

**SAVE MY MARRIAGE TODAY!**



*Consults Book*  
VOLUME 3

A collection of marriage consultations written  
and compiled by Andrew Rusbatch

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## **Introduction**

Saving a marriage is seldom a simple task, as an accurate definition of marriage and what constitutes a problem is varied and complicated. While counselors and self help guides endeavor to provide couples with the answers they need to their most pressing marriage problems, there are a number of situations and influences that make some peoples' marriage crises unique.

This book is a compilation of consultations that have taken place between me and members of the Save My Marriage Today team, and couples in search of answers that they feel our course hasn't fully answered.

The purpose of this book is to facilitate your learning and understanding of the complexity, while at the same time universality, of marriage problems, and what it takes to create a truly secure and loving relationship.

I have edited any identifying details from the submissions and my replies, in order to protect the anonymity of my members. Other than that, I remind you that these are real consultations, from people with real marriage problems.

The consultations are broken down into several broad topics or themes, which will assist you in your navigation through this book and its contents. The book is divided into three volumes, in order that you might be able to read and digest the material, and print them if necessary, with more ease than a single 300+ page book.

As you read through the consultations, you may know someone with a similar marriage problem. Some of the consultations may strike parallels with your own marriage. In imparting our wisdom to members, our hope is to share this information with you, so that you may develop a greater appreciation and understanding of what is happening in your relationship and how to address it.

Yours in marriage success,

Andrew Rusbatch

Co-author  
Save My Marriage Today

## Negative Patterns Of Behavior



Hi, I downloaded Save your Marriage and I have a question. Maybe some of this is covered in your program but I need a fast answer on this matter. I have been married for 35 years and have always been trying to keep from drowning. My husband makes very derogatory comments publicly and privately. I guess you would call it verbal and emotional abuse. I have been to my Pastor recently as I am ready to put a stop to this one way or the other as this continual bad attitude that is there needs to be dealt with. As they know regular counseling and marriage courses have not helped, they are suggesting a period of separation for the purpose of his facing himself. I left about 5 years ago for about 2 months and there was a change in him for about a week after I returned. My question is, do you think a period of separation is good as a form of shock therapy as nothing else has worked. I want it all to work, but not at the expense of dying slowly or at times quickly in order to get away from such attacks. Do you think doing your program can be done within these circumstances with both spouses at home or do you sometimes recommend a period of separation? I have to make up my mind about the separation aspect soon, so I would appreciate hearing your opinion. Thank You

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

More than anything I feel you and your husband need to work on your communication techniques, and talk to each other about why these attacks are happening. When your husband makes these attacks, have you asked him why he feels he needs to make them? What motivates him to make these comments? How does it add to his sense of satisfaction, knowing he is hurting you? Have you spoken to him directly about how his derogatory comments make you feel?

I don't recommend using separation as a means of punishment, because it rarely works. All it seems to do is reduce the level of communication between the two of you and worsen the problem. When he makes these attacks publicly, what sort of things does he say? What do you do?

I had a client that was in a similar situation to you, and her husband made comments in an effort to be entertaining. She was at her wits end as to what to do, so I suggested the next time he did it in front of friends that she throws a drink at him. So she did. What that did was embarrass him, which he didn't like. Now I don't condone violence, so don't take the wrong message from this, but what his wearing a drink did was get his attention, which she had failed to do up until then. He needed to be shocked into realizing how bad the marriage had become. When they sat down and she was finally able to explain how he embarrassed her when he made derogatory comments, he stopped doing them.

The point I am trying to illustrate here is that you can't always control what your partner is going to do, but you can control your reaction. Try reacting to his derogatory comments in a different way. If he embarrasses you, try doing something to embarrass him. Say something that will embarrass him, or throw

a drink. Do something to get his attention. Every action has a reaction, and your husband needs to know that his actions will have consequences. Make the consequences a negative experience for him, and he is less likely to repeat them.

Most importantly, you need to look at your husband's reasons and motivations for making hurtful comments. In what way is his life feeling unfulfilled, unhappy, or frustrating, and how does hurting you make him feel better? Rather than concentrating on his comments, you need to take a step back and look at his reasons for making those comments. That is where you are going to make the most progress. When you are able to sit down and discuss his motivations, you will be able to turn around this pattern of negative behavior.

Leaving isn't going to make your problem go away. You need to get his attention and develop effective communication techniques. I have a number of communication exercises in the package that you can work through together as a couple.

I wish you the best of luck.



We have been married for 20 years and have had a relationship for over 24 years. We have two adult married children. We have one grandchild and another on the way. We are both 52 years old. I am a CA (CPA in the US) in public practice and my wife has her own bookkeeping practice with the majority of her clients having been referred by me and are my clients as well. I believe that this business partnership is a large part of our problem. We would have disagreements over how to deal with business issues that would degenerate into fights because my wife would take any kind of criticism personally because it was coming from me. It didn't seem to matter how I approached it. This fighting would at times become unfair and loud on both sides. The only other item that seemed to become an issue toward the end is that my wife helped my family out a lot due to health issues and she began to comment that they did not seem to appreciate what she did for them. There is nothing else significant that I can think of.

My wife moved out on Aug. 23 while I was away and then phoned me to meet her for a drink so she could tell me. I have since tried to find out why she left. She says that it has been coming for a long time and that it was not a snap decision. She really doesn't tell me much. She has said a few things, as follows: 1. She says that I don't respect her and I think she is stupid. I finally was able to get her to tell me that she said this because, she says, no matter what she says, I always know better or have a better idea. I guess there is some truth to this but, for the most part, we had give and take on both sides and neither of us dominated the marriage. She says that she still cares for me but that she "doesn't feel the same way any more." She has also said she has to find herself, that she doesn't know who she is any more. We have both gone to the same counselor, but separately. She absolutely refuses to go together because, she says, there's no point. She has told the counselor there is no one big thing about me that caused her to leave. I have suggested staying apart for now and trying to work with the counselor to see if we can find a way back together but she flatly refuses. However, she still wants a relationship with me on the business side. I do not know that I can do this for the long term as it is too emotionally painful for me. My feeling is that we have to do the same work to keep that rela-

relationship going as for our marriage and I just don't think I have it in me to do that work just for a business relationship. If that fell apart, it would be devastating for her business and she needs it to be kept together. I am trying for now but don't know how long I can do it. One thing that she has said is that one of the reasons she can't come back is that, if it didn't work, she would find it too emotionally devastating and she doesn't want to take that chance.

One final thought I had is to tell you how our lives have been in recent years, especially the last two. We have been going flat out. We always seem to be putting on a party, working overtime, participating in sports or running around for other people. We haven't made much time for each other. We have both been stressed out as a result. I believe this made us both become more irritable and short-tempered with each other and to allow little things to become big things. There was a lot of stress with my daughter's wedding which took place on July 30. It seems like that she had decided to move out after that event. I knew that we needed time together and tried to get her to take a holiday with me. We had even booked a weekend at a local hotel but she left before that could happen. One of the things I find particularly confusing is that two days before she left, we came back from a golf weekend together with another couple. We had a good time, laughed a lot and just relaxed. Then, two days later, she left.

This is a very brief synopsis of my situation. If you need more, please let me know. Anything you could suggest would be greatly appreciated.

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

Having a living and working relationship between man and wife can place a strain on even the most strong and stable relationships. Quite often in business people can exhibit different characteristics to what they may do at home, and this can be either alluring or disconcerting for the other partner. It seems in this circumstance that your approach to business relationships has hurt her and damaged her self esteem to the point of crisis which you see now.

I understand that you may not have meant to undermine her self-confidence in your business approach and your subsequent arguments over business issues, nevertheless it is something that has happened. Feelings and self esteem issues don't always follow logic and don't always have concrete reasoning. Despite this, your wife's feelings are still very real and valid. You don't have to agree with her feelings, but you need to understand that she has her reasons for having them.

Looking at why she feels these undermined feelings and how she might better express these feelings might be something for her to examine in individual counseling. In marital counseling we would look at how you can overcome the feelings that your wife has in order to come to some sort of middle ground where her contributions to conversation and her contributions to your marital and business relationship are validated.

You need to examine how important it is to always be right, and how important it is to let your wife have

her opinions. Choose your battles, examine the outcome, and ask yourself: Does it really matter? Let her make some decisions and have more input into decision making in your marriage. You may find that her way of doing things is also right, but just different. If you always know better or have better ideas you are dominating the marriage no matter which way you choose to look at it. You might not always do things the best way if your wife makes the decision, but making her feel validated and happy may be worth more.

Examine your reasons for always needing to be in control. Why is this more important to you than your wife's happiness? What do you think you need to do to overcome this? What changes do you need to make?

I understand your reluctance to maintain a business relationship if this feels like it is too much effort, however if you end your business relationship at this point, it may signal the end for any chance of a reconciliation in your marriage.

Your wife mentions that she isn't prepared to take a chance in case it doesn't work out. That makes no sense. In making no effort she is living the worst case scenario. If she tries, there is a chance that it may work. Is that not better than living the worst scenario out like she is right now?

You need to talk to her about your feelings, and the need for you to both make efforts to change the way you deal with conflicts. Tell her that you are finding it hard maintaining any type of relationship, business or marital when she is unprepared to make any effort if that is the way you feel. Be careful here though, as she might take it as a threat. You both need to be open about your feelings without being accusatory.

She needs to be prepared to meet you half way. Take some time out. Take a few days off and encourage your wife to do the same. If you are going to save your marriage you need to initiate the dialogue once more. You don't need to push her into shifting back in, but you need to start the process of you both sharing your feelings and letting your feelings be heard.

Good luck with that.

Andrew



My husband cried last week on Monday and said that he wanted to come home so I told him to come home. However, every night that I cooked he simply said that he did not enjoy my food and gave it to the dogs. I took one week of his being on Flirtnet in front me, looking at his mistress on his cellular phone every night, verbal abuse when on Friday night I just could not take it anymore and went out. He then SMSed me and wanted to know when I would be home. On Saturday, he accused me of taking his work keys and money when in fact he had simply misplaced his work keys and his money – he had given my son money for his pellet gun. On Sunday morning he continued to verbally abuse me and upon his stating “you’re a fucking whore!”... I just simply took his clothes and



all his belongings - put them in his car and told him to get out. I am not prepared to put with a man who verbally abuses me and when I am trying to please him and "change" for him, admits that "why should he change", must simply get out of my life as I no longer want a husband who does not want/love me for what I am. I deserve respect amongst anything else. I have tried for 3 months for him to come home and this is what I get for doing so. I do not know if our marriage is repairable, but at this stage, I feel that although I do love him, he has now hurt me beyond doubt and I do not know if I am prepared to put up with it. Our home is in both our names and on Saturday, it was agreed to put the house on the market - I have 2 boys from my previous marriage and decided to go and buy another property, if not to carry on with my life. I cannot allow my husband to pull me down to a state of depression where I feel worthless, unloved and just not worthy to be alive.

If you have any suggestions, please reply ASAP.

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

Let me just start by saying how very proud I am of you in taking the courage to stand up for yourself and putting an end to the cycle of abuse. You only get treated the way you allow yourself to be treated, and when things degenerate to the level of verbal abuse that you have endured it is a good time to take control and end the cycle. Your husband does not have to like you all the time, and he doesn't always have to agree with you, but respect for each other is paramount in a marriage.

Don't be in too much of a rush to sell the house or make any life-changing decisions. Your husband was out of control when he abused you, and you removed him from this situation and took control. Now that your husband is removed from the situation, you both need time to put things in perspective and decide with a clear mind where to go from here. Has he made any contact with you since?

You need to know that you are separating for the right reasons, and not simply using your separation as a punishment for your husband's unacceptable outburst. You need to know if there is any chance of regaining some of the basic principles that founded your marriage, such as respect, trust, love, and the ability to nurture and fulfill each others' needs both emotionally and physically. Once you are able to reopen dialogue with your husband you will be able to establish if there are any of these founding principles that can be salvaged. It is based on this that your marriage will be saved or fail.

You mention your feelings of worthlessness, feeling unloved and unworthiness. What sort of emotional outlets do you have? Friends, siblings or acquaintances? Perhaps even a counselor? I would encourage you to discuss those feelings with someone who is able to assist. Friends or family members know you the best and may be good people to discuss your feelings with and process these feelings in a healthy way. Alternately there are counselors who may be able to assist.

Your personal strength and feelings of self-worth are vital at this time in your life. Take some time out to recapture your sense of self and inner strength. There are a range of exercises in the book that will help you do this.





ing a divorce. I have purchased and am currently reading your book on-line. Here's my situation...my husband and I have been married for nearly 10 years and have 1 son who's 7 yrs old. My husband is 50 and I am 42. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage for both of us. My husband's other 2 grown children are not in the picture and I have never met them. From what I know his 1<sup>st</sup> high school sweetheart wife was very controlling. They were married 13 years. I was married for 2 years the first time

My husband's father was an alcoholic. His mother died suddenly at age 40 after raising 5 children who although all live within 1 hour of each other, rarely speak except at the Christmas holiday. He still feels he never received the love or respect he deserved from his father before he died.

My parents are in their late 60's and have the marriage from hell. They stay together, but are both miserable. My mother came from an abusive childhood with an alcoholic father who beat their mother. My father is an extremely selfish only child. My mother constantly pulled me into her triangle and told me her marital problems and bad mouthed my dad my entire childhood. She used me and my brother as scapegoats from her marital problems and still tries too. I remember my father coming up behind my mother in the kitchen and snapping her bra strap or pinching her butt and she would get angry and push him away (I now do the same things with my husband). My mother plays the martyr role. My mother was always good at doing things on the "to do" list (as I do now) and working outside the home, but never showed us an example of what a good marital relationship with love and affection is. My father has never told me he loves me and rarely gives me a hug or nice word. He's very critical of others and verbally abusive to my mother. It is very uncomfortable for me being around him.

I was a fat child growing up and was called names even by my own father. When boys finally noticed me it was for only one thing – a quick get laid job. I thought giving them sex would bring me emotional closeness I had lacked for my entire life from my father. I finally realized in my 30's what a fool I had been having so many sexual partners trying to get them to be more than 1 night stands. The nice boyfriend I did have in college, I broke up with and I went back to my promiscuous ways. I know I had some date rapes as well being intoxicated and an abortion at 21 (didn't know who the father was) and while visiting my Aunt and Uncle for 3 weeks one summer when I was 20, my Uncle would pull my bathing suit top down and grab my breasts making me feel violated. Now when my husband grabs and fondles my breast especially in rooms other than the bedroom I become angry and pull away.

My husband and I met at work. It was heated passion at first (like they all are for me), then it settled down. We did enjoy each other's company though, taking long walks getting to know one another, sharing dreams and goals. We built a house, got engaged and had a very small wedding. Although he had a vasectomy, he swore he wanted more children with me. So, after a year of trying with fertility treatments we were finally blessed. Being 33 and waiting so long for a family I was consumed by the pregnancy and preparations. Having morning sickness until the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> month, I wasn't much fun to be with. When I started feeling better, I suggested we take a romantic weekend away. So we did and it was a disaster. He was miserable and I had no idea why. At 8 months pregnant he started getting angry with me over everything and then told me the night I went in to labor he couldn't do this anymore and our relationship was over. I pleaded with him to stay until after the baby came. He did, but announced when our son was 1 month old right before Christmas he didn't love me anymore and was leaving. He moved out 4 months later. I know he agonized over his decision and I was devastated. He refused counseling. I went alone. We were separated for nearly 2 years and during this time I attended counseling on my own and we did a few sessions together, but nothing ever really became of it. I started dating someone else after a year and really began to grow close to him emotionally and

started a physical/sexual relationship with him. It was wonderful! We'd talk and laugh and have the best sex ever. Sometimes I feel better about myself as a person when I'm alone because my husband just reminds me more of the negative things that I do rather than the positive ones which makes me feel like a horrible person. Ralph was able to say the things I needed to hear..."you're a good person", "you're beautiful".

But, things still didn't feel exactly right...I felt guilty.. He wasn't my husband or my son's father. During the separation hubby and I were civil, but kept our private life from each other only seeing each other when we dropped our son off to each other. I did invite him to do family things together. He made few efforts to try to date me or do things together. He is a very passive aggressive personality. So, it was about 6 months after dating this other guy, I gave it one last shot with my husband. I suggested we try counseling again and give it another try. He agreed. We stopped seeing other people and tried to focus on us. He moved back in 6 months later because he lost his job and couldn't afford his apartment.

I think we moved way too fast back into our old lives without resolving these issues from the past and letting them go. I know he is still resentful toward me and brings them up. I feel I have worked through a lot of that, but still have issues with trusting him completely after leaving me when I needed him most. I also feel guilty (5 yrs later) for having another relationship and I still think of how nice it was and wish my husband and I could be like that. He does not know the extent of that relationship.

We haven't slept together in 4 years due to his snoring. While being a single mom I became an extremely light sleeper. His snoring has gotten worse with his age. It bothers me we don't sleep together and share a bed because I feel it brings me a feeling of safety and security and also an opportunity to snuggle and be close even without sex. He says if we aren't close during the day, what's the difference if we sleep together? And he refuses to see a doctor for his snoring. So, our son has never known that parents are supposed to sleep in the same bed. We have sex every few months when we can finally agree on it.

