self-image continued in this session. Group members were asked to discuss what they had discovered about themselves and their self-esteem. Participant B and E misunderstood the metaphor used in the story of the cracked pot. They identified with the water bearer instead of with the pot and felt the whole story was a waste of time and energy. It was interesting to

note that these two persons were both perfectionists and hard workers. In the first session participant E said that he identified with a Duracell battery. His self-image was that of a worker and a person who had constantly to perform which could be why he saw the metaphor in a negative light – that all he was good for was to work. It was also most likely the reason why Participant B felt the same. She also saw herself as a very hard and successful worker and her self-worth was linked to that. The metaphor was explained to them to help them understand that even if things were not perfect, they might still be put to good use. In other words, even if a person was imperfect, those imperfections could be put to good use. The other group members just quietly listened to the discussion, without making any contributions.

During this session, group interactions really started coming into play. The group members were now much more relaxed. Participant B was very assertive and tried to take over the discussions. She displayed a lot of anger and was very over-bearing, as if to prove a point. This was possibly a reaction to the powerlessness she had felt in her marriage. Although she perceived herself as a strong and knowledgeable person, she was given no recognition in her first marriage and her viewpoint was never acknowledged. Her self-assertiveness could be interpreted as aggressiveness and this caused Participant E to become even more withdrawn and quiet (probably because this was the dominant pattern of interaction in his marriage – when his ex-wife came over strongly or aggressively, or if there was conflict, he would simply withdraw).

Participant C had broken up with her fiancé and was very emotional during the group session. The group was exceedingly supportive. She stated that what she just learned about herself, was that she could no longer keep quiet when she felt that she was being wronged. She felt that her relationship with her fiancé was too much of a strain on her because her children did not accept him and disapproved of his bad behaviour. Also that she had the right to speak up and say what was bothering her. This was the first time she mentioned problems in her current relationship. Her fiancé was drinking too much and her grown children felt that she was making the same mistake as with her

marriage, when she also chose a partner that was not suitable for her. It caused a lot of strain in their family life, because she had constantly to mediate between him and her children, and to try and keep the peace. Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) was applied. The researcher asked her the questions: "What is the worst that can happen if you decide to stay in your relationship?" and "What is the worst thing that can happen if you leave?" These questions were discussed and she said that none of the things mentioned was so bad that she would not be able to handle them.

Participant A said that she also found it difficult to be assertive, and had to deal with a lot of suppressed anger. Again RET was applied to help the group members gain more insight into their own behaviour. She then said that it was possible for her to be more assertive, and that it wouldn't make her a bad person if she said and did the things she wished to say and do.

Participant D and E were fairly quiet during this session. The researcher felt that they were more like observers, trying to find out how the female species thought.

6.3.4 Session 4: Social readjustment

During this session it became evident that the participants differed vastly – their circumstances and needs differed and they were all experiencing their divorce differently. They were also at different times and phases of the healing process after the divorce.

However, there were also some resemblances in their needs. After the quotes (Cf. Handout 5.6 and Handout 5.7) were handed out, they talked about relationships in general. All agreed that they had a need for companionship. They stated very clearly that this was not a sexual need, but a need for friendship and some-one to talk to, with whom they could share experiences with.

It was agreed that the waiting period before you could start dating again after a divorce differed. Everyone needed to sort out their emotional issues first. For instance, Participant B felt that she had to deal with the issues of abuse in her

marriage first, and participant E had huge issues with trust in relationships. His idea of a marriage was to have a wonderful marriage with kids, and to be the perfect husband, and a father who could share and teach his children things. His question was: "What happened to my dream?"

What was interesting was that all the women in the group had said that they married young because they felt it was expected of them and that it was the right thing to do. No one even mentioned romantic feelings. In fact, both participants B and C said that they knew from the start that their marriages were a mistake, but that they did what was expected of them. They felt their life-script dictated marriage to them. Life-scripts were briefly discussed. Everyone in the group agreed that all people had certain unwritten rules and expectations they had to obey (or at least *felt* they had to). In this instance it was the women who felt it was expected of them to complete school, find a job and to marry, even if they were still unsure of their career choices and marriage partners. They did what was expected of them against their own better judgement.

Compared to the women, the men, however, had more romantic feelings. Participant E felt probably felt he had to be the perfect father and husband because of the example his father had set, but his own perception was that he had married his wife because he loved her. Participant D said he had dreams about their future, living together and growing old together, but because their romantic feelings were dashed, they both now experienced very strong feelings of betrayal and distrust in relationships.

The participants were then asked to name people who could form part of their support system. They could all name at least two persons. The researcher explained to them the need for a support system with the aid of a quote by Dr. Leo Buscaglia (Cf. Handout 5.7) and stressed the fact that they not only had to have a support system, but that they actually had to use it.

Lastly the group members were asked when they thought it would be a good time to start socialising again, and again there were big differences of opinion within the group. Participant D had met his current wife three months after his

divorce and immediately felt the need to start a serious relationship again. Participant E was still not comfortable about dating again, even though it was two years since his divorce. His friends encouraged him to date, but since he felt that trust still was such a big issue, he did not even want to try dating again. Participant A started dating her current husband 4 months after her divorce and Participant B said as far as she was concerned she didn't ever want to date again as the men were only after her money (she has a well paying job) and that she could take care of herself. She said this in a light vein and immediately excluded present company. One of the reasons the researcher had purposely chose to have a mixed group, was that in a mixed group participants could not stereotype members of the opposite sex because they felt hurt and betrayed by them.

6.3.5 Session 5: Being emotionally competent

The quote (Cf. Handout 5.10) was read out aloud and reflected on. The vocabulary of emotions (Cf. Handout 5.11) was handed out and the group members were asked to tick off the emotions they could identify with. This was done to help them develop an awareness of their own emotional states. They were also asked to verbalise their emotional states, using the list.

They all said that they were amazed at how many negative emotions they were still experiencing about things which they thought they had dealt with long ago, and all of them said that their anger was still directed at their ex-spouses, although for different reasons. Participant C said she was angry because her ex left her to struggle financially. His constant refusal to honour his alimony debts aggravated her current situation. Participant B was angry about the way she was abused and also angry with herself for subjecting herself to that abuse for so long. She also felt angry about the way in which the judicial system was treating her as a woman. The women in the group could identify with her hurt and said so. The men, however, seemed to feel uncomfortable because she was abused by a man, and they also expressed anger against her ex-husband. To the researcher it seemed that they felt partly responsible for her abuse and wanted to come to her rescue.

Participant E said that apart from the issues he has with trust, his biggest emotional difficulty was handling anger. Although he no longer wished to physically hurt his ex-wife's boyfriend, he still experienced huge emotional anger against her, especially where their children were concerned. He felt that she had stolen his "dream" of a nice marriage in which he could be a good father and involved in the rearing of his children. His daughter was now living with her mother, which made him a typical weekend father and he felt cheated out of a relationship with her. He was surprisingly open about his feelings, given that he was an extremely introverted person. He also stated that he felt as if he couldn't trust his ex-wife to respect any of his feelings anymore, and that there was a complete breakdown in communication during their marriage because of a snide remark that was made when he was sad about the passing away of his father. It caused him to shut down. The group's response to this was, that although they could understand his feelings of mistrust, he should get over it and start dating again. Participant D said he could understand the other participant's initial feelings of weariness, but encouraged him by saying that from personal experience he himself could vouch that once you were in a new relationship, these feelings disappeared.

The group also admitted to very strong feelings of being hurt, abandoned and crushed. They all agreed that this was very prevalent during the divorce period and shortly after the divorce, but that feelings of hurt still lingered. Participant B said she couldn't believe how many negative feelings she was still experiencing, in spite of feeling that she was coping quite well.

All the participants agreed that such feelings had to be affecting their children, and that the main emotion that affected the children was their anger. Because of the anger, there was a breakdown in communication between the ex-spouses, which also affected the children considerably.

Communication was further discussed because every one in the group expressed a deep need to be able to communicate, to be open and to be understood. They all agreed that to be able to communicate well took effort and exercise.

The diagram of coping with aversive emotions (Cf. Handout 5.12) was given to all the group members. It was explained with the aid of a few examples that the group had given. An example used was the common feeling of anger experienced by the group. The group was coached in the following way: If you are feeling angry, ask the following questions: "Why am I angry?" and "Is my anger justified in this situation?" or "Am I really angry at something else?" This way the anger could be rationalised and, because of this, a cognitive process could be set in motion and the emotion dealt with in a cognitive way.

6.3.6 Session 6: Being emotionally competent (continued)

Inter-personal skills were defined. "Empathy" as a skill was explained (using Handout 5.14) and demonstrated, especially where it concerned listening to children. The group members were then encouraged to give examples of how they communicated with their children – especially when they were in conflict. Communication (Cf. Handout 5.15) was also explained and demonstrated through the use of communication levels (Cf. Handout 5.16). Group members were then asked to state on which level they were communicating with their children, in their work environment and socially.

All the group members said that their communication with their children was lacking in understanding and sharing. They found it difficult to communicate emotions with their children. Communication at work was better because there they could easily impart facts or express opinions. Again the issue of trust was brought up, because they all felt that communication on a personal level had to involve trust.

They found the hand-out on the handling of conflict (Cf. Handout 5.17) amusing, especially when they realised how they subconsciously handled conflict. They were encouraged to discuss how they thought their way of handling conflict contributed to stressful situations in their failed marriages, as well as in their current relationships with their children. Once they were aware of mistakes made in the past, they could rectify them in the present.

Much time was spent on the verbalising of emotions (Cf. 5.19). The group members sometimes felt that it was difficult to explain their emotions, so the list

on emotions (Cf. Handout 5.11) that was handed out previously, was very helpful.

6.3.7 Session 7: Aggression and anger vs. humour

At the beginning of the session it was explained to the participants that now was a time to let go of the past and reach out to the future. They were shown how to deal with anger, using a handout (Cf. Handout 5.21).

Participants were then asked to write to their ex-spouses. In this letter they were asked to express all the feelings they experienced with regard to their divorce. In general, it was a very quiet session as the participants took quite a long time to write their letters. This was very good in the sense that they had a quiet time to reflect on, not only what had happened in their failed marriages, but also how it still affected them and their relationships. If there were things that they were not ready to deal with, or to let go, they were asked to write them on a separate piece of paper and to deal with these issues later at their own pace.

Participants C and E were openly aggressive towards their ex-spouses. They verbalised their anger on different occasions. Participant E even told of the fantasy he had of driving over his ex-wife's lover with his 4X4 vehicle. Participant B was still in denial about her anger towards her ex-husband, but when the group confronted her, she at least agreed that she had a lot of anger. Participants A and D had handled their aggression some time ago, but nevertheless took part in the burial ritual to help them understand the process.

The burial ritual was a foreign experience for members of the group, but they all agreed that to take part in a physical, symbolic act was very meaningful to them. Participant B said that she felt a physical release by letting go of the past.

Participant C still had a lot of issues to deal with, but they were mostly related to her current relationship rather than her divorce. Participant D said that he had two issues that he wasn't ready to let go of.

As time was running out the celebration idea was left for the next session.

6.3.8 Session 8: Parenting

The session started with the celebration part previously mentioned. It was surprising to find that, although the women were fine with the idea, the men were refusing to take part in any celebration ritual. Both said that the loss that they felt was no cause for celebration. Even when it was explained to them that the celebration would not be related to their failed marriages, but that they would rather be celebrating a new beginning, they still didn't like the idea. Participant E said that his dream of having a good marriage in which he could be a good husband and father was stolen from him, and that there was no cause for celebration. He further explained that because his daughter was now living with his ex-wife, he got to see her on Wednesday evenings and every alternate weekend only, which was why he couldn't be the father to her that he wanted to be. Participant D partly agreed with him, but could understand that although the end of his marriage was no cause for celebration, as such, it could be the beginning of something new. Because he had married again, he could agree with the idea of celebrating his new marriage. The women all said that they could happily celebrate, because for them their marriages were over and it meant the closing of a book after several bad chapters. In this instance it was clear that the ability to move on and redefine identity allowed for future orientation (which fuels resilient behaviour), whereas an inability to do so (Participant E) resulted in fixation and continued vulnerability.

The hand-out about the different parenting models (Cf. Handout 5.26) was handed out and discussed in detail. The researcher made the group members aware of the results of their actions towards their children. They found it very enlightening and useful. They could identify with the contents and could clearly see the results which their type of parenting was eliciting. Participant A said that after her divorce she tended to be more laid-back in her parenting, because she felt so guilty about the effect the divorce was having on her children, but that she could also see the effect it was having now on them, as they became fearful and unsure of themselves. At the time she thought that

this was a result of the divorce, but now she could tell it was because her parenting style had changed. Participant B agreed with this. Both participants D and E said that they were probably too disciplinary in their parenting styles, and that they would attempt to be more lenient.

