

CAN YOU SAVE YOUR MARRIAGE?

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Your relationship seems to be going down the tubes. You do nothing but fight and argue...or don't talk to each other. You don't really want to be around each other or make love anymore. One partner may have already mentioned that big bad word...divorce.

There are two kinds of divorce. The first one is legal which in some cultures can be civil, religious or both. In any event, some authority hears both sides of the argument, weighs the evidence and declares the marriage is no more. The second kind of divorce is emotional. Most people tend to get the two confused. The anthropological definition of marriage is "a socially acceptable sexual relationship between two people that is primarily designed to produce, protect and raise children." Did you notice there in not one word about love in that definition? That's because love is not necessary to have a successful marriage. Nice...but not necessary.

For thousands of years, everyone's marriage was arranged by their family. This system actually works quite well if the parents have their children's best interests in mind. Even today in many cultures arranged marriages are still the norm. In fact, many ancient people considered being "in love" as a form of madness...a form of mental illness. Stopping the legal divorce has absolutely no effect on the emotional divorce. In fact, the harder you try to stop the legal divorce, the less cooperative your partner becomes. As long as you are applying pressure they will not be able to see whatever qualities that attracted them to you in the first place. Memory that those good qualities exist are the first casualties of the divorce war.

The purpose of this book is to explain what causes divorce and suggest some solutions on how to either prevent the divorce or to get on with you life if you can't or decide you don't want to stop the break up.

Balancing Act

Relationships frequently feel like a balancing act...like you are walking a very thin line...that one misstep and you forfeit the relationship.

According to Brian Dyson, former CEO of Coca Cola Enterprises, *"Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling five balls in the air. You name them--work, family, health, friends, and spirit...and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls—family, health, friends, and spirit...are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged, or even shattered.*

They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life."

For most adults, their marriage is their primary family. It is the relationship that our lives revolve around...that takes up the greatest amount of our time and energy...and rightly so which is why the thoughts of a breakup, separation or a divorce causes such turmoil.

There are several factors that partners on the verge of breaking up tend to get caught up in. They mistakenly believe that fixing these things will get them what they want...usually to stop the divorce. These mistaken beliefs involve:

- **Other people** - They mistakenly believe that other people have more influence over their partner than they do. They believe things like "the in-laws never liked me"...that "their divorced friends are subconsciously envious of their marriage and want to see them break up". As a result they resent and fear this "influence" and try to eliminate it.
- **Negative feelings** – they don't want to hear about their partner's fears, hurts, anger or other negative feelings and start blaming their partner for all of their problems.
- **Personal pain** – they get caught up in their own hurt, their pain, their anxiety and their depression again blaming their partner and others for causing these feelings.

Then to make matters worse they tend to adopt desperate strategies that just don't work in an effort to get what they want such as:

- **Trying to be reassuring** – They will say things like "I've changed. I won't be controlling anymore. I won't lie to you anymore. I won't have another affair," and so forth. It never works because by this time, their partner doesn't believe anything they say.
- **Declaring undying love** – Telling your partner over and over again, "I love you" is a complete waste of time because they usually believe that if you loved them you wouldn't do whatever it is that they are complaining about.
- **Wishful thinking** – many use prayer and others just try to ignore the situation. Robert Ringer talks about wishful thinking in his book ***Winning Through Intimidation***. He was big into commercial real estate just barely getting by financially. And then he discovered he was doing wishful thinking, so he switched over to doing reality thinking. In less than one year, he made over \$800,000 in brokerage fees.
- **Arguing** - trying to talk your partner into feeling different, thinking or acting different. You can't force someone to change their thoughts, feelings or actions. They have to want to change or you are just wasting your time and making the situation worse.

- **Enlisting the aid of others** – your partner will resent you trying to get others to pressure them into doing what you want giving them another reason to leave.
- **Acting depressed** – some people act depressed or even threaten suicide. Sometimes that might work temporarily because your partner will feel guilty or afraid but that guilt or fear will quickly turn into resentment and anger and increases their motivation to want get away from you.
- **Using the children** – the worst thing you can do for all concerned is get the children involved in the problems you and your partner are experiencing. Your relationship does not involve the children and you have no right asking them to divide their loyalties.

None of these strategies will work. In fact they will make the situation worse. Save your self a lot of trouble, don't try to use them.

Chapter 2 - The Real Reasons Marriages Fail

1. Resistance to Change

Let's face it. The familiar is comforting, even if it's not good for you. Leaving our comfort zone creates anxiety in everyone. You need to realize that the world won't come to an end just because things change. I remember when my oldest son was 8 years old. We were moving to a different city. The boy hates change and was in complete denial before the move believing that it wouldn't happen. He even told himself that we would move back "home" for almost a year before he finally gave up and accepted the fact that we now lived in a different city.

Change for its own sake is unnecessary. Some changes are good...some are bad. The reality of the fact is that change is an essential part of life. Nothing stays the same...everything changes. You need to accept that change will happen and learn how to deal with it.

2. Learned Beliefs

Sometimes it seems like there is a little voice in your head that says, "Hey, my mom and dad didn't do it this way, so there must be something wrong". Actually, there is subconscious programming that occurred when you growing up in your household and watching how your family interacted. Your subconscious mind accepts what it sees and hears without judgment so if you never questioned what you observed, you will assume it

the “right” way...the only way...to act. That is also what you will expect...if not demand from your partner.

The problem is that your partner has their role models and their own subconscious beliefs about how they expect you to think, feel and act. Unless your backgrounds are extremely similar, you will have problems if you don't deal with your learned beliefs. That isn't to say your beliefs are necessarily bad but partners having different beliefs can cause problems...sometimes very serious problems.

The first step is figuring out what your parents or other childhood role models have taught you about relationships. This influence is so strong that most adults recreate the family dynamics ...what they feel comfortable with because they understand how it is supposed to work. They will subconsciously try recreating the methods of being attracted to and making their self attractive to potential partners based solely on those models. They will assume that other people's behavior is the same or similar to their parents or who ever their role model is. Then they will spend a lot and time and energy trying to get their partner to act, think and feel, the way they are “supposed” to feel.

Let's look at some examples:

“We had a beautiful relationship for two years. Then all of a sudden everything changed. Now my partner wants to be friends only.” Most people will respond that after all we've meant to each other we can never be just friends. Why? You most likely believe that because that was what you learned growing up...that former lovers can never be just friends. That belief is nonsense. Many former spouses and lovers are the best of friends. I even know couples where they socialize, by choice, with their former spouse and their new husband or wife.

“We were together for two years and then we got married and everything changed. It seems like getting married changed the relationship and now she wants a divorce.” This happens when one partner believes their partner isn't acting the way a husband or wife “should” act so they believe they have made a mistake...again totally ridiculous. There are no set rules for how partners should feel or act. Each couple has to find out what works for them based on their backgrounds, interests and abilities. I know a couple where she fixes the cars and he does the cooking. While somewhat unconventional, they both seem happy so it obviously works for them.

“My wife complains I won't listen to her like I did before we got married”. He says, “But I do listen to her. She keeps telling me that I've shut her out in the cold.” Of course he tells her she is wrong that he does listen to her. Naturally, she doesn't believe him. This kind of situation happens because she believes that he must listen to her every word and continually talk to her most likely because her parents did talk to each other a lot. He probably grew up in a home where his father didn't talk much to anybody so he is clueless why his quietness bothers her so much.