After my other relationship I realized what a great kisser Ralph was and what a terrible kisser my husband is. The chemistry was definitely there for Ralph and I, but not for my husband and I. I pull away from him when he tries to kiss me because my brain says – oh, no here's comes that terrible kissing again. I have tried to show him on several occasions how I'd like to be kissed, but it doesn't work. Ralph was 10 years younger than him and an extremely attractive man. Hubby is showing his age with age spots, balding, belly, acne scars and many molds on his back that I do not find attractive. I know this all sounds terrible and wonder why I would stay with him, but here's the positive. He is a devoted husband and tells me constantly he loves me and shows me affection. He's not the most romantic but tries. He's a great father and if we have done anything right we get compliments all the time from teachers and parents of a wonderful job we have done raising our son. He works very hard at his job and is outgoing and friendly with everyone. He is always willing to lend someone a hand. He jokes around a lot and has always had a way of making me laugh – which is what attracted me to him in the first place. Even when we attended counseling, the counselor would comment we would leave the session with a smile or laugh.

I don't feel attracted to him anymore. I see him as an old man. I don't want to complain about him like my mother does or put my son in that triangle. We go out occasionally by ourselves or with other cou-

ples and our son spends a few weekends a year at my parents so we do have time alone, but it always ends up in disappointment and a fight. Neither of our expectations are met even though we sometimes do express before hand what they are. Now, we don't even look forward to that alone time. He wants closeness – both physically, sexually and emotionally. I do too, but just can't seem to feel that way about him anymore. He asked me to dress in certain ways and I do once or twice, but it's never enough for him. The affection I give him is never enough. I do admit I do things to avoid sex with him. It feels like an obligation, not something I look forward to. We have no foreplay and if we do – I don't enjoy his kissing and it turns me off. I think I am more of the guy – get it over with quick. There were times during our relationship when we did make sex playful and fun, but it never happens anymore.

I really don't want our marriage to end, but feel he would be better off without me. I feel I am depriving him of the loving relationship he deserves and he's wasting his life on me. He's not getting his needs met by me, so I think it will be just a matter of time before someone comes along that can do that for him.

Another reason I pull away from him is he nearly always has bad breath. I have spoken with him about it many times and even our son says something, but he doesn't go to the doctor. It's very offensive and a turn off to get close to someone with bad breath. He only brushes his teeth in the morning and I asked him to change that. He does sometimes, but not consistently. He says his bad breath is just another excuse for me not being close to him.

I truly believe we care about each other very much, but our relationship has become more of a competition of who's right and wrong and who wants what when. He still continues to point the finger at me and says if I changed my behavior toward him everything would be better. During counseling sessions, the counselor did say I had made some small changes, but didn't see much of what my husband had done. Maybe if I did change my attitude it would be better. But I feel he needs to be more sensitive and understanding to my sexual abuse issues from the past (and avoid those things that trigger past memories for me), but all he says is I should just get over it and that he's not the one that did that to me. He says it doesn't matter how he touches me, I pull away. He said give me options of how I can touch you and I do – holding, hugging, cuddling, but that doesn't get him what he really wants – sex.

He says we are only close and have sex when I want it. He says I only want sex or to be close when I need it or feel like it, not when he tries to initiate it. I guess it's true – that way I can have some say or control over what happens to me. But I feel there is so much more wrong with us than just sex. He says I am not committed to the relationship and sometimes I don't feel like I am, that it would be just easier to let things go.

Our pet cat died nearly 4 years ago and both my son and I have been asking to get another one. He refuses because he says it will be one more thing that I will have as an excuse to take care of and not give him attention and affection.

He complains I don't respect him or listen to him. That I shoot down his ideas without even trying them. I agree I do at times. We did get closer last year when we were taking dance lessons at a dance studio in preparation for a wedding he was in. It's the closest I've felt to him in years. Then a few months later



the feeling was gone again. We are capable of feeling close and enjoying each other, but it just doesn't stay that way for long. I remember a time when we met when he would write me love letters when he was away on a business trip or send me flowers for no reason at all.

We both work full time and our jobs can be very stressful at times. We assume the traditional domestic roles at home – me doing the laundry, cooking, house cleaning and he takes care of the yard, projects, fixing the cars. We both equally share in the responsibilities with our son.

Even though I put surprise notes in his lunchbox or do unexpected reminders, gifts of my feelings for him, it's not enough or the way he wants to be shown affection/attention. Why does it seem we are so mismatched now, so many years later? Why were we able to meet each other's needs years ago, but not anymore?

He is now extremely defensive and actually pushes me away. He keeps needing reassurance verbally and physically that I want him. When he's not pushing me away, I'm pushing him away. How do we stop this see saw game and break down the barriers for good?

I love being a family (we both enjoy our son tremendously), but what happens when our son grows up and moves away – are we headed for my parent's marriage?

Thank you for any help or advice you can give us!

MY REPLY:

Hi,

Thanks for your email.

From what you have described in your submission, you and your husband both sound very unhappy with your marriage. Your husband has some very deep self-esteem issues, and this is reflected in his constant need for affirmation of your love and affection.

I can see from what you have written that you are both pushing each other away at different times, and this is causing a lot of pain for the both of you. It is very easy for this see sawing to continue indefinitely unless one of you is prepared to end it.

From the sound of it, you both have work to do. If your husband wants the affection and intimacy he craves, he needs to realize that he needs to make an effort. Bad breath and a lack of foreplay make intimacy very one-sided, and as a husband he needs to consider what it takes to make the experience pleasurable for you too. Its not just about him getting his pleasure. For love making to bring you closer together, you both need to be in tune with each other's needs.

You need to let go of the guilt of your past relationship. Your husband left you first. What happened after he left is nothing to feel guilt about. Your relationship ended when he walked out.

You mention that you have been to counseling for years and the suggestions never stay in place. Why do you suppose that is? Why do the both of you revert back to your destructive patterns of behavior? If you want to make real changes in your relationship, you need to both be committed to making the changes and

continuing with the effort. A marriage is a continual evolution of feelings and effort. When you stop making the effort, your marriage suffers.

Sit down together and make a list of what each of you expect from your marriage, like an ideal marriage wish list. Then make a list of what each of you bring to the marriage, both financially, physically and emotionally. This should identify the gaps where your problems lie. It might also be a good idea to make a list of things that cause you to push your partner away. This would be helpful so that the both of you know why the other is pulling away from the relationship.

Make a list of goals that you believe you can achieve in a month. Then 3 months. Then 6 months. Make the goals specific and attainable, and revisit your goals regularly to assess your progress in achieving them. You both need to have goals set so that you have something to work towards. This is vital, because up until now you have no incentive to follow through with your counseling outside the sessions, and no way of measuring your progress.

You also mention that you do unexpected reminders and gifts of your feelings for him, but it's not enough or the way he wants to be shown affection/attention. Have you read author Gary Chapman's "*The Five Love Languages*"? Check it out. I will guarantee this will change the way you communicate love to one another.

You have a chance, but it involves discipline from both of you. Let's break the negative patterns of behavior and start goal setting.

Kind regards,

Andrew



I have never been in such a horrible mess for nearly 3 years. Divorce in full swing. Lawyers getting rich. Worst haven't seen my 2 girls, now 14 and 20, for 15 months.

I can't get my wife to even speak to me. I send her emails and she sends back Criminal Harassment threats. We were both 50 when it happened-no infidelity, violence, abuse etc. I certainly wasn't perfect, but neither was she. Married 24.5 years lived together for 3.5 years before that.

You have some good points in Book 2 – I need to now reread them both. Please help. Big thing is to get her to talk to me- no idea how - she has lots of support. I don't have much support at all. Don't know what else to say. I have depression-not a big deal/worried a lot (about business i.e. for them). Once she said I had always drank a little too much-at 50 I was lonely so drank too much downtown.

She asked that I go to AA which I willingly did. Had one relapse(did a big business deal & came home 2oclock) She said next time she would divorce me. Soon after I relapsed again -Calgary Stampede-within 2 days she was gone! This was May1-July15. On the other hand she made all the big life deci-

sions unilaterally – the decision to have kids how to raise them, me-Chores. why didn't she tell her OWN daughter)emasculated me in the prime of my life@38 Didn't think it was a big deal - now I do. No holidays for 6years -interfered with her golf leagues. And of course this huge one -get a divorce-no counseling. Problem - I still love her and of course my girls - the youngest of which was Daddy's girl then and is now being played like a pawn in a chess game.

Help.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Unfortunately, your marriage has been festering and rotting for many years, and it is only now that you want to do something about it. When you stopped sleeping together at 38, your marriage was in serious trouble. The first sign of what is going on in a relationship can be gauged from the nature and frequency of sex in your relationship, and while it's not the only facet of a marriage, it's a pretty important one. If you were no longer sleeping together or having sex, you really weren't living as a married couple. Couple that with the alcoholism and the lack of holidays or quality time spent together, and I am not surprised that you both had some depression issues both individually and as a couple.

I would understand that her Criminal Harassment threats to your emails would indicate that she doesn't want to hear from you. When it has got to this stage, I think it is time to walk away. The more you dig your heels in on this one, the more she is going to react with force. The criminal harassment notices are an indication of how serious she is, and I would implore you to take that into consideration.

Your marriage has continued down a destructive path for quite some years from what you have described, and I feel it may have gone too far to turn it around. Too much time has passed, (more than 12 years from what I can calculate), and too much hurt. Initially you may have kept it together for the kids, but considering the negative patterns of behavior that have pervaded your marriage, sometimes it's best for the children if you live apart.

What exactly do you love? Your wife, or your old way of life? You lost your wife 12 years ago when the sex stopped, and have lived more as room mates than as husband and wife. 12 years is almost a lifetime of resentment and sexual unfulfillment, and to be honest, I think it's too late to turn it around. In that time your wife has moved on, and realized that you no longer play a significant role in what's left of your marriage.

I want you to consider your reasons for wanting to save this marriage. Is it because you love her with all your heart, or is it because you like the benefits that being married does for you?

Basically, is it for love, or more selfish reasons?

I believe the best course of action for you is to cease contact, after sending one last letter or email. Thank her for being your friend. Thank her for being your wife and bringing you many years of happiness and two wonderful children. And tell her that you will always be her friend, even if she doesn't want to be.



Love is not possession. Love is what you had, but it is time to let go. It's still possible to love her even when you are no longer together.

Kind regards,

Andrew



My husband Jack and I have been married for 9 years. Our relationship was fantastic for the first 2 years but after we got married he lost interest in sex. He was still affectionate to me and I felt loved but he explained that he didn't have much sex drive and had always been like that in previous relationships. Our relationship was strong in all other respects and we went on to have 2 children (now 6 and 4.)

Our problems revolve around issues with Jack's family and the way he deals with them. Jack's mother and sister Miranda have not been in contact for 15 years. This has always upset Jack and he has felt a responsibility to look after his sister because of his mother's absence. Miranda told us 4 years ago that she had been abused by her stepfather. She told us because we have two daughters to protect. Jack didn't want to face up to this and tried to convince himself that it may not be true. My angle was that we must protect our children as a priority even if it is not true only Miranda and her stepfather will ever know the truth. He buried his head in the sand for 18 months and I struggled to cope with the information we had been given and my desire to protect the children. Ultimately, after many upsetting debates between us, we tackled the problem by explaining the accusation to Jack's mum and stepfather and stating although we did not believe it we had to take measures to protect our children for our own piece of mind. Our proposal was that we would always be around when they saw the children. Jack's mum reacted very badly and had nothing to do with us for almost a year. She refused to accept our point of view and when contact was eventually resumed she was rude and hostile towards us.

Meanwhile Miranda had become an alcoholic and was arrested for drunk driving. Only Jack and I knew and supported her. We turned up for her court hearing and she was sent to prison for 2 weeks. Jack was struggling to cope with all these traumas and I became angry with his mother for neglecting Miranda and leaving her supportive role to Jack.

In November last year my Mum was diagnosed with Cancer. Jack seemed unable to give me the emotional support I craved. This put a huge strain on me and I know I transferred a lot of my anger onto Jack's mother. We saw her in February and she was vile. I lost my temper and told her a few home truths. She told me to get out of her house.

Jack and I only argue about his family. I get frustrated that he can't deal with his emotions and handle situations that arise. He can't stand that I hate his mother and wants me to bury my emotions like he does. With every family problem I have seen Jack withdraw more and more emotionally. He has de-

scribed himself as feeling “dead inside”. He works long hours and I look after the house and children and have a part time job. He started a fitness kick last year, going to the gym, swimming, cycling and has decided he wants to climb Mont Blanc next year. He appears to be trying to lose himself in activities he enjoys and is shutting down his life with me and the girls. The weekends have become difficult. He exercises then just wants to sleep or watch TV. I thought he was depressed. I tried to get him to go to the doctors but he resisted. Eventually I booked him an appointment. He refused to go and said he needed some time to think. He disappeared for a week. When he came back he said we had grown apart and he couldn't live with me anymore. He moved out, saying he doesn't see a future for us. That was 2 weeks ago. I don't know what to do. I love him and want our marriage to work but I don't know how to get past all this baggage. He told me a few days ago that he has failed as a father and a husband and he doesn't have any emotional attachment to me or the children. He really wanted children and to give them the security and happiness he didn't have as a child. I can't understand how he is now feeling. He has agreed to go to counseling but I feel he has made his mind up that our marriage is over. I know things have been hard but I feel our relationship has a strong foundation and is worth saving.

Thanks for your help.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your submission. From what you have written, I can identify a number of different issues, and outline how each of them can be looked at in a calm and structured manner. The first thing I will tell you is that your marriage is able to be saved, and has every chance of doing so once the issues surrounding your relationship are able to be dealt with one by one.

The issues I can identify are:

- The break in contact between Miranda and her mother
- Sexual abuse allegations
- Support network for Miranda
- Protecting your daughters from harm
- Break in contact between you and Jack's mother
- Finding an effective way of dealing with and processing emotions
- Depression

Perhaps the most important observation here is that you have both allowed issues and arguments that are not yours enter your life and affect your relationship. While Jack feels emotionally invested in his relationships with Miranda and with his mother, allowing their issues to enter his life has put extra pressure on your marriage when perhaps it shouldn't have. That is one of the dangers of letting yourself get involved in other people's lives and issues. This is especially hard when it is family.

I feel Jack has taken on board Miranda's feelings and subconsciously made them his own. This has also jeopardized his relationship with his mother. Since Jack feels very emotionally close to his mother as well as his sister, the situation has placed a lot of pressure on his loyalty, and seeing either of them would bring associated feelings of guilt and betrayal of the other. With the benefit of hindsight, Jack

should never have got involved, especially considering the impact this has had on his immediate family, namely you and your children.

Sexual abuse allegations are almost always explosive issues, and at this stage a counselor or mediator should have been called in. Jack is not qualified to mediate in this sort of issue, and perhaps a step ahead in this respect would be to get the family to hire a mediator to work towards resolving this situation.

Miranda is in dire need of support, and while Jack feels he needs to be there for her, he cannot do it alone. Miranda needs the support of other friends to help Jack ease the pressure and responsibility he feels toward her.

Protecting your daughters is paramount, and despite Jack's mother's hurt feelings, you did the right thing. Your children need to be supervised at all times when they are around Jack's parents, and it should be possible to do this in a subtle fashion. This might hurt Jack's mother, but your first loyalty as parents is with your children's welfare and safety, regardless of whether the allegations are true or not.

Combining all of this emotional turmoil with the split between you and Jack's mother would be an emotional strain almost too much to bear for anyone. I'm not surprised Jack is depressed, and he might be on the verge of a breakdown. You need to listen to what he tells you when he says he is dead inside, and when he says he has failed as a father and a husband. What this indicates is that he has given so much of his emotion to his family issues that he has nothing left to offer you and the children. That's not all that uncommon.

What you need to do is meet with his sister and mother, probably individually and encourage them to look at mediation. One family has already been torn apart, and while they feel they may or may not be able to salvage their relationship, they should all have a common love for Jack to want to ease the pressure that has been placed on him and help him save his relationship. Your children need a father, and their happiness as well as Jack's must come first.

Whether or not you like her, she is still Jack's mother. Nothing will change that. As his mother, you and her should have a lot in common. You both want Jack to be happy and want the best for him and his children. Make this your focus rather than focusing on the things that divide you.

Your focus has to be on easing as much pressure off Jack's life as possible. His mother and sister could help do this too in their own ways, and this would be for a common good. As far as I can see, everyone loves Jack, and he feels burnt out from the push-pull of his emotions, and this is what has had the greatest detrimental effect on his marriage.

Jack needs all the love and support that all of you can offer him at the moment, and he needs to know that he is a good husband and father. He is doing a great job, but he needs some help and love and support. Take a look at how you can show him your love (refer to Chapter 7 of Book 2), and help support him in his depression (Chapter 11 of the main book)

I wish you the best of luck. Your positive attitude and faith in your husband's recovery is going to provide him with all the support he needs.