Participant C was very quiet. It seemed as if she was struggling with issues of her own that were not related to the topic being discussed. Her current relationship (she and her fiancé were reunited) was still not going well, because there was a lot of conflict between her two grown daughters and her fiancé. He was still drinking too much and it caused a lot of tension. Her problem, she felt, was more a question of handling the conflict between her fiancé and her daughters, than being a good parent to her younger son. She and her fiancé had previously broken up, but were now reunited. This situation was dealt with privately after the group session.

The participants were then made aware of the different needs children had (Cf. Handout 5.27). This was especially helpful to the male participants, who admitted that they were not always certain how to deal with their children's emotions, and often found it difficult to talk to them. The other handouts (Cf. Handouts 5.28 and 5.29) were distributed and the group members again said that they found the contents very insightful and that they felt as if they now had a better understanding of their children.

The group members were reminded that the therapy sessions were drawing to a close. The next meeting was to be the last one. They were asked to consider what the sessions meant to them; what worked and what didn't; what they liked and what they would have wanted to add to the sessions.

6.3.9 Session 9: Hope

The whole intervention programme would not have been of much use to the group members if they had been left without a sense of hope. Hope makes it worthwhile to step into the future and to possibly enter new relationships with an expectation that things could change for the better.

Much time was spent on reading and reflecting on quotes and metaphors (Cf. Handouts 5.32, 5.33, 5.34, 5.35) and the group members were then asked to comment and to apply the stories to their own lives.

This particular session was also a time for closure and of saying goodbyes. The group members had developed a real affection for one another and they all expressed the hope that their paths would cross again. Telephone numbers and e-mail addresses were exchanged.

At the end of the session, the group members were given the same questionnaires that they had filled out at the beginning of the programme as a post-test. As a last request, the researcher asked them to write a short comment on the programme to say whether and how it was helpful to them or not. They were encouraged to be very honest so that the necessary changes could be made to future versions of the programme.

6.4 IMPACT OF PROGRAMME ON PARTICIPANTS

In order to gauge the impact of the programme, pre-tests and post-tests were conducted, as well as ongoing interviews. These will be reported on about each participant.

As discussed in Chapter 4.4.3.1, the measuring instruments used were the Child and Youth Resilience Measure – Adapted (CYRM – A; Addendum A) and a Parenting Questionnaire (see Addendum B).

Group members had to rate the questions in the CYRM – A on a scale from 1 to 5 (one meaning the least resilient and 5 the most resilient). The researcher hoped that the pre-test would show a lower rating of resilient characteristics and that the post-test would be higher. The results were qualitatively interpreted. Although there were only small differences in the quantitative results between the pre-tests and the post-tests, the feedback that was given from the group members to the researcher was in general more positive.

Divorce impacts on parenting and the Parenting Questionnaire was used to gauge improvement in parenting as resilience improved.

6.4.1 Qualitative evaluation of CYRM – A

Resilience rests on personal, familial and community protective resources and processes (Cf. Fig. 3.7). For this reason, and in order to facilitate data analysis, the CYRM (which consists of 49 questions), was divided into nine scales which reflect this division. The scales evaluated the following:

6.4.1.1 Humour and a positive attitude

Having a positive attitude and seeing the humour in situations, is a protective factor (Cf. 3.4.2). It lightens a person's mood and helps him to see things in perspective.

Questions 1, 21, and 43 formed this scale.

6.4.1.2 Family and a sense of belonging

Family is part of a person's support system. If a person has a strong support system in his family, it ameliorates risk in that the family acts like a safety net (Cf. 3.4.2)

Questions 2, 16, 22, 31, 32, 40, 44, 46 and 48 formed this scale.

6.4.1.3 Persistence or being future orientated

To have goals and to have hope for a better future is a strong protective factor (Cf. 3.4.2).

Questions 3, 4, 13, 17 and 20 formed this scale.

6.4.1.4 Social interaction

People who have good social skills tend to be more resilient because they can organise social support for themselves. As with family, the person with a social support system is more resilient (Cf. 3.4.2).

Questions 5, 7, 9, 15, 24, 27 and 33 formed this scale.

6.4.1.5 Emotional insight

The ability to understand their own and other people's emotions is also a strong protective factor (Cf. 3.4.2).

Questions 6, 11, 12, 26, 28, 34 and 36 formed this scale.

6.4.1.6 Self-image

A positive self-image is also a strong protective factor. Because this is one of the main things that is damaged by a divorce, it is important for a divorcee to re-adjust his self-image in order to be more resilient (Cf. 3.4.2).

Questions 8, 10, 14, 23, 25, 29, 37, 41 and 49 formed this scale.

6.4.1.7 Spirituality

A person can derive a strong sense of direction from his religious beliefs. It helps him to have hope in the future and to rid himself of toxic relationships (Cf. 3.4.2).

Questions 19 and 38 formed this scale.

6.4.1.8 Work

Work is linked to self-efficacy, self-image and self-esteem. If these three factors are positive, a person becomes more resilient (Cf. 3.4.2).

Questions 18, 30 and 42 formed this scale.

6.4.1.9 Community

Apart from family and other social groups, the community forms a strong support system for the divorcee and is thus a good protective factor (Cf. 3.4.2).

Questions 35, 39, 45 and 47 formed this scale.

These protective factors were evaluated for all five the group members. Although the scales were numerically scored, the emphasis is on a qualitative interpretation.

6.4.2 Qualitative evaluation of the Parenting Questionnaire

This questionnaire evaluated four types of parenting:

1. Dismissing
2. Disapproving
3. Laissez-faire
4. Emotion coaching

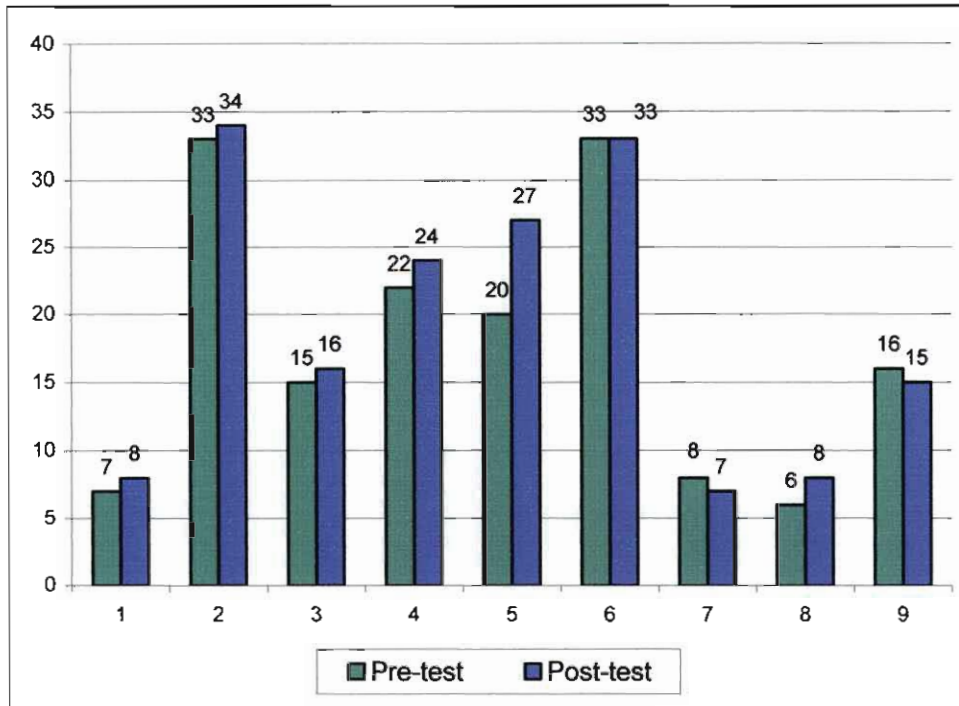
This can be linked to the four types of parenting described in the programme (Cf. 5.3.8). The dismissing and disapproving parent could be likened to the authoritative parent. Laissez-faire constitutes the permissive parent and emotion coaching would be the democratic parent. The best type of parent to be would be the democratic parent, and the group intervention programme aims to improve emotion coaching skills. This would mean that the parent is able to understand the child's emotions, and rather than judging the child's actions and emotions, guide him to certain conclusions.

6.4.3 Results of the group intervention program

6.4.3.1 Participant A

6.4.3.1.1 CYRM – A results

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
7	33	15	22	20	33	8	6	16	Pre-test
8	34	16	24	27	33	7	8	15	Post-test

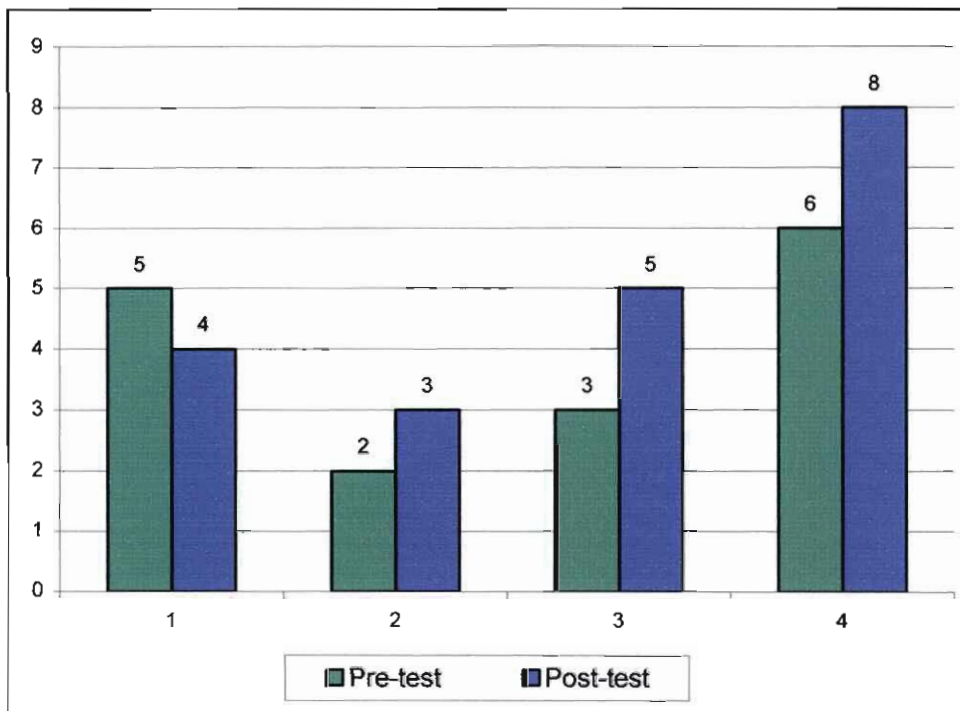


Participant A was the one person that the researcher initially thought would benefit least from the programme. She was very introverted and needed often to be drawn out to participate in the discussions. She had been divorced for 5 years and was now settled in a happy marriage. The only thing she felt needed consideration was her relationship with her children. Even so, she herself evidently benefited from the programme and was more resilient than before. She reported benefiting and her post-test data suggested improved resilient and parental functioning.

The biggest impact of the programme was on her emotional insight (Cf. CYRM-A Scale 5). She had a better understanding of other people's feelings; took more responsibility for her own actions and feelings and was less judgemental about other people. She also seemed to have a more humorous attitude towards life, was more future orientated and was more focussed on her work. Her social skills had also improved. Spirituality and involvement in the community (Cf. Scales 7 and 9) showed a marginal decline. She initially indicated that her relationship with her children needed improvement – her family score improved marginally.

6.4.3.1.2 Parenting questionnaire results

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
5	2	3	6	Pre-test
4	3	5	8	Post-test



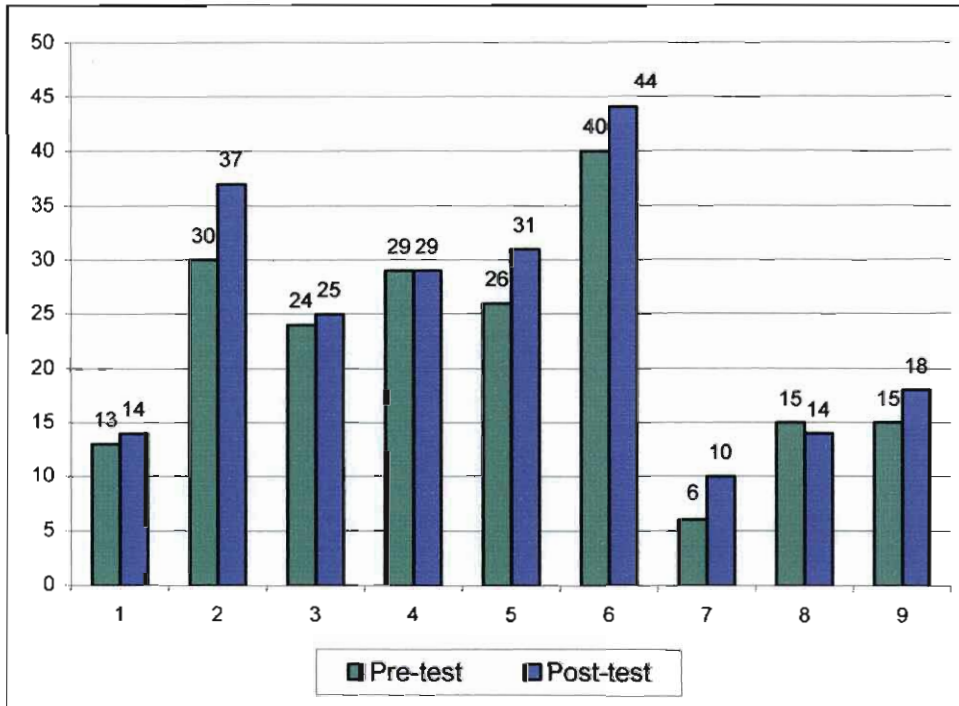
Participant A seemed to be less autocratic, more relaxed and more democratic. As such, the programme seemed to be successful in that it empowered her to practice better parenting skills. She verbalised improved interrelationships with her children. She said that she was more patient with them and more sure about when and how to discipline them.