“We’re on the verge of separation. Our problem is that we just don’t communicate. If he would just talk to me, I think we could work it out.” Actually the problem is usually that they are communicating too much...at least too much of the wrong kind of communication. They may have some of the same issues as the couple in the preceding example but the reference to “working it out” suggests that they are blaming their partner for all the problems while defending and explaining their actions. Everybody wants their partner to talk to them but not to tell them it’s their fault. What they really want is their partner to take all of the blame so they can prove to themselves that they are not responsible. I suspect that both of these people grew up in homes where there was a lot of blaming and very little real communication.

“We’re just two different people when it comes to sex. He wants it every hour and I want it once a month, so we fight about it. And I am about to leave him even though I still love him.” Sex is a form of physical communication. Just as some people can’t seem to shut up and others never talk, sexual desire varies from individual to individual. Self esteem, physical health, tiredness, other distractions and the level of anger each partner feels toward the other all effect sexual desire. It can also be influenced but what they learned growing up. In any event these people need to decide whether the relationship is more important to them than the frequency of sex. If the relationship is more important then they will need to reach a compromise they both can live with. Most likely when they stop fighting about sex, they will have it more frequently.

“Her kids came between us. They have her wrapped around their little finger. She can’t say no to them. She always puts them before me.” He probably grew up in a household where his mother paid more attention to his father than the children when dad was around so he believes that his wife should pay more attention to him. He is jealous of her children and that is ok for him to feel. He needs to recognize that he is jealous. He is not in competition with the children. In this case, whether he likes it or not, he is an outsider. Both his wife and the children will resent his interference. He must stop criticizing the kids and let her deal with them. He needs to back off and butt out.

“She was jealous of my kids. She couldn’t understand they had been through a lot.” This is the reverse of the last situation. It is perfectly ok for your partner to be jealous of your children. The children do take a lot of your time, energy and love. That is a common problem that usually will work itself out if the other partner stays out of it and let’s the children and the new spouse deal with each other. If a new wife or girlfriend is the one who is jealous of the kids. It’s ok for her to be jealous. Stop trying to control her. If you don’t feel comfortable with her feelings...Tough. It is ok for her to be wrong. Human beings have the right to be wrong.

In either of these situations, if the kids are trying to break them up, which is not uncommon for children of divorce, both partners are playing into the children’s hands and making it a whole lot easier to get rid of the new wife, girlfriend, husband or boyfriend. Mature adults do not let children run their lives. You are driving your partner away. Their relationship with their children does not involve you. Stay out of it

All of these problems are the result of the subconscious beliefs that we have. Examining them in the light of reason will help stop it from being a problem.

3. Needing to Be Loved

Needing something makes you fearful and anxious. If you need to be loved you will always be afraid of losing your partner's love. That fear will eventually destroy your relationship. Making anything too important creates fear and the fear will always push it away because most people find loss easier to live with than the fear of losing. Hear that. People find **loss easier to live with than the fear of losing**.

The opposite of putting too much importance on something is to say it has no importance. Romantic love is nice. Most people want to have it. But it is not essential for happiness. Romantic love is a want...just a want...nothing more. Your life will change but you will not die...the world will not come to an end simply because your marriage breaks up. The world will not end just because you don't get your own way....it won't.

For example, when you go to a restaurant and it's time for dessert, the waiter asks to take your order. You ask for cheese cake. The waiter tells you he is sorry but they are all out of cheese cake. Do you get hurt? Do you get angry? At a maximum you feel slightly disappointed. You then choose another dessert. You don't throw a tantrum. You don't get all hurt and run out of the restaurant. If you go there again and they say, "We have cheese cake today." You don't say "Too little too late. I have hurt feelings to nurse." Of course not, we are more reasonable than that.

So why can't we view not getting what we want from other people the same way. But, that's different, you say. No it isn't. It's exactly the same. Needing creates hurt. Hurt creates anger. Anger promotes fear of loss...all because you believe you need to be loved. Give up the belief that you need love and the hurt and anger go away. Sure, you may be disappointed or even frustrated but not hurt and angry.

Then to make matters worse when you feel hurt and angry you behave in ways that increase those feelings. You attack the other person's pride. As things get worse and I guarantee that they will, you now have an excuse to feel sorry for yourself. The only way to break this viscous cycle is to realize that you do not need to be loved. You just want it. If you are just disappointed, you will not attack the other person nor will you injure either their pride nor your own pride.

When you realize that something is only a want, you can relax and get out of your self imposed rut. You can decide what is best for you and then act on it. For example, earlier I talked about my partner being tired. Instead of insisting we go out or going out alone, I suggested we get take out and watch a movie. No hurt...no anger...no problem. My partner took me out to dinner a few days later. See...a win-win situation.

When your partner is pulling away, they give you less time, less energy, less interest. A fairly common cause is low self-esteem. One partner begins to have contempt for this person who is stupid enough to be in love with them. So they become more critical of everything their partner does. When we get married we tend to become overly dependent on our need to control the other person. After all, everything they do reflects on us. We feel guilt and shame if we can't make them always do what we think is right.

In reality getting my partner back is only a want...a preference. It is not a need. The more you see it as need, the less likely it is to happen. It's a known fact, that if you need a loan, the bank won't give you one. If you don't need the money, not a problem. When you only want something, you are in control...when you need something...you are desperate...anxious...scared...not in control.

My partner will think I don't care if I don't tell them I need them. Is telling them that working? Of course it isn't. In fact, telling them you need them is a form of extreme pressure to make them change their mind. You want them to think, "How can I leave someone who needs me that much?" It doesn't work. In fact, your need may be what is driving them away. If something doesn't work, stop doing it. One definition of insanity is "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Stop doing what doesn't work. Just stop it. Try something different to see if that works.

I once heard that there are three kinds of people in the world: Dumb people who never learn anything, Smart people who learn from their mistakes and Wise people who learn from other people's mistakes. Be wise. Learn from other people's mistakes. Millions have said, "But I need you and I love you – pressure, pressure, pressure." It never works. Your partner instinctively knows that you are just trying to get what you want without any regard for what they want.

Why waste your time trying to convince your partner to come back to you. Get on with your life. Stop beating your head against a brick wall.

Pressuring your partner and running after them will only push them further away. Why, because you are telling them you have very low self-esteem. When you believe that you need to be loved, you are creating low self-esteem. We DO NOT NEED romantic love. There are very few things in life that are actual needs. We do need food, water, oxygen and protection from the elements. Beyond these, everything else is a want.

Ask yourself what you were doing before you were in love with your partner. Most people will answer, "Working, going out with friends, playing sports, enjoying my freedom." Then ask yourself if you were happy. Most people will answer, "Yes, I was happy". Were you romantically involved? If so, was it serious? You need to look at the actual facts so you can see beyond your feelings. Remember your feelings are a little spoiled brat that always wants its own way. As a mature adult you need to compare those feelings with the facts around you so you can make reasonable decisions.

It's nice to be loved, but not necessary. By needing to be loved you are setting yourself up to get hurt, get angry, criticize, complain, argue, be jealous, etc. All of those negative things come from a belief that you need to be loved...that you need to be believed...that you need to be trusted. Don't buy into the lie. Just because something is nice to have doesn't mean that you need to have it. The reality is that the more you believe you need something, the less of it you will get because needing something always seems to drive it away. There is always a part of us that wants to be unhappy, that wants to feel sorry for our self and that wants to be depressed. That is the part of you that keeps insisting that you need to be loved, supported, understood, and agreed with. You do not need any of these things. The more you believe the lies, the more you are pushing happiness away.

You cannot sell needs. No one will buy needs. They especially will not buy someone else's needs. Can't you see how much pressure your needs puts on someone else. Nobody wants that kind of pressure. Pressure causes stress...anxiety. Love is a want not a need. Human beings have certain rights. The most important one is the right to be wrong. That's right...I said the **right to be wrong**. We have the right to make bad choices. Making poor choices is usually how we learn to make good choices.

