

Conquering the divorce

divide

Peter Courtney-Fitch catches up with a mum of three to find out more about her crusade to help families going through divorce.

Real life can be tough. In these testing times the reality is that although married couples make a vow to stay together until death do us part, divorce rates are on the rise and the parting of ways can be devastating to all – especially if children are involved.

Suzy Miller, creator of the Alternative Divorce Guide and the Starting Over Show, faced her divorce fears when her own children were just one, four and six years old, describing it as: "The most painful and traumatic experiences of my life."

However, as the years passed along the initially harrowing co-parenting journey, she actually became grateful to her ex for the courage he had in ending a relationship no longer working for either of them.

It got to a point where a healthy respect grew between them in the place of heartache.

It was this revelation which began the process towards the Alternative Divorce Guide taking shape.

Suzy's middle child Joe beautifully summed up its intent when, aged ten, he said: "Break up right – please don't fight".

Even without conflict, courage, determination and a vision of a positive future in the midst of struggle is needed to succeed.

The desire for change fuelled by the joy children bring can help conquer the divorce divide, a journey Suzy strongly believes needn't be made alone.

"You will all know someone who will encounter the pain of divorce in their lives and people need help," she says. "They also want to know how to help themselves."

Suzy, drawing from her own experiences, devised the Alternative Divorce Guide to help navigate through the maze of divorce decisions.



Alongside the free advice on the Alternative Divorce Guide, Suzy also created the Alternative Divorce Directory – part of her on-going crusade to help families avoid wasting their money on adversarial divorce proceedings, and guide them through free, no-obligation introductions to experts in law, finance, parenting and wellbeing.

Dubbed in the national press as the 'UK's First Divorce Fairs', her Starting Over Shows began in 2010, with experts meeting the public face-to-face in a bid to help educate people on how to avoid adversarial divorce.

"I have some wonderful experts that give people a sense of what is on offer, a menu of key advisers who can help make a shift in

people's lives," Suzy explains.

The mum of three from Forest Row clearly feels not enough is being done in companies, due to 'divorce' being still a taboo subject.

Yet, there is an argument that without dealing with personal staffing issues, the business itself will suffer as workers become ill due to work and life pressures encountered during this difficult period.

In fact, it has been argued the stress divorce brings can easily spill into the workplace and annually cost employers an average of £600 per employee per year for stress-related absenteeism.

"It is not enough to have a helpline," argues Suzy. "If there are not adequate resources for those affected by divorce in



the work environment, we can come in to talk about our resources from a business standpoint.

"The team are able to support staff through different situations which could include the events leading up to unfair dismissal or self-esteem issues."

Ultimately, she would like to work with companies to attain a conscious measurement of wellbeing in the workplace that is not a tick box exercise, but more 'first aid for relationships'.

Similar to a first aid box, Suzy has 'Divorce in a Box' – a travel guide for people navigating family break-up, that includes booklets, a DVD packed with resource information, vouchers for expert taster sessions, a unique divorce organiser

to map your journey and strategies for protecting and empowering yourself through the entire process.

Suzy is starting to attract an increasing number of collaborative lawyers and mediators on to the directory, as well as coaching and other wellbeing experts, who help their clients gain swift solutions, change mindsets in the legal system and get results within months to alleviate painful issues that could otherwise take years to resolve.

"I feel genuinely thankful that I offer hope to those in despair," she says. "People can and do go through amazing transformational process that shift them from victim to an empowered person, who can see without blame their part in the game."

Suzy represents the massive change in family law that encourages the need to collaborate with a common goal and vision. A vision, that allows couples to break up right, without the fight.

For more information on the Alternative Divorce Guide, Alternative Divorce Directory, or Divorce in a Box, visit www.AlternativeDivorceGuide.co.uk; www.AlternativeDivorceDirectory.co.uk; www.divorceinabox.com. You can also contact Suzy on Twitter www.twitter.com/suzymiller or on Facebook www.facebook.com/alternativedivorceguide