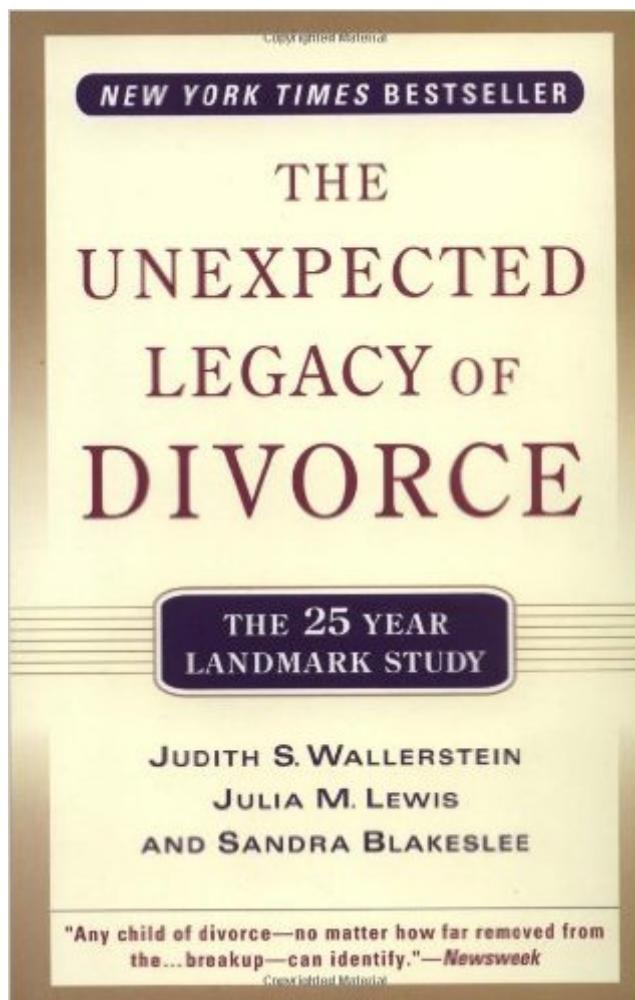


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The Unexpected Legacy Of Divorce: The 25 Year Landmark Study



Synopsis

Finally in paperback, the New York Times bestseller that has fundamentally changed the way children of divorce see themselves as adults--updated with a new preface by the author. Divorce is at once a widespread reality and a painful decision, so it is no surprise that this landmark study of its long-term effects should both spark debate and find a large audience. In this compelling, thought-provoking book, Judith Wallerstein explains that, while children do learn to cope with divorce, it in fact takes its greatest toll in adulthood, when the sons and daughters of divorced parents embark on romantic relationships of their own. Wallerstein sensitively illustrates how children of divorce often feel that their relationships are doomed, seek to avoid conflict, and fear commitment. Failure in their loving relationships often seems to them preordained, even when things are going smoothly. As Wallerstein checks in on the adults she first encountered as youngsters more than twenty-five years ago, she finds that their experiences mesh with those of the millions of other children of divorce, who will find themselves on every page. With more than 100,000 copies in print, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* spent three weeks on the New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, and Denver Post bestseller lists. The book was also featured on two episodes of Oprah as well as on the front cover of Time and the New York Times Book Review.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having suffered through an unwanted divorce twenty years ago, and having taken on the full responsibility for raising my two children (ages 10 and 13 at the time), "The Unexpected Legacy of

Divorce" was a welcomed book by me and my children. My children have continued to experience divorce related issues as they have moved into adulthood. Maturity, relationships, marriage, and parenting have been catalysts for the emergence of feelings that were buried and denied. Judith Wallerstein's excellent book provides the context and structure for my adult children to explore and understand their "new" feelings (and behaviors) enabling them to move-on, happier and emotionally healthier. My children, their spouses, and I have all read "Unexpected Legacy of Divorce." We have and will continue to use the book as a resource in our on-going effort to get closure. We have all come to understand that the feelings and behaviors that are surfacing are not unique but, rather, are quite "normal" for children of divorce. This has been of great comfort for them - allowing them to cleanse the shadows of divorce and move forward with greater confidence that they are not weird. Wallerstein has conducted a longitudinal research study of divorce dating back to the late 1970's. "Unexpected Legacy" is the third and most recent book based on the study. In previous books, she has studied the effects of divorce, not only on children, as she has in this book, but also on the divorcing parents. All of the books are "must reads" for those who are considering divorce or have divorced. Over the years, I have had a number of people confide in me that either they or their spouses were considering divorce.

Wallerstein's central thesis is that despite what adults would like to tell themselves, divorce is *not* a simple, minor, or transitory matter in the life of a child. Divorce is a profound trauma that *forever* alters a child's life, often in ways unexpected. It does not at all lessen the impact that so many children nowadays are from divorced parents, either; as Wallerstein puts it, "children come single file." The divorce is just the beginning. After losing their childhood and family home, the child then has to deal with reduced--often severely reduced--parenting time from the custodial parent, who is devoting energy toward maintaining a home and rebuilding their shattered life and has correspondingly less time to spend with the child. The non-custodial parent's investment in the child often drops to a minimum--every other weekend and a month or so in the summer is no substitute for the time and attention of a live-in father or mother. On top of that, both parents are often dealing with profound emotional pain in the context of a reduced support network and often come to rely on children for support in inappropriate ways. And the effects of divorce don't end there. In addition to losing the familial home, and (often) being forced to relocate, change schools, make new friends, etc (another traumatic event for children), the child is then often exposed to another series of transitions as one or both parents try out a rotating shuffle of new dating and/or live-in partners. If/when the parents settle on new marital partners, then the child faces yet another transition of

trying to integrate the new adult/s (and possibly assorted children) into the new family. The complexity of this process increases logarithmically if stepchildren are involved.

A long but worthy book recommended for anyone touched by or considering divorce. I read it as an adult child of divorced parents, looking for further clues to heal the past and become a more emotionally secure person. This book helped. It offers four in-depth case studies of two women and two men, relating the childhood and teen experiences of these four to each other and to additional observations about divorce. This manner of presentation demonstrates the kind of close personal attention and genuine interest in these children and their development(over a 25 year span) that I always wished had come from my parents. The authors do a good job of being clear about the need of children for secure parenting and give tips on how to provide it without making pronouncements about whether divorce or staying together is definitely better in a given case. (Though they do state that divorce is ultimately more detrimental to children, especially as they come of age and attempt to form their own committed relationships, than we have thus far believed.)In addition to the compassionate voice of the authors, the real benefit of this book is the longevity of the studies undertaken. The passage of time in these children's lives and the lessons learned therefrom are a perfect counterweight to the impatient tendency of some parents who divorce to say "oh, the kids will adjust," and go right ahead doing what they think will satisfy themselves. In a tangential way, the book also opens for discussion the topic of who should be a parent, given the sacrifices and ability to put another above oneself that it almost always takes.

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