What is the real purpose of needing? Its purpose is to feel bad, of course...to give you an excuse for self pity...to shirk responsibility for yourself by blaming someone else. That is the real purpose of needing. It will not get you what you want...period...end of discussion. There is nothing wrong with you. You only believe that there is something wrong with you that another person's love will fix. Our culture fosters this belief in our literature, our music and our movies. There is an old song titled, "You're nobody until somebody loves you." What rubbish. If that's true, we are all in serious trouble.

Being loved is a want not a need. That means you don't have to pressure your partner to do things your way to prove they love you. For example you want to go out to dinner. Your partner is tired and just wants to fix something quick and easy and stay home. You can fight about it and demand they go with you or you can go by yourself and have to deal with their hurt feelings when you get home, especially if you argued about it. If you decide to stay home, I will almost guarantee your partner will suggest going out in a few days when they are not tired. You need to decide what's more important to you, getting your own way or having a good relationship?

Let's look at a few examples.

"My wife says I can't leave her, she needs me." That's total nonsense. Anyone saying this is really just showing how immature they are. A mature rational adult would not make that statement. No, she is being immature by saying that. It is not your responsibility to provide her happiness. As a husband, you may be providing monetary support or she may be self supporting. However, while you can provide love, friendship and sex, none of those are needs. They are just nice to have...preferences and wants.

Some people believe that they can't make it without their partner. They say things like "My life has no meaning. I just can't go on. I love them so much, it hurts." This is an

intellectual problem. We use the same word for sick, immature and twisted love that we use for mature healthy love. That can be confusing at times. Mature love should not be painful. It is the belief that we need to be loved that creates an unhealthy dependency on our partner. That kind of dependency can suffocate the other person. It also causes them to have contempt for someone so weak...someone with such low self-esteem. If you don't value yourself, why should your partner value you?

Other people believe that there is virtue in pain. In fact some major religions actually teach that concept. Moslems beat themselves with chains to prove their love of Allah, Christians deny themselves pleasure to prove their piety. This belief is masochistic. These people are in love with the idea that suffering proves they are worthwhile people. Nonsense! All human beings are worthwhile. We are all born worthwhile. It is the people around us who try to convince us we are worthless. You can change that belief if you want.

So you can't live without your partner? Will you starve because you can't fix a sandwich without them present? Will you stop bathing...stop going to work...stop watching TV? Of course you won't. You are an independent human being with intrinsic worth. You just need to recognize that fact. Once you do your partner will be much more interested in being with you.

The reality is that no one wants to be with someone that is always complaining, demanding, afraid of losing them and in many cases trying to make them "prove" they really love them. They don't want someone who clings and whines. Most people have contempt for clinging whiny people. Relationships need to be built on respect and friendship. If your partner sees you as a happy, independent person, they will start to remember why they were attracted to you in the first place and will be much more likely to come back.

In the book *How to win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie tells the story of a 30 year old man who meets a 50 year old woman who is single and super wealthy. So he goes up to her and tells her he wants to marry her for her money. Amused, she tells him that his honesty is refreshing. She says she will study his character for a year and let him know her decision.

At the end of the year, he asks her what her decision is. She says you are a decent man who keeps his word and has a good reputation. So even though she doesn't love him either, she will marry him for practical reasons. They each treated the other with respect but there was no romantic love.

20 years later at age 50 and 70, he tells her that he married her for her money. She answers that she knows but if he had to do it today it would be for love because she knew that he loved her. He agreed.

The moral of the story is that neither of them had any preconceived ideas of what a husband nor wife should feel. They also both believed that it was ok to get married for practical reasons.

Sometimes, it takes courage to admit that you even have fears, especially if you have learned to suppress them. Yet this is what it means to consciously participate in your own happiness...to choose love even when fear screams so loudly that it nearly drowns out the whisper of love.

It's up to both partners to keep their relationship from getting boring...doing little things to enhance the relationship. I don't mean trying to control your partner...just the little things that one friend will do for another to make their day more pleasant. You see, when you stop needing love, you will finally be able to truly love another human being.

4. Fear of Making Mistakes and Trying to Control Your Partner

Another commonly held belief is that differences cause problems. That is not necessarily true. What causes problems is a clash of wills...of wants. When we want different things, there is a problem. You see I not only want what I want, I want my partner to want it too. I also want to have a good relationship with my partner. If I try to control my partner and get them to forget their wants and accept mine, they will resent it. If I do it often enough, they will get angry, hostile and start pulling away.

Almost everyone both professionals and no-professionals say that you must "work at it" to have a happy marriage. I think they have it backwards. I believe that "working at it" makes it not work...not be happy. Does a small child have to work at being happy? No...then why should you have to?

So what causes the emotional divorce? It really quite simple, you are trying to "improve" your partner...trying to get them to act, think and feel the way you think they should rather than just letting them be who they are. In other words change them into your preconceived notion of what your partner should be like. When you criticize, you're trying to change them. When you complain, you're trying to change them. When you argue, you're trying to change them. When they tell you they want a divorce and you keep telling them you love them, you are trying to change them. Trying to change your partner rather than accepting them as they are is the major cause of divorce.

Don't believe me? Stop trying to change your partner and watch your relationship get better. In other words stop working at your relationship. All you really need to do is accept your partner the way they are. You need to allow them to think, feel and do what they want to do. Tell them they're ok the way they are. I guarantee that their negative feelings toward you will begin to disappear because they need to have something to argue about to nourish all that negativity. When you sincerely, one hundred percent totally and happily accept them, warts and all, there is nothing for their negative feelings to build on.

Basically, you have raised the white flag, surrendered. That forces them to do the same. It is impossible to fight a battle without an opponent. It's ok to shoot an enemy in battle but it is murder to do after they surrender. Most people aren't murderers. It's not normal not to defend yourself. It's not natural, but it is healthy. It will improve your relationship.

When we tell someone that they are wrong and we are right, we are pressuring them to accept our opinion and make it their opinion. They will only become more hostile and negative toward us. So we are not really defending ourselves, instead we are trying to change them. The reality is we have just given them a club that they can use to beat us. We only call this defending our self because it feels that way to our pride. The best way to defend yourself is to defend your partner. Agree with them. Disagreeing is not to your advantage. In fact, it is both dumb and stupid.

I've seen this work in relationships, even my own. We have occasionally had serious problems. But, I immediately stop arguing...stop explaining...stop defending. He stops being negative within a couple hours. This method always works. But doing this is not natural because emotionally, we are all spoiled brats that believe we should always get our own way all the time even if it is bad for us. We want to choose the goal and also tell everybody exactly what they need to do to reach it. We are like the infant who wants to play with that shiny butcher knife and not that silly old rattle.

You have to use your brain to keep your emotions from ruining your life. If your emotions say, "I want this person back." That's ok. But your head needs to start figuring out what you will need to do to reach that goal. You have to stop trying to change your partner...stop criticizing, stop demanding. In other words, accept them the way they are. But won't I lose them if I let them be who they are?" Maybe...but I guarantee you will definitely lose them if you keep trying to change them.

When you really stop trying to change your partner and start accepting them for who they are, your relationship will change. It will improve dramatically. If they are in a bad mood, it's ok. If they want to believe you are guilty of a wrongdoing, it's ok. You know whether or not it's true and nothing you can do will change their mind about it anyway. In fact, if you try to defend yourself, they will usually take that as an admission of guilt.

You can be paralyzed by losing your partner. That is the biggest mistake you can make. Demanding that you get what you want doesn't work. Telling your partner they are wrong doesn't work. In fact it gives them more reason to be hostile, more reason to pull away.