I have read your save my marriage series, and I understand most of your points but I have trouble with the part of accepting the worst. We have 2 kids aged 14 and 15, my husband moved out about 5 months ago now, saying the love was gone, he was not happy, I'm leaving, no discussion. I was shocked, I knew for months he had been pushing me away, avoiding talking and touching, I had been afraid to find out why. I have never stopped loving him, and I always feel loved, safe and secure when I am with him. That is and has always been our problem- lack of communication. We have been married for 16 years. I have acknowledged I have made mistakes, I did not know how he was feeling as he did not tell me, we had been taking each other for granted, no talk so no touching and you just get used to it. We did try counseling and it was helpful at first, but my husband has many stresses, mid life crisis? Family business, family issues and a large company to run so he wanted to go to the counselor on his own, but that did not work. He did not like what they had to say, he tried 3 different ones. I am trying to get him to just do counseling as a couple again, but something always comes up. His work is always his priority. After reading your books, I know I need to accept being separated and do things to make myself happy. To me that means moving out of the family house, as I cannot sleep here and I feel I need a fresh start. My husband moved to small apartment where there is no room to take the kids, so we do not share custody, he just drops in all the time, which always makes me sad as I have to keep seeing him leave. But more than anything I want to save my marriage. How do I move the kids away from their home to save my marriage?

I know my husband still cares for me, he tells me he loves me but I do not think he is in love with me like I am with him. a week ago I injured my leg, I am in a cast for the next 6 weeks, I cannot drive. He has been here for me everyday although I am trying to get my friends to help as well, I hate to think he is only here out of obligation; I want him to be here because he wants to be with me. We had a good Christmas together as a family but he has now gone off on a vacation alone to find himself, I am very worried he will just find it easier to find someone else. He'd still rather run from his problems than deal with them.

Any advice is helpful

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

It is not unusual when couples find themselves in the situation where they believe the love is gone out of their marriage. This is one of the most common challenges that couples face when they have been married for a few years and fallen into patterns of behavior where one partner or both takes the other for granted. This doesn't mean that the love is gone. It simply means that you have forgotten how to love each other as a couple.

Every day we are married we are invited into finding new ways of loving each other, and if we fail to maintain the effort of loving one another, it is easy to fall into living separate lives, even when we do live under the same roof and share the same bed. All marriages and relationships go through stages, from infatuation to lust, to romantic love or the honeymoon period, to utter chaos and the spawning of real

love. The fact that you have been married for a number of years would indicate you are well past the honeymoon stage, and into what we call real love. Real love is when you realize your partner is not perfect, but you still love them. You love them for their differences rather than in spite of them. However the trap people fall into with marriage is that real love does require maintenance. Every day we are called to find new ways of loving our partner and expressing this love as we grow in love and understanding together. If you neglect the need to maintain your love, it will start to wane, and one day one of you may wake up and find your relationship isn't at all what you had imagined it would be. I believe this is what has happened with your husband.

You need to point out to your husband that love is more than just lust. If counseling is going to work for the two of you, he needs to prepare himself for the fact that he may sometimes hear things that he doesn't like hearing. Some stuff you hear and work through may be difficult, but real counseling is supposed to challenge you. It is supposed to challenge your beliefs and way of life, and enable you to look at your situation from a different perspective. Your existing beliefs and viewpoints are sometimes the very obstacles that inhibit you from making any progress with your marriage problems. If you are serious about dealing with some of the issues, I would encourage you to revisit counseling. Counselors aren't what save marriages, you are. The success of your counseling depends on the attitude you have and the efforts the two of you make. You do the work, the counselor provides you with the tools.

Take a look at Chapter 7 of Book 2: Love is a Doing Word. This is going to teach you and your husband new ways to show love for each other and reassure and support each other in the relationship. Consider how each loving action is going to bring you closer together. Consider how each action is going to reassure and let your partner know that you value him and love him. Forget about shifting out. This is not going to bring you closer together. This is only going to cement your separation. Make each interaction with your husband as positive as possible, always looking at ways to recreate love and bring you closer. Then it is time to revisit counseling, this time with more realistic beliefs and expectations.



I have read Save My Marriage today and Part 2 ..

I am trying to save my marriage very desperately.. My hubby as moved out for the 3rd time in our two years of marriage.. he said that it's because he was alone.. I was all ways out with work, family and trying to get better things for the both us.. I have never wanted anything more then to get him back home and heal our marriage.. for good I have stoped running after family and I just can't show him that I am willing to do any thing for him.. How do I get him back and save my marriage.. if he is so angry he can't talk to me or even look at me. HELP ME PLEASE..

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

The situation you have described in your email is increasingly common, especially with demands on the income coming into a marriage. Many couples like yourself have increased pressure to work hard and for longer hours to afford the lifestyle that both of you desire both now and in the future.

But in the midst of this effort to work hard and get ahead, there is increased pressure on the relationship. It goes without saying that if you are spending increased hours in the workplace instead of bonding with your partner at home, then this is going to have an effect on your marriage. A healthy relationship needs to find a balance of income versus lifestyle that enables couples to have the things they need or want as well as the time spent together to enjoy it.

You mentioned that this is the third time your husband has moved out in two years of marriage. This worries me. Is this an issue of how much you work, or is it an issue about how the two of you communicate as a couple? What were the reasons for him shifting out the previous two times?

One of the challenges for new couples is how to resolve conflicts and learn lessons from them. When dealing with conflict, it is important that the feelings of both of you are taken into account, and that steps are taken to modify behaviors so that communication is always open. It sounds as though your husband has been feeling alone and invalidated in the relationship for some time for him to react this way, and your lack of awareness of his feelings may be due to the poor communication that exists between you.

Your husband's reaction and his shifting out is a learned behavior, and this is something that needs to be discussed. The fact that this is the third time in two years that has happened indicates that your husband is learning that this particular reaction gets your attention. However lessons need to be learnt from this if you want to avoid it happening again. The first thing is to indicate to your husband that he does have your attention.

- \* What does he want to achieve by moving out?
- \* What does he want to achieve from his anger? Does he want attention, validation, love?
- \* What modifications does he want in your relationship? More time? More input into the relationship? More money?
- \* What is his view of the marriage problem?
- \* What is your view?
- \* Is there room for compromise where you can both realize your goals?
- \* In finding a solution, how can you measure progress?

I want you to consider what you believe his issue is with the marriage. You mention he indicated he is alone. Does he want to spend more time together? How does he feel this is going to improve your relationship?

He has shifted out, and that makes your ability to communicate much more difficult. You need to schedule time where you can sit down together as a couple and listen to each other. This is using a skill called "active listening." This is when you switch off your inner thoughts and monologue and focus completely on what is being said. Silence the part of your brain that is trying to respond to what is being said or trying to justify your actions. Simply listen. This is really important because it seems that your husband is crying out for help or attention.

Once he has told you what he thinks the problem is, I want you to go away and write down what he has



told you. Then go back and tell him where you see the issues are at, inviting him to actively listen. Then he can go away and write down what you have said. Then I want you to share both pieces of paper with each other. The object of this exercise is to examine what you say to others, and how in turn it is received.

Your marriage problems are tied to your inability to communicate as a couple. If you are able to work on this and open communication, these outbursts where he shifts out are less likely to happen.



My husband and I have been together for 4 years and just got married in June 2006 I am 27 and he is 35. We both have been divorced once before. He has child from his previous marriage and we love her every much she is a great kid and adjusted well to the family. I have no children. My husband left me one month ago and has been living with his cousins and I stayed in the house.

Here's the story:

I have hurt him emotionally our whole relationship and he kept asking me to go get help, but I didn't know what I needed help with until he walked out the door. I would go to bed mad, I would lash out at him for no apparent reason and rarely apologize. He says I need to fix myself and love myself and that he wants to separate our assets and getting the divorce going, but he says he doesn't know how he will feel in 6 months or a year. We both are going to the same counselor just not together. I know he still loves me and had reached a point that he couldn't be around until I got better. I would come home from work and distance myself from him and sometimes his daughter even though I loved them both so much. He would ask to go do activities we both loved and I would just lie in bed sleeping instead even though I loved doing those activities. I have been diagnosed with having depression and have unresolved issue from my previous years with my mom and sister. I learned at a young age that it was normal to hurt the people you love even though I knew deep down it was wrong I carried it on in our relationship. My husband doesn't like my family and I care for them because they are my family, but I have also had to divorce them in this last month.

My husband and I keep in little contact and he keeps asking if he comes back will I nurture him, of course I will, I am getting help and my counselor says I am doing good. So why won't my husband come home and support me? I can understand he his hurting and needs time to heal, but in things he said he still loves me, so why is he so quick to start dividing up our assets? He knew I needed help and didn't make the call to a counselor until after he walked out the door?

I have not been begging him to come back because I don't want him to hurt more, he says I'm doing all the right things but he's confused. The other night on the phone we ended up having phone sex and now he is scared to talk because he is worried that it will happen again. Of course it messed with my mind a bit because I took it as this marriage is going to work out.

He needs to work on being assertive and I need to work on my anger, but do you think it's possible to save my marriage? How do I stop him from filing for divorce and breaking up our assets? When he is not even sure if where he sits in our marriage.

Help I need your advice...

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Unlearning the entrenched behaviors of our past is perhaps one of the greatest challenges we face as adults. As children we are nurtured to have certain beliefs, and the behaviors that our parents display are entrenched in our way of thinking much more than we give it credit. However in saying that, one of the first steps to changing the patterns of our past is self-awareness and that is something positive that you can take from this.

Being made aware of your depression and seeking treatment for it is the first step to making positive changes. I myself suffered from depression for a number of years, and strongly believe it is something that is passed on in families. But rather than defining myself by having depression, I saw it as something to work around.

Your husband has moved out because he believes it is the only way he can get your attention, and in this respect he may be partly right. What do you feel it would have taken for your husband to communicate to you the gravity of his feelings and the situation that he found himself in? As much as you are in pain and suffering, being on the receiving end of those moods is just as difficult. Some would say it is more difficult because they don't understand the processes that are going on inside you.

The first point you need to make clear to your husband is that this is not his fault, and not something that he has done. While the things that other people do may frustrate you sometimes, you ultimately have the choice over how you choose to react. In this instance you have vented your frustrations out on those that are closest to you, and that is pretty common.

You have been to see a counselor, and this is tangible evidence to your husband that you are prepared to take this issue seriously. You feel betrayed because your husband isn't coming home to support you, however you need to understand that your husband may not be in a position where he feels he is ready to support you yet. In fact, he is barely ready to support the idea of continuing the marriage. Now is really not a good time to expect his support while you deal with your anger and depression issues.

The next point I want you to consider is why you are doing this. Why are you going to counseling? Is it what you believe you need to do in order to keep your husband? Are you doing this for him, or are you doing this because you want to be a better person? I want you to be doing this for the right reasons. You should be motivated to do this because you want to be a better person as well as a better wife. You should do this because you want to break the patterns of behavior that you believe were passed on from your family. You are aware of your past, now it's your challenge to change it and grow.

Talk to your husband. Tell him about the progress you are making. He needs to be your friend again before you are ready to make him your husband. Ask him to be there for you as a friend. Tell him you would like to tell him about the progress you are making and what you are learning every session. Sex or phone sex right now is a really bad idea. You both have lot to learn from this process, and sex only further creates expectation and misunderstanding. Your husband needs to be there to support you, but only as a friend, not a lover, and without expectation.

Ask him if it is possible that you meet once a week to talk and have coffee. Do this as friends. Focus on making every interaction with him as positive as possible. Prove to him through actions, not words that you are growing in your understanding of what it takes to make a better relationship.



My husband and I are currently separated for three (3) months now. He is still in the marital home and I am living in a shelter. I still want my marriage, however, because of educational differences, cultural differences, etc..... he feels that he no longer wants to try to have a relationship with me. He is 50 years old and I am 48 years old. We have been married only for four (4) years. I have no proof, but I suspect he has begun to entertain the advances and affections of another woman at this time. Of course, he tells me that this is not the case.....that he needs no one else to help him made decisions about his life with me or anyone else. He refuses counseling. His behavior over the last three (3) months of our separation has gone from wanting to try to work things out with me.....to unsure.. to it is probably for the best that we go our separate ways. I have read your manuals and attempted in earnest to follow the steps you have laid forth. I implore your help to save my marriage.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

I want to start by asking you to examine your actions. Examine the situation you are in now and the mindset you have about your marriage, and consider how this mindset and actions are influencing the outcome.

You mention that you are committed to saving the marriage yet you are living in a shelter while he stays in the family home. What led you to shift out of the marital home? Is it not possible to shift into another room?

Many people use the idea of a trial separation to give each other space to consider the future direction of their marriage and whether it can be saved, and a trial separation can often ease the stress and trauma in what can be a very emotionally charged environment. In this respect a trial separation serves to ease stress and tension and encourage a more thoughtful and less confrontational style of communication.

I want you to consider your reasons for shifting out. Was it to give you both a better perspective? Was it the hope that absence would make you want to try harder? Or was it to get his attention and get him to listen to you? Did you shift out as a way of punishing him?

Trial separations only work when there are very strict guidelines put in place. Communication is vital. Even when separated, it is important that you are able to meet on a regular basis to talk about the relationship and where progress can be made. The goals and expectations of a separation must be made very clear, especially when it comes to dating others, boundaries, communication and measuring progress, and determining if the marriage can be saved.

Don't consume yourself with worrying about him seeing another woman. You are no longer living as a couple. You mention that he refuses counseling? Has he offered you a reason for this? Would he feel better about it if he was able to choose a counselor?

The issue I see developing here is that you have been living as single people for the last 3 months. In this time you have learned to cope as single people, and the need to work on your issues is not as pressing. In fact, the longer you leave it the harder it will be to adjust to being part of a couple again.

If he is unwilling to participate in the marriage at this stage, I would encourage you to shift back in. By all definitions you are still married and are entitled to do so. You cannot control his actions, but you can control how you choose to react to it. He is reacting at the moment from a place of power. He is still residing in the marital home. If you shift back in this would be a clear indication to him that you are prepared to face the educational and cultural differences that are present in the relationship.

Tell him you want to work on the issues. Tell him you are his friend even if he doesn't want to be yours. Love is not a possession. Indicate to him through your actions as well as your words that you are not ready to walk away from your marriage.

HER REPLY:

I understand that this communication is not to be a dialog. Meaning, I understand that this consultation is only once. However, I feel that the entire situation is not grasped here for your advice to me to be pertinent. That could be because there is no vehicle of avenue for a person to fully explain to you their situation. I did not shift out of the marital home.

I was forced out. There was domestic violence in the marital home which resulted in my being taken to the emergency room and my husband being arrested. When I was released from the emergency room, I had no way to re-enter the marital home. Once taken to the emergency room by my husband, my keys, purse, cell phone, etc. remained inside the house. I must also explain to you at this time that the marital home (dwelling, structure) was his before our marriage. The circumstances surrounding my leaving the home and at that time unable to physically get back in resulted in my living in a shelter. I am not originally from this city and have no family or friends with which to stay. Now that he is back in the home (having been released) he is angry about the domestic violence charge and says that he doesn't want to be with me there in the house. I did not press the charges, involve authorities or begin any of these proceedings. All that has happened has been a result of his actions. All I have tried to do is to forgive and learn and be counseled and move on.

I just felt that I had to make you aware of the situation as it really exist and not some theoretical scenario that may be as cut and dried as it appears initially.

MY REPLY:

The advice I offered you was on the strength of the information that was provided to me, and your inclusion of more facts about the circumstances of your split would certainly have changed the slant I took in



the advice I offered you.

Your split happened as a result of domestic violence that resulted in your hospitalization. That is a huge issue to work around, and coupled with your husband's reluctance to have you in the house and work through your marital issues, there are some very real obstacles that are preventing you both from overcoming your marital issues.

Obviously the first issue is your husband's aggression. When aggression gets to the level that you are in physical danger or have been harmed, control has been lost. My concern here is that your husband doesn't seem apologetic about what has happened. In fact, he is angry and humiliated. That indicates clearly to me that he isn't in a position where he is ready to learn or participate in saving your marriage.

The second issue is what your rights are. Have you sought legal advice on what your rights are in this situation? I would encourage you to check out if there is any type of free legal advice or representation available that may be able to identify what your rights are in regard to your share of the marital assets. This may seem contradictory to the idea of getting back together, but it is important that you are aware of what your rights are. At the moment he is holding all the cards.

Was your husband's aggression an isolated incident, or is this something that has happened before? What is the outcome of the legal proceedings against him? Are you entitled to any form of payout or compensation? Does this give you any more rights?

One thing is certain: A shelter is no place to live. If you don't have family or friends in the city where you are, you should think about shifting back to where you have some support. A shelter is no place to be while you are negotiating counseling and forgiving your husband. In fact, giving him some space to calm down for a few weeks may give both of you some clarity.

I understand marriage problems are seldom cut and dried situations. That's why I encourage people to give me as much information as they can when they write to me. The advice I offer is limited by how much clients are prepared to share.

Shift back to your home city. Spend some time regrouping and considering what you want to say to your husband. Consider if this is a relationship that is viable to save.

HER REPLY:

Yes, the split is a result of domestic violence. To be exact, because my spouse is currently wearing a monitoring device as part of his punishment, we are not to share the same residence. (a stipulation of the monitoring device by law). This device is to be removed on 5/9 and there is nothing to impede both of us living in the marital home. However, he is now saying that he is not sure if that is advisable - for us to return to that situation. And you are right, he is angry, embarrassed, humiliated, etc.

We have been married for four (4) years, and this is the first time anything of this nature (violence) has happened between us. But I am in agreement that he does not appear to be apologetic, only looking for reasons why he shouldn't be blamed. The outcome of the legal proceedings was him pleading to a lesser DV offense which only carried a suspended sentence and individual counseling.

