

The background of the entire page is a lush, green and purple floral arrangement. It features clusters of small, vibrant purple flowers with white centers, interspersed with various shades of green leaves and stems. The overall aesthetic is natural and serene.

# *5 Practical Choices Divorced Women Can Make...*

to Reduce isolation, Re-energize your life and  
Return you to balance

María Tomás-Keegan

# Welcome!

You're holding the key to break through that protective barrier you've built and unlock the armor you wear every day. If you're a divorced woman who is throwing yourself into your career to avoid feeling anything at all — or feeling isolated now that you're on your own — or struggling to find the new balance you need to feel alive again, this book will help you with practical choices you can put into play today.

You put on a brave face for colleagues at work, as well as friends and family — yet you struggle on the inside to deal with the loss and grief. You spend all your waking hours busy, doing whatever you can to keep your brain engaged and your feelings at bay. You should be exhausted by day's end and yet you can't quiet your mind enough to sleep. Can you relate? It's tough to be your best when you're not even sure who you are anymore. I get it.

I'm María Tomás-Keegan, a life transitions coach who specializes in helping professional women successfully recover from their divorce. I have been where you are today. My journey through divorce, the lessons I've learned and the wit and wisdom that comes from surviving many life transitions allow me to help other women face their divorce with ease and grace. I've been a corporate manager, coach, mentor and consultant for more than 20 years and I know how tough it can be to just "show up" each day.

In this eBook, I'll share five choices you can make to get you started on an easier journey. My hope is this: when you put these simple practices in place you will become encouraged and inspired to move forward — one small step at a time. You will begin to rediscover what makes your heart "sing" and you'll notice some cracks in that armor you've built, so you can break away from its grip and start to breathe again. I know how wonderful those first few breaths are — imagine how liberated you will feel when they come from you! You're not alone!



# *Getting Started*

To get the most from the ideas in this book, I'd like to suggest you find a journal or notebook in which you can write your thoughts and feelings as you go through each chapter.

You'll find an "Inspired Action" section in each chapter that will share ideas for putting new practices into place that will shift you from where you are today to a different path — based on the choices you make.

When you've completed this book you will have started a journal which you can reference as you move forward on your journey. This same journal can be used to keep track of where you've been and how far you've come. It could be a new treasure.

This is just the beginning and I want you to know that you're never alone!

*“Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much.”*

~~~ Helen Keller



## *Choice #1*

### *Turn isolation into motivation.*

You're not meant to do this divorce stuff alone. In fact, I can't think of much in this life that is better done alone. Well, there are a few things.

Let's talk about how to reduce the feelings of isolation that divorce can bring about. You may feel you've lost your "best friend" from divorce — your "ex." You might have lost other friends, as well — people who didn't want to pick sides, so they divorced you, too. You may be going "home" to a new place that doesn't feel quite right yet or, you're still in the old place which now feels so empty. You may be staying home all the time because you don't want to be the third wheel or you just don't feel like putting on that brave face and pretending everything is okay.

There are lots of reasons you may not feel "up to it" so you stay alone — isolated from those who love you and want to help. This is one of the top reasons it takes longer than it needs to for you to "recover" from big changes in your life — like divorce.

Reaching out, even when you don't really feel like it, is one of the best ways to feel better. When you laugh with friends or family, when you watch a funny movie or go to the comedy club, when you have a friend over and just talk for hours — maybe even cry, you are elevating your spirit and allowing yourself to feel. That's right — to feel.

Allowing yourself to feel the emotions you have is the best way to acknowledge them, understand them and release them. And having people you love and trust around when this happens can help you to feel safe and



secure as these feelings of anger, guilt, fear, anxiety and grief come to the surface. When you feel safe, it's easier to let the feelings out and begin to heal them.

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### *Inspired Action*

So, let's get motivated. Who do you love and trust to be in your support network? I often suggest to my clients that they make a list of all the people who can support them in the best way for them at this time in their lives. Be careful as you make your list — you may have friends or family who are negative and keep bringing up the bad stuff. Those are not the people you need to be around right now. Instead, think of those who lift you up and help you to find the opportunities in each situation, allowing you to come up with the best solutions. Those are the people you want to lean on now.

Get out a piece of lined paper. Write those names in a column, and then write beside each name what you love to do with that person. Someone might enjoy the same kind of movies as you. Someone else may be the perfect person to confide your deepest secrets. And there may be another person who makes you laugh uncontrollably — no matter what kind of mood you're in, they lift you up. How many people can you put on your list?

After your list is complete, have a little fun and give your network a funky name. Something like: My Divorce Avengers or My Happiness Squad or My Band of Angels.

Then, give each person on your list a call and let them know that you've included them in your own personal "Happiness Squad" — and ask if they would be willing to support you in this way. If they say yes, celebrate a little and make a date to get together soon.

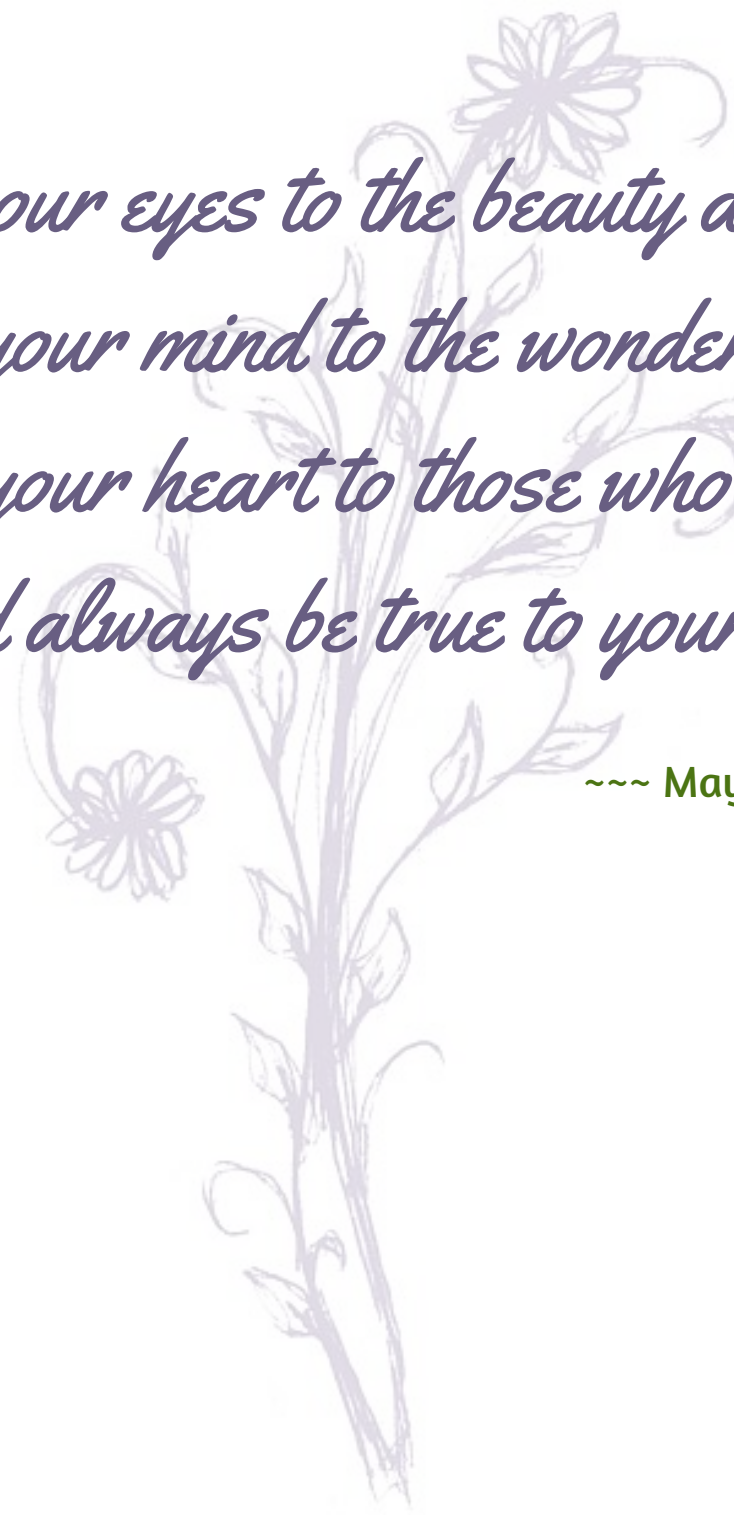


When you have some scheduled dates on your calendar, it will give you something to look forward to and get you motivated — watch out — it just might also lift your spirits!

This could be the first tiny crack in that armor of yours.

Take a deep breath and imagine that!





*“Open your eyes to the beauty around you.  
Open your mind to the wonders of life.  
Open your heart to those who love you.  
And always be true to yourself.”*