No one likes being told that they have to do something. Order them about and they will resist. Suggestions usually work better. However, people respond differently to suggestions. Some will do what is suggested while others will do exactly the opposite. When your partner is pulling away from you, they will automatically put themselves on the opposite side of every fence they perceive you as being on because they are trying to distance themselves from you...to justify their wanting to get a divorce or separation.

People are really strange creatures. For example, someone wants to listen to music on their mp3 player. They get a set of headphones and try to plug them in so they can hear the music. The plug won't go in. They will look at the plug and the socket and realize they have the wrong headset. So they go find the right one, plug it in and happily listen to their music. That's mature behavior.

Do we use that approach to our romantic relationships? No way! To continue the analogy, we will try to force the plug into the socket. We will get more and more frustrated and angry because the plug won't go in. We may even force it until we break it completely. Totally irrational behavior! So if the arguing doesn't work, we argue some more. If criticizing doesn't work, we criticize some more. If being negative doesn't work we get more negative. We have the mistaken belief that if we have the right amount of something surely it will work. Ridiculous...it won't work. No matter how hard you try...demanding to get what you want with no regard for your partner's wants doesn't work.

When you tell someone, "You are the only one I can love, the only one I can be happy with, you're the only one for me." What you are really saying is, "I have no self confidence.

Don't you want me?" Usually the answer is no, they don't want someone with no self confidence.

Life does not give you what you believe you need because you don't really need it. Unfair or not, that's the way life works. If you ask your partner to dance and they say no, just say, "Ok, I'll ask someone else to dance". Then do it. If one thing you want is not available something else you want usually is. If you turn on the TV and get static, do you trash the TV? Or do you try another station? Why? Because it not worth getting in a bad mood over. You know that the station will eventually come back on. People are no different. Some days they are cooperative. Some days they are not. Trying to change them will only make things worse. Good moods attract good things. Bad moods attract bad things.

When I am in love, the main thing I am in love with is my pride and the idea of being loved. I picked my partner because I believed they would support my pride. Don't believe me? How many people do you know who fall in love with someone they are ashamed of?

Can't think of any can you?

Then over time, as they do more and more things that cause us to be ashamed of them, we fall out of love. It's that simple. Have you ever heard anyone say, "I fell in love with this worthless piece of humanity?" Of course they don't. They may say that after the divorce, but not while they are still together because they see only the good things about their partner...not what everybody else sees. Why? We are protecting our ego. The only thing people hate worse than being told they are wrong is looking stupid.

Believing that you need whatever you desire is a flat out attack on your own ego. That's why criticizing, complaining, arguing and being jealous is an attack on both partners. Because the more you do these things the more insecure you become and the angrier your partner feels and everything continues to get worse.

Both partners need to realize that true independence is a good thing because the more independent an individual is means they have more self esteem and will usually be nicer to their partner. That doesn't necessarily mean they will stay together. The rational reason for getting a divorce is because you believe that you will be happier divorced and single or happier with someone else. Being unhappy is the worst possible reason for a divorce. Happiness is your responsibility not your partner's.

You can stop trying to control others by identifying the fear that drives you. If you want to let go of dominating attitudes and behaviors, you must confront and heal the fear that causes them. Realize, also, that you exercise fear-based control at the cost of friendship, trust and true intimacy...all the goodies we love to enjoy with another person. The tension caused by your fears and suspicions acts like a cancer on the relationship. A relationship that could have been a heaven becomes just another battleground. You end up wasting your time and energy on exerting control or escaping it rather than loving each other and evolving into a deeper, more meaningful relationship.

Yet most controllers don't even know they're controlling. It has become completely automatic. You'll be likely to use controlling behavior if you felt strongly controlled by your role models, such as parents, teachers, or other adults who were important to you or if your models were completely out of control like an alcoholic where you always felt the need to control in order to make up for their lack of self control..

Are you controlling? Ask yourself these questions:

- Are you the person with the right answers all the time, or the one who always knows best?
- Do you have trouble admitting your mistakes? Do you pretend your mistakes didn't happen, or find another person to blame?
- Do you need to feel responsible for other peoples' lives? Are you constantly giving advice and trying to influence the choices of others? Are you trying to get their lives to work so they, in turn, can give you what you want?
- Do you exhibit extreme agitation when things don't go your way? Do you "see red" when a situation is not under your control?
- Do you feel the weight of the world is resting on your shoulders? Do you feel indispensable?
- Are you quick to judge free-spirited, undisciplined people? Do you feel disgusted about their apparent lack of discipline? Do they make you nervous?
- Are you constantly driven to attain the ideal? Is perfection your goal?

- Do you have a general distrust and suspicion of others? (Controllers project that everyone is trying to control also, so they are on the alert, expecting harm from others.)
- Do you feel isolated and alone? Do you feel you live in an adversarial world, even with those you love?
- Is your sense of self worth determined by being the best and always coming out on top? Is winning everything to you?
- Do your mate's "imperfections" bother you?
- Do you exhibit aggressive and dominating behaviors?
- Do you experience anxiety attacks?
- Is verbal one ups-man-ship your style of communication?
- Would you characterize yourself as rebellious? Are you trying to control by resisting others' control?
- Some people use helplessness as a way to control others. Have you ever noticed how a household can revolve around an invalid? Sometimes people use their illness to manipulate others.
- Is lying and concealing the truth your pattern of behavior toward others?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you need to look beneath the surface and identify the fear that driving you to control everyone around you.

If you're ready to create more cooperative relationships, write down your thoughts about the above questions. Then consider the positive experiences and emotions you'll have when you've made a change, and write about those, too.

Are You Letting Someone Control You?

If you've been allowing yourself to be controlled by someone else, it may be time to ask yourself these important questions:

- What do I want out of this relationship?
- Am I re-creating my relationship with my parents?
- Am I afraid of taking responsibility for my own needs?
- Am I unwilling to let go of the luxury of blaming others?
- Do I have low self esteem?
- If I had the power to change it, would I want to?

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

If you decide to stop letting your partner control you and you can discover the fear that drives them, you'll be better able to respond with compassion instead of your own fear or anger. Defensiveness and anger tend to increase the fear of controllers, making them even more controlling. Trying to control a controller is a sure-fire recipe for a major power struggle. Instead, begin by mastering your reaction to their behavior. Understanding, compassion, and self-control are the abilities you will need to cooperate without giving in to controlling people.

Let's look some examples:

For example...we want to buy a new car. My partner will be the primary driver. They want a mini-van because it's practical. I want a sports car because it's cool and I will look sexy when I drive it. Does it make sense for me to try and force my partner to buy a sports car so I can drive it once in a while when they really need the minivan for every day errands? If I insist, nobody wins. In fact it could destroy the relationship. If I don't want a divorce, the smart thing is to look at the situation rationally...logically. Every day utility makes more sense than occasional showing off. So I will agree that the minivan is right. All I will lose is being able to show off once in a while. A good relationship is worth much more to me than showing off.

Remember the wife who feels her husband never listens to her. When he tells her does listen, do you think she responds that she knows that he listens sometimes? Of course not, she will disagree and the war will continue. More hurtful things will be said...more negative feelings...more anger and a determination to terminate the relationship. Ignoring the controller doesn't work either because it causes them to panic because they feel like there are losing control. He needs to agree with her so she will feel less threatened...more in control.

If what you've been doing doesn't work. Doesn't it make sense to try something different? Or do you get pleasure by hanging your head against a wall? He should agree with her. Say, "You're right, I don't listen. I will try to do better. Please be patient with me."

