



I'M DIVORCED AND AM NERVOUS ABOUT BEING INTIMATE AGAIN. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Jo Barnett, dating and relationship coach (jobarnett.com), says:

I can totally understand your nerves about starting an intimate relationship having just left a long-term marriage. After such a long period of time with one person, there is a deep level of security and acceptance that has been built over time. There's so much uncertainty with someone new that can leave you vulnerable, such as how sex might have changed, what it means to be physical with a different partner, and the list goes on.

As a result, it may feel like you've lost your confidence and suddenly there's a scrutiny that you may not have felt before being with the same person for such a long time. Worrying about our body image is, unfortunately, part of our modern culture as the pressure on how our bodies should look climbs with every airbrushed image. Although the circumstances of your relationship break-up aren't specified, this can be made worse if your long-term partner has been unfaithful or left you, igniting feelings of rejection and insecurity making you feel unloved and even unlovable.

However, there is light at the end of the tunnel – to change a negative outlook, we need to think about

changing the story and taking control of our thoughts. What you tell yourself is what you become, so to move forward you need to flood your mind with thoughts and images of a whole new capable and deserving you. After all, this is an exciting time – use it to really find out who you are as an individual and feel empowered by how far you have already come. If you find yourself in a promising position with a new lover, remember that you're in this situation because they already find you attractive. So the chances are that they won't look twice at that flaw you've been poking and pulling in the mirror.

When I work with clients who are stuck in fear, I advise them to list everything that scares them, then acknowledge that they are all based on the past, not your future. Now look at the possibilities that are there for you when you say yes to intimacy: a new adventure, connection, physical contact, warmth, love, personal growth and pleasure – who doesn't want that?

You always have a choice in your future – whether it's to stay stuck in your fears or to say yes to new possibilities. Once you decide, give yourself permission to experiment, to stay open and allow yourself to live life to the full.

Try it

Make yourself a collage of pictures that connect you to what you want and your strengths. These can include images of you happy in the past or things that you are aspiring to in the future. This will help you to focus on the bigger picture and put things into a broader perspective.