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New York Divorce and Family Law Blog

[Older Couples Divorcing More](#)

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There seems to be a trend among couples in long term marriage, with grown or emancipated children, getting divorced. In fact, there are reports that rate of divorce is increasing the fastest among this segment of the population. Al and Tipper Gore's surprise announcement last week that they were ending their 40 year marriage is further evidence of that trend.

The appearance of this trend begs the inevitable question why are couples, who have been together for so long divorcing. As detailed in this [online debate](#), there are many possible explanations.

I think, however, Deidre Bair, in her New York Times op-ed piece, [The Forty Year Itch](#), has it right:

"People change and forget to tell each other," Lillian Hellman said. Marriage is a process; some couples grow together and some drift apart. For the couples that drift apart, there comes a point, where no matter how comfortably situated they are, how lovely their home and successful their children, they divorce because they cannot go on living in the same old rut with the same old person.

With children grown and out of the house, unencumbered by the costs of maintaining a household or the expense of raising children and then financing their education, couples may want to take control of their lives. Ms. Bar, from her interviews with men and women who divorced, and ended long term marriages, found that:

Women had grown tired of taking care of house, husband and grown children; men were tired of working to support wives who they felt did not appreciate them and children who did not respect them. Women and men alike wanted time to find out who they were.

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Given that people are living longer, it makes some sense that some couples, after being “responsible” for their entirety of their married and working lives, desire some “me” time for their retirement during their golden years. Not surprisingly, a common theme from Mrs. Bar’s interviews was, “It’s my time and if I don’t take it now, I never will.”