Your perception that he is holding all the cards is accurate. The house was his prior to the marriage, so I have no equity or financial stake in it.

When we married, I moved here from several states away but do have very lucrative employment. So the option of just leaving my job and returning to my home state is not an economical nor advantageous one. I am in a shelter because since moving here I have only been in the company of coworkers or in-laws, none of which are options for living with during this time. This incident happened on Jan 10th of this year. And up until this point I have not returned to the marital home to live. It has truly been a nightmare.

I really want to try to salvage this marriage, but I, unlike some, do not believe that one spouse can do it alone. This is the reason I have solicited the help of those such as yourself to try to give me guidance as to what is the most advantageous, yet expeditious move to make.

MY REPLY:

Your decision is a tricky one. However if you have lucrative employment where you are, I would suggest that it may be a good idea to stay where you are. I guess the question is: Do you believe you would be in physical danger if you were to return to the house? I am concerned by the way your husband has shown no remorse, and think that it may not be in the best interests of your personal safety or your marriage if you return to the home.

When does his individual counseling start? Do you believe he is likely to get anything out of it?

Putting all the factors into perspective, it may be to your advantage to sit tight and see what comes out of his counseling. Do you have any contact with him at the moment? Is it positive or still negative contact? I'm hoping that his counseling might help put some of his issues in perspective, but you are largely out of the picture where that is concerned.

At this stage you can't control his actions, but you can control your reactions to him. Focus on making every interaction with him as positive as possible. He crossed the line when he hit you, but judging from his reaction he is aware of that. It is important that while you do not condone his violence, you need to indicate on some level that you support his recovery, his counseling, and efforts towards talking about and finding new ways to express his feelings.

Your marriage isn't a write off. It's about behavior modification and finding positive ways to channel energy, both good and bad. Yes, he holds all the cards, but you still have control over how you can support him. Write notes to him. Tell him you are still his friend even if he doesn't want to be yours.

There are a number of exercises you can do at the end of each chapter in the book, and I would encourage you to use this time to go through them and examine where the communication in your relationship has broken down. What behaviors and methods can be modified? What clarity and perspective can you offer the situation now you have had some time to think about it? What would you have done differently?

It may be that you are unable to salvage this, but I want you to focus on what lessons this situation has taught you. How can you grow from this? How can you be a better wife from this experience?

You can't control your husband, but you can control what you choose to learn from this, and whether

this new learning can influence your marriage outcome.

Sit tight and see how his counseling goes. Continue to be supportive. Tell him how much you can both learn from this process. This is not just about your husband modifying his thoughts and behaviors. You can both learn from this, and if you are able to tell him that, you may find he is more receptive to your support.



We have been married for almost 12 fantastic years; it is the second marriage for both of us. In my opinion our disagreements fights were over pathetic and inconsequential issues but unfortunately we were never able to address them properly or put them to rest. Needless to say, in every new disagreement my wife would bring up the past over and over, and it felt like fighting ghosts.

I am a firm believer that it takes two to tango, and I would never give her exclusive responsibility for our fights. Believe me I am not a saint. She has the nasty habit of sharing our personal life (disagreements/fights) with so-called friends and you know how that goes, depending on the friend. In some instances she tried that with my own family and needless to say they did not appreciate their son or brother being bashed. Also, my wife thinks she is the reincarnation of Mother Teresa, so she will never take any accountability for our fights, and it is always my fault.

We also have tried professional help, although for the most part, they concentrate on the negatives rather than focus on the here now and the future. I find it very strange that a professional marriage counselor would dare to ask why I did this or that 2 years ago, some days I wish I could remember what I had for dinner the previous night.

Over a recent stupid fight in Chicago (decided to invite my family over to our home for one night, I am proud of our home, and to see the kids), with my family that I had not seen over 12 years my whole world crumbled. She left me in Chicago, and before the car got cold depleted our joint accounts. I got a ride back home with my sister and husband, and my sister got the riot act from Laura once at the house. By the way, a couple of those so-called friends were there. Stupid me for thinking the argument was with me. Anyways, they decided to stay at a nearby hotel, can't blame them for that, and I stayed with them.

Anyways, I decided to return home the next day and to my surprise the locks had been changed and I could not enter in my own house. I also learned the police was called the previous night and obtained the report, still can not understand why she allowed those so-called friends to call the law. I did not say a word that night; my wife said it all, unfortunately to the wrong person. After two nights at a hotel, and consulting with an attorney about my rights to return home, I got an apartment. I refuse to break into my own home.

Two weeks later I filed for divorce, I let my emotions run high. I was hoping Laura would come to her senses and stop acting irrationally, but I lost. I can not justify my actions. I just think it was a cry for help, for both of us to realize that we need help. 45 days have lapsed, we had a hearing, and I am to

move back to my home and Laura goes out, God knows where.

I did not follow the advice in your book; then again I just got it last night. I tried to reach out four times, I am in love with Laura, but got no answer. These last 10 weeks have been a rollercoaster for me, but without reading your book I knew I had to take care of myself, and be happy, or try to do the best I can. There is not much I can do anymore, just hope and maybe pray, although I am not much into that.

It is hard to summarize 12 years on a few paragraphs. My marriage was 90% awesome, 10% unhealthy. She is a wonderful lady, and I miss her. She is also a very insecure individual, and this I learned via counseling and it is an area that I can do very little, I was told. I can see according to your book that it is never too late, but you must live together or have some sort of interaction for anything to work.

I do not expect your answer if any will solve my problem. Although you may lead me on a direction that can be of help for me.

MY REPLY:

I understand you when you say it is hard to summarize 12 years of marriage in a few paragraphs, but I feel you stumbled on something very powerful when you mentioned that your marriage was 90% awesome, 10% unhealthy.

That doesn't make your marriage special. In fact, it makes your marriage very normal. If you read through my books you will see that perfection is a very dangerous illusion, and that it is normal to disagree, and even fight over issues in your marriage. What this tells me is that you are both passionate people, you stand up for yourselves, and that there is scope for growth.

If we never made mistakes, we would never learn, and even the most secure relationship has its fair share of mistakes. What makes it healthy or unhealthy is how you choose to react to them as a couple.

When your wife decided to run you down to friends and family, she went outside the relationship. Instead of confiding her feelings in you, she sought the support of others in her effort to be right. That was wrong. One day, whether the lesson comes from you or someone else, she will realize the opinions of others have very little relevance for how she should conduct a relationship. It really doesn't matter if her friends don't like you. Her friends aren't going to be the one counting the cost of a divorce or finding alternative accommodation now that she is out of your house. The support of friends only takes you so far, then the rest of your life is determined by the actions you take.

One of the crucial lessons we teach is that when you enter into marriage or a deep, committed relationship, you need to give up the need to be right. It's about making the transition from being an individual to being part of a couple. It's okay to be wrong. Being wrong exposes vulnerability, but within a loving relationship this is okay. In fact, exposing vulnerability can be an incredibly sexy and empowering exercise.

You are right when you say that you both need to share the responsibility for this one, and from what you have written I can see two people who are screaming to be heard. Laura left you in Chicago, depleted your joint accounts, locked you out of the home, and called the police to get your attention. It cer-



tainly got your attention, but the method was flawed. In addition to getting your attention, it pushed you to react and hurt her in the way that she hurt you. So you filed for divorce to get her attention. Tit-for-tat.

The lesson for both of you here is to find ways of getting each other's attention and listening to each other without having to resort to negative actions. You mention reaching out to her four times. What did that involve?

It's never too late to respond with love. Love and hate are very close on the emotional spectrum, and if he has any feeling for you, good or bad, it means that she still cares about you or cares what you think. It's when we look at our partners and feel nothing that the marriage is in real trouble.

Have you tried writing her a letter? Have you tried talking to her about the fact that both of you make mistakes and that it is possible for both of you to get each other's attention without hurting each other? What specifically is it about the marriage that your wife feels the need to change? What is her motivation? What is the issue for her? What is the issue for you?

I want you to look at what makes you react the way you do. Does her need to always be right make you feel inadequate? Does it make you feel as though you never do anything right?

When I delve into past disagreements, it is often easy to identify patterns of behavior. The fact that your wife never lets anything go tells me she has a point-scoring mentality when it comes to the marriage, and may point towards self-esteem issues or similar feelings of inadequacy. It may also be a control issue.

If you want to save your marriage you have to take the first step. There will be plenty of opportunities to see her and interact with her as you negotiate your separation, and you need to focus on ways to make every interaction as positive as possible. Acknowledge her when you see her. Acknowledge that both of you are hurting. Tell her that you will always be her friend, even if she doesn't want to be yours. Tell her that no matter what, you love her. Even if she continues to be angry, continue to love her.

You can't control her actions, but you have complete control over how you choose to react to her. You have the choice to participate in her anger and let the problem escalate, or to simply love her.

HIS REPLY:

Please allow me to express my apologies for addressing you as Amy, it was not my intent to insult you if I did.

From day one Laura has always been in charge of managing our assets/finances. She always performed superbly on this arena, bills were paid on time, savings existed, and big financial decisions were made as a couple. I despise money, it only brought turmoil within my family after my father passed away, so I have stayed away from it as much as possible.

Laura always had open reign in our lives together in the finance world, if we needed a new refrigerator, stove, etc, all she had to do was order it and voila. This never bothered me, on the contrary, it made me feel good that she took care of our home.

She has the necessary resources to find a suitable place and a monthly support imposed by the court.

I am not worried for her in this arena, besides she owns a small business. Of course, she does not have what we both use to anymore, that is a given and a fact of live.

Andrew, you mention to stay in contact with her, somehow it contradicts your book, or maybe I am misunderstanding your comments. My understanding is that you are suggesting I tell her thanks for the wonderful 12 years and then wait. Please advise.

MY REPLY:

I'm pleased to hear that she has enough to find herself a suitable place to live, as this makes it easier for both of you. Some couple struggle to find suitable accommodation when separating, and this can often serve to add further stress to an already difficult situation. Certainly if she has enough resources to find a suitable home then you don't have to worry about this.

It appears from your description that you have both had a good relationship with money and have handled it in a way that exhibits coupledness. That's great.

I am a firm believer that the things said in the heat of battle or in jest are often very telling. The saying, "Never a truer word said in jest" springs to mind. She brought up the money issue when she was angry with your sister because despite your relationship, she still felt as though it was an issue. You are right when you say that you could do little about that, so I guess you can let that issue pass.

I mentioned keeping in contact with her not to confuse you or contradict what is written in the book, but because given the particular circumstances it was deemed necessary. She is hostile, and looks like she will be for some time, but it is important that when she calms down she realizes that you are there to support her.

If you are able to thank her, you are letting her go with love. You can't control what she does, but she will know that if she changes her mind the door is open and you are willing to talk. What letting go with love does is removes a lot of the fears that motivate you to react negatively, and sets you free. Then any reaction she makes comes back to her, not you. It's hard for her to fight you if you won't fight back.

Sometimes it's the most unlikely reactions that will give you the greatest results. That's what I'm asking you to do.



I am a member of the United States Navy and have been enlisted for 4 years now. I have one year left to fulfill my obligation. I have done extremely well in my career, and I attribute a portion of that success to my spouse, Liz. Although I do realize that I am the reason I am successful, she has played her part as well. When we first met she had just turned 15 years old and I was just turning 18 years old. We met through a party that I held at my house. It was a great relationship and we loved each others company.

When deciding if we should continue the relationship, seeing as how I was just about to join the Navy, we talked about the issues of what the military life would bring. The main factor being extended periods of separation. As soon as I got out of boot camp, I learned that while I was in boot camp she had been unfaithful to me with my so called best friend at the time. It was a time of great hurt and distrust for me. But over time I was able to rebuild all of those things, and I forgave her. I have never forgotten this issue, but am always slow to bring it up. I have brought it up since, but only as it relates to current things going on in our lives. Soon after I received orders to the middle east. I was in Bahrain for a year, and then was able to come to Texas. I was in Texas for a year when we got married. She was 18 and i was just about to turn 21. We then found an apartment nearby my station and moved in together. And man the great times we've had since then. We have been married and living together for almost 2 years now, and have been seeing each other for almost 5 years now. I am not stationed in Bahrain again, but only for a 4 month period, which I only have 38 days left until I return to the US and will never have to leave again. Thank God! I have always been controlling in our relationship. I have always made the difficult decisions and am always the one with the plan for what is going to happen next. Liz liked this idea. She always let me have control, and always catered to it. She would ask my permission for the most simple of tasks, and I would respond saying you know you don't have to ask. But at the same time it felt good that she did ask me. Only recently has this proved to be very burdensome. Another aspect is that I excluded her from some mundane day to day things. I.E. I would want to get away from everything for 20 minutes so I would ride to the convenient store to buy a soda. She would ask to come and I would say no, babe, ill be right back. I just need a little time to myself to think about things. Which was the truth. Work is way too hectic to think about anything and at home I was always devoted to her, or getting prepared for work the next day, or we would be hanging out with friends. This hurt her badly to be excluded, because she says she just wanted to be with me for everything. I did not see how badly I was hurting her. Since ive been back here overseas, I have been very controlling. I wanted her to call me and let me know where she was going, if she was going out, I wanted her to call me when she got back, so I knew she was ok. I basically was trying to control her life from thousands of miles away. I do believe that is how America formed to begin with correct? A war broke out due to that fact. Well not much is different In our lives. I know I can trust her, at least to be faithful to me and to take care of day to day business back home. But I still felt the need to be in control. Liz says I have slowly been pushing her away due to these factors. One other factor was a sexual one. I would work a 12-15 hour day, come home from work, sit around and talk to her for a while, maybe watch some TV together and then I would be ready to go to bed. She would want to have sex, and there were many occasions where I would turn her down. I would say I was too tired or make up another excuse. But it wasn't a matter of attraction, ive always been really attracted to her. It seemed honestly to me, that I was too tired. But looking back I wish I would have spent the extra 30 minutes to make her happy and feel loved. But one thing ive learned is that you cannot change the past, but you can change how you deal with the future. I did make one horrible mistake though for sure. I bragged to a friend that I had sexual relations (before our marriage) with a girl from the local video store. This was actually totally false though. I had asked her on a date once, and she declined saying she was married. But I felt that to feel macho in front of this guy that I needed to say something stupid like that. Well he ended up telling her, because they hang out a lot together, which is another problem. This guy's name is Derek. He is 28 years old, divorced, two kids and still lives at home with no job. His sister, Lauren is 24 years old, works at a local bar and has little to no ambition in life. We were hanging out with these people regularly before I left, because they were fun people to be around. I knew they were not going far in life, but never cared. They were still fun people. Since ive left, Liz has been inseparable from these two. And I wouldn't dare try and tell her that these people could be bad influences, due to the fact that she would just get very defensive. The last time we actually talked to each other she told me that she didn't feel in love with me anymore and that she has

been unhappy for quite some time now. I have done many things in her life to make it as good as possible. I am paying her tuition for school which starts in a week. I am paying for her to drive a much nicer vehicle than me, never asked her to work, but there were several times I mentioned it could help us financially and she did get a job. Just recently she got a job working at the same bar as Lauren, which is why I wanted to know when she was coming home and what she was doing and etc. Just concerned about the other people around here and what they could do, not necessarily worried about what she would do though. The time difference here makes it pretty hard to stay in contact as it is though. But I had been calling her once a day since this conversation about 4-5 days ago, and I just tell her what's going on here in my life and she gives me about a 20 second update of her life, but her voice is dry and devoid of any emotions. So then I end by saying I love her and she says goodnight. It hurts pretty badly. I know I have made mistakes in our relationship, and I have told her I take credit for these mistakes and that I know I cannot change what I have done. But I have told her I am willing to change for the future. That I will not be controlling anymore, and that I will gladly include her in everything, and that my sex drive has definitely increased with the separation. She says she is going to try but that she feels the feelings are gone and cannot be reclaimed. I offered her free counseling through a great Navy program where a qualified marriage counselor will meet for six sessions free of charge. She has accepted this offer, but has not yet to initialize contact with the counselor. She expects to do that later on this coming week. I am really happy she is trying, but I still feel that she thinks it's already over and done, and nothing can possibly help her be happy with me and love me again. I want to tell her that marriage isn't always happy, and that love is more than just a feeling. It's working things out. Learning to deal with others, and that when marriages have problems, you don't just give up. But I know if I tell her these things it will only drive her further. I have talked to my mother about this issue and she feels that Liz is just going through her teenage years. She felt trapped. And now that I am gone, she has this freedom and she realizes she likes the freedom. And I feel this may be partially true. She is hanging out with friends, drinking a lot, partying and etc. but I feel she is still being responsible about it.

My mom suggested that I give Liz space. Don't call her for a while, don't email her, just let her contact me when she's ready to talk. I am going to try this today. Her birthday is in several days and I am planning on calling her and saying happy birthday and I have bought her a treatment at a local spa and have sent a birthday card. I am willing to do whatever it takes to get our marriage back on track. Liz says she is willing to try, but I can tell she has already given up inside. She is a great person, but has definitely changed lately. I don't know what to expect when I get back. But I'm going to continue giving her space until I do return, hoping that this time she has, she can think about everything. But I know how dangerous the advice these two "friends" of ours are giving her can be to our relationship. I am worried about that but there is nothing I can do. I suggested she take some time away and go back home to Louisiana for a while and just get away from everything. Take time to think and pray and listen to what God has to tell her. But I just feel like anytime I tell her something now, it's just separating us even more. And I did not tell her I planned on not calling or staying in contact. Should I tell her? I did tell her I was backing off and wanted to give her her space. So I just need all the advice you can offer. I read through both of your books, and have learned a lot from them. I still have much to work on though. But any advice you can offer would be most appreciated.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.



