Family Life… Ex-husband & girlfriend

Situation:
Saturday I had my two children for the day and about 7:30 their Dad (my ex) and his girlfriend were coming to pick them up. The closer it got to 7:30, I found myself getting more and more uptight.

Symptoms:
I was tense, had a headache, and it was on it's way to being a really bad one. "I don't want that woman in my apartment. She's going to look around and see my trashy furniture. I haven't got any pictures on the walls. Things really look pretty bare." Then I started thinking about the situation with the kids. Todd has full custody and I get Sara and Stevie every other weekend. "That's just not normal. Mother's should have their kids. It's not fair."

Solution:
I knew for my sake and the kid's sake too that I needed to calm myself down. "This situation is distressing, not dangerous. It's a triviality, not an emergency. "
My fear was one of social reputation – what's she going to think? The fact is, even though I don't have much in this little place, it's clean. And I do have everything I need.
I can't control what his girlfriend thinks. That made me laugh to myself. I was trying to make her think that I was OK. I can't "make" anybody think anything!
What's more important is my self-image – what I think of me. I know I'm doing so much better than I was before. I recognize it. So do my professionals. That's more important than what girlfriend thinks.

In the past:
In the past I would have gone off on "I've lost my children." I would have obsessed about it for at least the next week and made myself miserable. The fact is: I have not "lost" my children. I know where they are.
My children live with their Dad. It took a lot of practice for me to be able to say that without feeling ashamed, without having to hang my head down and cry when I thought about it. Right now our children are living in a caring supportive environment. It helps me to think and say "our" children instead of "my" children. After all, they're not just "mine." Todd is responsible for them too.