Afterwards she also said that she had benefited more from the programme than expected – that at the time she was heading for a burn-out and that the sessions had restored her self-confidence. She felt that the information given was very practical and that she benefited much from that. Although she said that she liked the group interaction, she was often very quiet and had to be drawn into the conversation.

6.4.3.2 Participant B

6.4.3.2.1 CYRM - A

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
13	30	24	29	26	40	6	15	15	Pre-test
14	37	25	29	31	44	10	14	18	Post-test

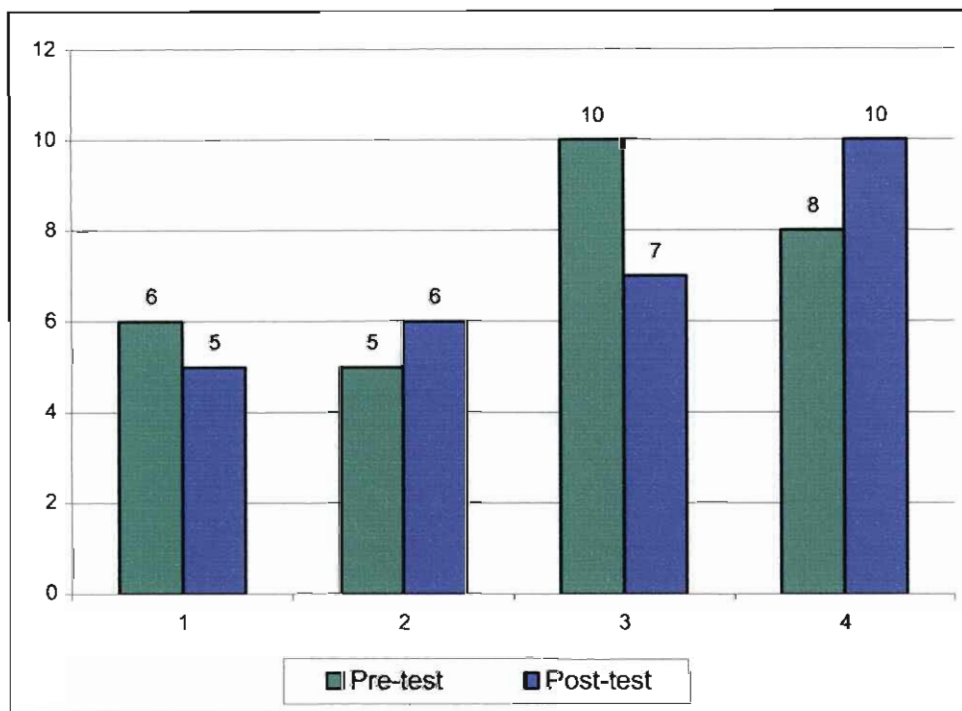


This participant benefited greatly from the programme. She was more positive, had a much improved sense of belonging to her family, and was more hopeful of the future. Although her social skills remained the same, they were good to start with because she was such an extrovert. She had better emotional insight and her self-image has improved. Her work-related score decreased, but that in itself was not necessarily negative, because initially much of her self-worth was founded on her work performance. She now felt more positive about herself as a person, not only in the work situation. Spiritually she was also stronger, felt more at home in the community and no longer so rejected. The scale which improved most was her sense of belonging (Cf. Scale B, CYRM - A) which suggests augmented protection with regard to being

grounded. Her post test scores suggest augmented levels of personal protective factors (Schoon, 2006: 14).

6.4.3.2.2 Parenting questionnaire

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
6	5	10	8	Pre-test
5	6	7	10	Post-test



As a single parent, participant B was very permissive in her parenting style. She was clearly overcompensating because she felt that her children had suffered enough harm through her failed marriage and divorce. This is a very common mistake divorcees are inclined to make. After the programme, she tended to be much less permissive and more democratic.

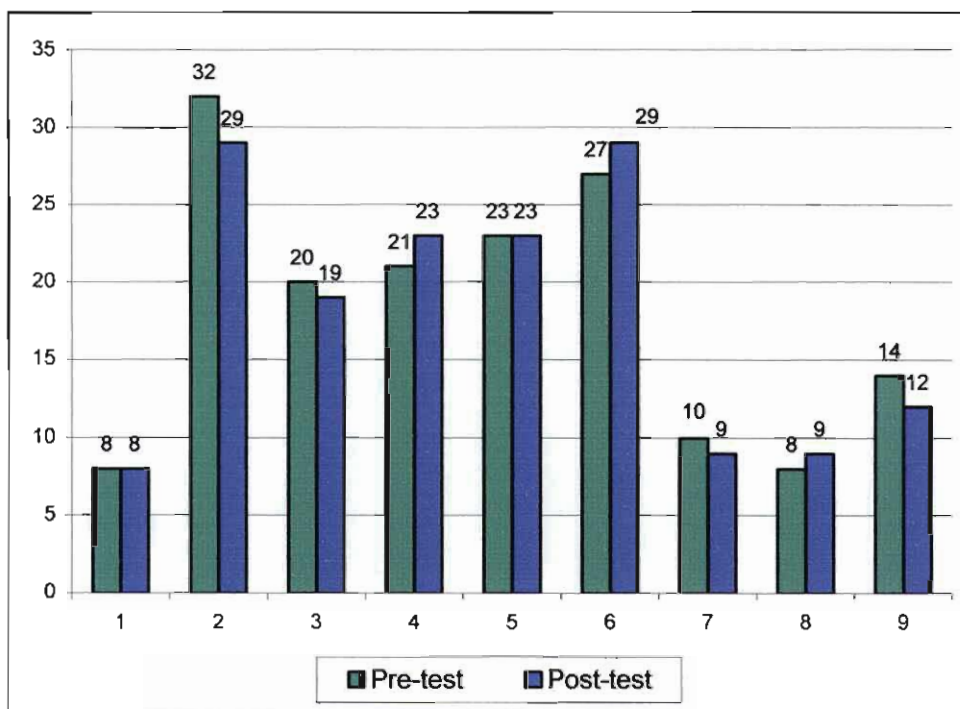
Participant B was an extrovert. She was outspoken and already had good resilience skills, but even these were improved after she had followed the programme. She said that she felt more positive after participating in the group intervention. She said that although she was extremely self-confident, she had a poor self-image because she had to hide so much hurt and humiliation and

felt that she always had to prove herself to others. Her self-image was now much more positive. She said she found the part on social-readjustment very good – probably because she was now able to employ it in her own social relationships. There were, however, still issues that needed working on, but she felt that she was at least handling her aggression better now.

6.4.3.3 Participant C

6.4.3.3.1 CYRM - A

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
8	32	20	21	23	27	10	8	14	Pre-test
8	29	19	23	23	29	9	9	12	Post-test

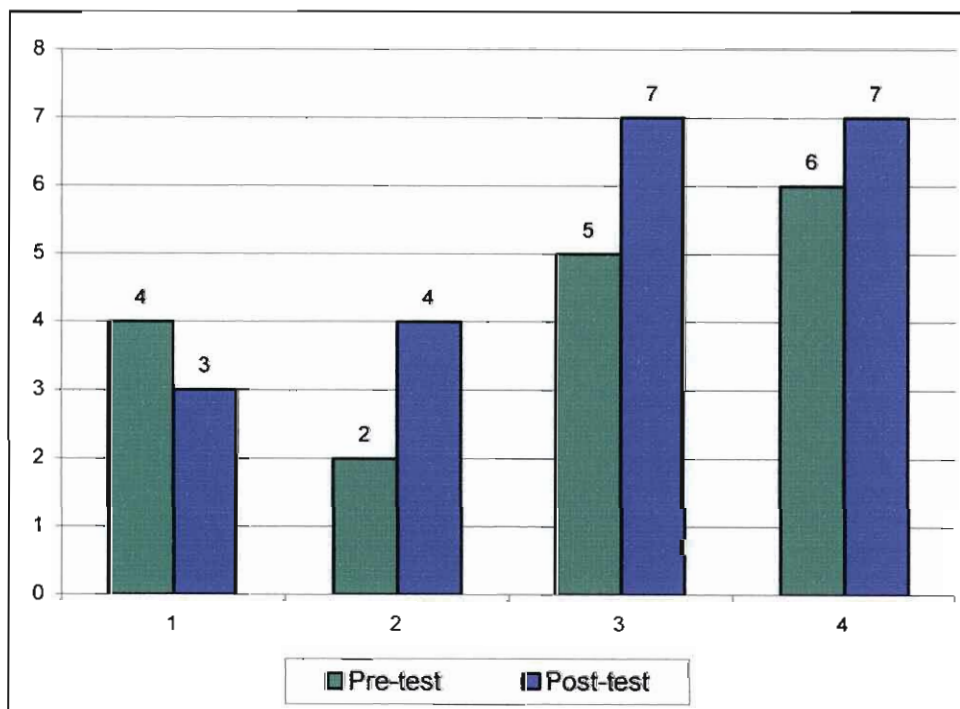


Participant C was struggling in her new relationship. She broke off her engagement and was very emotional about it. The relationship was then resumed and this led to a lot of conflicting emotions. As such, the researcher felt that the programme was presented to her at the wrong time. She had too many other issues to deal with apart from recovering from her divorce. However, she still felt that the group was very good for her, especially the emotional support that she got from the group members.

Even though she was struggling, her social skills, self-image and attitude towards her work improved somewhat (Cf. Scales 4, 6 and 8). The fact that her sense of belonging in her family had decreased (Cf. Scale 2), was probably related to the fact that her grown children did not accept her new fiancé and that she felt abandoned by them. This also made her very unsure about the direction her personal life should take. Her issues were not directly linked to her divorce and were therefore not addressed in the programme. However, the fact that her sense of belonging in her family and community (Cf. Scales 2 and 9) decreased, suggest that she lacks interpersonal support which is a noted risk factor (Schoon, 2006: 14)

6.4.3.3.2 Parenting questionnaire

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
4	2	5	6	Pre-test
3	4	7	7	Post-test



Participant C had grown children, as well as a child who was still attending school. She benefited from the programme as she was now more willing to listen to her children and to do more emotion coaching. She was also more

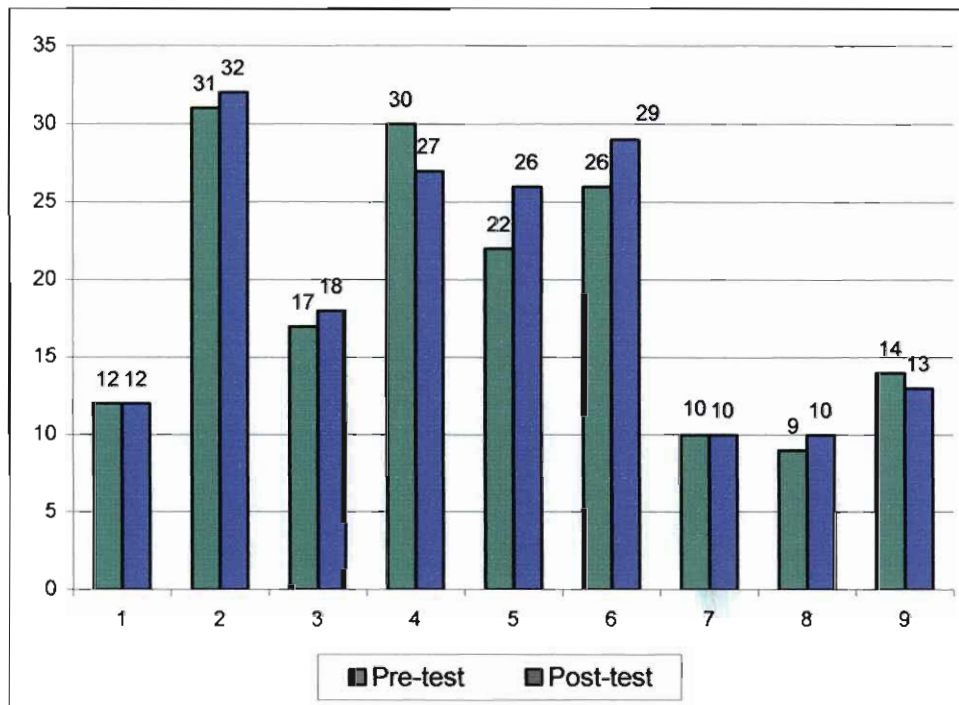
disapproving of her older independent children because she felt that they were trying to manipulate her. Her younger child, however, was reaping the benefit of her being a more democratic parent.