~~~ Maya Angelou

## *Choice #2*

### *Reconnect with what makes your heart sing!*

How often have you said “yes” when someone asked you to participate in something that really didn’t feel right to you? Do you find yourself compromising to keep other people happy? Is it hard for you to say “no”?

Sometimes, when you’re in a relationship for a long time, you don’t even realize you’ve compromised your personal values to keep the peace. You may realize that you’ve been doing things for years which have made you feel “less than” who you really are. Well, it’s time to make a different choice.

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### *Inspired Action*

What makes your heart sing? What are the things you used to do that you gave up doing because they just didn’t fit in with what he wanted to do? Did you work out regularly in the past? Did you love to sew and could never get around to finding the time? Were you an avid reader and you gave up that wonderful “alone time” because he felt slighted?

Think of all the things you used to do that made you feel good about yourself — the things that soothed your soul and fed your confidence. Take out another sheet of lined paper. (By this time you’re likely to be noticing a pattern — I love to make lists. You may want to start a journal about now.)

Leave some space between each item on your list. Next, write about why you love to do each of these things. It might read something like this: I love to ... sing because singing makes me feel uplifted — walk because I feel





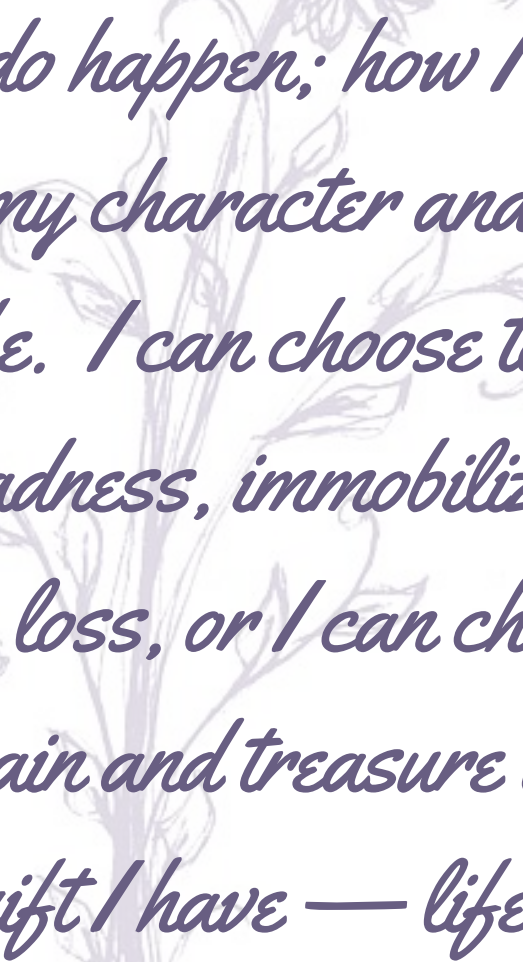
invigorated and healthy — make my own clothes because it fuels my creative side and I love wearing new clothes that I made. Got the idea?

