

TDS Rose Stokes

[00:00:00] **Samantha Baines:** Right. Rose Stokes joins me for this episode of The Divorce Social. I followed her on Twitter and she shares some brilliant articles that she writes about body positivity, leaving difficult relationships. As you also recently did a campaign to get shops and pharmacies to lower the cost of the morning after pill, which has been so amazing.

[00:00:21] And some shops have listened to her and they've done it and she's still campaigning on others. So she's a brilliant activist and kind of spoke person as well. So it was lovely to talk to her. She's very pregnant. So I definitely appreciate the time she took. She did warn me that she might burp throughout because apparently that's one of her pregnancy symptoms.

[00:00:42] I hope she doesn't mind me saying that. , But we also talk about relationships, her parent's divorce and how that has affected her experience of relationships now, and her ideas about marriage, which is a really interesting one. So enjoy[00:01:00]

[00:01:00] I am joined by Rose Stokes, freelance writer. Hello, Rose. Welcome to The Divorce Social.

[00:01:06] **Rose Stokes:** Hi, thank you for having me.

[00:01:07] **Samantha Baines:** You're so welcome. Now how does that feel when I say welcome to The Divorce Social?

[00:01:12] **Rose Stokes:** It's quite funny because I have never been divorced, or married, [laughs] but ironically I'm recently engaged.[Laughs] So what I said to my boyfriend this morning, he was like, 'What you've got on for the day?' I was like, 'I'm doing a podcast'. He said, 'Oh, cool! What's it called?' And I was like, 'The Divorce Podcast'. He was like, 'What?' [laughs] 'So is there something that we should talk about?' I was like, 'No no no'. [laughs]

[00:01:38] Although I do have experience of divorce in that my parents are divorced. So I suppose I have a flavour of the whole divorce experience, but yeah, no. Funny enough, when you first got in contact, I was like, it was maybe like a few days after I got engaged and I thought it was quite funny.

[00:01:54] **Samantha Baines:** Sorry for the timing.

[00:01:56] **Rose Stokes:** Oh no! Not even slightly!

[00:01:58] **Samantha Baines:** How bad timing was that? Congratulations![Laughs]

[00:01:59] **Rose Stokes:** [00:02:00] Good, I'm probably the least romantic person, but, I think divorce is such an important thing to think about when you get engaged [laughs] As in, I think we're both like, my partner's parents are divorced as well.

[00:02:11] I think neither of us ever saw ourselves as getting married because we were both quite cynical about the idea. So we're very like, we don't mind talking [about it], but I mean, it's important to recognise that it might end in divorce, hopefully not, but we're sort of quite comfortable talking about like divorce as an idea, I guess, because of our own sort of personal experiences with it.

[00:02:33] **Samantha Baines:** That's really good because I remember when I went into my marriage, I didn't consider divorce or like anything to do with it. And actually I interviewed the comedian, Steve Hofstetter recently, and he said, 'Don't marry someone you wouldn't be happy to divorce with and go through that process with.' And I think that's good advice.

[00:02:54] **Rose Stokes:** Yeah. I think that is true. Like, I think like at the end of the day, like we [00:03:00] hope, right? We hope that we won't need to, but we have had some difficult conversations to establish where we stand on certain things in the event of, you know, things breaking down in the future. Obviously we don't want that to happen.

[00:03:12] We're having a child together. Like we really, you know, our intention is for things to go well, but I think it's a very strange experience planning a wedding or, not a wedding, we're getting a civil partnership, but when you've never really, marriage has never been on the cards for you. Like even the engagement was very, very muted.

[00:03:30] [laughs] you know, we'd been talking about it for a long time. We've talked about logistical sides we've discussed our fears around it. We both have a lot [of fears]. So for us, it's more of a like practical decision, but one that we're like trying to look into the hard parts of, and not pretend that they don't exist because we have seen, you know, how things can unravel later and the difficulty is particularly for the children. So for us, yeah. It's funny. Cause I just, I, you know, people are like, 'Oh, you know, how are you going to do this?' And I'm like, 'I don't know!' Like, probably like, 'Are you [00:04:00] going to wear this? Are you going to have bridesmaids? Are you going to have errhm' I don't know! [Laughs] Because I've never thought about it. I've never, it's not something I've ever seen in my future. So, [I'm] possibly the most cynical bride to be, [laughs]. But yeah, I think it's important to consider divorce when making a commitment of that level. Like, you know, you have to, I think "deromanticise" a little bit.

[00:04:22] **Samantha Baines:** I think that's a really healthy way to go into a marriage, but that's funny because I always thought about marriage in my future.

[00:04:30] And then in some ways, I was pressuring myself to get married because that was always in my plan. So how does it feel for you? Is it quite nice that you didn't have that in your plan? So you can respond to it in a more present way?