Although the timing of presenting the programme to Participant C was not so good, she still benefited from the programme. Her resilience skills as well as her parenting skills were improved. She said that her total experience of the group sessions and of the contents was very meaningful to her, especially that of handling anger and letting go of the past. She also felt that she had benefited from the session on parenting.

6.4.3.4 Participant D

6.4.3.4.1 CYRM - A

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
12	31	17	30	22	26	10	9	14	Pre-test
12	32	18	27	26	29	10	10	13	Post-test



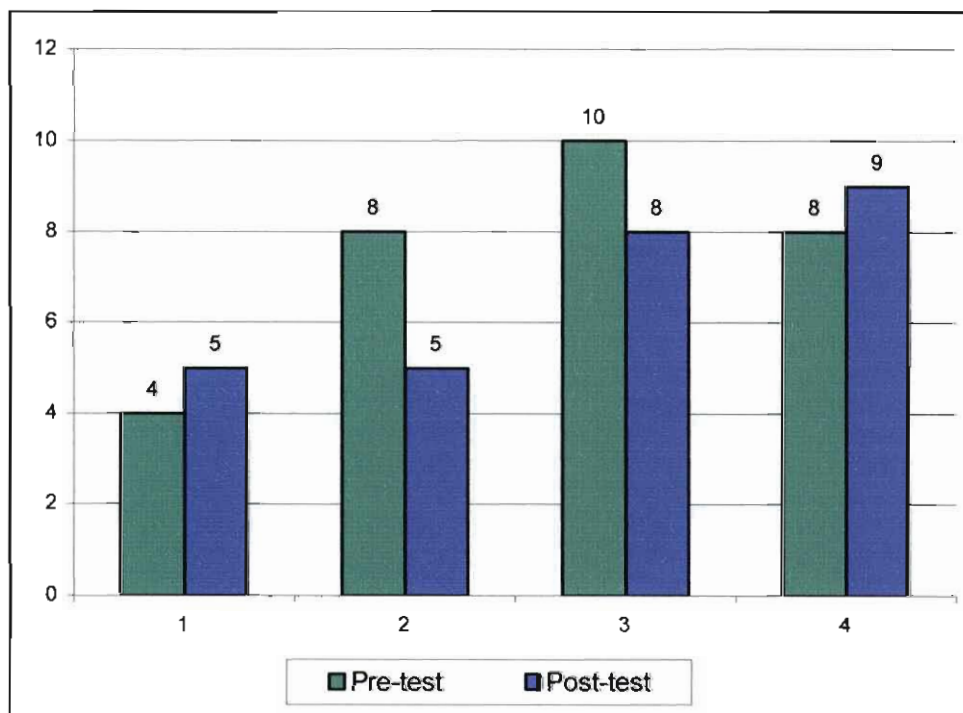
Participant D was a very introverted and soft spoken person. He said that the sessions were definitely positive for him. The only thing that he felt negative

about was the celebrating-after-divorce-ritual (Cf. 5.3.4). He felt there was nothing to celebrate.

He showed improvement in the categories of family, persistence and work and his emotional insight and his self-image had improved (Cf. Scales 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8). Those are strong protective factors. His social and community skills had slightly decreased (Cf. Scales 4 and 9). This was possibly because he felt that he had to focus more on family issues.

6.4.3.4.2 Parenting questionnaire

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
4	8	10	8	Pre-test
5	5	8	9	Post-test



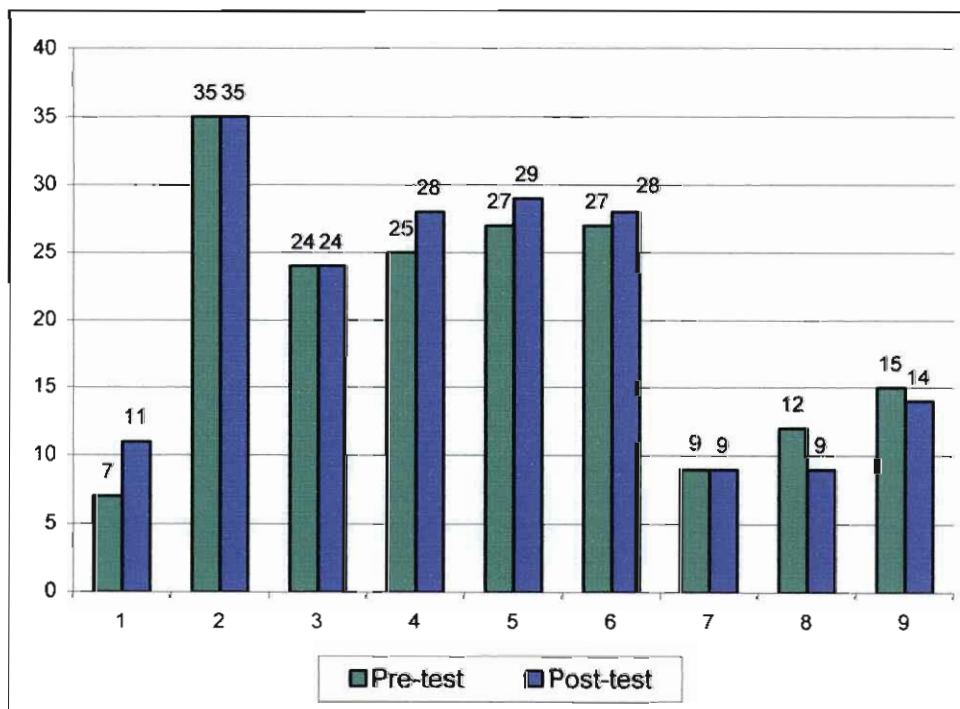
Participant D was struggling with another familiar post-divorce problem: the reconstructed family. “My children” and “your children” were big issues in this family, and he was not always sure about when and how to act as far as the children were concerned. He seemed to have benefitted from the programme, was more democratic and also less judgemental in his handling of the children.

In his feedback of the sessions, participant D said that he felt more positive about the way he now handled issues and conflict. He also felt that his anger about his divorce had decreased.

6.4.3.5 Participant E

6.4.3.5.1 CYRM - A

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
7	35	24	25	27	27	9	12	15	Pre-test
11	35	24	28	29	28	9	9	14	Post-test



Participant E was the one person the researcher felt had probably benefited the most from the programme, even though his scores do not reflect this. He is a very introverted and extremely private person and for this reason, the group setup was initially problematic for him, but that was exactly what he felt he had benefited most from. It was a huge eye-opener to him to see other people struggling with exactly the same issues he had.

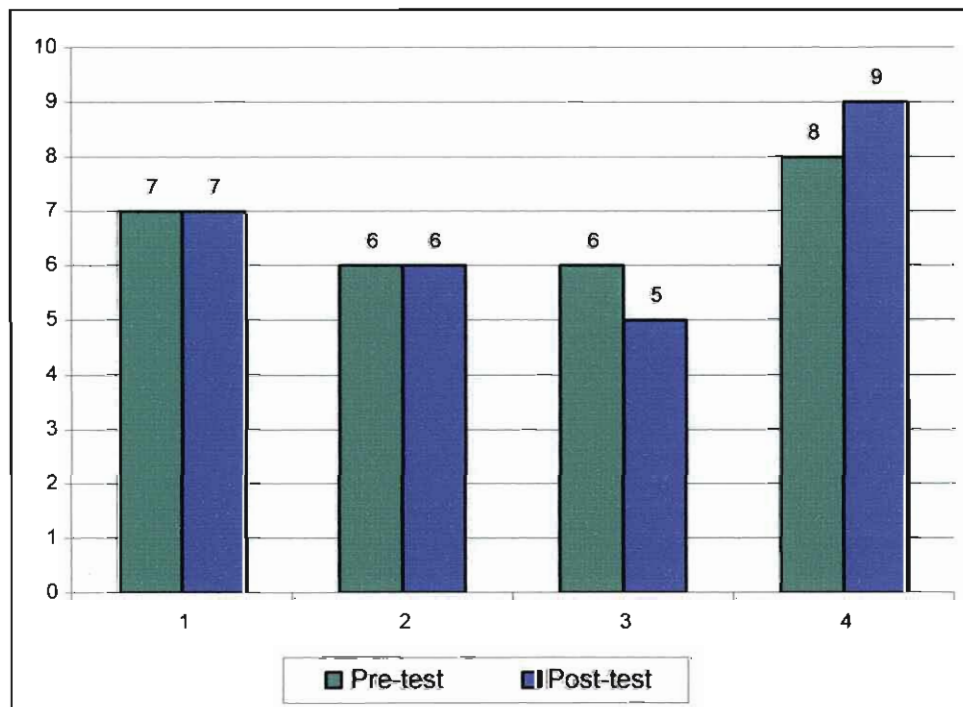
Because he is also a perfectionist, the feeling of failure was an issue to him. His self-image suffered hugely due to his divorce. The edification of his self-

image was something that he wanted to spend more time on. Although he was still on an emotional rollercoaster, he felt that he was much better at handling his emotions. He made certain discoveries about himself and his emotions and in the end was extremely positive about the whole experience.

After completing the programme, he projected a more positive attitude generally and on the CYRM-A post tested better social skills, more emotional insight and his self-image had improved (Cf. Scales 4, 5 and 6). Work and community involvement decreased, but this could be attributed to the fact that he no longer measured his self-worth by his achievements only. He seemed much more at ease with himself and his life.

6.4.3.5.2 Parenting questionnaire

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
7	6	6	8	Pre-test
7	6	5	9	Post-test



There were no big changes in the way participant E was handling his children, although he tended to be a little less critical of them and more democratic. This was probably because he saw himself as a good father anyway.

6.4.4 Comments of the participants on the intervention programme

Participant A agreed that she had less “issues” to deal with than the other participants, but she still felt that the programme had meant much to her. She said that she sometimes felt inadequate in how she dealt with the issues in her life: marriage, relationships and children. This had left her feeling burned out and rejected. The sessions had restored her trust in herself and she also liked the fact that the programme was very practical.

Participant B said that the sessions with the intervention programme were a positive experience for her. She realised that although she was brimming with self confidence in her work, she had a very poor self-image. She had learned much from the sessions on social readjustment and emotional competence and also felt she could handle her aggression better. She found the information on parenting useful.

Participant C was very emotional shortly after the programme had ended, but this was due to her personal circumstances. Because of the emotional state she was in, she declined to write a short feedback on the sessions, but said that she had found the sessions helpful and learned much.

Participant D said that the programme had pointed him in a very positive direction and that he had learned much from it. However, he did not like the part of celebrating the beginning of new things.

Participant E gave a lengthy feedback in which he admitted that the group setup was initially a problem for him because he was a very private person, but that in the end it was one of the things that he felt had helped him the most. He found that he could learn much from the other participants. He stated that in general the sessions had helped him very much, especially in his handling of emotions. He also said that he had found that it was okay for him to be single and that he was not yet ready for another relationship again.

Figure 6.1 is to illustrate and summarise the reactions of the participants.