Remember that the choice here is to re-discover and re-engage in activities that make YOU feel good. Inviting someone to “play” with you is a great way to integrate your first and second new choices suggested so far. Are you ready to give it a whirl?

What I love about making these lists — even better, keeping them in a journal — is this: every time you feel a bit low or lonely or need a “pick me up” you can read one of your lists and make a different choice. You can call someone and do something other than what you’re doing right now or you can choose to participate in one of the things that lift you and make you feel better.

Your choice!





*“Bad things do happen; how I respond to them defines my character and the quality of my life. I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have — life itself.”*

~~~ Walter Anderson

## *Choice #3*

### *Take control of what's in your control.*

Whenever I think about taking control, I'm reminded of a prayer my grandmother, Ruby, taught me when I was a little girl and we shared a bedroom. I used to love to watch her mouth when she spoke these words and they have been emblazoned in my heart ever since.

These words have served me well through each of the tough times in my life — especially through divorce. I'm sure you know this prayer, too. Listen to the words carefully as you speak them now:

*God, grant me ...  
the serenity to accept things I cannot change,  
courage to change the things I can  
and wisdom to know the difference.*

When you're going through divorce, there are many times when you may feel "out of control" and it's important to acknowledge that there are some things that are not in your control to fix or change.

The biggest one is "him." There is nothing you can do to change him or change what he says or how he says it. That goes for anyone else in your life, at work or within your circle of family and friends — there is nothing you can do to change any of them.

What you can do is take control over yourself — your perspective, your actions and reactions.



For me, Wayne Dyer said it best: *“When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”*

A few years ago something totally unexpected happened to me — after 18 years with the same global tech company, I was laid off. Total surprise — never saw it coming! It put me in a tail-spin and I started to worry about all kinds of things, as you might imagine.

Until — a few days after I got the devastating news, a colleague called me to see how I was doing. As I went into the litany of things I was worried about she stopped me and said, “María, what if it was your idea — what would you be doing then?”

“What if it was my idea?” It’s a different perspective that empowered me to take control and stop being the victim. Those six words changed my entire direction. Can you imagine how many times I’ve shared my gratitude with that colleague? Thousands!

I love the way that question starts ... it’s how I start many questions with my clients. “What if ...”

When you start questions that way, it opens a world of possibilities. What if you felt confident enough? What could you do? What if you stepped out of your comfort zone? What’s the worst that could happen? Is that really likely to happen? What if it worked out the way you thought it could? Would you feel more comfortable the next time?

Do you see how you can start to take control over things that are in your control when you ask for help (the prayer) and you ask yourself some questions?



What are your “what if” questions? Here’s another opportunity to journal.

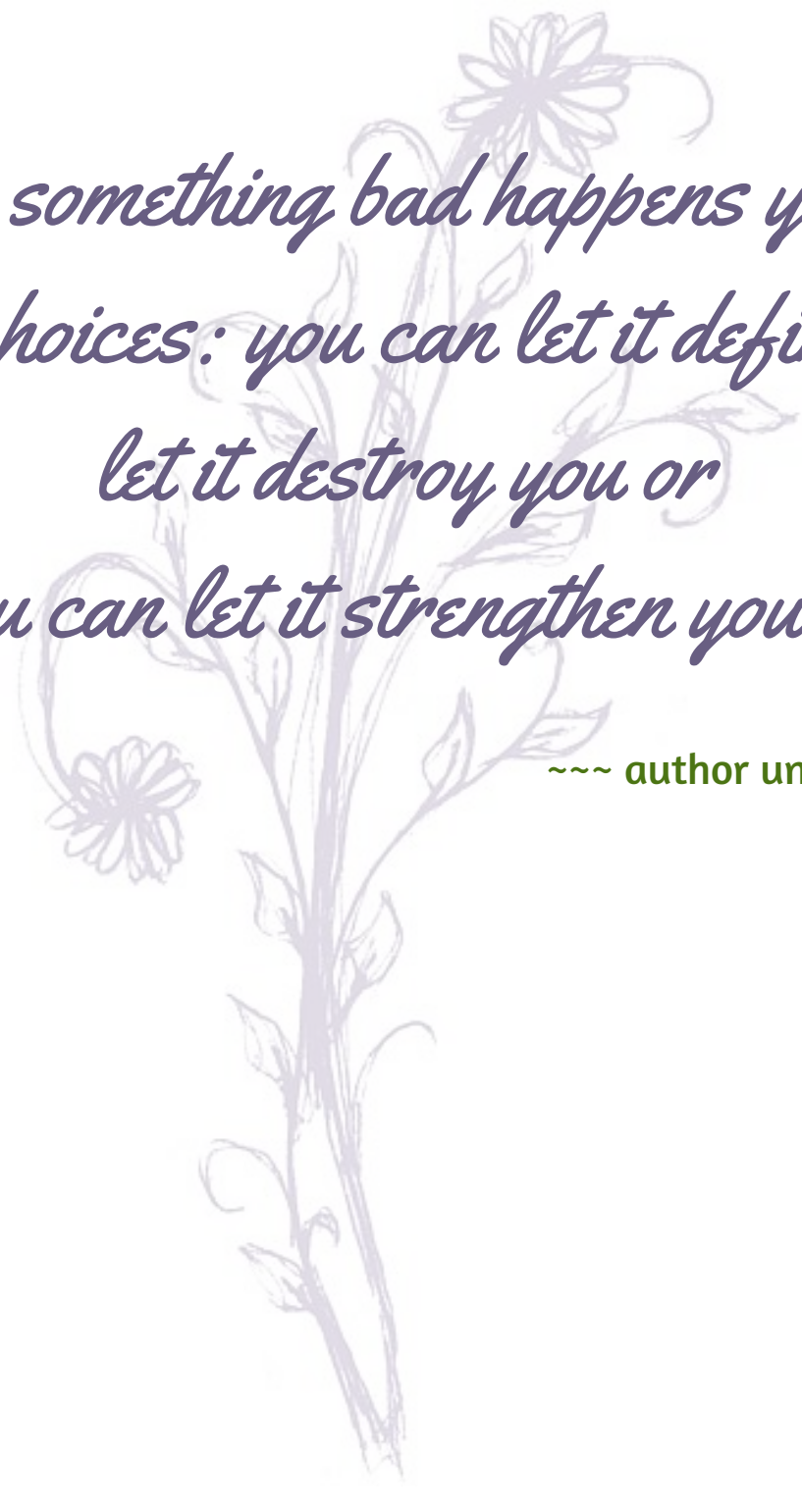
*Inspired Action*

Write about the things in your life right now that you can control — how can you change your perspective and empower yourself to take that control? How could you step outside your comfort zone and stretch in ways that will help you reach new heights?

Don’t forget, you’re not meant to do this alone — reach out to your “Band of Angels” to help as you consider all the “what ifs”.

Are you sensing more cracks in your armor?





*“When something bad happens you have  
three choices: you can let it define you,  
let it destroy you or  
you can let it strengthen you.”*