Always agree with your partner even if you don't. Sound sincere then shut up. You'll see it works. By agreeing, you immediately stop the war and become supportive and are acting like you care what your partner wants.

5. Wanting to Be Right at All Costs.

When people get locked in a "power struggle", they are being controlled by the unresolved issues from their past, usually their childhood. It can feel like a life and death struggle to win, not to lose, at any cost.

The cost is almost always damaged trust in the relationship. The only way to move from power struggle to cooperation is with increased, or rebuilt, trust. But, how do you do that?

Successful relationships are not a matter of luck, of meeting the "right" person, of finding the "perfect" job or even of "being" the right person.

If every time you and your spouse try to talk it devolves into a loud argument or cold shouldered silence. You obviously no longer want the same thing. Everything has turned into a clash of wills with no apparent solution in sight. Is there a way to end the stress...the tension...the turmoil to stop the divorce and save your marriage?

Yes, but only if you are willing to do what it takes. As long as you are at war, no good feelings about you can enter your partner's mind. If you want to win, the war has to stop...immediately. You must put your pride and ego on hold and do what is needed to stop the war. But it won't stop as long as you insist that you want something different than your partner wants and demand getting your own way. You have a clash of wills or more accurately...a clash of pride and egos.

Needing to be right neutralizes your willingness to work things out.

For example let's look at this situation. What did we fight about? Everything! What we should have for dinner. What time to get up. What time to go to bed. You name it and we fought about it. We've all heard this tale frequently enough. In this case, both partners have an ego problem...an immature need to always be right...to always get their own way...to always appear to win. They pride themselves on being good at arguing. They pat themselves on the back for waging a good battle. They may even occasionally win the battle, but probably not because winning is usually defined as getting the other person to agree with you. You know that doesn't happen. When the topic of divorce comes up it is because they are both losing the war and getting tired of waging constant battle.

Another variation of this attitude is shown by one partner always taking the opposite stance of what they think the other partner wants. This behavior is reminiscent of adolescent rebellion and definitely immature. For example, if a couple is separated and the children are living with the mother, she will not allow them to spend a lot of time with their father if he wants to spend time with them. On the other hand, she will insist he spend time with them if he appears not to want to spend time with them. This is also a lose-lose situation for everyone and will continue to be so until they declare a truce...stop trying to spite each other...until they stop hating each other...and make no mistake this level of animosity can only be described as hate.

Is being right worth having your partner hate you? No one can possibly know everything there is to know. Why do you think you can? The world will not stop rotating just because you make a mistake or are wrong...it won't...I know it's hard for you to believe...but making mistakes and being wrong are really no big deal. In fact as a human

being, you have the right to be wrong and so does every other human being...whether you like it or not.

Look at it this way, by trying to be right all the time you are setting an impossible goal. That means you are setting your self up for failure. Failure erodes your self esteem and makes it even more important for you to be right.

Stop banging your head against a stone wall. Accept the fact that you are not perfect...not all knowing...not a god. When you do, you will be able to develop a true relationship with another human being.

6. Letting Your Feelings Run the Show.

Arguing about feelings is futile. People feel what they feel whether you think they have the right to feel it or not. People have all kinds of feelings that are unreasonable. It's a waste of time judging your own or your partner's feelings. Irrational feelings feel "normal" to the person. Stop judging feelings as good or bad and start looking at what they are trying to teach you.

When you act blindly out of your feelings, you can limit and even damage your relationships. But your feelings can be your greatest teachers if you will listen to them. Paying attention to your feelings allows you to discover where they are coming from and what you are "really" feeling mad or sad about. That way you can let the emotional energy move through and out of your body without judging it.

Mature adults make their choices based on both rational thought and their feelings. The two must work together tempering each other. The rational mind looks at what the spoiled brat wants and decides if it is a reasonable goal. If it is then the rational mind determines the best way to get what the feelings want. It has been scientifically proven that our thoughts create our feelings. The reason most people don't see this is that the thoughts that generate our feelings come from both our conscious and subconscious mind. If you want to change your feelings all you have to do is change the way you think about something.

For example...You are afraid your partner will leave you. You feel that you can't live without them. That's nonsense...that is your subconscious mind believing that you need to be loved to be a whole person. You must continually tell yourself that you will be fine without them...you can find someone else and get on with your life. In fact your life might even be better if you divorce. Since your subconscious does not judge, it will eventually believe you and stop being afraid.

When we are upset we are letting our feelings run the show. Remember your feelings are a five year old spoiled brat that always wants it own way. Unfortunately, many people let their feelings make all of their decisions...not a good idea. This is a sure fire way to

cause problems for yourself. You will never be successful or happy in your relationship or anywhere else for that matter if you are a blind slave to your feelings. The need to be loved is a belief that causes feelings of fear and dependency. If you give in to a feeling of guilt and nurture it you are a slave to you guilt.

The spoiled brat only wants...wants...wants with no regard to consequences. It's like a kleptomaniac who steals things they have absolutely no use for because they can't control the urge to steal. Our society has an obsession for compulsive honesty when it comes to feelings. We are taught to always say what you feel...always...always...no matter who gets hurt. Compulsive honesty is bad for a good relationship because it attacks the other person's pride...their ego. It is not being dishonest to keep your feelings and thoughts to yourself especially when you know they will hurt your partner's feelings.

There is an old adage, "Put your mind in gear before you start running your mouth". That is very good advice...extremely good advice. Think before you speak...think about the effect your words will have. Then decide if it is what you really want to do. If not...shut up.

What do we mean? Often, people complain about circumstances, other people, or what ever as a way of connecting with one another. When someone agrees with you, it can make you feel good for a little while. So why is this a problem?

We create our relationships through language. A lot of people imagine relationships just "happen," as if they're some kind of thing out there that just materializes without much input from the people who participate in them. Yet what you talk about and how you talk about it literally builds the relationship. Our relationships live in language.

When you understand that the conversations you have with people are an essential part of building every relationship (including the one you have with yourself), you can be mindful and strategic about what you say, the questions you ask, and the conversations you initiate. If you whine and complain all the time you will only build relationships with whiners and complainers. Is that what you want?

If You Want People to Tell You the Truth, Be Willing to Hear It

Many people bitch about others being dishonest, but rarely do they look at whether they make it safe for someone to tell them the truth. If you make it difficult for people to be honest with you, mostly likely they won't be. This can condemn you to a lifetime of superficial or adversarial relationships. On the other hand, if you make it safe for people to be honest with you, most likely they will be, and you can experience some of life's most rewarding moments through being who you really are and genuine caring.

It is not always the best, wisest or the most loving thing to tell the truth all the time, no matter what. Even though that's what we are always told to do. It all depends upon the speaker's intention when speaking their truth. And very often their unconscious intention

is to relieve themselves of guilt or to make the other person wrong. And that NEVER works!

Sadly, with all the talking that goes on and passes for real communication, there is very little actual listening - really listening to the other person. Many of us are so starved to be heard that we have a bad case of diarrhea of the mouth hoping that if we can say enough, for long enough, someone will finally hear us. It doesn't work folks...it just doesn't work.

You see most of us are too busy listening to the little voice in our head to really listen to anyone else. What voice in my head, you may ask?

The one that just asked that question...the one that is constantly carrying on its own little commentary about whatever is going on around you.

Rachel Naomi Remen wisely said, "The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention. A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words."

Are you a good listener? Ask your self the following questions:

- Are you curious, open-minded, and nonjudgmental?
- Do you enjoy the process of discovery without interrupting or jumping to conclusions?
- Are you aware of the fact that the truth someone starts with may not be the same one they find at the end of a conversation?
- Do you really pay attention and asks for questions when necessary?
- Can you accept opinions different from your own without becoming defensive or argumentative?