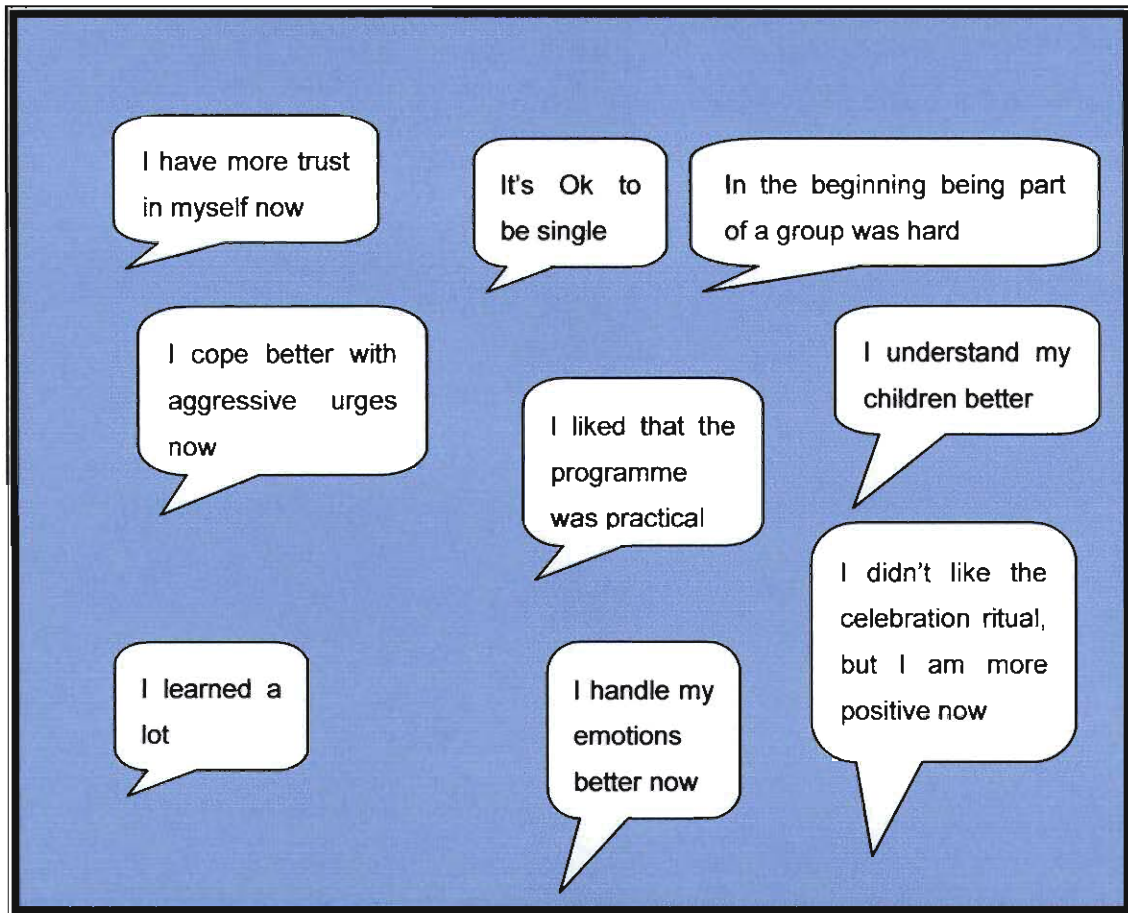


Figure 6.1: Participant review of Intervention Programme

6.4.5 Follow up

Approximately eight weeks after the completion of the group intervention programme, the researcher followed up her interviews with all the participants telephonically.

Participant A said that things were going well for her and that up to now the impact of the programme was still a positive in her life. Her relationship with her children had improved, and that flowed over into her relationship with her husband. As a whole, she was satisfied with her life.

Participant B said that she was seeing someone for the first time since her divorce. She felt confident about herself and the new direction her life was

taking. She still had a good relationship with her children, but was a little worried about how her youngest daughter would handle the new relationship.

Participant C had very bad news. Her fiancé had tried to commit suicide because of the continuing strife between himself and her children. The results of the programme was not discussed but will be followed up at a later stage.

Participant D said that everything was going well for him. He had no complaints. Family life was good and he was just returning from a weekend away with his family. He said that he still felt the impact of the programme on him.

Participant E said that things were going “reasonably” well. He was also seeing someone, but still had issues with trust. He continued to feel very positive about the programme and was able to use the things he had learned from the sessions.

6.4.6 Overall analysis of impact of intervention programme on experimental group

It seemed that all the participants, in one way or another, benefited from the intervention programme. Although it was not possible to address every participants' individual needs in a single program, the feedback given to the researcher, (both qualitative and quantitative), was positive.

6.5 CONTROL GROUP

The control group was randomly assigned and consisted of four females and one male. Apart from filling in the questionnaires, no contact was made with the participants of the control group. There was no intake interview and no conversation about the intervention programme whatsoever. The participants were simply asked to complete the same two questionnaires as the test group, and after a month to complete the same questionnaires again.

6.5.1 Results of the control group

6.5.1.1 Participant 1

Age: 53

Gender: Female

Profession: Teacher

When divorced: 2006

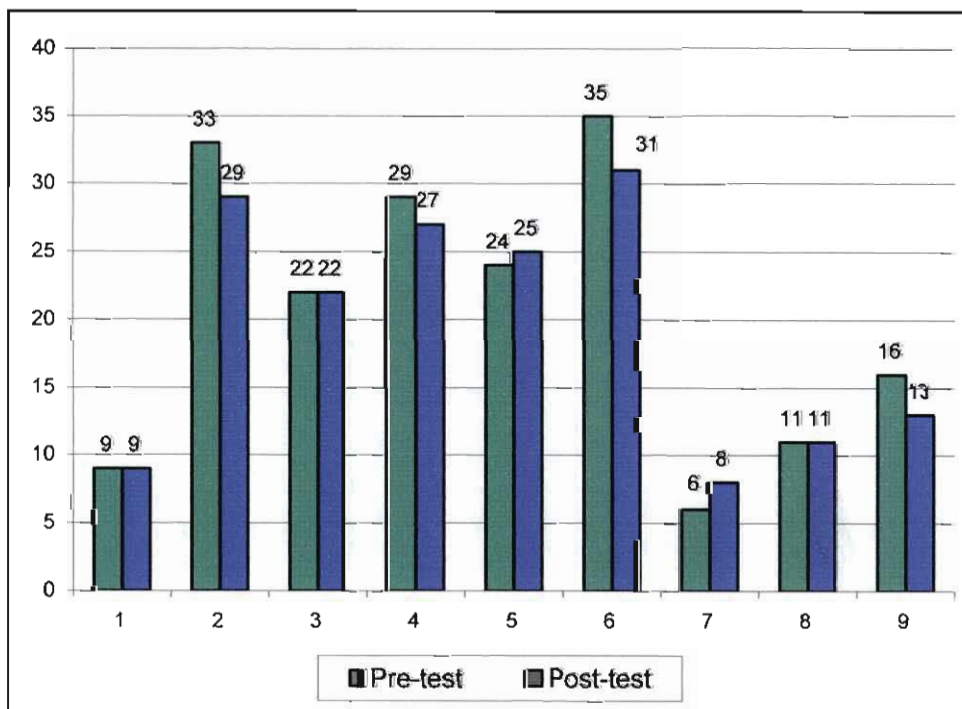
Circumstances leading to divorce: Her husband was unfaithful.

Children: Three

Current circumstances: Single

6.5.1.1.1 CRYM – A

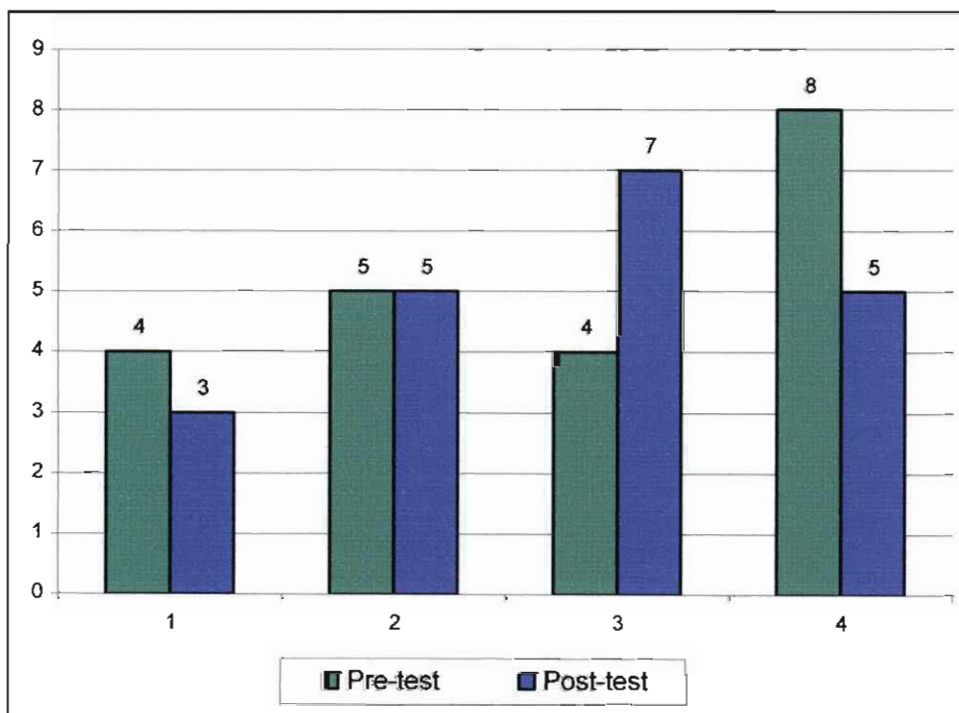
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9	33	22	29	24	35	6	11	16	Pre-test
9	29	22	27	25	31	8	11	13	Post-test



The results of this participant showed decreased scores in 4 of the 9 subtests; 2 subtests had improved and 3 remained the same – this suggests that she was not functioning more resiliently a month later. The decreased scores were in the categories of family and a sense of belonging, social interaction, self image and community. The scores that showed an increase were in the categories of emotional insight and spirituality. The scores that stayed the same were in the categories of humour and work.

6.5.1.1.2 Parenting questionnaire

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
4	5	4	8	Pre-test
3	5	7	5	Post-test



The participant did much less emotion coaching in the post-test than in the pre-test. In other words, she was much less inclined to be a democratic parent, but chose to be more laissez-faire. Over time and without intervention, her parenting skills did not improve.

6.5.1.2 Participant 2

Age: 35

Gender: Female

Profession: Psychometrist

When divorced: 2000

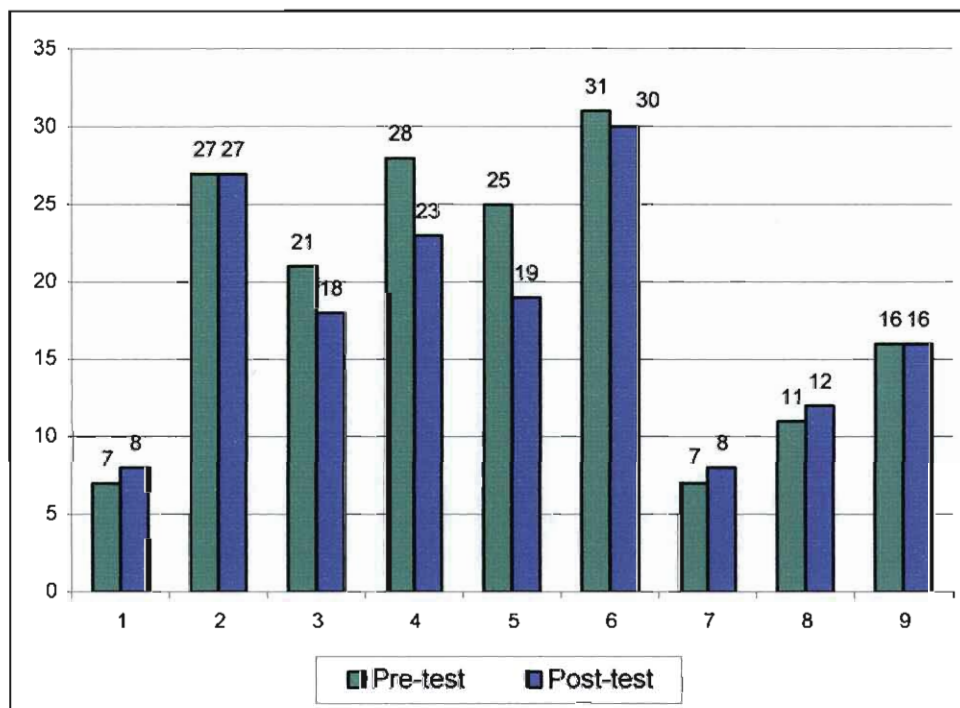
Circumstances leading to divorce: Incompatible personalities

Children: One

Current circumstances: Single

6.5.1.2.1 CRYM – A

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
7	27	21	28	25	31	7	11	16	Pre-test
8	27	18	23	19	30	8	12	16	Post-test

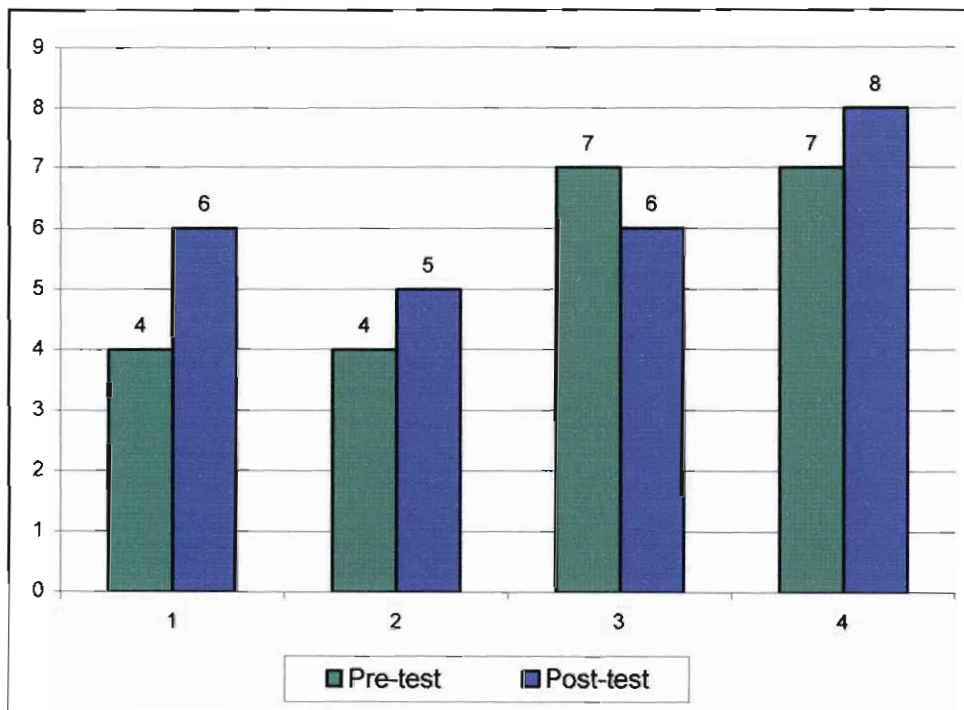


This participant seemed much less future orientated and more emotional during the post-test. Her social interaction scores had decreased and for

emotional insight and self-image her scores were even lower. Humour, spirituality and work were the categories that showed a slight improvement, while family and community scores stayed the same. Overall, she did not appear to be functioning more resiliently in the post-test.

