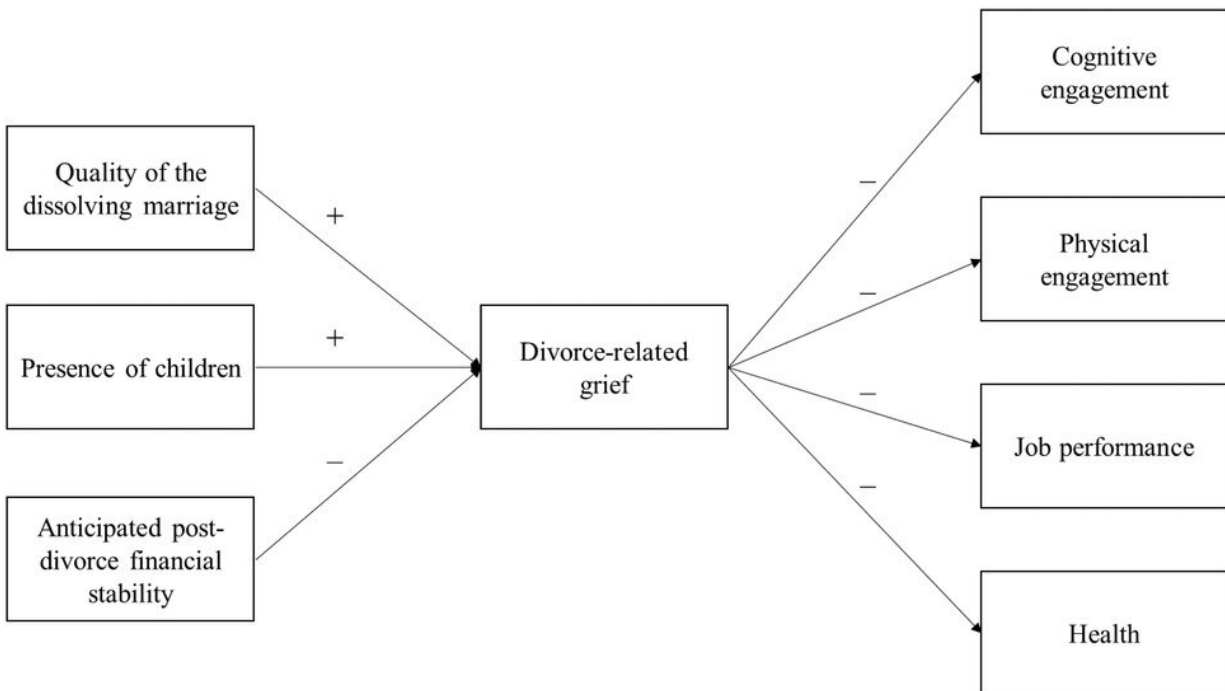


After the break-up: How divorcing affects individuals at work

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Hypothesized context-specific resource loss model for divorcing individuals.
 Credit: *Personnel Psychology* (2022). DOI: 10.1111/peps.12547

New University of Minnesota research suggests that while many in the midst of divorce struggle at work, others find renewed career motivation.

Until now, little research had examined how the effects of divorce may

spill over at work. Carlson School of Management Professors Connie Wanberg and Michelle Duffy, along with alum Borbala Csillag, '21 Ph.D., recently published their findings from two studies in *Personnel Psychology*. The first study surveyed more than 500 people who were married or cohabiting, going through a divorce, or had divorced within five years. The researchers found:

- On average, divorcing individuals reported lower health, poorer [job performance](#) and a more negative mood at work.
- Nearly 44% of those going through a divorce agreed or strongly agreed that being in the process of a divorce had a negative impact on their work.
- Nearly 39% of those going through a divorce agreed or strongly agreed that divorcing had a positive impact on their work.

"We found people can have vastly different experiences with divorce and it's not all negative," said Wanberg. "Some shared how they felt more distracted at work or even needed to take a break to cry. Others shared that their divorce removed a large stress burden from their lives and they had more energy to tackle career goals."

In the second study, researchers examined how the extent of divorce-related grief impacted outcomes at work. After a yearlong survey of more than 200 participants who were divorcing and working full-time, the researchers found:

- The end of a higher-quality marriage and the expectation of less financial stability post-divorce were both tied to [negative impacts](#) at work.
- Parents going through divorce experienced less grief and reported fewer negative impacts at work than those divorcing without children.
- Engagement at work, job performance and health improved from

when they were in the divorce process to a year later.

"There can sometimes be a narrative that divorced people have an innate characteristic that leads to bad performance whether it be in relationships or work," said Duffy. "Our research pushes back on that because it shows over time people improved."

The researchers suggest understanding the varying impacts of divorce will help managers and human resource professionals better support staff experiencing a [divorce](#). This will help avoid productivity loss as well as recognize often misunderstood grief responses such as a shorter temper or loss of concentration.

"It's important to have open communication about what would best suit the divorcing employee's needs whether it be offering flexible work options, more resources or even career development opportunities," said Wanberg. "It shows compassion and may offer reassurance during their time of transition."

More information: Connie R. Wanberg et al, After the break-up: How divorcing affects individuals at work, *Personnel Psychology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/peps.12547](#)

Provided by University of Minnesota

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