~~~ author unknown

## *Choice #4*

### *Give only from your saucer.*

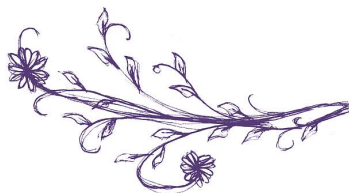
My mom used to collect pretty tea cups. Each one was different. They all were beautifully hand-painted — many with gold leaf at the rim of the cup and saucer and down the delicate handle. Mom used them only for special occasions. This is a special occasion.



A dear friend shared the following metaphor with me and I share it happily with you. I fondly remember my mom's tea cups every time I share it — “give only from your saucer.”

Imagine one of these beautiful teacups sitting gracefully upon its matching saucer. Imagine that you are the teacup. Everything you do for yourself fills your teacup. You eat well, rest well and take time to recharge. You visit with people who lift your spirits, read a good book and walk along the beach every chance you get. You buy tickets to a play you've been eager to see, make a date with your best friend for some bonding time and sit quietly listening to your favorite music just so you can think. All of these things fill your cup — they may even fill it to overflowing.

That's when you can start to give. Give from your saucer. When your cup is full, you can give freely without worry that you'll feel drained. When you take care of yourself first, you'll always have enough to give when you want to and when others need you most. If your cup is empty, you feel like you have nothing to give — and you're right.



I remember a story I once heard about a grandmother saying to her granddaughter, “you come first — after me.” I love this story because it’s so rare that we women take care of ourselves first. Most of us have been brought up to take care of everyone else — our careers, our husbands, our kids and our extended families. We’ve been taught that it’s selfish to take care of ourselves first. Is any of this ringing true for you?

I was conditioned from a very early age to take care of everyone else. That’s a habit I’ve been working to break for many years. I struggled with finding the right balance between the demands of my career, keeping my husband and family happy and taking care of aging parents. When I learned about my teacup, it helped to change my perspective. It helped me to understand that I could be better at supporting my family, my management team and my entire circle of friends when my teacup is “full.”

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### *Inspired Action*

Are you ready for another chance to journal? What fills your teacup? How often do you choose to do each one of those things? Are there ways you can think of to integrate those teacup-filling activities into your busy schedule so you are consistently taking care of yourself?

I know this is hard to do at first. Give it a try. Start slowly and build from there. Making changes like this can take some practice. Keep at it and don’t give up on yourself. Remember that taking baby steps in the right direction will get you where you want to go.

Start a new perspective: self-care is not an option — it’s a priority.