[00:04:47] **Rose Stokes:** It's a more, it's unexpected. And it was a nice, it was a very nice thing. Like we were both like, 'Oh, this is nice that we've decided that we want to do this!' But we also both really lent towards the idea of having a civil partnership rather than a marriage.

[00:04:59] I [00:05:00] think for me, like, I always knew I wanted to have a baby and that was more of a priority. And we find out I was pregnant before we got engaged.

[00:05:08] **Samantha Baines:** Congratulations by the way.

[00:05:10] **Rose Stokes:** Thank you! And what I did find quite funny and strange, and maybe like, we didn't tell anyone we got engaged for a while because we were both just sort of digesting it. Because it had come really out of the blue.

[00:05:22] **Samantha Baines:** As long as he didn't say it, like during sex or something. It's like, it might have been elsewhere. It was just a calm convo

[00:05:30] **Rose Stokes:** Yeahh. And then, and then I got told off from friends and family members for my muted delivery of the news, because I was like, 'Oh, by the way, we're engaged.' And everyone was like, 'What?' [Laughs], 'And how did he do it?' And what's your ring like?' And all this sort of stuff. And I was like, 'Oh, yeah!'. And then, but I think to us, it was really surprising because it came like maybe two months after we had announced our pregnancy and to us, the pregnancy was the big news.

[00:05:54] Like we were like, 'That's huge!', and like, obviously people were really happy and reacted very [00:06:00] positively. But there was this almost other level and dimension to saying we're engaged that I hadn't anticipated. For me the baby's the big commitment. Like for me, that baby's the big news. For me the sort of the expectation the romance everyone else had. And the sort of, I think I was the sort of imperfect bride to be because I was quite pragmatic about it or something. And I think a lot of people were like, 'Wait, this is so exciting!'. 'And this is so nice', and I was like, 'Yeah, yeah, no, it's exciting!' But I almost think my reaction wasn't quite as like big as people expect it to be. And like, I don't think that that detracts in any way, from the way that I feel about him or he feels about me. I just think that maybe we approach it in a much more sort of like, you know, realistic way.

[00:06:43] **Samantha Baines:** And so you described yourself there as the imperfect bride to be.

[00:06:48] **Rose Stokes:** [laughs]

[00:06:48] **Samantha Baines:** why are you imperfect? Why is this not a good way to approach marriage?

[00:06:53] **Rose Stokes:** Oh, I mean, okay. Sorry. I think it is a good way to approach my rage. Like I personally think, this is the [00:07:00] way that I think all big decisions should like, I don't want to steer away from shit? I think, I don't judge anyone for the way that they get engaged. And I am really happy for everyone that sort of, you know, has their own journey with it. But for me, I guess only in the sense that there is a, societal image and idea of what a bride to be looks like. And how they react and how they feel and all their excitement and that they've had this, like, you know, burning desire their whole life to walk down the aisle to wear a white dress, to do all of this sort of stuff. I don't really feel any of that. And so maybe there's a disconnect between why I want to get married, which I'm very clear on. And the way that people would expect me to be talking about it, if that makes sense.

[00:07:44] **Samantha Baines:** So you feel imperfect sort of in society's eyes rather than in your mind.

[00:07:49] **Rose Stokes:** Yeah, like I think some people would have liked me to be more, like mushy about it or. And obviously, and also I am! I am privately also, I feel a lot of those things, [00:08:00] but I think, I've never been one for like tradition for tradition's sake. But I definitely felt a little bit like I wasn't quite fitting an expected ideal that people had. But yeah, for us, it was a more personal thing I think. And I was surprised at how much was expected of me when I shared the news.

[00:08:18] **Samantha Baines:** Even though you're talking about getting engaged, I feel a lot of, I can relate to a lot of what you were saying about getting divorced in that people thought I should react to my divorce in a certain way and were sort of shocked when I didn't.

[00:08:35] So, you know, I think they thought I should be crying on the floor all the time. And obviously I was doing that a certain moment, but actually I felt quite good about it initially because you know, the decision had finally been made and I sort of felt this like freedom and excitement for the future. And I think people wanted something else from me and, imagined this kind of [00:09:00] stereotype of the divorced woman. And it sounds like people imagined from you a stereotype of the engaged woman. So it's just interesting. That happens at both ends.

[00:09:10] **Rose Stokes:** Interesting mirroring.

[00:09:12] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah.