6.5.1.2.2 Parenting questionnaire

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
4	4	7	7	Pre-test
6	5	6	8	Post-test



This participant was more autocratic during the post-test, but at the same time her emotion coaching skills had improved, which caused ambivalence in her parenting skills. She tended to be rigid in her parenting style and her relationship with her child was not an open and warm one.

6.5.1.3 Participant 3

Age: 33

Gender: Female

Profession: Speech therapist

When divorced: 2002

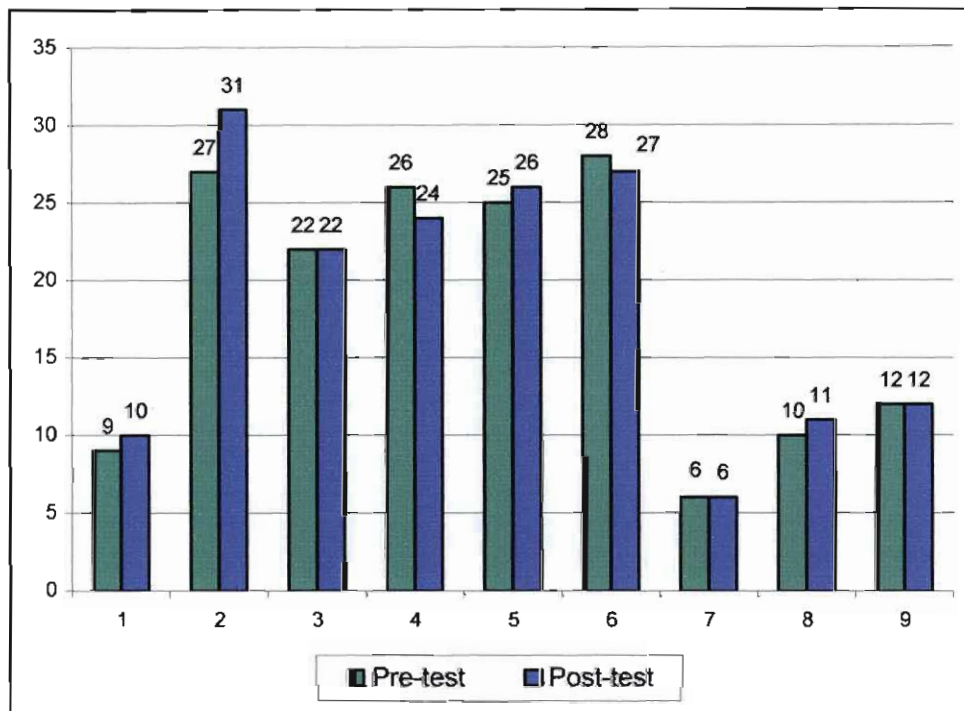
Circumstances leading to divorce: Incompatible personalities

Children: Two

Current circumstances: Single, but in a relationship

6.5.1.3.1 CRYM – A

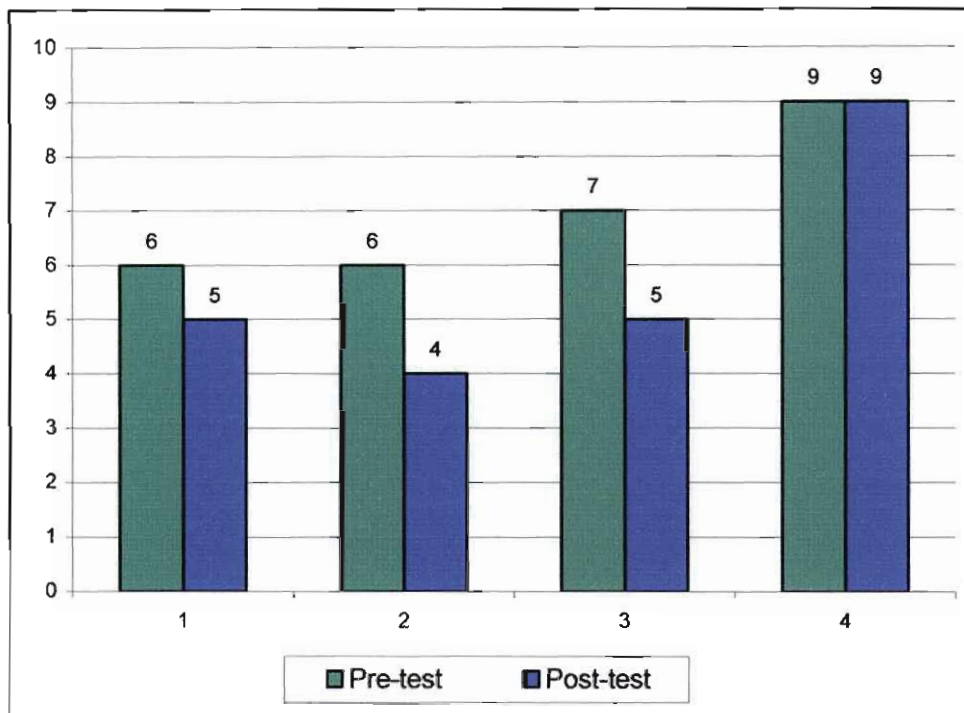
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9	27	22	26	25	28	6	10	12	Pre-test
10	31	22	24	26	27	6	11	12	Post-test



Little had changed for this participant. The only score which had changed significantly was her family orientation. Her emotional insight had improved slightly. Her social interaction skills and self-image showed lower scores. Persistence and community scores remained the same.

6.5.1.3.2 Parenting questionnaire

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
6	6	7	9	Pre-test
5	4	5	9	Post-test



During the post-test, this participant showed decreased scores in all the categories but emotion coaching. The fact that his emotion coaching skills are better could be linked to the result of the CYMR – A test that showed increased family involvement.

6.5.1.4 Participant 4

Age: 43

Gender: Female

Profession: Receptionist

When divorced: 2004

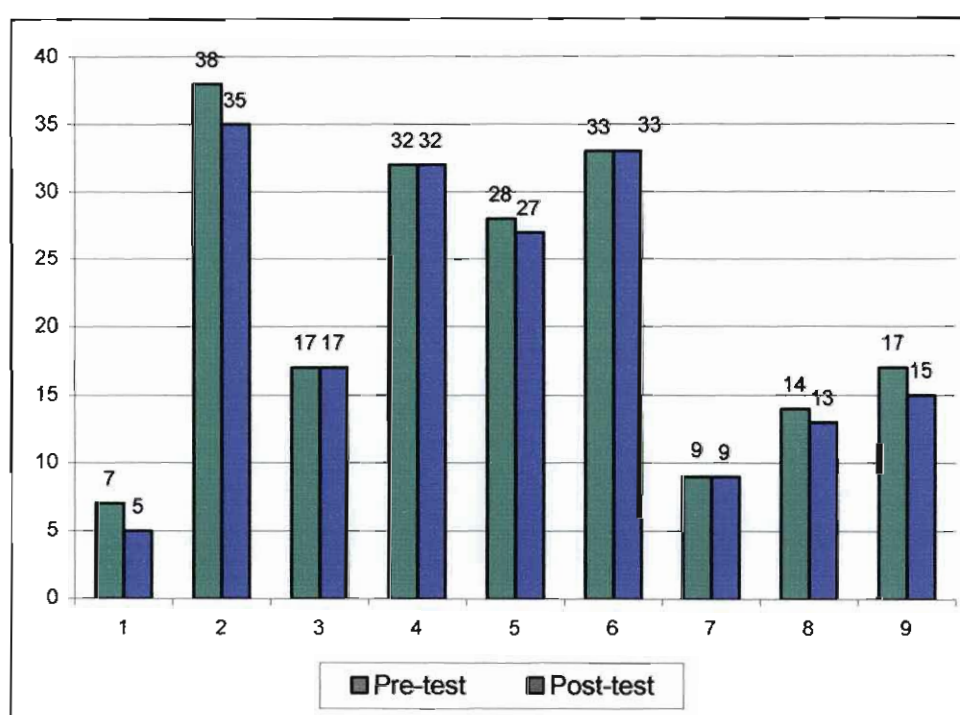
Circumstances leading to divorce: Incompatible personalities

Children: Two

Current circumstances: Single, but in a relationship

6.5.1.4.1 CRYM – A

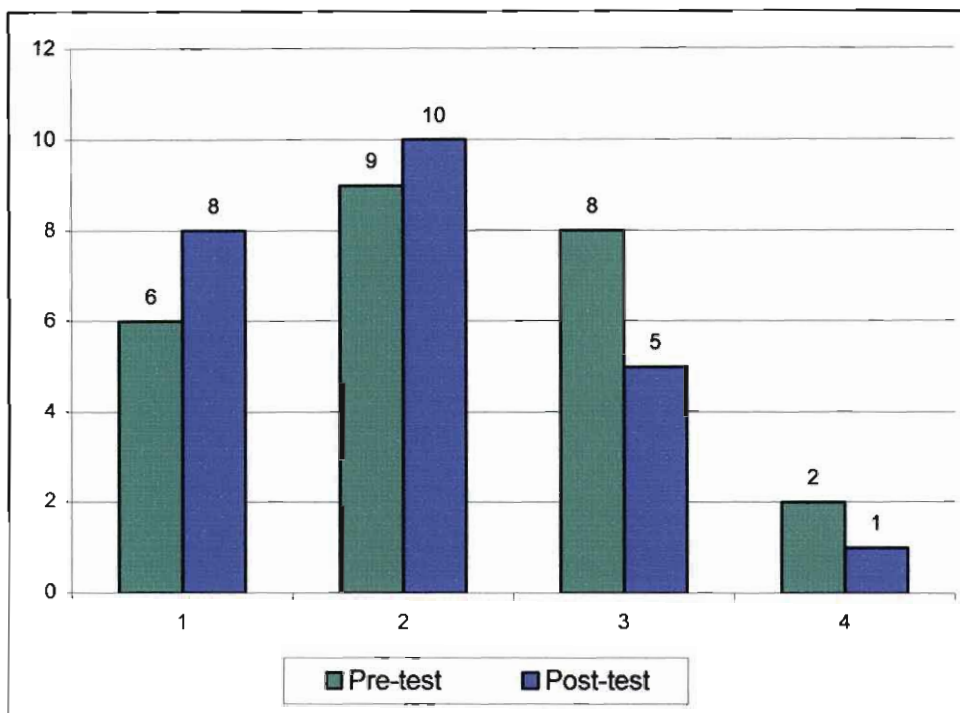
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
7	38	17	32	28	33	9	14	17	Pre-test
5	35	17	32	27	33	9	13	15	Post-test



During the post-test this participant seemed to be more emotionally insecure than during the pre-test. None of her scores had improved. Her scores in family, emotional insight, work and community were slightly lower. The other resilience skills remained mostly the same during the two tests.

6.5.1.4.2 Parenting questionnaire

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
6	9	8	2	Pre-test
8	10	5	1	Post-test



This participant was much more autocratic and less laissez-faire during the post-test. The desired outcome of more emotion-coaching skills, was, however, very low.

