Divorcees fight the grip of the **Ex-Wife Syndrome**

By Patti Thorn
Scripps Howard Service

Five years after her divorce, the woman was tied to her ex-husband by anger as consuming as any bond of love. She downgraded her former mate, even while out with other men. When he nitpicked about her housekeeping abilities, she seamed all day.

“He called daily to check on the kids, and they’d argue and fight,” said Sandra Kahn, author of “The Ex-Wife Syndrome” (Random House, 248 pages, $18.95). “Not one conversation could they have that would not end in an argument.”

He held a key to her house, a lock on her ability to get on with her life.

She was suffering, said Ms. Kahn, from the ex-wife syndrome.

And she’s not alone. Women may divide the furniture with their spouses, split custody of the kids, change the phone number. Yet many remain so attached to their ex-husbands they might as well still be married. They’re legally divorced, but emotionally and psychologically they’re not.

Women may divide the furniture with their spouses, split custody of the kids, change the phone number. Yet many remain so attached to their ex-husbands they might as well still be married. They’re legally divorced, but emotionally and psychologically they’re not.

**Report**

Ms. Kahn recalls one woman who called her ex-husband through job losses and bad luck, eventually sacrificing a few for him. “They thought that’s the way it has to be,” said Ms. Kahn. “If you went and made a mistake in your marriage, this was part of it, have a man like a chain around your ankle forever.”

Others corroborate her findings. Bryan Brook, a Denver clinical social worker and author of “Design Your Love Life,” guesses 30 percent of divorced women suffer an unhealthy attachment to ex-mates. “Just because a person receives a paper in the mail saying the divorce is final,” he said. “Doesn’t necessarily change an unhealthy dependency.”

Their dependency takes many forms.

One woman said her ex-husband was so consumed with bitterness toward her former husband that she jeopardized her relationship with her children. She fought with everybody, said Ms. Kahn. Anger is a common emotional tie that keeps a woman unwittingly bound to her ex. So are guilt, love, insecurity. Some women still consult their ex-husbands on financial decisions. In many cases, the ex retains a key to the woman’s house.

**Are you bound to ex-spouse by a sexual jealousy? A quiz**

By Scripps Howard Service

How do you respond emotionally to the following situations that can involve an ex-spouse?

1. Do you seek out information about your ex?
2. Are you upset when they spend time with your ex?
3. Do you hate the fact your ex has remarried?
4. Are you upset that his ex looks good?
5. Do you feel your children love your ex more than you?
6. Are you upset when they...

**Source:** “The Ex-Wife Syndrome,” Sandra S. Kahn.