[00:09:12] **Rose Stokes:** Yeah mean, you have to read it, but Helen Dawn's book *Get Divorced, Be Happy*. Like, I definitely know that the, I even saw it with my own parents like I remember when my parents got divorced, my mum got this sort of new lease of life, partially because my understanding of their divorce came later. As in they hid a lot, it was all behind the scenes. So for me, when I was sort of processing it, they had done a lot of the emotional sort of side of things. And I remember my mum was really energised. Like, you know, we lived together. I remember seeing like a whole new side of her and I have definitely felt that way in pretty much every breakup I've ever had in my life as well because, you know, it takes so much emotional energy to be in a relationship that's not working. And you get so used to being in that state that you don't even [00:10:00] notice that you're working. And I remember like when I broke up with my last big ex, which was not a good relationship to put it lightly. I remember the first night I slept, I hadn't slept for months. And the first night after we broke up, I slept for 10 hours without waking up. And it was the first, you know, there was like this whole body release of like, 'Oh my God, I don't have to try anymore!'. Like, I don't have to be sort of, you know, like you're sitting in a boat where there's just like holes popping up everywhere and you're like, 'Put something there, Put something there, Put something there.' Like trying to like stop yourself from sinking. And when you just say, 'Fuck it I'm going to sink!' You actually kind of float. It's almost like you sort of suddenly you're like, you know, actually, the relief is huge. And so I can totally understand that. Like, and I think that is a very normal, in fact, reaction to being a positive

decision, which I think in a lot of cases in my personal view on divorce, having, you know, sat in the [00:11:00] sort of spectator seat is that it can be a really positive thing. It doesn't have to be a sad thing. And I feel this way about breakups as well. I remember, you know, people always commiserate breakups. So if someone says, oh, you know, I've broken up with my boyfriend. I always found it really sad that no one ever says, 'Congrats!' On making a decision that, I mean, assuming that you're not the injured party, obviously like, or that, you know, say that it was your choice or your decision, that's a really empowering decision to make for yourself, like to choose something else. Something more, to have faith that you could be happier. I think that is some really big positive vote in confidence in yourself. And I think that we should be able to celebrate that rather than just like pouring commiserations on people who might actually be like, 'I actually don't feel sad, you know?' And yeah, there's definitely a lot to be learned from that. Like, I certainly felt a really [00:12:00] massive release of pressure on leaving my ex and I mean, I was just a happier person in so many ways. So then to feel like I should be grieving or, performing grief, I think it's unfair what we do to people by having expectations on them in terms of how they feel.

[00:12:18] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah, definitely. And it's funny. Because when I said, 'Congratulations!' To you earlier for your pregnancy. It did remind me that you and we've spoken about it before, and we have had the lovely Helen Thorne on the podcast, but yeah, we don't say congratulations to people when people are getting divorced or have left a difficult relationship.

[00:12:37] And there is like, in some ways it's harder than getting engaged.

[00:12:42] **Rose Stokes:** Oh yeah.

[00:12:43] **Samantha Baines:** Not in some, I was going to say in some ways, but no, it just is harder getting engaged. And I do think it's funny. I mean, obviously. I'm very pleased for you that you are engaged in having a baby,

[00:12:53] **Rose Stokes:** Thank you [laughs]

[00:12:54] **Samantha Baines:** But in some ways, getting engaged, is you know, there's two of you in that [00:13:00] decision and you have to get to a certain place in your life to do it. And getting pregnant is, you know, in some respects also out of your hands because the biology has to do its thing, as well as you kind of helping it along. But divorce is very much, you know, a lot of the time, not out of your hands, unless it's a complete shock to you, but then you still, even if it is a complete shock, you still then have to go through the process of actually doing it and all the paperwork. So actually divorce is the one sort of life thing that you have the most control over, even if not initially. So it is funny that we don't say, 'Congratulations for that!'. When we say congratulations for the other things that are more sort of, I don't know, biological, or...

[00:13:48] **Rose Stokes:** And also socially accepted, like in terms of the scripts that we give to women particularly about, you know, the way that their lives should look like. I personally actually will say that [00:14:00] getting engaged was quite a hard decision for both of us, but

purely from the perspective of really owning the decision and we didn't want to look beyond the potential difficulties that that decision might make. I think. What I see is a lot of people maybe getting engaged and getting carried away with the romantic side of things. And then sort of forgetting about the practical side. Like I think for us, I say it was difficult. I don't mean because I didn't want it. I mean, because we really wanted to make sure that we were making the decision for the right reasons. And we wanted to, like, there was a conversation that went on for multiple months, the process of being more considerate or more considered in making the engagement decision, reflects our appreciation of that, that we wanted to be mindful that our whole bodies and minds were in alignment with the decision. That this is what we wanted to do that it wasn't just because, you know, we're having a baby or because everyone expects that of you or because of, you know, we wanted to be really, really sure. So I do in that respect, feel more confident about us [00:15:00] because we've had a lot of the difficult conversations or like we've at least introduced the difficult ideas and both come to the conclusion that yes, in spite of this. And, you know, any potential things that could go wrong, we still want to do it. So I feel like that for me, is in a way more romantic, but again, I'm, I sort of, I've realised I'm a bit atypical and "atraditonal", in that respect