*“Self love, self respect, self worth:  
There’s a reason  
they all start with ‘self.’  
You can’t find them in anyone else.”*

~~~ author unknown

## *Choice #5*

### *Be grateful.*

Do you believe that everything in this world has energy? I'm coming to understand this better. In its simplest terms, some things have a positive energy and some have a negative energy.

Think about fear. That's probably more of a negative energy. Now think about gratitude — a positive energy, right? Now think about both of those energies and how one can cancel out the other. If you're feeling positively grateful, it's impossible for negative fear to occupy the same time and space.

So, you have a choice. Start a practice of gratitude and keep the fear (or any of the other negative energies like guilt, anger and isolation) at bay.

Another thing I share from my learned friend, Jaleh, who does all kinds of physiological research (she's a Master Physical Therapist and Movement Expert, among other fabulous things) — when you express gratitude for at least 90 seconds at a time, it “flips a switch” and resets your brain because that's how long it takes for a neural loop to occur.

It's more science than I understand but, here's the thing — I've tested this in my workshops and groups and every single time the women tell me that they feel better — much better — after doing a “Gratitude Rampage.”

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### *Inspired Action*

Are you ready to give this a try? Set a timer for at least 90 seconds. Sometimes I'd rather do it based on the number of things I'm grateful for —



like 5 things or 7 things. That will likely take more than 90 seconds, which is even better. Ready, set, go!

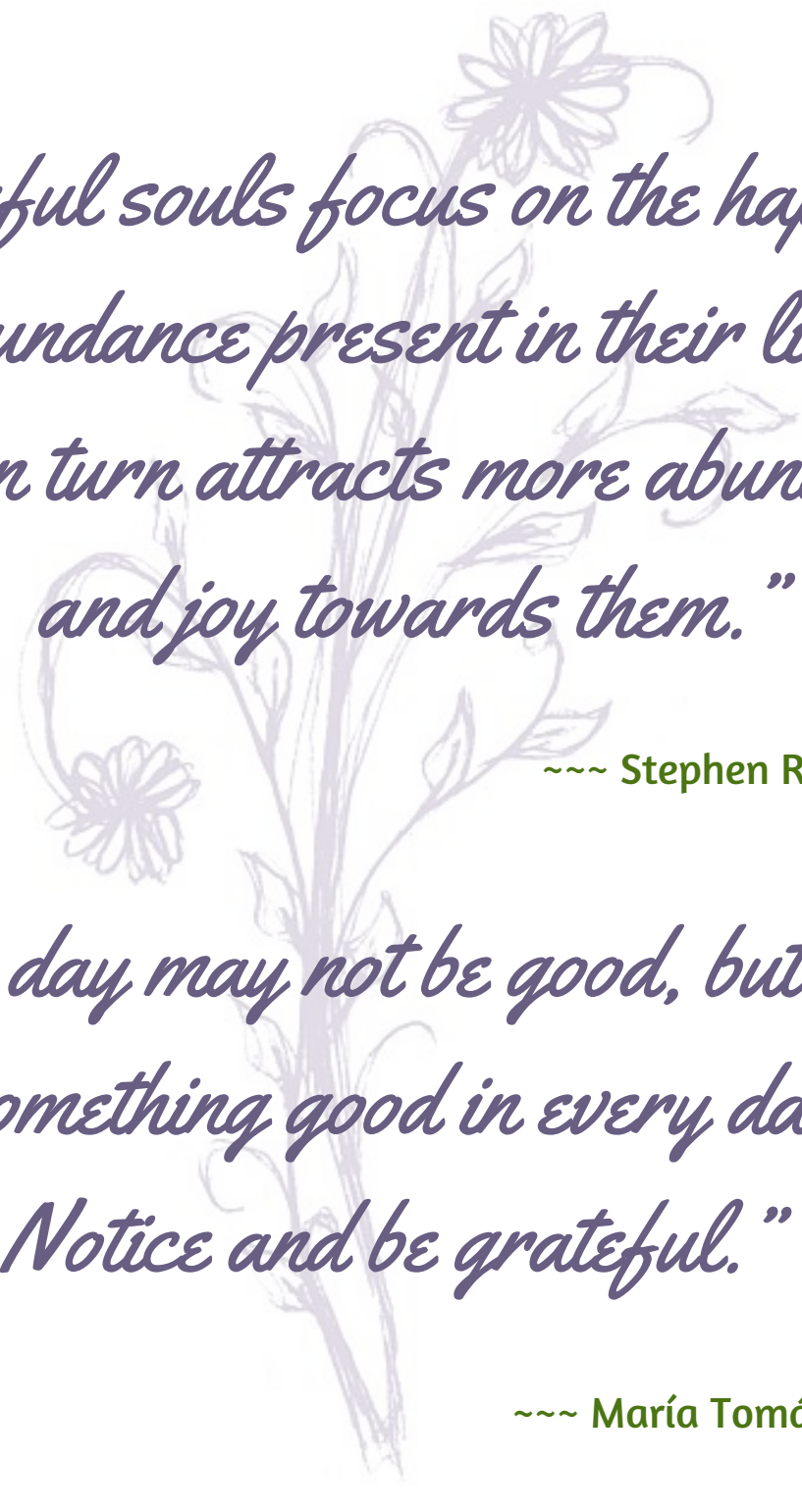
Here's another way to do a Gratitude Rampage. Get out your journal again — I actually have a separate gratitude journal just for this practice. Commit to yourself that you'll write at least three things you're grateful for in your journal every day. Pick a time that you will do this. One client of mine keeps her journal in the bathroom where no one disturbs her. Another client keeps it by her bed and writes before her feet hit the floor each morning. You may wish to do it before going to sleep at night.

Whatever time works best for you is great. What I do know from experience is, when I wake up in the morning and think about the things I'm most grateful for it starts my day off on very positive footing. And when I write those things in my journal later (when I get into my home office) it captures my gratitude in a place that allows me to re-read it any time I'm feeling a bit negative.

Imagine this — you've created a gratitude journal and you write in it almost every day and a month from now you're feeling especially blue, like nothing has changed and no one is there for you. Pick up your journal and read all the wonderful things in your life that you've been grateful for over the last month. The big things, the little things the silly things. I promise you, it will make you smile and change your perspective.

Remember, when you're in the positive attitude of gratitude none of those negative energies can occupy that same space or time. Choose gratitude — I dare you! Crack-Crack — I can hear your armor giving way!





*“Grateful souls focus on the happiness and abundance present in their lives and this in turn attracts more abundance and joy towards them.”*

