

# HR Magazine

The Business of People

50  
YEARS  
IN PRINT

What

## Coping with DIVORCE

Want

### A Mile in Their Shoes

On a classic rating scale of stressful life events, divorce consistently ranks No. 2—second only to the death of a spouse. Going through a divorce is a costly, time-consuming and emotionally draining experience.

“The process of getting divorced is an emotional roller coaster, and that impacts people’s ability to be mindful on the job,” says Bev Smallwood, a workplace psychologist from Hattiesburg, Miss. “When people are distracted, they make more mistakes and work more slowly. If they’re feeling depressed, their creativity will be down. If they’re feeling angry, they may project some of that anger onto co-workers or even customers.”

Be sure to also inquire about employees’ privacy preferences. “Some people don’t want to talk with HR about the divorce unless it’s absolutely necessary,” Smallwood says. “But there are others who are the opposite. If you don’t ask regularly how it’s going and whether they need anything else, they’ll feel like nobody cares. And that will ultimately impact their loyalty to the company.”