

April 15, 2010



## PULSE

Looking to split from your husband? Now there's a chic party scene that will help you do it in style

Cheers to our separations! Heather Kadish (left), who is currently going through a divorce, gets some tips from divorcee Dana Haddad.

# 'DIVORCE IS SO DIVINE!'

By WENDY STRAKER HAUSER

**O**N Tuesday evening, a flock of well-coiffed women in stilettos and wrap dresses settled inside a five-story townhouse in Chelsea, sipping cocktails with names like "Alimony" and "Settlement."

Instead of enjoying a romantic night out, these ladies had another, more sinister thought on their minds: divorce. Some women had already been through it. Others were just embarking on it. And the rest? They were just curious about what it would feel like to finally be free from the old ball and chain.

Like Stacey, a 41-year-old from the Upper East Side with kids ages 8 and 6, who didn't give her last name — because she didn't want her husband to know she was there.

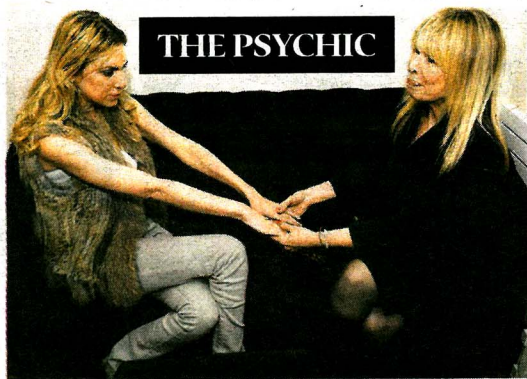
"When I met my husband, he made \$2 million a year. We had five cars, we used to go to Palm Beach, we used to go to London, we used to go to the Hamptons," she says. "Then one day he woke up and decided he didn't want to go back to work. Now my father pays the rent, my father pays for health insurance, my father pays for our kids to go to camp — it's not OK."

Some women at the gathering were new moms, now planning their divorces in the same dogged manner they once exerted to get their kids into a top preschool.

"I don't know anyone who is happily married," says Rebecca, 36, who also asked that her last name not be printed because her husband had no idea she was there.

Welcome to the latest in unusual NYC gatherings — Life After Divorce, an event designed to help women cope when "I Do" turns into "I Don't Ever Want To See You Again." Tuesday's event, which cost \$40 and is reportedly the first of its kind, included seven experts — a matchmaker, a nutritionist, a psychic, a makeup artist, a life coach, a yoga instructor and a divorce lawyer — all on hand to advise the newly and soon-to-be divorced on how to embrace the next stage of their lives with dignity. See **DIVORCE**, Page 62

## THE PSYCHIC



Psychic Roxanne Usleman (right) looks into the future for single Samantha Ox, who worries about finding Mr. Right.

## THE MAKEUP ARTIST



Who says talk of divorce can't be fun? Guest Gizelle Martezen puts her best face forward at the Life After Divorce event.

## THE MATCHMAKER



Janis Spindel (left) says potential divorcees wonder if they can find someone else after they leave their husbands.

# Separation elation

### DIVORCE, from Page 61

The event is the brainchild of Lyss Stern, founder of luxury lifestyle company Divalyssious Moms, which typically hosts more lighthearted "Mommy and Me" celebrations. "I've been hearing too many horror stories from moms who've been blindsided by their husbands," says Stern, 35, a married mother of two.

"Divorce is happening everywhere. And as women, we need to come together and talk about it."

**"It wasn't long ago that everyone here was bemoaning the fact that we didn't have a husband. Now we sit around a cocktail table bemoaning the fact that we do."**

— JENNIFER, UPPER EAST SIDE MOM

New York women used to congregate for Tupperware parties; later they thronged to Botox bashes. But 2010 ushers in the era of the divorce-planning parties, where you can eat, drink, be merry — and learn how to plot your marital escape. While some credit the economic crisis for a surge in divorce seeking, others say the recent sex scandals of Tiger Woods, Jesse James and Tiki Barber have Manhattan women suddenly second-guess-

ing their spouses.

Psychic Roxanne Usleman, who attended the event, says she's seen a significant increase in the number of women who come to her to learn if their husbands are cheating.

"They bring me pictures of their spouse and they want to know details. Who the woman is, if there is more than one," she says.

Stern rounded up the panel of experts and convinced luxury real estate developers Michael Bolla and Michael Daniel, co-owners of the 10,000-square-foot Chelsea Mansion, to provide the venue for the event. She hopes to make the party a regular series.

"I wanted the night to be helpful but also fun," says Stern. "I knew the divorce lawyer would give solid legal advice; adding the psychic was my way of having a little fun. The same thing with the makeup artist — even women contemplating divorce deserve to have a little fun."

The 50 women who attended the event seemed to agree it was a fabulous night out.

"We might meet under the guise that we are going to talk about other things," says Jennifer, a 32-year-old Upper East Side mom who has been separated from her husband for the past year and didn't want her last name printed for the sake of her kids.

"But inevitably, after we are done discussing the new shoe styles for the season, the conversation turns to our husbands, what they've done, and what they haven't done. And if it's not a question of infidelity, then it comes



Haylene Seidman(5)

## THE DIVORCE LAWYER



Divorced life coach Maria Caso (above left) dispenses advice to a pair of interested ladies, while divorce lawyer Peter Morris holds the attention of guest Stephanie Kaster.

down to two things: money and thoughtlessness.

"It wasn't long ago that everyone here was bemoaning the fact that we didn't have a husband. Now we sit around a cocktail table bemoaning the fact that we do."

"My finances are a huge issue," admits Catherine, a 34-year-old who, after five years of marriage, has just obtained legal counsel and been instructed by her lawyer to keep her name out of the press.

"It was something I always left in my husband's hands — and it turns out he wasn't very good at it. I feel like I was sold a bill of goods. I don't need to be in this situation where I am totally strapped. If we couldn't afford this lifestyle, then I feel like I should have been told that. I could have lived on First Avenue."

"Divorce in this city is like a contagious disease," adds matchmaker Janis Spindel. "A lot

of married women come up to me and say things like, 'If I were to be single, who would you have for me?' Women want to see what their stock is like before they end a marriage. No one wants to leave for an empty bed."

And yet the evening was a disconcerting one for Samantha Ox, a single woman in her mid-30s who attended the event to support a friend going through a divorce.

"I want to get married and have kids," says Ox. "But seeing how many people are getting divorced, it's hard to have faith that I will meet my Prince Charming."

Still, for others — women like Julie Cohen, 35, who is already divorced — events like this are inspiring.

"We live in a world where everybody acts like they have the model marriage and where people push their strollers around as if they have the perfect home," she says.

"But the minute someone says 'divorce,' it's like a domino effect. All of a sudden everyone is getting a divorce. This party is like AA for the pre-divorcees, but it's something that needs to be talked about."