[00:15:22] **Samantha Baines:** I wish I entered into my engagement. Like, it sounds like you are, because I think I was just like, , 'Yes, finally, I've got the ring, let's get married!' And I didn't sort of think through the ramifications of getting married. And we have talked before on the podcast about the fact that we feel like all, a lot of divorced people that I've spoken to feel like that everyone getting engaged should have like a session on divorce as part of the like marriage process, because you know, I wish I knew, I don't think it would have necessarily changed my decision, but I wish I knew some [00:16:00] of the things about divorce that I know now when I entered into it

[00:16:03] **Rose Stokes:** I think, I mean, I suppose having divorced parents is almost like a session on like divorce, as in, because both of us have divorced parents and remarried and again, divorced parents. Like we, were both quite clued up on it, I suppose. And there's a part of your brain that just wants to go, no, just be romantic and stop talking about hard stuff. Because this is all really nice and why you making it difficult? And I, and especially because I'm pregnant and, you know, carrying this child, like some of it, sometimes I do feel upset by even the notion of talking about separation when we're growing a child together, like is quite upsetting, but, I'm glad that we're doing it because it's enabling me to feel like we're really entering into this massive commitment with our eyes, open, understanding everything that we're agreeing to. And we still want to do it . This is the thing, right? So for me, I'm quite a practical, pragmatic person in many ways. And I guess for me, that is my reassurance. And again, you know, understanding that maybe it [00:17:00] won't work, but promising each other more than anything that we will respect each other in whatever process comes along and that we will always try and listen to the other person, I think is the, you know, we're changing our vows. Again, they're going to be very different to like what you'd imagine, but for us, it's like, you know, ' I will always try and meet you where you are and hear what you're saying. I will always try and support you in getting what you want.' And I hope that that's something that we 'll manage to continue.

[00:17:26] **Samantha Baines:** So I wanted to ask you how your cause you've mentioned your parents divorced and that kind of informing this decision. You know, and discussing when you got engaged, how do you think your parents' divorce affected you and what did they do well? Because I know a lot of parents who are getting divorced, listen to the podcast.

[00:17:48] **Rose Stokes:** So I think there's two, there's two separate parts. So for me, I was 16, which means that I was at the stage in my life where I was sort of starting to think about [00:18:00] relationships and what they were like, but I have not noticed that my parents' relationship was not what you might expect to healthy marriage to look like. So for me, the biggest difficulty or the biggest challenge was that it was a complete shock. I had no idea. That it was happening. And when they announced it, they announced it on, it was around their 30th wedding anniversary. And they sort of sat us all down, me and my brothers and I was the youngest and they had had this idea that they would wait until we got to a certain age or like when they were hoping that we could wait until we'd all left school. But for various reasons they pushed until I was 16 and I was just floored by it. It had just never crossed my mind that there was anything wrong. Because my parents didn't argue. They didn't have blowout raws, you know, I'd never see them touching each other really, but I didn't know that that was a thing that parents did because. that was you know, my [00:19:00] blueprint for relationships as my parents, I had no other information to enable me to look in a critical manner, the way that they were together. My brothers were older though. And they were both sort of more like, 'Oh yeah, okay. Not a surprise.' So for me, the biggest difficulty or the biggest hurdle, which has followed me around a bit since, and is something that I've, I've worked on a lot in therapy was this idea that things can go wrong and you have no idea. That, that like, that there's this sort of unexpected element for me, because my perception of it was that everything was great on Saturday and on Sunday, my whole world blew apart. And obviously that's all what happened. Like it was years in the making. So from my perspective, That was the biggest challenge. And it's definitely because it was such a formative time in terms of my relationships. It's definitely something I then carried into relationships that I had this intense fear that one day someone could just wake up and say, I don't want to be with you anymore. Which was a very juvenile understanding of a very [00:20:00] complex breakdown of a marriage. Right? And that's something that I've had to try and unlearn as I got older, that sort of fear of things ending without warning. It's not really related, I mean, obviously it is related to the, to the divorce element, but you know, it could have been the same, had the news been about something else, like, you know, I, for me, it was the shock value. What my parents did fantastically well is that they both really respected each other. They really liked each other. They were very much like, you know, 'We're friends'. I think they said to us at the time, you know, 'We feel more like brother and sister'. Which in hindsight it's a bit weird, but, but, but you know, like it was, um, that was their sort of trying to explain how the relationship had changed and they held that respect for each other the whole way through, they kept this and it took me, obviously, as you get older, you start to appreciate your parents more when you start. Understanding the difficulties that they went through. Like one thing that I've definitely come to think is really amazing [00:21:00] is the fact that they never ever disclosed the ins and outs of what went down. And when I have asked my mum in the past, Um, she said, 'That's not any of your business, like that's between me and your father.' 'You have a relationship with your father. I have a relationship with your father. Like