I have identified a number of issues coming through in your submission, and some areas that you can work on in your mission to save your marriage and find new ways of letting go of the mistakes of the past and moving forward.

The first issue that needs to be looked at is your control. It is the biggest issue that I can identify, and it is having a catastrophic effect on your relationship. I want you to consider your motivations for needing to be in control and needing to know where she is at all times. Is it motivated by fear that she is cheating on you? Is it a need to feel included in her everyday life? Do you consider it part of your job as her husband? Or is it simple curiosity?

The important thing to remember here is that she is your wife, not a possession. Controlling every moment of her day is not going to prevent her from cheating on you. In fact, it is more likely to push her directly towards that course of action.

I want you to consider how your control is being interpreted by your wife. You seem to be motivated by your fear of her cheating, and your actions send her a very clear message that you do not trust her. You may love her, but you also don't trust her, and the mistrust is the message she receives loudest of all. The very thing you fear the most, is the thing you are pushing her towards. If she believes you don't trust her, she will realize it's because you believe she is capable of cheating on you. If you already don't trust her, there is little incentive for her to want to be faithful. The trust has to come from you. You decided to continue the relationship after you found out about her affair, and it is up to you to find ways to have faith in your relationship and your wife's reasons for staying.

That brings me to the second point. If you want to safeguard your wife from infidelity, you need to be someone she would like to come home to. Be the guy she first fell in love with, the one who loves her, nurtures her, and above all, believes in her. You need to not only love your wife, you need to be capable of receiving love from her. Be the guy that she can share her feelings with, be the guy who can share his dreams with his wife, his hopes and his fears, and one that can encourage her to reciprocate by participating as well.

It's easy to assume that because you are married that all the hard work is over, but it's where the real work begins. If you are unhappy with the state of your marriage, the one thing you can control is how you choose to react to what is happening around you. Your reaction is going to determine whether your marriage issues are going to be resolved or if you are going to make it worse. Looking at what you have written, your decision to micro-manage your relationship from thousands of miles away was the wrong reaction. It insulted your wife's intelligence and right to independence, and it sent her a clear message that you didn't trust her.

Actions:

1. Participate in the relationship. If you want your wife to talk to you and share more, start by doing so yourself. Lead by your own actions.
2. Be someone she wants to be married to. Instead of accusing her of infidelity and needing to know her every movement, tell her how much you love her. Tell her how much you miss her. Tell her how happy you are to be married to her and how much you value her contribution to the marriage. It's not easy being you, but it's not easy being married to you either! It's hard being a Navy wife. Recognize that.

The third point I want to make is that long-distance relationships are difficult, and if you are both struggling with being apart, and struggling to adjust to living together again, it's okay. When you are apart, you both adjust to living as individuals, having your own lives and daily routines, and not being accountable to each other in the way that you would if you saw each other every day. When you are away she makes decisions based on her needs and wants, not yours. You do the same. That's okay. You need to realize that once you come back, you both need to adjust to being together again, and this is difficult for any couple, regardless of whether they have been together for 20 years, or 2 years. The adjustment can be difficult, and acknowledging this is the first step in the process.

You also need to consider your age. Liz has been with you since she was 15 years old, so your mother has a point when she mentions that she gave up a large part of her teenage childhood to be with you, and if she acts up from time to time, it's part of the process. She's nearly 20. That's normal behavior for someone her age, and it's important that she's allowed to express her individuality when she needs to.

That brings me to my next point. Balance of "we" time versus "me" time. Every healthy relationship balances time spent as a couple with time spent apart, doing hobbies, sports, or spending time with friends. Remember what it was like before you were together, how you loved each other's independence, as well as the fact that you were both so interesting? It can be that way again, by encouraging the both of you to develop your own interests. You don't have to do everything together. If you need time away to think, you need to tell her, but it needs to be framed in such a way that she isn't made to feel unwelcome. It's healthy to do stuff apart, otherwise you run the risk of being in a codependent relationship. A codependent relationship is one where you can't make individual decisions on your own, and lose the ability to see yourself as a person, not just part of a couple. Don't allow your wife to be that person. Encourage her to develop her own interests outside the relationship, so that you can have something to share and talk about when you are together.

All of this stuff is great in theory, but in reality you need to be back in the country to make a difference. If you really want to change, don't just tell her. Show her through actions how serious you are about making positive changes in your relationship. Talk is cheap.



Hi Andrew,

As you may guess I came across and have already read most of your books because I am in a situation of marital crisis--of course, I look back and am shocked that I am here, but can clearly see that it's a result of many of my own actions and things that I took for granted and neglected long ago. Now, let me explain.

My now husband and I met about 14 years ago as freshmen in college. We had a lot of fun, it was my FIRST relationship and I was very smitten and he too with me. Most of the time, Bill (my husband) had the "upper hand" in that I always agreed to what we would do, when we would see each other, etc. Bill decided we should break up and we split and then, shortly before graduation, he approached me with his love again. I was still so in love with him, but also hesitated a lot, as I had started enjoying life without him...after a few weeks of being together again--blissful, I got scared it would end the same

way and we fought and I found ways to push him away. Then we stopped talking for years. He gently entered my life again, first as friends and then, when I moved to the East coast, he came to visit and told me he wanted something more serious. I was very hesitant with our initial contact, because I was very aware of how I still felt about him and didn't want to enter another relationship that I invested a lot in and he did not...or something that would not work out. I could not afford to do that with my heart. This time, he had really changed. This was brought about by lots of life changes involving his family reconciliation (with his father) and career choices. He had seen a therapist and had really come to terms with things and said he had always had me in his mind as the best friend and perfect girlfriend because of the times we shared together. I saw this sincere change and we decided to date and marry...we were crazy about each other and always have been. He was wonderful and still is. He had matured so much and was, for the first time, so eager to show his love in every way. My parents love him as do all my friends and everyone that meets him.

We married and he started his residency program in medicine which was grueling hours and lots of mean people. This really affected him deeply. He was always miserable and at many times, I felt that he almost "wanted or liked" being miserable or affected by all things that happened (what people said/did). I know that this is part of being depressed...he now can admit, after talking to many other people, that he had a situational depression that often comes with medical residencies (no sleep and food). But, since this was the start of our marriage, I thought that this was how he really was. Always focusing on the bad and being snappy and not wanting to engage in our relationship or things I wanted to do. I felt neglected and of course this hurt me and my pride (I see that now). He would be too tired or upset many times to go out with friends, to do errands, spend time with me, to relax. I tried to understand his situation, but to be honest, there were times I just wanted my husband. I wanted to be as important and concerning as his residency. I was immature and "sick and tired" of his constant misery. I had to spend a lot of time alone, would do social things on my own because he was working. That made me happy. Being with friends really filled in the alone time and I still loved being with him...just that I didn't make him feel bad for not being there, would find a friend. I thought this made him happy and less guilty--he now says that he saw me with friends and thought I was happier when I spent time with them than with him because I always was critical/disappointed. He did say that he wished he had more time. I don't think it was the lack of time, but the lack of engagement during the time that we did have. It gets hard to constantly have a spouse that is always miserable and not there. This is really immature, but I think I didn't think of it as depression but some way he was being bad to me (REALLY IMMATURE).

So, I started being less patient. Always finding fault with things, each time he was late or didn't call. I would start correcting his social habits when we were with company. I started to think he was weak (disrespect) because there were times that I needed to lean on him and he could not handle this emotionally (we were under severe financial times and I handled most crisis and he expected me to). I acted on these feelings too. I picked fights for the dumbest things and when I argued, it was mean. I had to be right and would fight until he gave in. I expected to be forgiven and took his love for granted. I got unbelievably upset during arguments...overreacted. There were times I would continue a fight when he had asked to sleep because he had a full day and only 4 hours to sleep...I once again felt that he thought work was more important than me and if he really cared, he would stay up and resolve this. I felt disengagement and lack of care. I felt second place. I felt that I had married someone unable to deal with a bad work situation. [I am being brutally honest here, because if I can't be honest with you, then this is all worthless]. Over the years he stopped his once romantic ways and withdrew little by little in smaller ways...ones that I did not overtly notice but I think internally did, which is why I was increasingly dissatisfied and demanding of his time. I was mean because I felt neglect and he pulled back because I

was mean. BUT, he was a saint...each time I went into a rage, he always was patient and forgiving. He rarely gets mad at me (usually when I get out of hand).

One year ago, we moved for Bill's job. Bill was/is happy with his current job and so am I. We love where we live and have had many nice times. [note, things are not always that bad, we have lots of good moments too, but I just so easily revert to old behaviors]. I think we just got used to how we perceived each other and treated each other. Though finances were great and we loved our life, we were still the same to each other. I still had a short temper and was very demanding, disappointed, criticizing and mean. He continued to withdraw. The past few months have been especially bad at times. More frequent fights. I act just as immature and Bill now withdrew so much....not wanting to call or dreading coming home to a nagging wife that is always upset/disappointed. We talked about this, and of course, I always argued his feelings, etc. I said that I felt that I was neglected and felt like in college, like things in our relationship could go when he was ready ("I'm depressed, I don't want to engage as a husband" to "OK, now I love life and am ready to be an engaged husband"--resentful)...this was my perception and very immature. I was also fixed and used to seeing him in my perception and being mean. Most of the time I didn't mean it and liked being with him, I was just used to saying whatever I felt like and expecting it would be forgiven. I pushed the limit. He said he felt that I really hated him (he mentioned that in arguments) deep inside and really had wished that I was single and did not love him and found him a bother and disrespected him. I now see how he saw that after what I did. He was always very supportive and proud of me in my career and I in him...but I had always given him a hard time about work and he felt that it was not being a good wife and letting him go when he needed me the most. I am also a total slob, this has nothing to do with him, but he felt that I did not care about our relationship or the time he was going through to take care of those things.

The shit really hit the fan a few weeks ago. Everything that we had put a band aid on now came apart. We went on vacation and we started talking about things. He said that he loved me, but really felt that each and every day, he disappointed me, and I treated him disrespectfully and made him choose between work and me. He said that this was the only thing that needed to stop [note: he is so sweet and afraid of hurting my feelings and also in denial because he doesn't like to face hurt by those that hurt him--coping mechanism]. He was honest about the ways I hurt him and made him feel when I acted out. I told him the things I was feeling--of course I was still argumentative and demanding with questions. During that week, I called our phone company and found that he was text messaging a number about 250 times in one month and about 60 times in the one week in Oct. I asked him who this was. He said that he saw a "therapist" at the hospital, a curbside consult and she talked to him about me and us. Interesting revelations that coincided with what he thought (I really wanted to be single, etc). He said that's who the text messages were to. I did not believe this and did something stupid but necessary. I checked his voicemail and found a woman always leaving messages...they started to sound like she was more and more dependent on him and she said "I really miss you, a lot" but nothing romantic or plans to meet. I kept asking him about the text messages and he got very angry at me questioning him and told me it was another example of me nagging. One night, I caught him on the phone to someone and when I entered the room, he finished the conversation. He lied to me about who was on the line (said it was his coworker and told me a story about a procedure). The next day I confronted him about who he really called and that I knew that it was another woman. He instantly admitted to having a friend...that she was not a therapist, just someone he knew at work who now lives in another state (he has mentioned her before as a coworker in the context of a story). He cried and thought I would leave. I told him that I knew that this was not sexual (I can tell if he's lying and I know that to be true, he would never do that and didn't). He did say that he knew that it sounded bad and felt awful. He said he was



afraid I would leave and spent the next days remorseful and nervous and miserable thinking I would leave. He said he would stop contact and did. He said it meant nothing, just a person he was already friends with that asked him to help in a few things and he talked to for that and she called him a lot and she was nice. She texted him often and he would reply and also call sometimes on his own--he said most of the contact was responding to her contact--he said it was meaningless fun friendship. He did talk to her about us, mostly to figure out what he could do differently (and he tried) to make me happy--thought I'm sure he bitched about me as well, very normal though. Then they called about normal everyday stuff. I checked the phone bill and most were just messages or a few conversations of 10-20 min and one for 1 hour. This went on for 4 weeks. I was mad that he still called her that night when he knew that I knew (he said that he thought I knew) and it still didn't matter to tell her to stop calling. I was mad that he lied and made me feel bad to cover his lies. He said he lied because he didn't want to lose our marriage. He said that he had no feelings for her, and cut her off easily...just a non conflictual, nice person to talk to that was happy to hear from him--he said it could have been anyone. He admitted that he thought that she might start to like him (he was not at all attracted to her...I know this because I know who she is) and got concerned....he said it started harmless and then before he knew it he saw that it looked bad (got caught in calling and text messaging) that suddenly he realized that I would find it inappropriate. He said he did not tell her things that he didn't share with me (he always tells me stuff with work and his day, etc). He lied again about little things from her messages (nothing important) and I confronted him again and he said that he just thought it was going to make me mad and he was so freaked out about the whole thing, how he hurt me and that I would leave him. He really felt as bad as ever and that made me feel bad.

After the finding, he shut down and didn't want to talk because he felt so bad and depressed and emotionally exhausted. He immersed himself in work. I was a total lunatic, yelling at him all the time, freaking out, being mean and horrible. Of course, that sent him further into a shell. Because I lost trust, I would check the phone bill and confront him with questions, and he has been honest. He said that she called and he just said that they could not talk anymore. He was a little upset that I checked the bill and said that he could not handle a life of spying and was afraid that if I never trusted him again, he could not be in the relationship. This is when he started getting mad when I kept asking questions about the whole thing (of course, I am demanding and angry with the questions). He was so mortified that he also never initiated telling me the whole story of how it happened--who would if you're feeling so bad and when you have a wife that is shooting questions like a rifle, not much to tell I guess after my questions.

I also realized, with conversations with him that he fell into this because I was a total bitch...mean, humiliating, disrespectful, always disappointed, etc. I felt really bad and for the first time, I wrote him an entire email saying sorry for ALL the things I did...EVERYTHING...things that he never confronted me on because he is always in denial and so nice. This really undid the lid for his anger and years of withdrawal and loss of love. He said that he could not believe what I wrote and how disgusting it was. How awful I treated him. He said that he didn't know if he could be in the relationship. He said he was confused. He said that they were things that he himself had buried and never confronted (he did the same thing with his anger toward his father and the things his father did...just "forgot" them and it all came out and he had to mend). BUT, every time I cried, he cried too, and told me he loved me so much and I would always be the one he loved most. He said he was so patient and kind and I ran over him. That it's not worth spending time in a relationship for fear of losing it if it's abusive. He had to examine his self-respect (he said that he had fallen in the past to other people, teachers, etc that also crushed him and ran over him). He also said that he had really screwed up with me, and I had no right to trust him or be with him. He said that we had really treated our marriage carelessly and it was dead. He still says he

is confused, but says that he can't see how we will be happy again. He says that he doesn't miss me, dreads coming home, dreads seeing me, because it's always disappointment. He is relieved when I am gone for a week or two and is sad about that. He says that he doesn't love me in those ways anymore and doesn't know if he can--because I pushed it out of him. He says the thought of all this is really sad and hurts, and when I pressed him, he said he thought it was over. He said he thinks he might want to separate for a bit, to see if he could miss me again. To be away from me and the constant "expectations/disappointment/hurt" But, each day when I ask if he wants to separate and me to go away, he says no. He was hopeful 2 weeks ago, but is back to being really negative again.

I at first, last week, was desperate and begging, asking hard-hitting questions and demanding--saying I needed to know now if he wanted to be with me. He said he didn't know, and didn't want to make that decision on the phone and if he had to say something it was that he thought it was dead--he had no good memories of our last 4 years and was having a hard time remembering the good. I asked why he didn't want to work on it (of course, I said that we could work on it to have this wonderful relationship and he had to do it together, etc--high expectations). He said he was afraid of failing, of not being what I wanted in a husband or being loving again. He was afraid of being criticized and a disappointment. He said he didn't want what we had anymore, could not live like that, but didn't know if there was hope for something better. He said it was overwhelming to make things better and splitting was an easier thought. He said that perhaps his laziness in wanting to make things better meant that he didn't want it. He said in life, he hated to go after things unless he could see success and he didn't see it here---if we had been like this for 4 years, then it was all we could do...as good as it got. He said that we loved each other but didn't live together well.

I have been away on travel and back this week. He seems very distant, and slowly warmed up a little. He kisses me before he leaves work and says that sleeping in the same bed is OK. He says he is still confused, and if he still says that after all these weeks, it must mean that he can't do this and doesn't want it. We've still had sex as well. He also said that at times he looks at me and sees all the good and really loves me and its sad. He has been really stressed, visibly sad, taking meds to sleep and drinking (not out of control). Mostly, when we talk about this, he says it's too emotionally exhausting after a while. It's been really awkward. We try to make things normal by talking, and he really opens up about his day, sharing stuff and I jump in. We laugh at times. I told my mom, who has been wonderful in telling me the ways that I need to improve, that he was patient and kind and I pushed him away. Bill told his parents, and his mother told him that she never liked me and to leave me. She is right about the horrible things I have done, but I have always been nice to her--she is typically a really negative and depressed person only seeing the bad in things (Bill admits this too and said he did not agree with his mom about the things she said and said that she didn't see the good things about me and he did). I am afraid of his mothers influence, but something I cannot control. He was really sad to tell me what his mother said. When I cry, he really comes to me and consoles me with love. He said that he just wants me to be happy.