~~~ Stephen Richards

*“Every day may not be good, but there is something good in every day. Notice and be grateful.”*

~~~ María Tomás-Keegan

# *There you have it ...*

Five choices you can easily make that will help you to move through this horrible time in your life. There is nothing easy about going through a divorce – even if you're the one who wanted it. Exploring the new opportunities that lie ahead, dreaming about the possibilities and discovering how you want to write your next chapter are all choices you get to make.

I'd like to leave you with a new mantra. I share this with the women in my groups and workshops and it empowers them to **own** their new choices. I hope it does the same for you:

**I choose ...**

**to live by choice, not by chance.**

**to make changes, not excuses.**

**to be motivated, not manipulated.**

**to be useful, not used.**

**to excel, not compete.**

**I choose self-esteem, not self-pity.**

**I choose to listen to my inner voice,  
not the random opinions of others.**

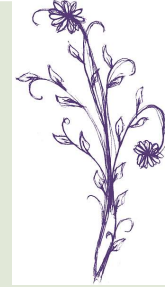
*It's all about making the best CHOICES for YOU!*

*You can start right now.*





## *Bonus Choice: What's next for you?*



*Can you imagine a life after divorce that's filled with peaceful days and graceful nights, is founded on your most cherished values, where you are surrounded by uplifting people and activities and it fulfills nearly all of your dreams?*

*Sit with that breathtaking image for a moment ...*

*How does it make you feel?*

To the beautiful lady inside of you ... I want you to know this is possible.

Are you a woman who feels that divorce is one of the worst things that ever happened to you? Even if you were the one to decide to leave, this can be true. It was for me. I've found that this is so often the case because we feel we failed ... our "happy ever after" dream can't come true now.

Is that really true? What if you had the power to create a new dream and make IT come true? Would you like to experience that?

Are you throwing yourself into your career because it's the one thing that you feel you can control? It's the one place where you feel heard and respected? It's where you feel a strong sense of belonging and accomplishment? I understand — that's exactly what I did.

You may keep rereading the old chapters of your life and you get stuck in the past and it's hard to move forward. Sound familiar? You may be afraid of change or of what's unknown and beyond your comfort zone. Desperately clinging to what is so familiar may bring some comfort — and it can keep you desperately stuck.

What is it Albert Einstein said? Something like, “doing the same things over and over and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity.” Going through a divorce and repeating your old stories over and over again can sometimes make you think you’re insane. What you need to know is: you can choose to leave the insanity behind. Are you game for that?

### **You’re not alone!**

I understand how you feel. I’ve struggled with thoughts of guilt and anger, feeling like there is no way I can make it on my own. I’ve feared the unknown and stayed stuck for longer than I care to admit. I was a self-proclaimed hermit for quite a while. I even steered clear of family and friends because I just didn’t want to talk about it anymore.

Then the “light dawned on marble head.” Put another way, it was a light-bulb moment and I got a good swift kick in the butt from a dear friend.

She helped me realize that if I didn’t move out of my own way, if I didn’t put on a brave face and meet the world again, I would be relegated to sitting alone in my own misery for as long as it took me to shake it off. That didn’t seem like a good long-term plan.

So, I started to read books, I reached out for a coach and mentor and I talked with other women who had been where I was and who moved on very successfully. I moved on, too — and I didn’t do it alone. That was the biggest lesson I learned and I share with you — you’re not supposed to do this stuff alone.

That’s why I’m on a mission to help women like you move past your divorce so you can discover yourself again and create the thriving life you deserve.

### **How do you know if you’re ready to move on?**

### **Are you saying to yourself ...**

- I wonder what my future has in store for me
- I'm ready to let go of the hate and the hurt
- I just want to feel like me again
- I'm sick and tired of feeling sick and tired
- It's time to invest in getting myself healthy and whole  
... and get back in touch with the real me

***I created a private Facebook group for women like us ...  
it's called***

***“Thrive after Divorce: Your Journey Begins”***

I believe that you can choose to live your life **by design**, rather than by default. And when we share our stories, our fears and our hopes with other women who understand we feel less isolated, less alone and more empowered.

This group is intended to provide emotional and practical support and help bring more clarity to those situations you share with us. We help each other to look at things differently, see new possibilities and move outside our comfort zone with more ease.

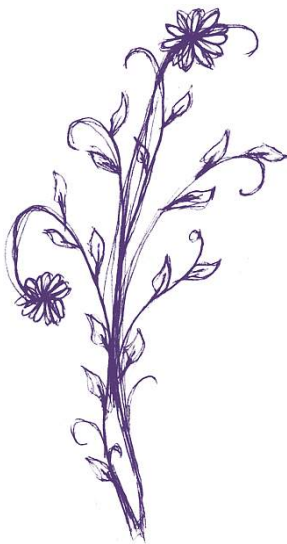


If you're ready to reach out and join a group of like-minded women so we can help you feel less isolated and alone, feel more connected and collaborative, and feel supported and strong we'd love to have you join us. Just click the link below and request to join.

***Thrive after Divorce: Your Journey Begins***



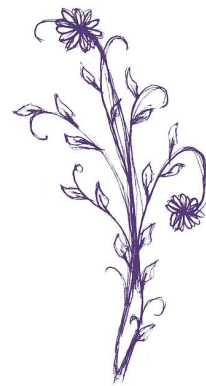
# *What my clients have to say ...*



*“When I met María, I was struggling with a lack of confidence and in a lot of emotional pain. I felt tethered to what I viewed as my embarrassing past. I had a history of failed relationships and was very confused about my life and how to move forward. María helped me to see that I had many strengths and unique qualities that could serve me to not only survive, but thrive. Through her gentle but powerful questioning and her unconditional support, I began to feel stronger and more confident than I had ever felt in my life. I let go of my stories of failure and began to see victories in them, instead. Because of this, all areas of my life improved...” ~~~Deb P.*

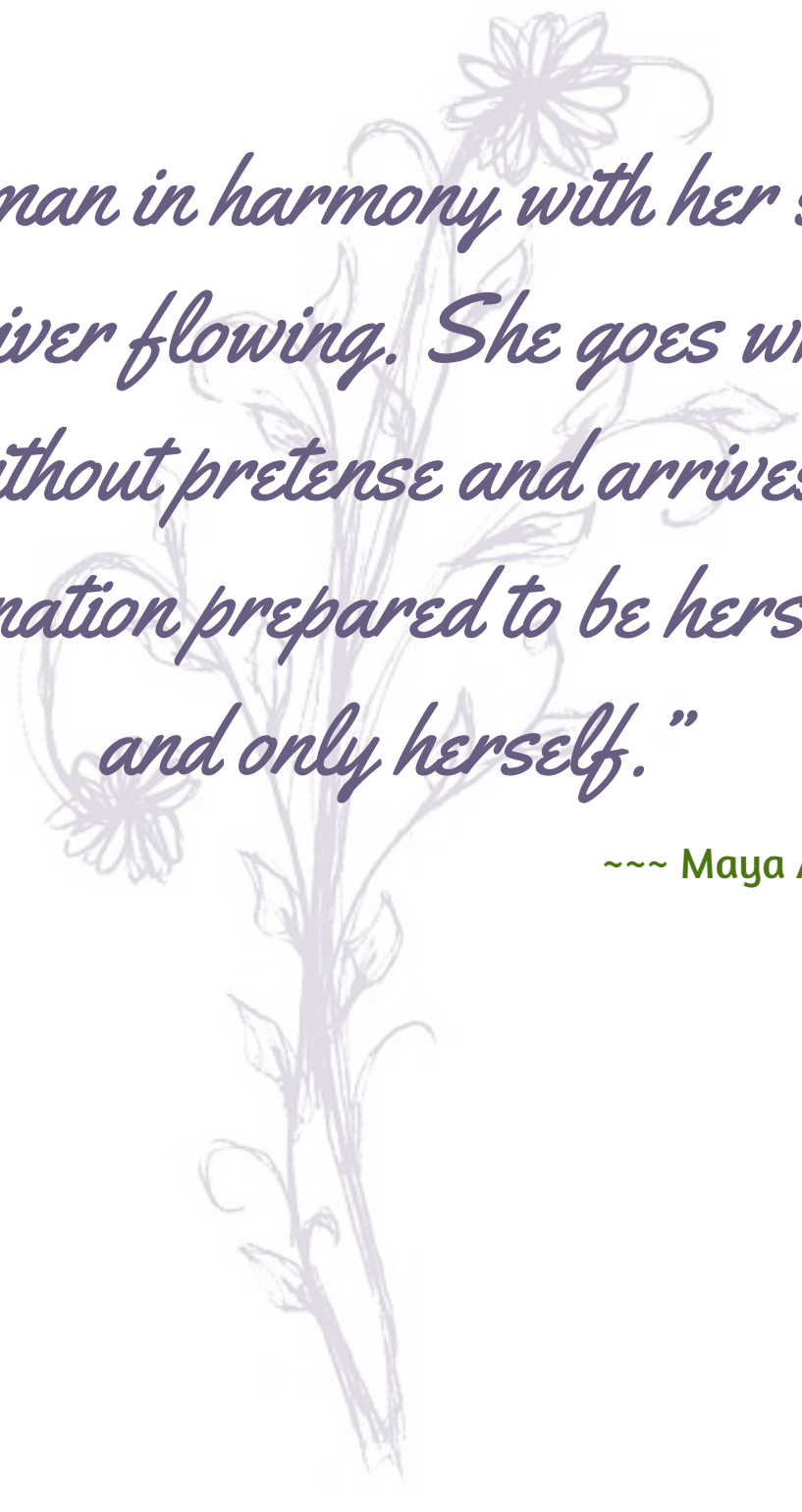
*“... María used thought-provoking techniques to help bring the bright light of awareness into hidden corners of resentment, fear and avoidance. Through plans developed with her guidance, I was able to bring healthy change to my family relationships ... There is now more joy in life.”*

*~~~~Maureen K*



*“... María has a very warm, calming and communicative style that is both comforting and inspiring. She is right there every step of the way ... helping to clarify your next step to be a better you. Through María's coaching, I was able to develop a plan to transition ... in a way that worked for me and my life circumstances ...” ~~~Z. Lee*





*"A woman in harmony with her spirit is like a river flowing. She goes where she will without pretense and arrives at her destination prepared to be herself ... and only herself."*