they're separate things.' And I, and I don't want anything, like, she doesn't want anything that she went through to color my opinion of my father and vice versa. So they've kept this sort of real sacred, like bond of never really disclosing to us, um, the ins and outs of their relationship, which I think actually as an adult, I now think is very helpful because I've seen examples where that hasn't been the case and where I have friends whose parents might have, you know, involved them. There might, might've been tug of war. There might have been a sort of emotional. Bargaining between, 'Oh oh, which one of my parents is the bad one?' And all of that sort of stuff. Like we didn't have any of that. And I [00:22:00] feel very grateful and because of that, my parents stayed friends like, and, you know, they'd check in with each other. And, you know, I remember at my graduation, my dad was there with his new wife. My mum was there. I think with her partner, my grandfather was there, who my mom stayed in contact with until he was, until he died, then my brothers and whatever. And I remember one of my tutors being like, wow, your family is pretty cool. Um, I will caveat that by saying that. Because they are pragmatic. I think you'll probably understand a bit more about me from [laughs] the fact that they had taken quite a long time to arrive at this decision. There was no based on what I know massively injured party, and that makes this whole thing much easier. I think when, when someone's in pain, it clouds your judgment. People maybe want to get revenge and stuff. There was just none of that. So, we're very lucky in a way it was a textbook. Like what, how, how well could a divorce go? It's not to say that it didn't affect [00:23:00] me, but I have so much respect, and I'm so grateful to my parents for the way that they did it and the respect that they showed each other and how highly they spoke of each other throughout the whole thing I think was really, and, and that's not to say I have no idea what the conversations that they had with their friends or behind that each other's back, or maybe they had like, you know, maybe it was completely different that, but from my perspective, my opinion of either of my parents was never clouded by the other one's judgment. So that was really, I really appreciate that.

[00:23:28] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah. I mean, obviously it takes two to tango, so some people would love that and the other party doesn't want to get involved in that, but it sounds like, you know, both of them made this decision to be really respectful. And I know you said you don't know what they could have done differently about that surprise factor for you, but do you think, you know, did they sit down with you and say, this is taken, you know, we've been thinking about this for a long time and discussing it and ?

[00:23:57] **Rose Stokes:** Yeah, but by the point of which we were [00:24:00] introduced to the conversation, it was the decision was made. It was like, 'We've actually initiated the Decree Nisi' or whatever your mom's looking at house like, or my mum then very quickly looked at houses. Like it was very like, 'Decision was made'. It's not open for discussion, obviously it's none of my business anyway, but as a teenager, maybe I would have felt like it was, so there are good sides and bad sides to that. One is it wasn't messy. They told us in August and my mum and I moved out in November and we moved down the road. And then there was the sort of two years of me living down the road and we had to change the way that I interacted with my dad. Obviously I had to go and see him and visit him or whatever, but, um, it was clean is the way I would describe it. But obviously sometimes I think maybe had I been able to, I don't know, it's a very difficult, because I don't know if I was emotionally mature enough to have been able to look at them as individuals, rather than my parents, and to have enough self-awareness to be

able to [00:25:00] remove myself from, from what they were going through. But I guess maybe there is benefit in having a sort of, you know, in the way that for them, the slow, realised sort of creeping realisation that this was, you know, and the slow conversations they had made. It meant that by the time it came, it was a lot easier for both of them. Maybe that could have benefited me. But then maybe I would have felt too involved in something that wasn't really any of my business. So it's, it's, it's a really difficult one to strike and I, and I don't envy people and I think you're completely right. There are many people that would love to have, you know, a divorce like that. And I don't want to show off about my parents' divorce.

[00:25:38] **Samantha Baines:** That is a weird thing to say, please do, if you feel like you want to please do!

[00:25:42] **Rose Stokes:** No because I'm sure that they, you know, no one's perfect. And they were, they were they were sort of working it out as they went along.