After being desperate, I moved to being respectful of his emotions and my own. I had to inspect if this was right for me as well. I love him so much. I am hurt, but can get over it, especially since after reading your book and others and seeing the depth of infidelity there (he said he didn't know if he would have stopped talking to this woman--nothing sexual in talking--if I didn't catch him). I also see that I never truly tried to be a good partner in our marriage. Not to say we didn't have great times...we did. The fighting and my attitude at times was horrible. I disrespected him and stopped thinking of him as his own

person and my friend. I always criticized and took his love, patience and kindness and denial of my bad things for granted.

After thinking, agonizing, being horribly panicked and depressed, I have now come to a state where I have detached and feel optimistic--because I know I can change, and in ways I have...when we talk and fight, I act like I never have and it's easy. When we talk, I listen, and no matter what he says, how painful or maybe inaccurate, I don't correct or give my opinion (or give it just when asked). I validate what he says and don't argue. When he doesn't want to talk about things and wants to sleep, I say OK. When he talks about light things, I jump in and am enthusiastic (I was uncomfortable at first, just because of all this and was a little withdrawn, which he asked me what I was feeling). I tell him how proud of him I am and other little compliments (things I always did). I don't ask a billion questions. I look at him and all my actions really come from love, not wanting to be right or my selfish needs to have answers, etc. He said that he still doesn't know if we can be happy again, he is so uncomfortable with me and I with him. He said that he still doesn't feel like running out and buying flowers and panics when he comes home that I will be mad at something--and that confuses him. He says he has to think about his self respect and whether he wants to be with someone who was abusive of his emotions.

I have made a solid commitment to my actions. I really have read your book and others and think of everything. For the first time (even when I thought a few weeks ago the meaning of changing, I did not) I really get the change, the love, the selflessness, the partnership. I know how to act and what to do and have made a 180 in ways. He has noticed and said that he feels he can talk to me about anything and I don't expect him to stay married to me or do I argue and get angry and he feels that it is sincere. Of course, I am trying and slip here and there. We have made a little progress yesterday morning. We were jovial and fun, still awkward a little. I had suggested that we take this day by day. He can leave at any time (I always thank him for his honesty) and each night he comes home to me is a night he wants to be with me and heal a little. I said that I was sick of always being uncomfortable and depressed (he said he was too) and I wanted to get back to some sort of normal time together to make sure we were at a better spot to talk about things. Basically, we have honestly talked about the root of our feelings, what we felt, were brutally honest. We know what the other feels about the future. Now, it's a matter of me changing and him seeing if the love slowly will come back. The only way to do that is to get back to some normality. He agreed to do that.

Sadly, I screwed up yesterday. I was checking the phone bill again and found another number that was called a lot for 2 days. I immediately panicked and went to his clinic in the hospital. I waited for him and asked him, very calmly, what the number was. He said he stopped talking to the other girl and this was a friend calling him for an outing that I knew that he went on. I made him promise/swear, he did and I calmly left. He didn't react at the time. I immediately felt horrible that I acted so selfishly intruding in his workplace, rattling him for the afternoon, barging in without thinking of the impact on others. For disrespecting his value of the workplace and the importance of his job. I wrote this out in an apology (lately I have been writing since I was a lunatic when we talked and escalated things to an argument). HE IS PISSED. He came home yesterday and told me he was pissed. I asked him if I could apologize and he said later and then he said he would read it and he did, half way. He had to go to work again, and when he returned, I asked if I could tell him the apology and he said yes and I did. I kept quiet, no questions, no nagging, I validated anything he said. He also said that I am to never come to his clinic again. No matter what. I said OK. He was angry this morning and had to go on a trip. I asked if he wanted me to move out and he asked "what do you feel?" Before he left, I asked again, or if he would come back and tell me that he wanted to end this...he was quiet and asked "what do you think?" I said that I know what

I did was horrible, I respected him and loved him and wanted to slowly see if he could work it out and I would never act that impulsively and selfishly again. He said he had things to tell me and he would when he returned. He didn't say yes or no to moving out when he returned. He said "You really pushed me hard today" and left. He did, however, kiss me (peck) goodbye. Though I am stressed, I do feel oddly good. For the first time, he got really angry at me and put his foot down. For the first time, I said sorry for the right things and did it right. I let him go without answering all the questions I needed for me. I let him go without knowing if he would come back. I have this bizarre feeling that we are finally doing it right, and that has to be positive...of course I could be wrong.

I am taking this time to really read, reflect and CHANGE. Not just believe and think, but DO. When he comes home I want to ask if he will stay. I will ask him what things he wanted to say to me, but not push him. I will treat him with love and respect with all that I do. I will do my best to be normal and keep things light. I want to be friends first and I don't expect miracles overnight. I want him to trust me again and not be afraid to come home. I want to show him that I trust him again (and I do). I want to be good to him so he doesn't feel that being with me is a loss of self-respect. I know what I did, how selfish I was and am really, really ready to change for all the right reasons.

I know it will be hard and he will say/do things that hurt. I cannot control that, but I can control myself and I know that I really understand the pain, the guilt, the change. I know, with an optimistic faith, that I can do it (a few weeks ago, I was really scared I could not). I know it's not about just not arguing or being disappointed, but a fundamental way I look at him, listen to him and that flows into the way I react to him. I do feel respect and love. I understand what he went through. Mind you, this was not an overnight realization for me either. It has been coming for weeks....and maybe months. I know this is hard work and will take months to heal.

I just hope that he will come back and will want to work it out. I hope he will not leave. I cannot think of that now and let that guide my actions from the wrong motives (to stop him and get what I want). I see signs of love in him for me. We have loved each other for 14 years. There was a point when I didn't know if he has changed and didn't want to be with him, but saw that he did and believed. I just hope he can do that for me now. I have no right to ask that....just to work on myself. The only thing that gives me hope is that I sincerely see the need to change and the way. I feel that it cannot be futile if I try--you never know until you try.

Also, I told you the truth about me. This is not to say that I have not been caring, loving, supportive, understanding. I have. He knows that too. He has said that many times in the past. It's also not to say that he was 100% miserable and disengaged in our marriage. Just that those are the overwhelming feelings we have.

Please advise. It would help to get your thoughts on Bill, myself and where you think this will go. I know that I have to try like it's the last chance I have, because it is. I am ready to do that.

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

Thanks for your email. It took me a very long time to get through what you have written, and it affected me deeply. You had a lot to tell me, and you and your husband have been to hell and back as far as



marriage problems go. From what you have written, however, you have turned the corner and have finally managed to break the patterns of negative behavior. Your past behaviors have really destroyed his self-confidence, and his ability to communicate openly with you.

I was so proud when you wrote that you tell him how proud of him you are, and that you are getting your moods under control. Your moods and particularly your accusations are something that are directly within your control, and something you need to work on. When I read your submission I could see a man that was very close to the edge. The constant feelings of inadequacy and disappointment are difficult things to bear, and can have an adverse effect on his life. From the way he reacted, he sounds very depressed, and possibly on the verge of a breakdown. Talking to other women wasn't a sign of his infidelity or lack of commitment to your relationship; it was a cry for help. If your husband hadn't had someone to confide in during this time, a sense of normalcy to grasp onto, he might have ended things much sooner. Your moods and behavior towards him closed the doors of communication between you, but his need for an emotional outlet was still there, possibly more than ever before. He needed to have someone to confide his feelings to because you did not fulfill that role.

The jealousy and accusations have to stop. If your husband was going to cheat on you it would have happened long before now. The fact that he is still with you and willing to work on your marriage despite the emotional hardship is testament to his commitment to you. He is placing an awful lot of faith in your ability to change, and in turn you need to place a little faith in him. If he feels he needs to share his thoughts with other people as well as you, then you need to respect his ability to get through this in the best way he knows how.

You are quite right when you mention that you can't control him and his reactions, and that the best course of action available to you is to focus on making the positive changes in you, and being a better partner. Yes, you need to be friends first, and make coming home to you something that appeals to him. You need to understand the pain and the guilt he is feeling at the state of your marriage. From the sound of it he is taking the failure of your marriage very personally. You need to make sure he knows you are just as committed to healing your marriage.

So where to from here? Well you sound as though you are finally putting some of the advice in the books into practice, but you need to continue to work on keeping your emotions in check. It is okay to have emotions and feelings, but you need to find appropriate and useful ways of expressing and dealing with these emotions.

You sound like you are on the right track though. Keep up the good work. I really think you have turned the corner. You just need to maintain your progress and don't let your fears or jealousy get the better of you. A little more faith in your husband is going to pay you real dividends.

Good luck!

Andrew,

Not to be a pester (and I certainly don't expect you to function as my instant messenger therapist)--just nice to voice progress and thoughts--especially as they relate to the teachings in your books.

First, I know that I wrote a lot in my last email, but I hope none to avoid blame in the situation. I wanted



to paint a fuller history (for myself as well) to really dig to the source. I have also read that resentment and anger is a poison (I know this as well) and the only step is forgiveness. I am working towards that. That will take faith on my part as well. Mostly I have forgiven, but it is what fuels my anger and impatience--I need to focus on forgiveness and trust in my husband's love for me. No reason for me not to.

Secondly, as related to your book, there have been many behaviors that I have already focused on. First, in all our interactions, I am able to clearly see how I would (or have in the past) have reacted. I can clearly see how these reactions were wrong, immature, hurtful and selfish. I am practicing empathy and really putting myself in Bill's shoes...which is not a good feeling, but really makes me believe that it's in my hands to make him feel better. Some advice I have taken from the books:

1. Really listen and understand in conversations
2. Being understanding in actions
3. Not getting defensive in an argument--not jumping to talk or deny what he says, listening and saying first before saying anything "I understand" and then voicing my opinion ONLY if it will add value.
4. Not acting desperate--this REALLY SAVED me last week (Bill said that it's what turned him off).
5. Being patient with his time with anger, pain and healing. I'm not asking questions every 5 seconds because I need to satiate my need to know if he
6. will stay with me or not, or what he is feeling, what he is doing, etc.
7. Respecting his time. When he needs to bed, work, etc.
8. Respecting his space. Not always tagging in the room with him.
9. Even when it's tough, always have a loving, friendly voice and smile.
10. Not saying "I love you" too much, but just at the right times with a touch of affection. I don't want to go overboard with this and be manipulative, and also I want to respect that he is angry, and wants space and to not want someone that is gushing and giddy when they have hurt the feelings of their spouse. Being respectful means I understand what I did, and I understand and respect his anger. Letting things drop. When he answers a question in a way that makes me feel scared and panicked, I do not keep nagging.
11. In the beginning, since our verbal conversations were useless, I was writing my feelings and apologies in emails.
12. Apologize for things that he doesn't even see. One thing that was hardest, probably most hurtful and healing to our marriage was a 4 page email I sent to him outlining every bad behavior I have towards him. This really took the wind out of him. I had stated that these are things that I am confessing, brutally honest, things that I know he won't even make me face to spare my feelings and to deny his. This is what started his anger--BUT, I am proud and grateful that I did this. It's the only way to honor his anger, to let him get it out, and to move past this. It's what I feel I needed from him during our relationships in college. He deserves that of me.
13. Thinking about the things that really pose as problems for me in our relationship (his priority for work over us, etc) and how to calmly resolve these without anger. To come up with and share solutions that will work for both of us (let's not schedule anything during the week because it always ends in disappointment for me and failure for you). Thinking back to the past and seeing how I could have handled things with solutions in mind and compassion in heart.

Though these and many other things sound like common sense--sadly they were not for me. Your book and the "reality check" of this serious situation has really made me "get real" and take responsibility. Though I see them now and am working on them, I am not getting too secure to stop constantly trying.

I know this will be a slow road, and that's another thing I need to practice--patience with the process and to really remove my ego and NOT EXPECT any progress with him (that is selfish). Just to make home and life more comfortable and loving for Bill.

Again, I can't thank you enough--your email is something I am constantly reading to keep me on track. It really helped!!!!

MY REPLY:

I am really proud to see that you are making such good progress. I don't think there is anything more I can tell you. From what you have written you have become a very self-aware person, and your awareness of your feelings and how this affects your interactions with others is a real breakthrough.

You just need to constantly keep in mind the consequences of your actions. When you feel yourself having a feeling or reaction to something, you need to consider where your reaction is taking you. What is your reaction going to do for your relationship, and what are the consequences of your actions? How is your partner going to feel? How are you going to feel? Is your reaction taking your relationship in the direction you want it to go?

You are doing really well. Keep up the good work. I am very proud of you.

Andrew



## **Falling Out Of Love**



Hi,

I have just purchased your book and intend to read it over the next few days.

My situation is as follows. My husband of 6 years has moved out - saying he needs space and time to fall back in love with me. He has fallen out of love with me for a number of reasons. We had a really tough yr last year with a toddler plus the birth of a new baby and his parents living with us for a year. I was traveling with my work and (whilst pregnant) and away 3 nights a week - as a result I got very jealous of my mum in law (who was looking after my daughter) and this drove a wedge between my husband and I - he says this is the main reason for falling out of love with me - although he did have doubts before (as we used to argue every Friday night -before the kids were born -when I got back from my travels - I put this down to adjusting back to each other after being apart for the week - he puts it down to us being incompatible!). He says we have grown apart and don't have fun together anymore - I am boring etc. he wants to get away from me and experience life as a single guy again - he says he didn't have a mouth arms or legs last year and now he wants to make decisions fro himself without me controlling him - e.g. if he wants to go car racing he will. He says i wasn't keen on investing in another house last year and he wanted to - which demonstrates we are on different wavelengths - I know this was because I had other things on my mind - pregnancy/travel etc. he says he doesn't know if he wants our marriage to work as he doesn't know if he wants to be with me.

I know I have done some stupid things - mostly neglecting him last yr for the sake of the kids. I have however made a huge number of changes - I have really tried. I have told him I love him - but he still says he need to get away from me - maybe for a yr or two. he is not asking for a divorce - just time away - but this may or may not involve seeing someone else (although there is no one else at the moment).

I have decided to just get on with my life - get a new job, go to gym, holidays etc. He comes around every day to help with the kids and I am trying to keep things on an even keel as in the past we have argued about the separation. So from now I am going to keep my cool and be nice and just agree with him and not argue.

He is also feeling very guilty and embarrassed about it and almost hates himself for the pain he is causing me. Even though he now has the space he wanted he is still not happy as he feels bad about it and that everyone thinks he is an idiot (which they do!) I have suggested 9not told him) that he might want to try counseling for himself (we tried it as a couple but it didn't work as by his own admission - he didn't think it would work and didn't want to do it)

is there hope for us - what should I be doing to save our marriage. Should I for example stop him from coming round every day - so that maybe he misses us ? I don't want to as I want to see him and the kids do too (they don't know anything). I will stop telling him I love him and begging/pleading. I will stop saying things to get a reaction - e.g. I am going to see other guys/move away etc.



What rules should I set up for the separation - the only rules we have right now is that he comes to help me with the kids and that if either of us see anyone else then the marriage will be over - i.e. divorce.

Please help.

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

Thanks for your email. I would recommend that you maintain contact with him and encourage him to spend time with you and the children. If you cut off contact you run the risk of harming your chances of getting back together.

What you need to focus on at the moment is making each interaction with your husband a positive one. What you are doing at the moment is really good, and it is obvious that you have put a lot of thought into how to deal with this.

Getting on with your life and making yourself into a more positive and more lovable person is one of the most productive things you can do. You can't control what your partner does, but you can use this time to make yourself into a better person. A new job and gym visits are great ways to make changes in your life, and that's a really good start.

What sort of qualities drew you to him in the first place? What things did he find really attractive? Was it your values, or your attitude, or maybe your carefree personality? If so, what changed, and how do you think you may be different now? What changes can you make to recapture some of what originally attracted your husband?

You need to read through Book 2, particularly the chapter on Staying Positive in a Negative Environment, and Chapter 4. Communication skills might be a good area to look at if you are ready to sit down with your husband and discuss what your expectations are of each other.

You sound like you are already making good progress, but if you are able to make each interaction with your husband a positive one, and use some of the thoughts in Chapter 7: Love is a doing word. Then you are on the way to maximizing your chances.

Rebuilding communication through effective communication techniques and words and phrases such as "I feel" will really help. There is a lot of really good material in Book 2 that can help you.

Good luck and keep up the progress.

Kind regards,

Andrew



I feel I am in a desperate situation and recently bought your book to attempt to make my marriage work. After 15 years of marriage, my wife has decided she no longer loves me and wants to separate. This change of mind came shortly after her very best friend died of cancer about 4 months ago. She claims that she has thought this way for many years but has always pushed these feelings back "below the surface". Initially she became depressed and we had some big arguments when a misread the signs of depression. Her doctor has put her on a course of anti-depressants which seem to have given her extra self-confidence and she is making big decisions. We have two children, aged 9 & 6, and my wife tells me she has now grown up and wants to try things on her own as she is now 36 and needs to do it now or she never will!

We have attended three sessions of joint counseling but these have now come to an end as my wife was not a willing partner.