~~~ Maya Angelou

# About Maria Tomás-Keegan



Like many of you, I dance in many roles: daughter, sister, aunt, cousin, friend, colleague, entrepreneur and wife. Each one requires a certain ability to be present, open and available. Life teaches us those skills if we're willing to learn. As I look back, my life has been one long lesson — I've learned a lot and I love to share.

As a life transitions coach who specializes in helping professional women successfully recover from their divorce, I share my firsthand experience of how hard it can be. I have been where you are today — twice in fact.

My first marriage wasn't very long (5 years). We got married too young and for the wrong reasons (in hindsight) ... but still — I didn't deserve to be cheated on. I felt betrayed and humiliated. Numb. It kept me isolated for a long time.

The only thing that kept me sane was my career. I pretended at work that everything was okay and I created a tougher exterior than I really had — a suit of armor of sorts. It helped me manage through the day without falling apart. So I learned to put on my "mask" every time I left the apartment. I didn't let anyone in for a long time.

I learned later that I never dealt with the emotions I felt, or my grief.

After a couple of years living like this, I met my second husband. He swept me off my feet. Treated me like a Queen. I was sure I got it right this time. And it was right — for a while.

There were signals along the way but, I was determined not to be that woman who was divorced twice. So I worked hard at keeping this marriage together — to the point where I lost myself. I couldn't separate his opinions from my opinions — his thoughts from my thoughts. I started making choices to appease him, none of which were choices I would have made had I been listening to my own Inner Wisdom.

Again, I threw myself into my career to avoid the pain at home. My career flourished, while his languished. It played on his male ego that I was the "breadwinner."

I should have given up long before I did but pride wouldn't allow it. I stayed in the marriage 5 years longer than I should have (in hindsight — 14 years total).

I felt like damaged goods. There was verbal abuse, then physical. When he came at me with my favorite chef's knife, the fear paralyzed me. I've never screamed so loudly in my life. I guess I scared him too, because he dropped the knife and dropped to his knees.