To have successful communication every time, you must not only speak the truth, but you must be prepared to hear it. You must invite the truth with your attitude and behavior.

Do you know the difference between dumping and being honest about your feelings?

Give yourself some time with your feelings before drawing conclusions or taking action. Refrain from arguing or trying to teach or persuade another when you're deeply upset. You want to honor your feelings in a safe and appropriate way. Express your emotions wisely. This yields learning and healing, while emotion expressed for the purpose of hurting yields regret and guilt.

If you need to express negative feelings, go talk to a trusted friend. Do not blast your partner. If you need to you can discuss any issues you discover with your partner later when you are more rational. You'll be much more able to sort things out with the other

person because you will be more capable of making good decisions.

If you feel yourself starting to “lose it” with someone, excuse yourself by saying something like, “I think it would be better for us to talk about this later. I want to sort through my feelings first

Your partner’s negative attitudes about you are being supported by you constantly telling them what you want. Each time you say, “But, I love you” you are really saying, “I want something different than what you want. You want to pull away but I want you to stay close. I don’t really care what you want. What I want is more important to me.”

Partners frequently tell their spouses, “I changed. I’ve really changed. Let’s get back together. I know it will work this time.” What they are really saying is that I haven’t really changed at all. How come? Well, why are you telling your partner you’ve changed? Isn’t it to get what you want...getting back together? Are you even considering what they want? Where they are at the moment? Have they told you they would think about it for the future, but not right now?

Every time you say, “I’ve changed” you are really saying, “Give me my way...my way...my way! What I want is more important than what you want. I don’t care what you want. Give me what I want!” You sound like a two year old throwing a temper tantrum. Your partner will think that you are sill a screwed up, selfish, demanding jerk or bitch and there is no way I’m falling for that load of bull. No way am I changing my mind. This behavior proves I made the right decision.

Feelings are important but we cannot make important decisions based on feelings alone. Remember that your feelings are a spoiled brat only interested in getting their own way. Unfortunately 90% of professional counselors will tell people to follow their feelings. The modern thought is “Go with what you feel”...which is a perfect recipe for disaster.

You also have a brain. You need to use it and look at the facts before deciding what the best thing for you to do is. The more you concentrate on negative feelings the harder it is to feel positive things. Many people mistakenly believe that reason is cold and harsh rather than compassionate. Is the hostility toward your spouse and the self-pity you feel compassionate? Rational thought can free you of the negative feelings long enough to allow your partner to be wrong and lessen both the hostility and self-pity. The best decisions take both reason and feelings into consideration.

Emotional mastery is the ability to recognize what you are feeling, to allow it without judgment, and to express it appropriately. Trying to suppress your feeling not only doesn’t work but it makes things worse.

You don't have to hide away your deepest feelings, just be aware that momentary outbursts can have long-term effects on your relationships, and so just be wise about where you release those feelings. Raw emotion can come out laced with blame, and blame damages relationships.

Are you projecting on your partner? According to the experts, whenever you have a harsh judgment of another, you're projecting. According to the dictionary, projecting means "ascribing to another [your] own undesirable ideas, impulses, or emotions." In other words, you're criticizing in others whatever you're afraid to look at within yourself.

Everyone projects. In fact most people don't even realize they are doing it. Judgment condemns rather than observes. If you have an overwhelming urge to punish someone, you are projecting...period. What happens is this...the other person's words or actions can trigger your self-doubt or an unresolved fear from the past. The next time you catch yourself criticizing, punishing, projecting, ask yourself, "Is it possible that my reaction is really a reflection of my own dislike of something in myself? Be honest with yourself.

7. Feeling Too Vulnerable

Are you afraid if you let someone see who you really are...that they won't like you or worse yet take advantage of your weaknesses? So is everyone else. So, what can you do about it? Look within your own heart and mind and ask, "What am I avoiding?" Then wait for the answer. You may have to ask it more than once.

If you focus for too long on you can start to over-identify with your pain, your story, your psychological "case." You can get hooked on processing your painful childhood and not notice that you're stuck in a self-created loop, recycling old material over and over again. This is more likely to happen if you get a lot of love, support, or positive reinforcement for "feeling your feelings." In this case, the fear is that if you stop "processing," you'll lose the love, praise, and attention. You are stuck in self-absorption rather than progressing to self-realization.

On the other hand, if you retreat into meditation and use it as an anesthetic, you can end up as an ungrounded space cadet. It's as if you've removed your armor and may feel dangerously exposed. Letting your self be vulnerable takes a lot of courage but believe me, it is definitely worth it.

8. Not Accepting Personal Responsibility

"To seek happiness outside of ourselves
"Is like trying to lasso a cloud.
"Happiness is not a thing;
"It is a state of mind." *Omar Khayyam*

People always feel guilty. Many times they experience guilt even when they haven't done anything wrong. Guilt is nothing more than a warning sign. It warns us that we are doing something that makes us uncomfortable...something that goes against our beliefs. That something might be an action or not doing something...a thought or not having the "right" thoughts...a feeling or having bad feelings. All of these beliefs are controlled by the subconscious mind. You need to grab these irrational beliefs and drag them into the light into your rational mind and then decide if it makes sense to keep them. Remember guilt is only a warning sign, just like a pain in your leg that is telling you are overdoing your exercise and need to stop before you hurt yourself. Listen to your guilty feelings but don't let them rule you life.

Guilt is just a warning sign that you need to look at what you are doing and see if you are prepared for the consequences. True guilt is immediately relieved by stopping whatever you were doing that was causing the guilt feelings. It is over and done with. Unfortunately many people use past deeds that caused guilt feelings as an excuse to continue to feel sorry for them self. This habit is very destructive to both the individual and their relationships.

Another major problem is that many people refuse to be responsible for their own happiness and success. Instead, when they don't get their own way, they look for someone else to blame...when they are upset they blame someone else for whatever is wrong. They are avoiding responsibility for themselves...for their happiness...for their relationship. Most people have it all wrong. Freedom is the acceptance of responsibility not the lack of it.

It is impossible for someone to hurt your feeling unless you let them. What's that you say? That can't be true. I don't let them hurt my feelings. Yes you do. You let them hurt you by putting too much importance on your desires...your wants.

Exaggerating the importance of your wants, exaggerates your feelings. When you remove the exaggerated importance the pain stops. Try it. You'll see. It works. Remember thought generates feelings. If you change the way you think of something, your feelings will change too

The Serenity Prayer probably says it best.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the thing I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can and the
Wisdom to know the difference*

The things you can not change are other people no matter how hard you try. You can influence them but not make them change. The only thing you have complete control over is your self so you can change you. Realizing that means you finally achieved wisdom.

You and only you are responsible for your happiness...it's no one else's job...it's all up to you. As long as you expect other people to make you happy...you never will be happy.

"Our ultimate freedom is the right and power to decide how anybody or anything outside ourselves will affect us." Stephen Covey

Look for ways to take responsibility for yourself without inducing or deepening your guilt...and without relieving others of the opportunity of taking responsibility for their part in an upset. We all make mistakes, and learning and growing from them in a spirit of forgiveness is an essential part of enlightened conflict resolution.

Each individual is responsible for their own happiness and self-esteem. No one else can make you happy or make you like yourself.....no one...absolutely no one except you.

The sooner you can unburden yourself of blame, the more effective you can be. Blaming others only traps you in the role of the victim, removing you from your highest expression of personal power. Yet, in the absence of personal responsibility, blame seems logical. Playing the victim can feel safe and give you a false sense of power. But whatever benefit you get is nothing compared to the benefit that comes from taking responsibility for your happiness and success in life. It's important to realize that blame is toxic. Personal responsibility builds trust and promotes healing. Once the truce has been called you are ready to negotiate a peace treaty...a mutual agreement on how to have a happy and productive relationship. The sky's the limit...reach out and grab it.