6.5.1.5 Participant 5

Age: 39

Gender: Male

Profession: Handyman

When divorced: 1996

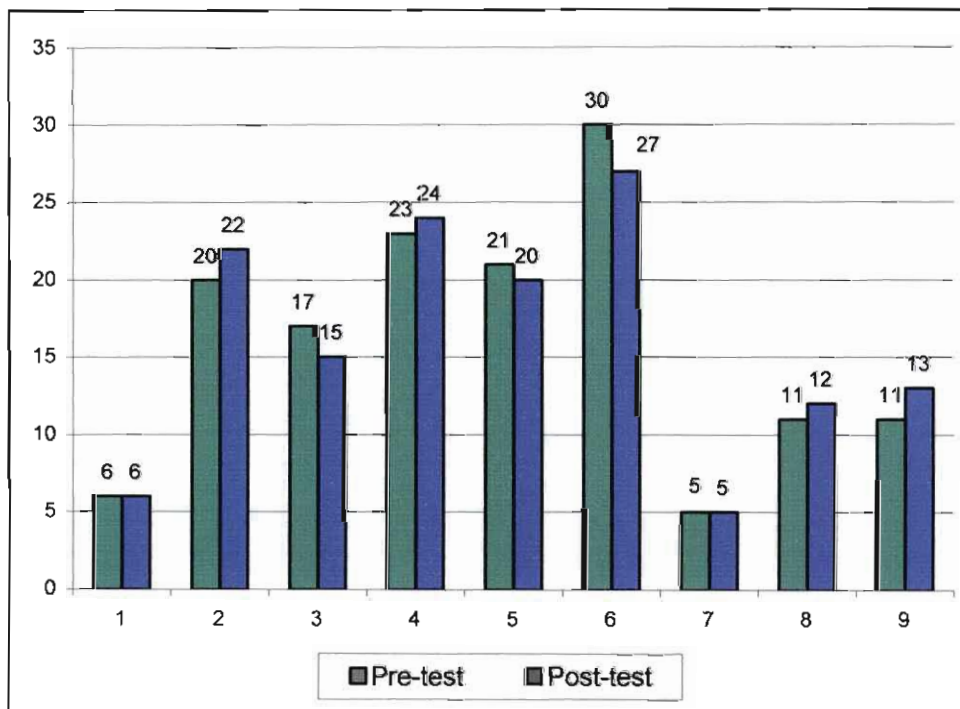
Circumstances leading to divorce: Wife was unfaithful

Children: Two

Current circumstances: Single, but in a relationship

6.5.1.5.1 CRYM – A

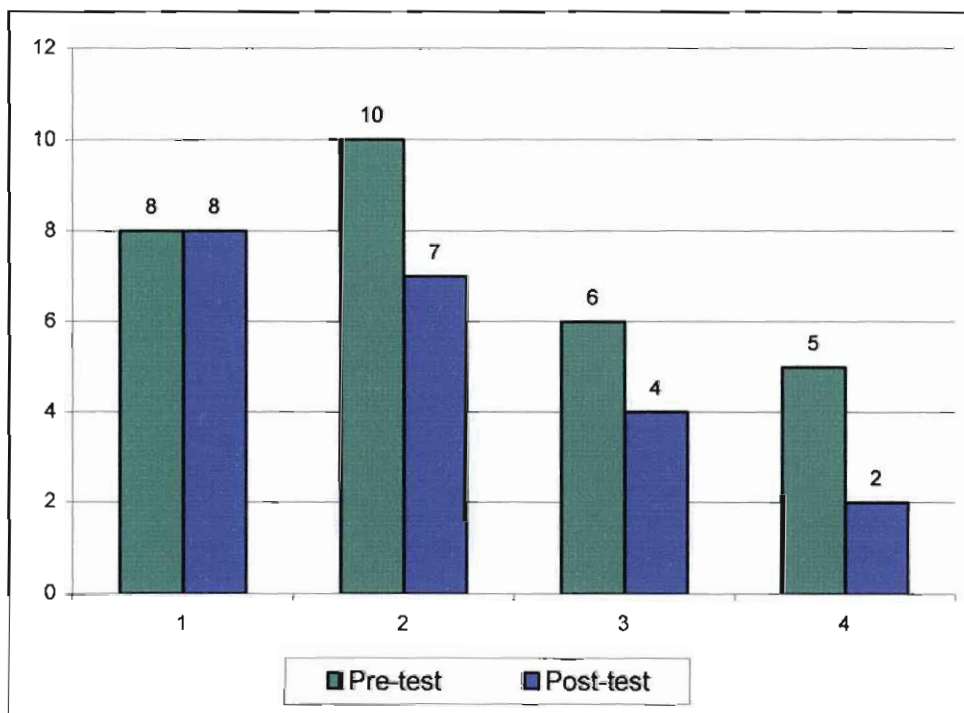
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
6	20	17	23	21	30	5	11	11	Pre-test
6	22	15	24	20	27	5	12	13	Post-test



Participant 5's resilience skills remained slightly improved in family, social interaction, work and community. Persistence, emotional insight and self-image scored slightly lower. Humour and spirituality stayed the same. Overall there was very little change in his resilience scores.

6.5.1.5.2 Parenting questionnaire

Dismissing	Disapproving	Laissez-faire	Emotion coaching	
8	10	6	5	Pre-test
8	7	4	2	Post-test



His parenting was more autocratic and less democratic after the post-test. The tendency noted in the control group seemed to be that even though their resilience skills generally remained the same, their parenting skills deteriorated, compared to those of the experimental group.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS THAT COULD BE REACHED ABOUT THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME BY COMPARING THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP WITH THE CONTROL GROUP

In the following table (Figure 6.2) the results of the pre- and post-test adapted CYRM are compared for the experimental and control groups. The results are qualitatively compared to determine whether the intervention programme might have contributed to elevated resilience levels.

	Improved resilience scores	Unchanged resilience scores	Decreased resilience scores
Experimental group	25	9	11
Control group	13	14	18

Please note this denotes the number of improved scores for all 5 participants

Figure 6.2: A comparison of pre-and post-test scores of the Experimental and Control Groups for Resilience

From the above table it can be seen that the experimental group showed more improved resilience scores than the control group. The experimental group's resilience scores improved with 25 points, while the control group's score improved with 13 points. The experimental group's score that had decreased was 11 compared to the control group's decreased score of 18. The control group showed more unchanged scores (14) than the experimental group (9).

Dismissing parent	Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental group	26	24
Control group	30	31
Disapproving parent	Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental group	23	23
Control group	34	31
Laissez-faire parent	Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental group	34	32
Control group	32	27
Emotion coaching	Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental group	36	43
Control group	31	23

Please note that this denotes the scores for all 5 participants

Figure 6.3: A comparison of the pre- and post-test scores of the Experimental and Control Groups for Parenting

A comparison between the pre- and post-test shows that the control group showed a slight increase (30 – 31) in their scores for the category “dismissing parent”, while the experimental group showed a decrease (26 – 24). This meant that the control group showed less rigid behaviour towards their children, whilst the control group could not benefit in the same way from the intervention programme.

In the category of the “disapproving parent”, the scores of the experimental group stayed the same, while the control groups scores were lower (34 – 31). The intervention programme made no difference in the behaviour of the experimental group in disciplining their children but the control group tended to be more pliant towards misbehaviour.

In the category of the “laissez-faire parent”, both the experimental group (34 – 32) and the control group (32 – 27) showed a decrease. This meant that both groups were now more involved with their children.

In the category of the “emotion coaching” parent the experimental group showed an increase in emotion coaching as a style of parenting for their children (36 – 43), while the control group showed a decrease (31 – 23). The experimental group were after the intervention programme much more willing to be involved with their children and to pay closer attention to their needs.

The desired effect from the intervention programme was for the parents to become better parents - in other words, to increase their emotion coaching skills and decrease their dismissing and disapproving parental skills.

From the above tables it becomes clear that the post-tests of the experimental group suggest improved levels of resilient functioning and parenting. This, combined with the conclusions extrapolated from the qualitative data, suggests that the null hypothesis can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

The conclusion is thus drawn that an intervention programme aimed at encouraging resilient functioning in divorcees leads to heightened resilient functioning and improved parenting skills.

6.7 CONCLUSION

No programme is truly generic and able to work for every one, because no two persons are at the same time in the same situation, struggling with exactly the same issues. The programme will be dealing with different people going through different stages of the divorce process.

However, from the evaluation of the data, it seems as if the programme had a positive influence on both the personal functioning and resilience skills, as well as on the parental skills of the participants in the experimental group.

In the following chapter, Chapter 7, the study is summarised.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

That what is behind you and what lies before you, is insignificant in comparison with what is IN you.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the research findings and conclusions reached, to point out the shortcomings of the study and to make recommendations for further studies.

An overview of the chapter is presented in Figure 7.1 below.

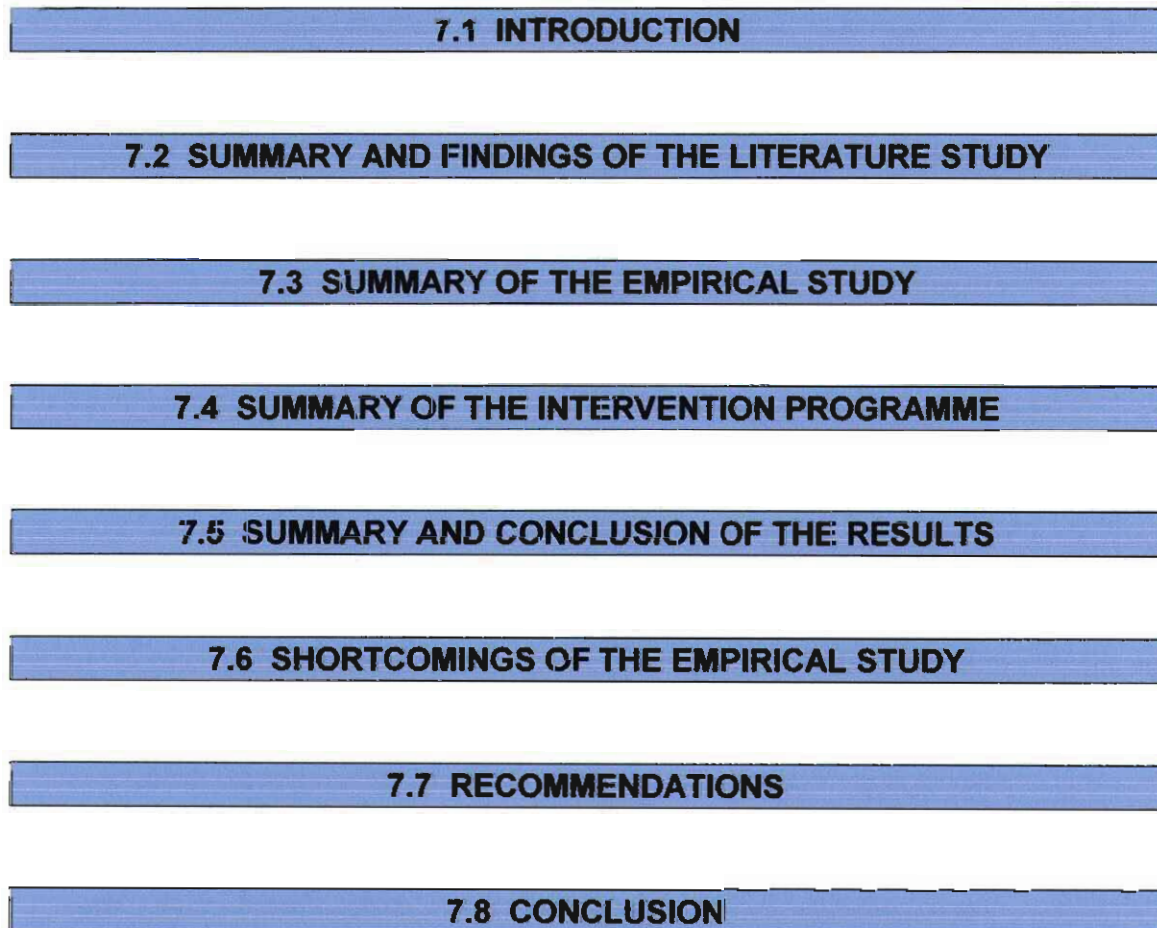


Figure 7.1: Summary of chapter 7

7.2 SUMMARY AND FINDINGS OF THE LITERATURE STUDY

As an Educational psychologist, the researcher often comes across children in her private practice who are broken, battered and emotionally abused because their parents are divorced. In the period before the divorce, they could have been exposed to many issues, ranging from violent fights at home, (both verbal and nonverbal), to deadly silences and antagonistic body language between their parents.

These children are generally torn between the two parents, two households and sometimes even two different families. They often feel that they have to choose between their parents, and sometimes they are asked to do so. Very often the children become the puppets between the divorced parents in order to settle old scores and to play their own power games.

For these children to become whole, functioning persons again, it is generally necessary to help the parents to overcome their hurt and work through their issues, to enable them to help their children.

In the light of this, Chapter 2 investigated the phenomenon of marriage and divorce. The following findings were made:

- Society's view of marriage has changed over the years. In the early eighteenth century, the purpose of marriage at all levels of society was to unite two families and to allow them to reproduce, rather than to gratify two young people's love (Dickenson, 1995: 233 and Gelles, 1995: 389). By the early nineteenth century, however, couples rather chose the romantic idea of love in choosing a marriage partner (Dickenson, 1995: 233; Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 14, 20).
- Divorce is a process and not a single event. Kaslow (in Ferreira, 1994: 29) divided this process into pre-divorce, during-divorce and post-divorce periods. Bohannon (in Gelles 1995: 402) identified six stations of divorce: emotional, economic, co parental, community, spiritual and legal divorce.