[00:25:48] **Samantha Baines:** No, but it is, it is nice to hear from a child's perspective, a divorce that didn't sort of damage unirrevocably

[00:25:57] **Rose Stokes:** Yeah. I mean, there's this whole sort of fear of [00:26:00] relationships ending thing was a big thing that I had to deal with, I still battle with sometimes, but I don't blame them for that. I don't think that that's their fault. And that's something that I've been able to address with like therapy and what have you, but I just can see exactly why now, like, you know, it's been, hold on right now. So. Oh, it's been ages, like probably almost coming up for 20 years since they've been divorced. And so I know them both as people now, rather than as my parents, and I can see exactly why it was the right decision and I can see how they flourished individually because of that, you know, my, my dad's gone and done something like lift his life in a way that my mum would never have wanted to. And, you know, they are flourishing as people I think, and they have done in a way that they couldn't have done together. So. I think watching your parents be happy is, is a really, it's a really good example. Like, and actually what I learned from that was probably that sometimes you might have to make a difficult decision, but if [00:27:00] you're choosing your happiness, then that's not necessarily a bad thing. And I think that's what an amazing, what an amazing example to have learned from my parents that, you know, being happy is really important rather than sticking through with a commitment you made 20 years ago or whatever, for the sake of other people. I think for me, you know, that that's a really, it's a learning moment. That's something that I, I have definitely adopted in my own life. And I think it's given me courage to leave relationships too, because I've seen. And actually, I remember when I left my last relationship for the first time in a while, my parents were in a WhatsApp group together with me. Um, and they kind of coached me through it. Like one of them picking up on the more like practical issues of how are we gonna move this stuff and like, getting furniture and stuff. And the other one kind of taking the emotional side. And I feel very grateful that I had that example in my life because I think I've also have, you know, known people in my life whose parents stayed together and resent each other. And I think that that can be far more [00:28:00] damaging to your understanding of your own life and the joy that you are able to access then, perhaps, although, again, I don't criticise anyone for doing that and

everyone's different. This is just, I'm just specifically talking about, you know, in my, what I appreciate in my own situation.

[00:28:15] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah. No, that's really useful to hear and I can totally relate my parents separated and seeing my mum get happier and flourish as you called it, has been so nice. So I can totally relate to that of like she's happier. So I'm happier. You know, because of that

[00:28:34] **Rose Stokes:** You know, I think there's a true mark of love. Isn't it? Like, you know, I, I would much rather my parents be happier than stay together for any sort of selfish reason. Like when I was a teenager. Yeah. I resented my friends. I quite unusually actually, I didn't really have any friends whose parents were divorced and I resented more than anything. The only thing I will say, I still resent at the age of 34 is the admin with having separated parents, because you have to have two [00:29:00] WhatsApp groups with different people in them and two Christmases and two birthdays and to everything. And like, whenever you announce something, you have to have two different, you know what I mean? Like that, that stuff is sometimes I look at my friends and I think, 'My God, if I could just have one Christmas!' Or like, because my partner's parents are separated it doubles the amount of time that you're sort of, but I love everyone in my life. I love my parents. I love the new people that have come in. I love my partners, parents. I love their partners. I love actually expanding your family is a really nice thing because there's new people that have come in that we wouldn't have otherwise met. And I don't think that's a bad thing

[00:29:35] **AD:** It's the Ad Break. So it's a perfect time to remind you to hit subscribe, to be notified about more episodes. You can also leave us a lovely review because honestly it makes a difference to the chart positions. And one time I was in the charts next to Michelle Obama. No, it was really thrilled about it. So it'd be nice to do that again. Uh, you could also join in the conversation [00:30:00] on social media. We're on Twitter and Instagram at divorce pod. We have a website thedivorcesocial.com and you can also join us for our like 90 style divorced chat room experience over on Patrion. So just go to patrion.com forward slash Samantha Baines, B a I N E S and it starts at two pounds a month and we all have lovely and awful and amazing chats. See you there.

[00:30:29] **Samantha Baines:** And I wanted to talk to you about the bad relationship that you left. Because I know you've written about it a lot and I think it would be really useful for anyone who feels in a seminar situation to hear how you kind of maybe made that decision. And then the recovery process of that?

[00:30:50] **Rose Stokes:** I mean, the relationship was a car crash from the beginning I would say. It was definitely one of those ones that, again, I think almost umm, this might help [00:31:00] understand me and my current relationship, there was, it was heavy on romance or this idea that romance prevails over all other elements. And you know, if something's painful or something's difficult, but we love each other, or this is romance, this is how it is like, and this sort of dramatic oscillating between like highs and lows and highs and lows and describing it as romance, I had a very, in that relationship in particular, I had very clear physical and emotional