Let's look at some examples.

"Everyone agrees with me that I should separate or divorce". Trying to get everyone to agree with them is caused by not wanting to be the one responsible for the marriage failing...being responsible for making the decision to leave or being responsible for making it work either. Later, if they are still unhappy, they will say, "I only left because everyone told me I should."...see, it not my fault.

"Her parents never liked me". He's both jealous and afraid of the influence her parents have over her. He feels helpless and hopeless. He worries she will listen to them, instead of him and he is afraid she will leave him. He is already looking for someone else to blame in case the marriage fails. This man is not willing to be responsible for his happiness and desperately looking for a scapegoat so he can say, "I wasn't my fault. Everyone was against me. I never had a chance." He will never be happy as long as he refuses to be responsible for himself.

"I found someone else". If this is a woman, she usually won't admit that she found someone else. She is more likely to rationalize by saying, "He's just a friend. Nothing ever happened." Or "I didn't plan it. It just happened. It not like I went looking for it."

“I found someone who treats me better than you do”. This is a variation of “I found someone else”. Of course you wouldn’t expect your partner to turn down better treatment, would you?

In either one of these cases, the complaining partner believes that their partner doesn’t love them because they are not happy with their life so they turned to someone else for the love and affection they believed their partner was denying them. This situation can happen because the straying partner has truly neurotic needs that their partner can not meet. But usually, it’s because the straying partner believes their partner is responsible for making them happy. When that doesn’t happen they start looking for someone to do it. Of, course, it will never happen.

“I don’t love you and I never did. I just wanted to get out of the situation I was in.” That statement will definitely do a job on the partner’s ego. People tend to change the facts to provide support for whatever it is they are trying to prove at the moment. They also get angry if some one calls them on the facts. Why would some one say something so hurtful to some one they supposedly love? They say hurtful things because they don’t want to be responsible for making the marriage work. In fact, they usually don’t accept responsibility for anything that happens in their life.

“I’m not happy”. What they really are saying is that they are 5 years old and want mommy or daddy to come and fix everything. This is the same as admitting that you are immature and believe that your partner is responsible for making you happy. This statement is more commonly heard from women than men although both sexes do say it. Many studies show that people who use this excuse to get a divorce are no happier after the divorce or even after other marriages then they were before the first divorce. When asked why they divorced, most said they thought it would make them happy. When asked if they would get divorced again, most said no.

No one else can make you happy if you are determined to be unhappy. Happiness comes from within. Only you can change you life. It’s not your partner’s job to make you happy...no...absolutely not...it’s your job. Our happiness is our responsibility. The rejected partner needs to understand this and agree to a separation because the unhappy partner needs to learn how to be happy alone. Only then will they be able to be happy with someone else. There is really nothing a partner can do. It’s up the “unhappy” person to do something to improve their life before seeking a divorce.

“I’m too depressed to cope with marriage.” I’m too depressed to cope with you or anyone else.” I don’t want to be married to anyone.” All of these are excuses for feeling sorry for yourself. Instead of blaming their partner for their general dissatisfaction with life, they are blaming “depression” for not wanting to do anything to make their life better.

Sometimes they will say, “It’s not you, it’s me.” They do realize it’s not their partner’s fault. However, they never add, “I’m going to work on improving me.” Instead they would rather just leave. It’s easier to just run away. They are in love with their negative feelings and they are totally...completely unwilling to accept responsibility for

themselves. The thing people like this tend to forget is that when they run away they have to take themselves along. Usually nothing improves. In fact most of the time things get worse.

9. Low Self Esteem and Self Righteousness

There's nothing wrong with you. You don't need fixing, and you aren't damaged goods. If you've experienced hardship in relationships, then it's more than likely that you simply haven't acquired the tools, understanding, and wisdom to create the kind of intimacy and trust you really want.

Maybe you need to learn more about how to communicate...how to listen effectively and express yourself openly. Most people talk without really thinking and call that communication.

Maybe you need to heal old wounds and move beyond the "issues" that hold you back. Most people walk around with the proverbial baggage weighing them down, slowing their progress, causing them misery instead of joy in their relationship.

Your beliefs about how loveable you are determine who you are attracted to and who is attracted to you. What do you believe about how much love you deserve? Ask yourself these questions:

1. Are you are lovable?
2. Or do you believe you have to struggle for love?
3. Do you expect your relationship to be safe place where you can be vulnerable and show your true self?
4. Or do you feel that you must protect yourself from people who say they love you?

Most people assume that if their partner is pulling away it's because they are afraid of commitment. The truth of the matter is that if they have low self-esteem and they can't understand why anyone would love them and want to be with them. In fact, they usually decide that there is something wrong with you otherwise why would you be with them.

Here you are trying to reassure them. When what they really want is for you to make them work for your affections. If they think they are not worthy of you, then they must work hard to win your affection. If you give unconditional love, they think you are a fool and become ashamed of you. That shame can turn into contempt because they have such a low opinion of themselves.

Unfortunately many people believe that if they are not perfect, then they are worthless. So when we cannot control everybody and make them do what we think is right, we are total failures. They are telling themselves, "Bad me...Stupid me...worthless me...poor

me!” Guilt and self pity are constant companions. You never find one without the other. Most people tend to whine when they are feeling sorry for themselves. The tone of voice alone can be extremely irritating.

Low self esteem is just another cohort of the guilt and self pity. A person with low self esteem believes that they are inferior to other people and can't really do anything right. They only focus on their failures. In fact they love their failures because it reinforces their belief that they are really worthless and of course, if you are worthless, failing is not your fault. You are just a victim of circumstances.

People always feel morally superior to their partner when they are upset with them. They are usually thinking something like, “I wouldn't do this to you. Look at how good I am. I still love you no matter how bad you treat me” The fact of the matter is that many people with extremely low self esteem also tend to be self righteous. While they are whining and complaining on the one hand, they are patting themselves on the back for how loyal, and good they are with the other hand. These two traits are a viscous combination that will not only drive your partner away but most other people as well. The professionals say this person has a superiority complex hiding an inferiority complex.

We all know many people who seem to spend a great deal of their time banging their heads against walls. This behavior doesn't accomplish anything except to make the person feel frustrated and depressed. So why do it? It really is simple. You see all the time they are banging their head they are also patting them self on the back. This perverse behavior provides ego satisfaction.

When a person is in pain over being rejected they are always feeling conceit. They know that less deserving people are being rejected and divorced, but them? Never! A healthy response to rejection is sadness or disappointment. But it's not the end of the world. Just go out and find someone who won't reject you. Unfortunately we hate the pain but love what causes it.

They love the idea that they need to be loved. There was a song with the lyrics, “People who need people are the luckiest people in the world” Ridiculous. People who need people are hurt, angry, insecure, anxious and afraid of loss...not exactly what I consider lucky. Do you think they are lucky?

There is no magical way to keep all of your cherished beliefs and simultaneously get rid of your pain. You have to give the beliefs up. As long as you continue to allow your partner to treat you badly, their contempt for you will grow. This is a lose-lose situation where nobody is getting what they want.

For many people, the less love they get from their partner, the more they cling to them even when the partner has open contempt for them. They subconsciously want pain. I don't think they enjoy the pain, but they definitely want it. Maybe it's all they think they deserve. So what are they patting them self on the back about? They are usually thinking something like, “I wouldn't do this to you or I don't deserve this!” What they are really

saying is “Look at how good a person I am to let you treat me this way because I love you.”