- During a marriage, there are certain periods in which divorce is more likely to occur (Davidson & Moore, 1996: 654). These are the early-, mid- and late stages of the marriage.
- There are a number of factors that influence the probability of divorce. They include: age at the first marriage, the mother's age at first birth, low family income, the wife's work status and income level, the number of children in the household and the educational attainment of the head of the household (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 20-23; Davidson & Moore, 1996: 656-657; Schwartz & Scott, 1994: 356).
- There are many factors that contribute to the failure of marriages. These include: poor communication, unrealistic expectations, power struggles, serious individual problems, role conflicts, lack of loving feelings, insufficient demonstration of affection, alcoholism, extra-marital affairs and sex (Schwartz & Scott 1994: 36).
- The impact of divorce is multifaceted and complex. Some of the consequences influence both spouses, but others are unique to husbands or wives (Cf.2.9).
- Problems commonly experienced by both men and women as a result of divorce are health problems, loneliness, the need for social and sexual readjustments, financial changes in their lifestyles, damage to self-esteem and self-image, aggression and feelings of guilt (Bezuidenhout, 2005:22; Ferreira, 1999: 29; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 157).
- Three common sources of stress intrinsic to single parenthood have been identified, namely: responsibility-, task- and emotional overload (Bank & Kain, 1995: 311).
- Divorce has a huge impact on children. Immediately before and after a divorce, parents often cope less well than their non-divorced counterparts in almost all measures of parenting (Brink, 2002). Parents who struggle to control their once intense emotions, are not emotionally reliable and their

children may experience them as remote, unavailable and overemotional. Children then often feel thrust aside (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 26).

- Some of the emotions that children commonly experience after their parents divorce are rejection, anger, denial, sadness, grief, despair, depression, confusion, guilt and isolation (Bezuidenhout, 2006: 27; Brink, 2000; Schwartz & Scott, 1996: 367).
- The adjustment of children to divorce is best facilitated by a custodial parent who is adjusting well. The best thing adults can do for children is to be well-adjusted, secure, and loving people. This requires resilience (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2004).

Chapter 3 explored the phenomenon of resilience. The findings of this chapter included the following:

- Resilience can be defined as the ability to bounce back or cope well in the face of adversity, or the ability to overcome considerable hardship and the ravages of the past. It is also the process of persisting in the face of adversity (Turner *et al.*, 1995: 25; Wolin & Wolin, 1999: 11).
- Resilience is not a fixed attribute, but a process, and the choices one makes at important points in life can greatly influence this process (Reivich & Shatte, 2002: 184).
- Rutter (in O'Leary, 1988: 427) described four functions of resilience: it reduces risk impact; it reduces negative chain reactions; it establishes and maintains self-identity and self-efficacy and it enhances opportunities.
- In order to enhance resilience, risk factors need to be eliminated or at least contained, and protective factors need to be enhanced (Rutter as quoted in O'Leary, 1988: 427; Schoon, 2006: 15).
- Possible risk factors for divorcees are health problems, loneliness, social- and sexual readjustment, financial changes, damage to self-esteem, emotional lability, feelings of guilt and age (Armstrong *et al.*, Stroul &

Boothroyd, 2005: 391-2; Barter, 2005: 345-348; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Schoon, 2006: 8-11; Shaub, 2002).

- Possible protective factors for divorcees are self-efficacy, high self-esteem, high intellect, emotional competence, temperament, social- and problem solving skills, hope, sense of humour, empathy and the ability to separate oneself from toxic relationships (Boyden & Mann, 2005: 6-8; Schoon, 2006: 14-15; Shaub, 2002; Theron, 2006: 200-201; Turner *et al.*, 1995: 26-27).

7.3 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

In this study there was one central hypothesis:

- Null hypothesis

An intervention programme aimed at encouraging resilient functioning in divorcees will not lead to heightened resilient functioning and improved parenting skills.

- Alternative hypothesis

An intervention programme aimed at encouraging resilient functioning in divorcees will lead to heightened resilient functioning and improved parenting skills.

To determine which hypothesis needed to be accepted, a quasi-experimental approach with a nonrandomized pre-test post-test design was selected (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 88). A quasi-experimental design was chosen for logistical reasons: the researcher needed to work with divorced persons in her own geographical area. The empirical study can be summarised with the aid of Figure 7.2 below:

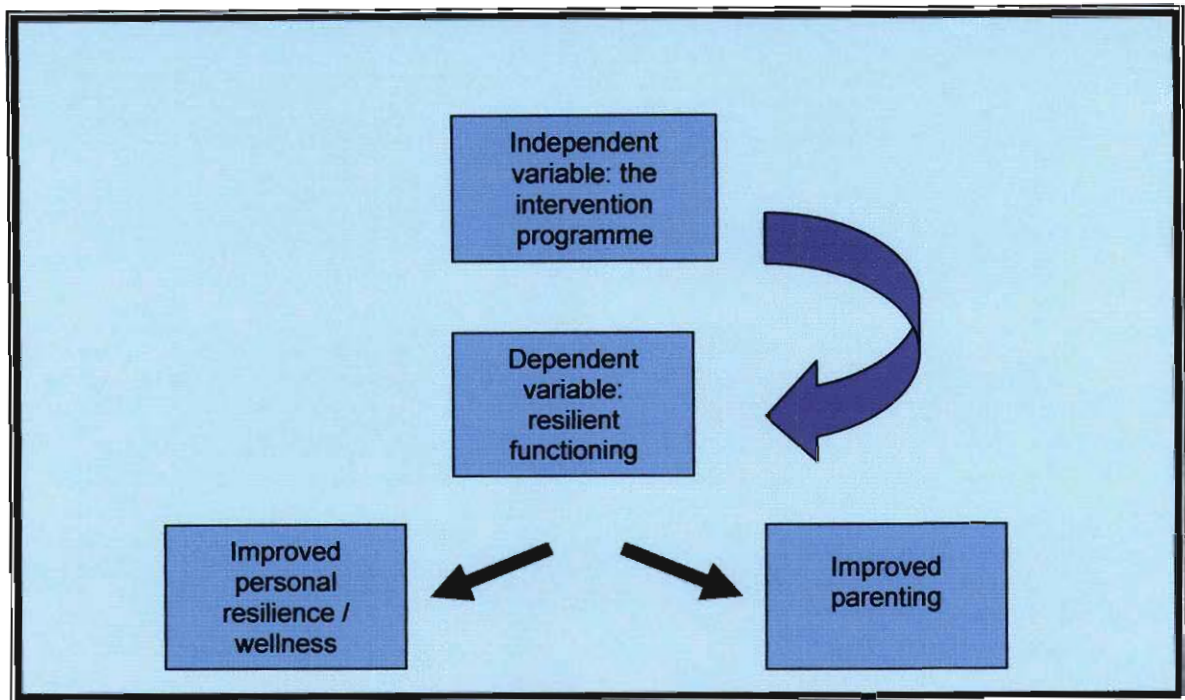


Figure 7.2: Summary of the empirical study

- It is difficult to control all nuisance variables when a nonrandomised design is used. In this study internal validity was aimed for by limiting participants to one geographical area and similar socio-economic backgrounds (for instance keeping things constant); by including a control group; and by randomly assigning participants to control and experimental groups.

- A purposive convenience sample was used

The researcher invited divorced parents in her immediate vicinity to participate. The principal of the primary school and local churches helped the researcher to find participants.

- Both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (process notes and interviews) measures were used to measure the impact of the intervention programme on the participants. The questionnaires used were the CYRM – A (Ungar, 2005) and Parenting Questionnaire (Gottman, 1997). The purpose was to measure whether the participants were more resilient in their functioning after the implementation of the intervention programme, and, if so, if this led to improved parenting skills. The process notes and interviews were used to note the process through the intervention program.

7.4 SUMMARY OF THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The intervention programme consisted of 9 sessions that aimed at encouraging personal protective factors to buffer risk factors intrinsic to divorce, as summarised in figure 7.3 below.

Risk factor linked to divorce (Cf. Figure 2.11)	Linked theoretical risk factor (Cf. Figure 3.7)	Potential protective factor	Intervention programme
(Bezuidenhout, 2005:22; Ferreira, 1999: 29; Schwartz & Kaslow, 1997: 157; Shaub, 2002)	(Armstrong <i>et al.</i> , 2005: 391-2; Barter, 2005: 345-348; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Schoon, 2006: 8-11; Shaub, 2002)	(Boyden & Mann, 2005:6-8; Theron, 2006: 200-201; Turner <i>et al.</i> , 1995:26-27; Schoon, 2006: 14-15)	
Health problems	Personal risk factor (physical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to be emotionally competent • Empathy (also to the self) 	Acquisition of self-knowledge to enhance self-esteem
Loneliness	Personal risk factor (psychosocial: inability to relate / poor attachment / low self-esteem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being emotionally competent • Good social skills (learning to ask for help / support) 	Rebuilding self-image through disclosure Receiving closure about the divorce, rebuilding social contact and alleviating loneliness Acquisition of hope by using metaphors

Social- and sexual readjustment	<p>Personal risk factor (psychosocial: inability to relate; behavioural: social isolation)</p> <p>Familial risk (poor support / separation from family)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even temperament • Good social skills • Good problem solving skills • A sense of humour • Empathy • Being emotionally competent 	<p>Receiving closure about the divorce, rebuilding social contact and alleviating loneliness</p> <p>Acquisition of hope by using metaphors</p> <p>Communication skills and verbalizing emotions</p>
Financial changes	<p>Family socioeconomic status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-efficacy • Good problem solving skills 	
Damage to self-esteem	<p>Personal risk factor (psychosocial: low self-esteem)</p> <p>Familial risk (fragmented family structure / divorce; abuse / violence in family context; family conflict)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope • A sense of humour • Being emotionally competent 	<p>Repairing the divorcee's well-being to encourage emotional competence</p> <p>Acquisition of hope by using metaphors</p> <p>Communication skills and verbalizing emotions</p>
Emotional lability	<p>Personal risk factor (psychosocial: low self-esteem; behavioural: aggressive behaviour)</p> <p>Familial risk (poor support; conflict; abuse / violence; family disorganization).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to separate self from situation • Learning to be emotionally competent • Good social skills (asking for help / support) 	<p>Letting go of anger and aggression</p> <p>Enhancing humour</p> <p>Communication skills and verbalizing</p>

Feelings of guilt	Familial risk (fragmented family structure / divorce; conflict / abuse / violence in family context; poor parent-child relationships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope • The ability to separate self from situation • Learning to be emotionally competent • Developing empathy 	<p>Demonstrating different parenting models and discussing pro's and con's of each</p> <p>Acquisition of hope by using metaphors</p>
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Figure 7.3: Overview of how risk and protective factors inform the intervention program

The sessions took place on a weekly basis. Each session was between 60 to 90 minutes long. In each session, handouts were given to participants to make a statement, to encourage reflection and dialogue, to explain statements and to reaffirm information learned. Open discussion of opinions, emotions and thoughts were encouraged. The aim of the programme was to reinforce protective factors and cancel out risk factors so that the participants could become more resilient after their divorce, and by implication, better parents.

7.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE RESULTS

The aim of Chapter 6 was to provide a description of the programme's implementation and its impact on the group members. The backgrounds of the participants of the experimental group were given. That was followed by a detailed description of each session.

The impact of the intervention program on the participants was discussed. This led to the following conclusions:

- When the experimental group was compared with the control group, results of the post-tests of the CYRM – A showed an improvement in scores after the intervention programme was done. This meant that the participants who completed the intervention programme, showed better resilience skills than those who did not complete the programme.

- When the experimental group was compared with the control group, results of the post-tests of the Parenting Questionnaire showed an improvement in scores after the intervention programme was done. This meant that the participants who completed the intervention programme showed better parenting skills and were more democratic in their parenting than the participants of the control group.

The alternative hypothesis for the study can thus be accepted: The intervention programme aimed at encouraging resilient functioning in divorcees and led to heightened resilience functioning and improved parenting skills.

7.6 SHORTCOMINGS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

- The biggest limitation of this study was that it was a once-off study without follow ups. This means that no conclusions can be reached about the long-term effects of the intervention.
- Another shortcoming of the study was the fact that only 5 active participants were included in the experimental group. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population. The results are only valid for the population of this study.
- Because the study is dealing with people's emotions, it is important to remember that no two persons are the same, or experience a situation in the same way. This leads to the fact that divorcees are not dealing with the same issues at the same time. To create a programme that could address all the participant's issues at the same time is virtually impossible. Nevertheless, a possible limitation is that this intervention was not equally well-suited to all the participants (for example Participant C was struggling with issues that the programme did not address).
- A further limitation of the study was the fact that although much was said in the literature about resilience, very little of it concerned adults. In the literature, resilience is mostly concerned with youth. The researcher couldn't find South African measuring instruments aimed specifically at