markers that something was going very wrong. I was like started having loads of panic attacks all the time that I tried to medicate my way out of, I started losing lots of weight. I started a diet to try and keep my partner happy. There was lots of things that were going. From the outside, I changed dramatically in the way I looked and the way I acted and my confidence levels. And I did everything I could to try and fix those things, which I blamed myself for before looking at the relationship and wondering whether [00:32:00] it was causing them. I think I had grown up with this view for some reason that I couldn't do relationships. There was something wrong with me that other people can do them, but I could never relax into them partly because of this fear of endings. And so I was much more ready to scrutinise myself for my own failures and flaws than I was to look at the relationship. I was also, later in my life, when I started dating this person and therefore I was like everyone else really aware of my biological clock, everyone around was getting married, having kids like all of that sort of stuff. And I had convinced myself, this was my ticket, right? To get that life. But the sort of peaks and troughs became more dramatic. I was, you know, I've always been someone that performs well at work. I was not able to because I was having crippling panic attacks all the time. And I think when you were in a relationship that's clearly not working, um, where there are things [00:33:00] that are very not healthy that are happening you can sometimes get into a logic where you explain it away by saying, 'Well, this is our relationship.' and no one else understands how our relationship works and whatever. I also didn't tell anyone what was happening inside my relationship. And I think for me, the blessing in disguise is that something happened that my friend saw. My best friend. Who's known me my whole life. She was there and she witnessed it. And once she had witnessed something bad happened, I then couldn't ignore it. because there was a witness then, and it, and so the end came in a sort of spiral after that, because having someone say, 'Hey, that doesn't look like a very good thing .Um, has that happened before ?' And sort of someone that knows me this is my best friend I've known actually since our moms were pregnant together, we were born in six days apart. So she knows me better than anyone, sort of starting to piece together some bits and pieces and, and, [00:34:00] um, be concerned. Actually I left my ex actually out of love, my best friend. This sounds really weird because she then started to get really upset. At, how I was treating myself and her love for me and what, her desire for me to be happy when I couldn't feel that for myself, I kind of substituted it. But in terms of how I left, I just couldn't survive anymore. I was not sleeping. I was not eating. I was not talking to lots of friends. I was not being able to work. I was not like it was, it was just that dramatic that many people might have been able to pick up the warning signs earlier. Hopefully in the future, I will, because I've learned my lesson, but you know, it, it, it kind of blew up in my face at the point where like, it could no longer go on. And so. In that sense. It was a sort of very clear, like I hit rock bottom. I was like, I can't, I can't go on. I had like a mental breakdown. It was just bad. But I think [00:35:00] the thing for me was I just sort of had this, like at some point I had this like vision in my head of the future and I, and I couldn't imagine myself happy in any of the situations that I was in. And that for me was like, you know, I I'm I'm, if I'm choosing between a big fat question mark, and definitely unhappy, then I'd rather choose the question mark because who knows where that's going to go? But at least that could bleed in a good direction. And that's where I felt my choices were at that point. And it was difficult because by that point I was, again older. Like not many of my friends were single and actually it was at the point in my life where everyone was getting married. So, there was this massive disconnect between me and other people around me that I found quite difficult, but the

further I got away from it, my health started rebounding a little bit. I mean, obviously things got worse before they got better, but I, I started to be able to see that even if I was never, even if I was not going to meet anyone, [00:36:00] even if I was going to be on my own forever, that was a better choice or that was a better option than being miserable forever. And also I kind of had this flash-forward in my head of like, you know, 'If I have kids that I'm this miserable and they see me this horrible, like, you know, hating myself in this horrible situation, then they're going to learn, what are they going to learn from me? Like, what kind of example am I going to set?' So I sort of decided to choose the question, mark. Um, and I'm really glad I did, because it took me on a really long journey of trying to understand my relationship with relationships. Um, and the reverence that I held for them over, anything else and where that came from and try to deconstruct my fear of being on my own. And all of these things were such positive realisations for me and led me into really positive paths that, um, I kind of just kept following it and you know, like I think the thing is, is that [00:37:00] I wasn't instantly happy, but I knew that happiness was possible and that felt more exciting than the alternative.

[00:37:11] **Samantha Baines:** Wow. Like thank you for sharing that. And do you think there was, can you remember anything practical you did as part of your recovery? Like what really helped you? Was it friends or therapy?

[00:37:23] **Rose Stokes:** Therapy Definitely. I remember I had been in therapy. But guess what? I'd been lying to my therapist as well about my relationship. And I remember writing a letter to my therapist. I stopped therapy and been like, 'Okay, magic, like I'm fixed or whatever'. And I wrote a letter to my therapist, like a couple months later saying, 'Okay, I want to come back, but this is what you need to know. Like, this is the real story'. And went back into therapy and having that sort of like, I really got to the point where I was like, things can't get worse, but maybe they can get better. And I don't want to keep spiraling back [00:38:00] into these like chaotic cycles. Um, so, you know, and every time I had, I had been living in a very boom and bust way my whole life. Um, and I kind of wanted to get to the stage where things were a little bit more consistent. So that, I mean, I have to best best friend in the world. Like she's, I just, I can't even talk about her cause I'll cry. Um, but she was just my north star because I completely lost sense of who I was. And she had a very confident idea of who I was. She was like my cheerleader, the whole way. I think one of the things, I really got into exercise, which helped me a lot to give me some routine, I think, cause the biggest thing, when you come out of a relationship, I think it's the time you have all of a sudden

[00:38:47] Yeah.