I have asked my wife to leave and I will stay in the family home with the two children which would be best for them.

She refused and originally looked into renting a house and take the children. She has now realized that she cannot afford this so is staying in the house and has recently employed a solicitor. We are now in separate beds and communication between us is difficult. I am yet to receive any communication from her solicitor but a letter is on its way to me.

I really want our marriage to work and everything I have tried has failed. Originally I pleaded with her and promised change which I know was wrong after reading your book. She is very angry with me, competes for the children's attention with me and is avoiding me all the time. She is now going out on her own with friends more often and has expressed a wish to spend time with the children without me. As you can see, the situation seems desperate and I really need guidance on how to turn the situation around to save our marriage. Please can you give me a structured plan to work to as I still love her and I want to work at saving our marriage but every week it seems to get worse.

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

The first thing I learnt about relationships and marriages is that interpersonal relationships, particularly when mixed with feelings and emotions, are ever simple or able to be boxed into groups and given structured plans. There are facets of your marital problem and you and your wife's emotions that make it quite unique.

The first issue I can identify is your wife's depression and her subsequent medication. I understand that she is on anti-depressants, but what sort of follow-up therapy is she receiving? Drugs are designed to be a short-term solution, often to give the sufferer a boost to enable them to function and face their problems. However, in addition to drugs she needs counseling to actually deal with the issues of her depression, such as her reaction to the death of her friend, and her perception of missed opportunities and the need to try things on her own. There are elements of your wife's condition that closely resemble a mid-life crisis. Does her doctor know how she is at the moment? You should be able to talk to her doctor and tell him about what is going on. The doctor doesn't have to say anything, so this should not clash with the patient confidentiality issue.

It appears that your wife has a lot of repressed feelings, and in particular has a lot of anger towards you, perhaps in her perception that you have in some way held her back by marrying her and having children. Life is about choices, and the choices that you and your wife have made throughout your lives has led you to where you are now. Unfortunately, your wife is unhappy at the destination of her choices, and in some ways feels as though she has missed out.

You need to allow her to make some choices of her own and explore her options. The more you try to stop her, the harder she will fight you. Let her go out with her friends. Let her see the children alone. But at the same time, listen to what your wife wants, and see if there is a way to do it while still being married. Being married doesn't have to stop her from doing things. Both of your children need the support of both parents. This is something that both of you need to remember.

This really is a depression issue, so your biggest priority is to get your wife the support she needs to deal with her depression. More than anything, she needs the help of a counselor. Now is not a good time to be making big changes in her life.



I have been vaguely concerned about my marriage for some time. Married for 4 years, together for about 7 years.

The literature I have read (including your book) talks about the romance of 'falling in love'... etc and then that changing to something more complex.

With my husband...I have never actually felt that intense about him. (Years before I met him, I had fallen hopelessly in love with someone who did not deserve it – swore I would never fall in love –like that-again [don't know if it is relevant]) however I question whether I actually fell in love with my husband...or whether it was more practical...he will do.

My husband is a good man. He loves me very much. He is a bit dependent on me...regularly wants me home, rings me at work regularly through the day. Even asks where I am going (when the choices are obviously I am probably going to get a drink or go to the toilet). So I do feel somewhat claustrophobic at times.

I love him (I think, probably but not sure) but if I do it seems more the love for a good friend. I remember talking with friends when we were first dating...'great man, lots of qualities...like him a lot...not sure if I love him (especially compared with the previous experience I had of falling in love)'

So it is hard for me to think that romantic love aspect of the relationship lifecycle actually relevant for my situation.

We have had a series of serious life events which have dragged serious attention away from each other – including moving states, moving house 4 times, changing jobs several times – for each of us, IVF, money stressors (never enough) three miscarriages, working full time and doing a Masters of Business (now finished) serious injury and rehabilitation.

The reason why I have decided to put the spotlight on our relationship is that we are now looking at adopting children and I don't want to bring (probably abandoned) children into a relationship that is not rock solid. I don't want them to deal with abandonment issues again through divorce.

I will do whatever it takes to save and strengthen our marriage. It has all the evidence and practice of a successful marriage. We respect each other, communicate reasonably well, there is a desire by each other to help the other achieve their goals. We are supportive through the more challenging times. We travel and share good times. We are willing to talk about our relationship.

In fact, when I ask the question – knowing what I know about him and me. Would I make the same decisions... re marrying him...making decisions to put our relationship first...I probably would.

I just have a nagging disquiet that – this is not enough- that I don't love him enough or with enough intensity. I feel as if I am having my life, thanks a lot, and I have this pesky little relationship thingy that is taking my focus from stuff I really want to be doing.

I have spoken about my concerns with my husband and (although he thinks we are fine...and I am just over-anxious) he is willing to actively participate in strengthening our marriage.

I would appreciate your advice. I value my marriage far too much to leave it because of 'vague feelings of disquiet' but my experience is...if we don't turn around and face those feelings they will gnaw away like a cancer at the foundations of the marriage until it crumbles.

Given the above, including the issue of whether I really loved my husband, at the beginning of our time together...do you think that by following the exercises in the book we can have a deeper, richer more stable relationship?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

There is no such thing as the perfect marriage; in fact, going into marriage with this fairytale inspired ideal is a dangerous illusion. You need to examine what your expectations of marriage are, and if indeed they match what your partners expectations are in return.

You speak of loving someone in the past that did not perhaps deserve your love, however I wonder if this was your first romantic love, and the shattering of this first love lead you to believe that you would never love on the same level again. First loves are always different, and it's not uncommon for people to feel that any love after this will never match up.

You talk about your husband being a good man and loving you very much. That is a good foundation to build on. You have been through some significant life events and have managed to keep it together where many couples may have broken down. That deserves recognition. I really do think you have something to build upon, especially where the both of you are so keen to communicate and commit to a stronger marriage.



I wish I had more couples like you. Instead of looking for an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, you are committed to making changes now. I think that's really great.

Our books are going to be of enormous help, because we have a unique structure. We have a submission at the beginning of each chapter which raises important marital issues, which are then discussed in a relevant and practical way so that you can understand. Then each chapter is backed up with a series of exercises to apply the thoughts and theories to your marriage, which is where the real progress can be made.

I'm really looking forward to hearing of your progress.



Thank you for your ebook and newsletter. Both are valuable.

I have a special concern. My husband and I have been married for 12 years, and have two gorgeous girls of 12 and 10. We are 43 and 46 respectively.

When we met, he had just been dumped, and badly hurt. I had too, but a few years before, so was ready for another relationship. We had a strong connection, and after a year, decided to get married.

However, the upshot of the imbalance in the beginning has been that I know he has never really had the feeling of being 120% in love with me. In retrospect, I should have gone overseas when we actually got married, given him the space, and then he would, I'm sure, have realized consciously how much he does actually feel.

As a consequence, I constantly feel short changed. I have tried everything, and now am really only prepared to continue if there is an equal effort evident from him. Otherwise I'm ready to walk away.

The other way of doing things is unorthodox ...agree with him to separate for a period, after which time we see how we feel. The terms would be that we are both free for that time, and that there is no cohabiting, but can be contact. Contact with the girls would continue. The risk is that he falls for someone else, and that is the end of my marriage. The upside might be that he realizes our value, and comes on board totally, which would be great, and 100% better than a half hearted man.

What do you think, and specifically, what period of separation would you advise? Is there any alternative advice you would give?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

So you feel your relationship is imbalanced, and that you make a greater contribution to the relationship than your husband. This is a valid concern, and I am interested in how you come to make this statement. Most particularly, I am interested in knowing how you make this measurement.

I get a lot of couples sharing the same concerns with me, and I wonder how much of it could be due to misunderstanding or poor communication in the relationship.

When you speak of your husband not being 120% in love with you, can you compare this to something or someone else in his life that he has more enthusiasm for?

I'm interested in your statement because I wonder how much of your love imbalance is due to your husband's lack of love or how much is related to your need for affirmation within your marriage.

Affirmation, such as declarations of love, touching, kissing, reassurance and intimacy are integral parts of a marriage, so when men and women are not able to meet the other's need for love, resentment and anger can often develop. This is not a problem with your husband alone. This is a problem with both of you and your relationship.

Have you and your husband received any counseling?

As a couple, you both need to sit down individually and list what your love expectations are for your marriage. List what you would like to receive from your partner in the way of affirmation, reassurance of love, romance and intimacy. Then list what you offer your relationship and your partner.

In doing so, and showing the results to each other, you should be able to identify areas of deficit on one side or another, or perhaps both sides. Then I want the both of you to list the things your partner does for you that makes you feel really good and really loved.

Awareness is the first step. The second is to take a holiday together, perhaps a week after this exercise and spend the weekend together, taking time to address the issues from this list.

Can you profile your love needs? Can you summarize what way you like to be loved, and can you profile your partner's love needs?

I'm reading "The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate" by Gary Chapman. In this book Gary explores the idea that each of us has a love language, and that identifying the love language for you and for your partner is the key to greater love and intimacy. I would recommend you both read it.

I think your idea to separate is a really bad idea. You need to maintain contact, particularly communication for your marriage to work. Separating works against this. You also need to stop issuing ultimatums. This problem is something that you both share, and judgments and attributions of blame will only stifle the communication process.

Good luck.



Well it all started Feb 2, 2006 when my wife of 27 years told me she had fallen out of love with me. I was told that over the last 6 years I have put her down to the point where she has no self-esteem. I am guilty as charged all though I was not aware of it at the time. If I did put her down I also put her on a pedestal other times. She always told me that she loved me. I have always been there when she needed a boost up. I cook, I clean, and I am a hand on dad. She is 47 and going through a stressful time right now (death of best friend, anxiety attacks, Aunt sick, Mom sick, more responsibility at work and me) so I am not sure if this confusion is midlife crisis. I have seen where I was a cause and have changed immediately; I love her more now than ever. After 2 months of me changing but her still having a closed heart and a wall up and saying she still had to leave to get her head straight and find herself and hope the spark magically reappears, I told her to go now so she can start. She left Thursday 4/6/2006 to live with her Aunt and Uncle.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

27 years is a long time to be married, so I can imagine that your marital problems are really turning your life upside down. It is easy to fall into a routine after you have been married for that length of time, and the idea of taking your partner for granted is not all that uncommon. While the put-downs may have destroyed her self esteem, it is fair to share the blame of this with your wife. If she felt bad about the way she was being treated, she had a duty both as your wife and friend to share her feelings with you. To wait 6 years to make this revelation to you is not fair.

Stress can make people do funny things, especially when friends or people close to you die. It can force you to re-evaluate your life, and for many people, what they see can be very different to the life they dreamed they were going to have. One day you are 25 with dreams of an ideal life, the next thing you are 45 looking back at the result of the choices you made. The combination of the death of a friend and sick relatives are often the catalysts to change, however the results of the resulting life change do not always deliver the peace and satisfaction that is anticipated.

I feel very strongly that your wife is choosing to look at opportunities wasted rather than focusing on the many great things in her life. Leaving the marriage is not going to give her the answers she wants and it is important that you understand this. You did not drive your wife away.

At this stage, now she has left the house, you need to maintain regular contact with her so that this time is not wasted. If a separation is going to work, you will need to meet regularly and talk about your issues. I would recommend going to joint counseling on a regular basis.

As far as what you can do right now, you need to look at ways you can show your support and love to your partner. Take a look at Chapter 7 of Book 2. In this chapter I show the small ways you can show your partner you are thinking of them. These small things, such as buying your wife her favorite muffin, or a single stem of her favorite flower, can make a huge difference.

Hope that the spark reappears is not enough. You need to make a commitment to each other that you will do your best to keep contact and break down your barriers so that love can flourish again.

Keep me up to date with your progress.



My wife and I were married 25 years and seemed to grow apart. We had been having problems for about 5 years before we separated thinking that maybe some time apart would give us a different view of our marriage. After about 8 months of separation I started talking to her about getting back together and she was somewhat interested so I read some books....arranged some counseling but after a couple sessions she backed out and I kept hounding her till she became resentful.

We left it for a few months...talked again and again she was interested till we got to the counseling after about 4 sessions she quit again. We left it this time for about 16 months she seemed even more interested that time but after the first session she again, backed out. At that point I decided to come to terms that it was not to be. I never brought it up again to her....we remained friends and got along well. After about another year she mentioned to me she would like to try again...I acknowledged her but never answered her.

A few months later she told me she had come to terms with everything that had happened and asked again if we could try and work things out and again I never answered because I was afraid to be rejected again and I wanted to get on with my life so a couple months after that I talked to her about getting a divorce. She told me she didn't want a divorce, she wanted to work on the marriage and she was serious. I thought about it for a few weeks and talked to her some more and we decided to try again. It went alright for a couple of weeks and then she started backing away.

We now have coffee once or twice a week and today she told me she is not sure she wants to work on it. The books I read and reread several times were Dr. Phil's book "Relationship Rescue" and two books of Michelle Weiner Davis. I have tried to use the advice they give and with some success at times. I don't understand why she keeps telling me she wants to work it out but never puts any effort into it.

I have not expressed myself well but I hope you get an idea of my problem and can suggest a couple things I could try or say to her.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

From doing my calculations, you have been living apart for over 3 and a half years. This is a significant obstacle to you and your wife getting back together, and every month you continue to live apart, the more difficult a chance of reconciliation is. Your wife's fear of being rejected and the marriage not working out again is irrational. In shying away from her fears, she is letting her fears become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The issue here is that your wife is unwilling to put the effort in, and for some reason her fears are holding her back from participating in the marriage or any kind of counseling that would facilitate personal growth. In addition to this, the time that you have spent apart is significant. You have both grown accustomed to living as single people, and any change to this situation now is going to require a huge life adjustment. That alone may be more difficult than talking about the issues that divided you 3.5 years ago!



This is not about picking up your marriage where you left off. This is about creating a new relationship with your wife, with new rules and new intentions. A post-mortem on what happened in the old relationship is only going to serve a limited purpose after so many years apart, so any decision to start over needs to be guided by the belief that this is an opportunity to get to know each other all over again and start with a clean slate.

This situation has been allowed to fester for far too long. A separation should never be longer than a few months, and the problem with splitting for several years is that she has grown accustomed to life without you. She may even like her single life. She may also be scared about living with you again.

You need to make a resolution to move forward or you need closure. She doesn't want to try to save your marriage but she doesn't want to be the one responsible for ending it either.

You need to tell her that she is living her fears in her reluctance to try and save your marriage. Giving things another go is a huge leap of faith, and she needs to take strength that you believe in her enough to have faith in your marriage. If she doesn't share that faith then it is time to respond with love.

Thank her for being your wife. Thank her for giving you the years of happiness that you had together. Tell her you will always be her friend. But if she doesn't want to live with you anymore then it is time to walk away.

Love is not always possession.



I think perhaps for me it is too late to save my marriage. But I value your opinion, nevertheless.

I have been married for 21 years; have 3 children ages 11, 9 and 6.

18 months ago my husband told me he didn't love me any more and didn't want to be with me and he left for a while. He came back and we went to counseling together. It was a hard time and counseling raised issues that he felt I was controlling and everything revolved around me and the children and he felt pushed out. For me I felt he was too quiet and uncomplaining and had wished he could have told me how he had been feeling, but he said he thought it would get better if he ignored it, of course it hadn't and so resentment built up. There were no real rows or arguments just digs and silences sometimes. I thought we were tentatively making a go of it and by Christmas he was saying he loves me again and we were going away together and trying to rekindle love.

However, the last few months things cooled in the bedroom and I asked what was wrong and a few weeks ago he said he had been kidding himself and he felt the same as he did last year and he didn't love me or want to be with me and has since left. He said if he stayed he would have turned the kids against me and turned 'in on himself' and it would be worse if he stayed.

I am devastated again, for myself a second rejection, and for the children, who can't understand particularly the eldest one and are upset and emotional and so I am trying to deal with their feelings and my own.

My husband has stated he will not discuss it any further and doesn't want to work on our marriage anymore, for him its over. I feel he emotionally left this marriage sometime ago, whereas I had hopes still.

I wish I had tried harder, but was scared to go too far in case he felt pressurized, but now it's too late.

I have to my shame tried to barter with him and tell him what he's losing and how awful he is I even attacked him and threw something at him, such was the strength of my emotions and of course he became more hardened to me. But I was desperate and still am to make a go of it.

My feelings are still raw, especially every time I see him which is 3-4 times a week because he has the children when I work, this tears open the wound for me each time he goes again.

I vary on how I feel each day and the last time I saw him I stayed calm and tried to be friendly especially with the kids around, but inside I'm dying. He just seems to be putting the knife in to emphasize its finality. He even said that 20% of our marriage had been no good, that really hurt to put it in terms like that, he must really hate me. I feel such a failure. I thought most of our marriage had been good.

We are supposed to be going on holiday soon. But I think I should stay and let him take the kids, I would love to go and haven't told the kids I'm not going, but what is the point of going and trying to put on a show when the man I love doesn't want to be with me, but then I'm torn as I know the kids will be upset if I don't, he has told me if I do go not to get my hopes up. What should I do as regards to this?

My second question is I suppose is, do you think there may be a chance for us or should I try to accept its the end? We've had 20 years together and its as if I don't know this man anymore, one who would always rise to a challenge and support and help, but with something as important as this, he doesn't want to try.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your submission.