It is their self righteousness that is experiencing the pain. Self righteousness is one of the worst forms of neurotic conceit. They think that because they are good, they should get everything they want and are truly shocked when that doesn't happen.

Let's look at an example.

“I don't love you anymore”. This happens when one partner has very low self-esteem and the other partner is madly in love with them. Because the individual don't think they deserve being loved by a decent person, they hold their partner in contempt for being stupid enough to love them. They may offer other excuses such as, “You neglected me.” Or “You are never there for me when I need you”. You see, if they weren't just excuses, they would be willing to try and work their differences out if their partner offered. But they won't because they are only excuses.

The partner seeking divorce has a serious ego problem that they can't overcome by saying to themselves, “I'm so proud of myself for having conquered this idiot.” The only thing the “idiot” can do is to become more independent so their partner will begin to respect and possibly want them again. Remember, nobody respects a door mat and all good relationships are built on respect.

Chapter 3 – What Really Works?

Cooperation Always Works

Agreeing with your partner really works. When one partner rejects the other, they are in love with their negative feelings and have a tightly closed mind. So if you agree with them, don't defend yourself and sound sincere, you've opened the door. It is not normal to agree. We always want to tell the other person that they are wrong, even if we agree there is some validity to their complaints. Has trying to convince your partner that you are right ever worked? I didn't think so.

Try taking all of the blame. That will work. You win by being willing to lose. Not too long ago my partner told me I had handled a situation poorly. My first reaction was to defend my actions but I knew that would probably start a fight. I didn't feel like fighting right then so what I said was, “Honey, you have a point. I guess I could have handled it better.” Can you guess what happened next? My partner said that it was not all my fault because Bill was responsible too. So instead of arguing, my partner was defending me. Like I said, agreeing always works. Always agree.

The biggest problem with agreeing is that most people see it a sign of weakness...hypocritical...pointless because they don't believe it will work. It works because the other person is always right about something even if it is only 10 or 20% right. If you keep talking about where they are wrong things get worse. If you talk about where they are right things get immediately better. It is absolutely amazing...when you agree, sound sincere, do not defend yourself, do not explain your actions, they will defend you. It works every time. Try it. You'll see.

The fact of the matter is that people do not want to divorce someone who is always pleasant and always seeing their side of things and agreeing with them. People don't want to be married to someone always making demands on them and punishing them when they don't do what the other person wants. Stop pressuring your partner to love you. Don't say, "You have to love me because we're married." Can't you see that the solution to that is to get a divorce so you don't have to love that person? If your partner wants a divorce, agree. Tell them you are willing to do whatever is best for them. Guess what? You just cut their hostility of at the knees.

So how can you agree when in reality you don't agree? Isn't that dishonest? Ask yourself what your purpose is. Is it to prove to your partner that they are wrong and you are right? Trying to prove them wrong will only make them hostile and more stubborn. You are attacking their ego and pride. Is that what you want? Do you want to escalate the war? If not, try something different. First off no one is 100% right or wrong. Each partner is both right and wrong. If you can see where your partner has some valid points, you are not being dishonest when you agree. You are just acknowledging that they have some valid points.

By not acknowledging the valid points you are saying, "I don't care about your feelings or your pride. I only care about what I want...about my feelings...my pride. Allow your partner to retain their pride by acknowledging their valid points and they will begin to move in the direction you want them to go.

By agreeing you are not a slave to your partner's wants...you are not a conquered person. Conquered people are rebellious and feel they have to take the opposite position. It takes strength, emotional maturity and healthy self-esteem to see that your partner is always right...not a 100% of the time but at least 10% to 20% of the time. So in reality, your partner is always right and so are you. Learn from the salesman, he always agrees with the customer and when he does he usually makes the sale which is wanted to do.

Do what makes you happy

If you take responsibility for your happiness, you can become a happy person. Once that happens, your partner will do one of two things. Run...or decide they want some of what you have. So you need to work on making yourself happy by doing the following things:

- Take part in activities that bring you the most peace, satisfaction and a sense of deep meaning in your life.

- Invest time in your other relationships with friends and family
- Invite your partner to do things that you both enjoy doing
- Refuse to let your partner manipulate, control or produce guilt in you.
- Be willing to upset the status quo until the relationship finds a new and healthier balance.
- Commit to loving yourself no matter what happens

Once you have built up your self esteem by learning to love yourself, you can stop fighting and start agreeing.

If You Are Already Separated

Now this doesn't mean you can't have contact. If you are separated, you can call and say hi. Keep it to small talk...nothing serious...nothing you will fight about. Most people, including most professionals, will tell you to have a serious talk. Serious talks usually hurt a relationship especially while it is falling apart. Serious talk just keeps the war going leaving both parties more hurt, more angry, more defensive and more negative. There is a myth in our society that expressing your negative feelings gets it out of your system.

How can something that hurts someone and gives them a reason to get more defensive help anything? In fact, these expressions become a habit and part of your self image which makes you a more negative person and drives away the things you want.

Chat like you would with a casual friend...nothing serious, nothing controversial. Keep contact short. If you do this your partner will be willing to talk to you because they are not feeling pressured. Make your calls brief and stick to practical things so the perception of there being a clash of wills lessens.

You should also date other people. Why? Everyone knows it is easier to get a job if you already have a job. The employer sees an employed candidate as more desirable than an unemployed candidate. The same thing is true with your partner. If you are dating someone else, they will see you as more desirable. But you don't want any one else? So what

Go out with someone else anyway. Who knows you might actually enjoy yourself. In the meantime, when your partner sees you with someone else they will reevaluate their decision to divorce you. Your partner may decide you are worth reconsidering. In most cases, that is what happens. You know how it is. You may not be sure you want them but you definitely don't want someone else to have them...at least not yet.

Why does going out and having fun work? Because if you just sit around all day and whine, whine, whine “I don’t have...I don’t have...My partner doesn’t love me enough and I am losing them.” your relationship will never improve. You have to accept responsibility for your own happiness even if you don’t really believe it. Act confident...positive whether you feel that way or not.

Conclusion

Should every marriage be saved? This is a difficult question to answer. The fact of the matter is that some marriages should not continue...others should. For example, if one partner is physically, verbally or sexually abusive...they should divorce. Most marriages can be saved. However, whether the marriage should be saved has more to do with what each partner wants. It’s difficult to maintain a healthy relationship unless the people involved are emotionally healthy as well.

We have discussed what the real causes and the many common excuses for divorce are. The best ways to stop the divorce and create a healthy relationship are:

- Decide what you want out of the relationship
- Make decisions based on love rather than fear
- Accept you partner for who they are. Respect their right to be wrong...to have wants and desires that are different from yours.
- Accept responsibility for you own happiness realizing the being loved is a want and not a need. The only person you can change is yourself.
- Realize that every human being is worthwhile and deserves happiness and that includes you.
- Accept the fact that no one is ever 100% right or 100% wrong so everyone is always partly right and partly wrong. Acknowledging valid points reduces hostility and can be the basis for a lasting relationship.
- Communicate honestly and really listen to what you partner is saying.
- Devise mutual strategies on how you will handle future conflicts
- Commit to finding win-win solutions. No one will get 100% of what they want but both will get enough to be happy. You must agree to compromise.
- Share the power rather than demanding to have everything you way.
- View differences as interesting challenges and problems as learning opportunities.

If you learn to do these things you will become more emotionally healthy and happy even if you can’t or no longer want to stop the divorce. I guarantee if you use these principles when you get back together or in a new relationship, you will have the tools for a happy and successful marriage.