I could deny it no longer — we were beyond repair. Why did I feel so devastated? As though that knife really did rip my guts out.

Déjà vu. The humiliation. The fear. The panic attacks. Feeling like my heart was going to burst, it was beating so hard. I finally called my best friend who is a nurse. With her stethoscope in hand, she assured me my heart was physically fine — but emotionally broken — again. She suggested I reach out for professional help.

Why? I got through the last one just fine! I'll just dust off that suit of armor and find my special mask that shows I'm okay — no one needs to know.

After a couple of weeks there were cracks in the armor. And, my mask showed my sadness instead of my stability. It was time.

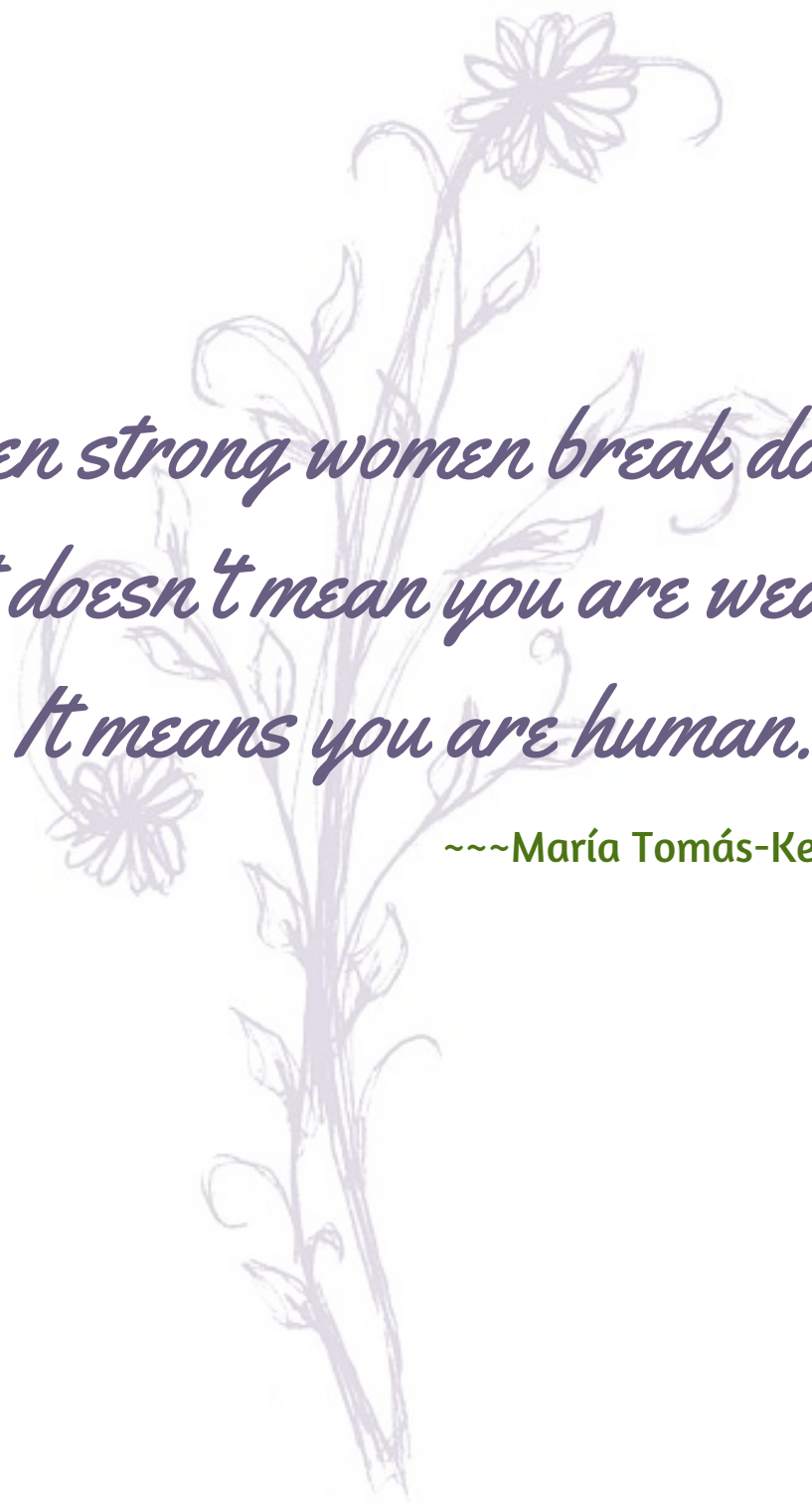
I had no idea how talking with someone who understands the grief and the pain could help so quickly. As my stories, choices and decisions came out, I saw the absurdity of my actions. By the way, some of these were old stories and wounds from my first marriage. What? How could that be? I already moved on long ago, right?

Some of the questions that came up for me were disturbing and heart-wrenching. How could I give up so much of me? Why did I think it was okay to sacrifice myself so fully for a relationship that was a one-way street? Twice! How blind could I be? And for so long! I beat myself up pretty good at first.

Then I learned how to change the way I looked at things. And I learned how to forgive myself. (This is one of the best lessons on the face of the planet. This is a lesson I still depend on today — for myself and my clients!)

Getting back to my most precious values, understanding who I am and becoming comfortable again in my own skin were the start of my transformation. It was also the ignition switch for my passion to help other women.

I've learned: we don't have to do this divorce stuff alone — we can learn to change the patterns and habits so we don't repeat the same old stories — we can stop going through the motions and live our lives by purposeful design.



*Even strong women break down.  
It doesn't mean you are weak.  
It means you are human.*

~~~María Tomás-Keegan

To learn more, please visit:

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