[00:38:48] **Samantha Baines:** I relate to that. Like what am I, what am I going to do with all this time?

[00:38:52] **Rose Stokes:** Yeah. I mean I had moved jobs recently into a more, a job that had a lot of travel and stuff. So I had a [00:39:00] lot of distraction. I did drink too much, definitely in those days. So that's something that I regret. But again, you know, I, it was, it's not a period of my life that I like to think much about.

[00:39:12] I was very miserable for a long time, but it sounds really banal, but just putting one foot in front of the other, I think, unfortunately you can't fast forward through the bad stuff and the heart ache and the difficulty, because then you don't get the lessons. Um, and I know I sort of, sometimes people do do that or they like, you know, throw themselves into the next relationship for me, it was much more about, 'Okay. This has gone really wrong. Why did it go wrong?' And accepting my role in why it went wrong and understanding that basically that I had allowed myself to be in such a bad relationship because I had zero self esteem and I didn't think I deserved anything better. And therefore making, building my esteem a goal and [00:40:00] deciding that, you know, 'Okay, well, how do I stop this from happening again? Well, if I start thinking more of myself, then maybe. Like less bad stuff. And then maybe he'd less bad stuff will happen. And I will, you know'. So for me that became like a focus, this sort of rebuilding, it was like my . It was like a, like a Buckaroo, like, you know, like after the, everything falls on the floor, but I was like a okay I don't want to put it back in the way that it was before. Like. I want to rebuild in a way that's different to where everything was when it exploded and sort of, but thinking really carefully with every piece that I was putting back in being like, 'Do I want this to be in that place? Do I want to be different or do I like sort of?' And it, and, and, and, and the unsexy sort of answer, unromantic or, um, you know, is, it takes a lot of time. It really does. It took me a long time. But I feel very, very confident and that, you know, I'm currently in the happiest, most wonderful relationship [00:41:00] beyond what I ever imagined could be possible. And I don't say that to, to show off or whatever I say that because I didn't, I just didn't think that was something that was going to happen for me or that I was going to be allowed to have. Um, and I don't think I could have found it if I hadn't learnt that I deserved it. And that was my big challenge, it was understanding, you know, what is possible what's available when you start to think that you deserve good things.

[00:41:28] **Samantha Baines:** That's so nice to hear. I'm so glad after all of that,

[00:41:34] **Rose Stokes:** I'm presenting this as if it's like an end of story. Like obviously, you know, we've got the rest of our lives ahead of us and there's so many more lessons, but you know, that, that period of my life was very instructive and I learned a lot and I'm glad I did, because I think it will help me be a better mother, help me be a better partner. It's helped prepare me for the challenges ahead, but obviously unforeseen unforeseens, like, you know, who knows what's going to happen? But I think, [00:42:00] um, and I don't want to present this as my happy ending because we all know that's bullshit. So, but it's, it's my happy beginning. My happy new beginning, my happy start,

[00:42:09] **Samantha Baines:** Happy ending part one

[00:42:10] **Rose Stokes:** But that's what it is maybe. Yeah. Happy new chapter.

[00:42:14] **Samantha Baines:** Oh, thank you so much for sharing your story with us. It's been so nice to hear. And so I think, I feel like I've related to so much of it even though you're not divorced, as we said at the beginning, you definitely have a lot of experience of the breakup and divorce. And it sounds like you've put them all into your kind of toolbox and now, you know, you've got a full toolbox for the future, which sounds very positive.

[00:42:42] **Rose Stokes:** We'll see

[00:42:43] **Samantha Baines:** So where can people follow you and find out more about you and read all your glorious articles?

[00:42:51] **Rose Stokes:** Um, well, I'm on Twitter and Instagram @RoseStokes, all in one word. And I'm my website, which has [00:43:00] got my portfolio when I remember to update it, is rovestokes.co.uk. So they're probably the best places to find the like new work I share on my social media. So yeah.

[00:43:09] **Samantha Baines:** Amazing well I really enjoy reading all your articles as they come out, so definitely everyone should check them out. Thank you so much!

[00:43:17] **Rose Stokes:** Thank you for having me! It's been so wonderful and yeah, I look forward to listening to future episodes.

[00:43:22] **Samantha Baines:** Thanks.