I read with interest your email, and the way you have described your situation. In answering your two questions, I believe it is in your children's best interests for you to go on holiday with them. Staying home and punishing yourself and the children isn't going to help save your marriage or add anything positive to what is already an emotionally charged situation.

In regard to your second question, it sounds as though you have already given up. If you don't believe that it's possible to save your marriage, then how are you going to convince your husband? Effective marriage resolution starts with a positive attitude. There are a number of exercises at the end of every chapter that will help you build the attitude necessary to save your marriage.

Your husband does not hate you, nor should you blame yourself for the marriage problems you are in. As a couple, you both have a duty to communicate and hiding behind his fear of your "controlling" nature is not an excuse. Every crisis situation calls us to growth and to learn something about ourselves. You can both learn something from this, and hopefully by going through the course and its concepts together, you can identify positive areas where both of you can improve on, especially talking about your

feelings and losing the victim mentality that seems to have pervaded both of you.

What you have here is a communication problem, in which neither of you know how to communicate effectively anymore. You and your husband need to work on effective communication strategies, and ways to express thoughts and feelings freely without projecting guilt or overriding each other's feelings. This is a valuable exercise to undertake as parents of your children, not just as husband and wife.

I would recommend you take some time out to re-examine your sense of self, and what it takes to be an individual capable of gifting and receiving love. Both are very important. You are more than just a wife. You are an attractive woman and the mother of your beautiful children. Meditate, paint, write poetry, or listen to music. Recapture your feminine self and take control for your happiness. You have control over your emotions and how you are going to choose to react to all of this, and I want this to be a learning experience for you.

There are a number of issues that I believe your husband hasn't dealt with, and I would recommend you revisit counseling to identify what those are. He may or may not want to accompany you, but I believe you can get lessons from this regardless of whether he chooses to participate. However you need to also take a good look at the attitude you have and the internal and external language you use. If you believe it is too late then it is going to be very hard to turn this around.

The first step is belief, and the second step is in taking control of your reactions to your husband. Respond with love. This makes it hard for him to fight you.

Lead by example and let the love you have for him and your children guide you.



Last night I purchased your eBooks and read "6 Reasons for Divorce."

Thank you for putting some things in perspective. My husband is the one who wants a divorce, doesn't want to work it out, isn't "in love with me anymore", just wants to move with his life, without me.

Here's bit of background. Dean & I met 10 years ago (through our children). He was married twice and I was recently divorced from my first husband. I was married 21 years and my ex-husband spent the last

8 years of our marriage with another woman, whom he married soon after our divorce. Dean & I have been married for 5 years and 2 months ago he came to me and said he didn't think he wanted to be married any longer.

He said that he hasn't been happy for the last 2-3 years and that he's been trying (I was unaware of this conflict), but has come to the conclusion that that the only answer is divorce. He says he is not in love with me any longer, but that he does love me. He says he can't stand the fighting and arguing all the time. While I don't agree with the 2-3 year thing, I must admit that over the last year we have been fighting more and more. Sometimes it seems, almost daily.

Dean, who is 55 years old, has a friendship with a young (recently married) woman who is the saxophone player in his weekend band. He met her through work when she joined the company - about 2 years ago. They play in the corporate band together and hit it off. She joined his band about a year

and half ago. Since that time, they have gotten closer & closer. At first, I was okay with the friendship. She would call him Pops. Her & her husband are both from New York and decided after graduation to stay in the Midwest. So, I understand that they are lonely and don't have many friends yet. After a time, I noticed my husband becoming more and more involved with this young woman. They talked on the phone at least once day, sometimes as many as 10-back & forth, they went to lunch together 2-3 times a week, they went to jam sessions at various bars at night, staying out until late in the evening. And, my husband talked of nothing else, but "Jessica." How smart she was, how talented... Jessica, Jessica, Jessica, until I thought I would explode. Then one day, I finally said, "Dean, you need to back off a bit. This relationship is just a bit inappropriate and too much." I realize that they kept everything up front, and didn't try to hide anything. They only seemed to talk about music, but let's face it, I'm sure my husband was harboring thoughts about more than just music. Maybe not on her end, but come on, he's 55 years old and a young 24 woman with a slim figure thinks the sun rises and sets with him.

Always calling and asking for his help for one thing or another. He would tease her (like he use to do with me) and they would whisper back & forth. It was getting painful to watch. In fact, she did this in front of many of his friends, all of middle age. It is flattering and I really not angry about that, that I understand. What I don't understand is when I asked him to back off, he felt his friendship with Jessica was more important than our marriage.

After telling him how I felt, instead of doing the right thing, the relationship intensified. During this time, Dean was less & less interested in "us" and seemed more critical of me. He seemed irritated and aggravated, always finding fault with everything I did. I became more defensive, always trying to defend my actions. That made him angrier, until it just seemed like all we were doing was either fighting or talking about Jessica. Then, she started have problems with her husband and she started crying on Dean's shoulders. She even said that they talked about divorce. Soon after, Dean said he didn't know if he wanted to be married and was thinking about divorce. I don't know, but sure seems coincidental to me. This time I asked him to terminate the relationship so that we can work on getting our marriage back, but he refused.

As it is right now, I'm going crazy. He's already seen his attorney as a consultation. All I do is want to talk about it with him and the more I talk about it, the more I drive him away. I finally got the courage to call Jessica and tell her about what was going on and asked her to terminate her relationship with Dean, not only for our marriage, but to save hers. See, her husband feels the same way about the situation. In fact, before they were married (last November) he told her that he wanted her to curb her friendship with Dean because it made him feel uncomfortable. In fact, whenever Dean was around, she never paid any attention to him. The same thing was happening to me. Anyway, she kept telling him it was an innocent relationship but she never stopped. Why do people think just because there is no sex involved that it's innocent?

Jessica agreed to terminate the relationship. I explained that he needs to be away from both of us so that he can think clearly. If she remains in the picture, there is no room for me. I appealed to her as a friend and I believe she'll keep her word. It pains me to do this behind my husband's back, but I was going crazy, crying all the time, pleading, begging him to reconsider, until I found your website. I read "6 Reasons for Divorce" and feel some hope after all. I can't wait to start reading the "Save My Marriage." My only problem, is how do I present this to my husband? Right now, I we are barely speaking to one another. He can't trust me that I won't start crying, pleading, and begging. I don't blame him.



Just when he thinks I'm calm, I start in again. I'm relentless and I know that's driving him further and further away, but I can't stop. On this past Sunday evening we had a very painful, emotional argument and said some very hurtful things to one another, along with my pleading, crying, begging, etc.

As I read this mini book, I can see how my reactions as contributed to the events. In fact, almost every other bullet point in the 25 Relationship Killers refers to me. It makes me weep to think I have been hurtful to the person I love and respect. I just hope it's not too late. But I guess until he actually files the divorce papers, there is still hope.

I am moving into an apartment this weekend. I believe it's the best thing for both of us. If I'm not at home, looking at all the memories, watching him leave the house at night to be anywhere but with me, it will be healthier for me and him in the long run.

I would like to present this course to him, along with my sane and rational reasons why I would like him to reconsider and try to save our marriage. I plan on doing this through an email because I think that I can remain calmer that way. In person is just too intense and painful. I would ask that he take time to read the "6 Reasons for Divorce" and see if he could see the possibility of working on our marriage. I'm afraid I've pushed him so far, he just won't be receptive. Is it too soon to approach him on this or should I wait a week or so? What advice can you give me?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Your submission was very thorough and well thought out. It is encouraging to see you have put so much thought into examining the issues surrounding your marriage problems and your responses to it.

I firmly believe you did the right thing in contacting Jessica and talking with her about the problem that exists in the relationship she has with your husband. This was especially important considering Jessica herself is married and having marital problems in her own relationship. The fact that you were able to contact her and discuss the issues as an adult is indicative of your considered thought as well as your commitment to saving your marriage.

Regarding your move into an apartment this weekend, I would advise caution here. You need to be very clear what you hope to achieve by shifting out of the family home, and focus particularly on how this is going to help you get your marriage back on track.

If you are committed to shifting out, you need to sit down with your partner and discuss very clearly your reasons for doing so. This should not be about punishing your partner. In addition to this, you need to set some guidelines for what behavior is acceptable and what behavior is unacceptable if you are living in separate locations. Questions about whether you can both go and date other people, guidelines on what type of contact the both of you have with each other, guidelines on how often you communicate, and regular intervals in which you can meet and review and discuss what progress is being made in regards to saving your marriage.

You need to be very clear what your goals are, and how you can measure your success in achieving these goals. Without some thought about this I don't see how you shifting out is going to help your marriage.

You have a lot to think about, and I think it would be beneficial for you to take some time out to relax and refocus. The best type of communication is when you are both able to sit down and discuss the issues, so I would much prefer you did this rather than sending an email. However, if you feel that this is the only way to express your feelings without getting hurt too much, then you must do what you feel is right.

It may be too soon to approach him on this, and if you are committed to shifting out I would recommend you wait on the email for a couple of weeks. You both have a lot of adjusting and thinking to do, and the consequences of a divorce are huge. You both need to take some time out to put things in perspective before you are ready to decide on your future as a couple.



Thank you very much for the materials I purchased online. They are a very good start. I feel now is the time I need my free email consultation.

My wife and I have been married over 20 years, and we have two wonderful teenage kids. Our marriage has always been somewhat shaky, much of it my fault since I have always given priority to my work with long working hours, and I have never had good communication skills with my wife. There are no problems with alcohol, drugs, or physical abuse.

Last January my wife announced that she wanted to get a divorce and would not be accompanying me on our next overseas assignment starting this last summer, which is for 2 years. She said she no longer loved me, and maybe never did. Her actions hit me hard, and I immediately made radical changes in my lifestyle and my treatment of her - I was able to change my work schedule and come home at 5pm, I asked that we do family counseling, I helped out tremendously around the house, I learned how to communicate better and learn what her needs are. I have read a number of self-help marriage materials, including the ones from you, and they have helped me make it over the last 9 months. We did separate counseling, but hers basically said that she was a fool to have stayed so long with me. She left her counseling because she became physically ill much of the time after hearing all he said, but she believed what he said was true anyway.

My wife has openly acknowledged that I am a much better person, father and husband, but she simply doesn't feel any love, but she does care for me, and needs to feel passion for someone and have her passion lit. My wife says that the reason she decided to go with me on this two year assignment was because she does not feel secure at this point going on her own, and she wanted me to develop a better relationship with our 13 year old daughter. She insists she will get the divorce in less than 2 years. We are sleeping in separate bedrooms, and although we talk, go out, and hug each other in the morning and at night, we have no other physical interaction, which she says she simply won't do because she doesn't feel passion/love for me.

Right now I feel we're at a stalemate. She has a comfortable lifestyle, has no need to work, enjoys the fact that I help out around the house and treat her well, but she says that all the improvements I've made are good for me and will help me have a great relationship with another woman after we divorce.

At times I feel that I should just tell her to go and let me rebuild my life, but I remember that I need a lot of patience and hope. I don't cling or hound her, but if I'm too distant then she tells her friends that I've lost interest in the relationship anyway. And if I try to get closer to her, she won't let me.

I would like your comments on what I can do, if anything, to try to build passion with her which appears to be her main interest in a relationship now and the major missing ingredient for her - everything else such as a nice lifestyle, helpful husband with chores, going out together are appreciated by her, but she wants to feel love for someone and have her passion ignited - which she said I simply don't know how to do. At the same time, she won't even let me touch her in anyway that is even close to sexual, not even kiss her on the lips, and she gives no clues on how I could ever ignite her passion - which I feel I could do if she just gave me a real chance.

I really would appreciate any help you can provide and let me know what I can do now to at least try to get some sparks lit up in her.

Thank you very much!

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Your submission was really well written, and I am encouraged by how much thought went into describing the situation as it is. Sometimes writing about it can make the issues of your marriage crisis a lot clearer, so for that reason it is a worthwhile exercise.

I noted with interest a few points as I was reading your email, and the first that stuck in my mind was counseling. I noticed that you and your wife decided to have counseling, but decided to receive counseling separately rather than as a couple. This troubled me, as I feel as much as it is important to receive advice on an individual basis, moving forward as a couple requires couples counseling so a specialist can identify the ways in which you interact with each other. Without couples counseling it is difficult for you to diagnose specific problems and areas in which you can improve your interaction as two people, as well as monitor progress.

It's not a problem that "YOU" or "SHE" has. It's a problem that "WE AS A COUPLE" have.

In revisiting counseling, I would encourage you to attend sessions as a couple. Before doing so however, I would recommend you review the following issues:

What are the objectives of counseling? What do I/we hope to achieve?

Are my counseling goals attainable? Are they measurable? How do you know you are making progress in reaching your counseling goals?

How often do you review if progress is being made? What do you do to motivate each other and keep each other on track?

The goal of counseling should be that it brings you closer together as a couple. Going to individual counseling, while laying the groundwork for identifying and discussing issues, does not work toward the setting of common goals, and in developing communication strategies as a couple in which both of you are able to share ideas and feelings, feel valued in the relationship, and work towards successful con-

flict resolution. Couples counseling is the key to helping you work through these issues. Regarding reintroducing passion into the relationship, I feel the issue stopping your wife from responding to this is her lack of value in the relationship. In order for her to want to be passionate, she needs to feel as though her contributions to the family are noticed and valued. She needs this affirmation, both as a woman and as a wife and mother.

I would point you towards Chapter 7 of Book 2, titled 'Love is a Doing Word,' to identify ways of showing your wife love and support. There are lots of ways you can demonstrate your support and love towards your partner, and most of them can be small gestures. There are lots of useful suggestions and exercises to help you do this in the course, and I hope you employ them in your efforts to reconnect and love one another. Reinforce those good intentions with good actions!

Encourage dialogue with your wife, especially working on your ability to listen. This is going to be a long process to let go of the scars of the past and for your wife to learn to trust you and love you again.

Challenge her comments and ask her how she is supposed to feel love without making an effort through actions. Waiting for the feelings to return is a pointless exercise. You need to both commit to actually doing something, and preferably together. I always say that every crisis situation is an opportunity for growth, and I feel strongly that you both have something to learn.

As long as you maintain your love and support, and continue to love your wife, through actions as well as intentions, you are maximizing your chances of success.



Hello, I just purchased your material online. I haven't had a chance to read it all yet, but I hope it can help me with my situation. I have been with my wife Beth since high school, and we have now been together for 16 years. We've been married for 12 years and we have 4 beautiful daughters. Ages are 11,9,4 and 3. We have definitely been through some rough times. Early in our years we both had affairs, and can't seem to get past the pain that has caused. We both love each other, but as my wife states: "I am not "in love" with you anymore". I guess the feeling is mutual, and she has expressed desire to move out, and get a separation. I also know that she has been confiding (speaking at least) to a man she knows from her workplace. She is openly honest about this as well. I love her so much that it hurts. I just want to make everything better, and be the father and husband that I know I can be. I know that I am smothering her, and pushing her further away, but I want to reconcile. A couple months ago, I bought her a new wedding ring for our anniversary, and scheduled a cruise as well. The cruise is coming up in a couple of weeks, and I will probably just cancel it.

We have openly communicated over the past month, and we are both trying to do what is right, but it seems like all I want is to make everything better, and she just wants to move out and have some time/space. I realize that once she moves out that there is virtually no chance of getting back together. We both come from "split" families, and I don't want my children to go through that.

I told her that I respect her decision to leave, but it hurts a lot. I just feel like a failure as both a father and a husband. It seems the more I try, to further she is pushed away. What is the right thing to do?



MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

When you have been married for as long as you have, it is often easy to forget how to love your partner. Time and familiarity mean that you can take each other's love for granted, and immerse yourselves instead in the everyday issues that surround your home and working lives. While you may indeed love your partner, unless you continually find ways to show and express this love, couples can drift apart, living separate lives without the comfort and fulfillment of your intimate needs.

I'm not necessarily talking about sex here. I'm talking about the need to feel valued and loved, both as a wife or husband, but also as a person. It is often easy to fall into the trap of overlooking the importance of love, and the need to reassure your partner that they are loved.

So when you forget how to love your partner, what do you do?

Well the good thing is that both of you have woken up to the realization that your relationship has changed. When you both wake up one morning and realize that your relationship is not how it used to be, it can be a very scary thing for some. This applies to your wife. In realizing that the marriage has been neglected, she assumes that the feeling she has now is that the love is gone. It's not. You just need to find new ways to express this love.

Take a look at Chapter 7 of my *Book 2: For Marriages in Extreme Crisis*, and identify ways in which you can love your wife and show your support and love for her in small ways.

Your love started to die because you neglected to maintain it. Love is not something that just exists. Love and marriage are things that you need to constantly work on, and it is an evolving process. You never stop making the effort, and you never reach a destination. Your love is a journey that the both of you will travel as a couple for the rest of your lives, constantly growing and evolving in your love for one another.

This crisis is a call to action, or an opportunity for growth. Read my book and find ways to love your partner. Another book I would recommend is Gary Chapman's "*The Five Love Languages*". This is a great book for finding new ways to love your partner and finding the special type of expression which elicits the greatest response from them. I truly believe you can save your marriage if you make the commitment to finding ways to love your wife, even if she is unable to reciprocate this love in the short-term.

There are lots of exercises for you to do, and lots of material for you to take a look at. All that remains now is for you to apply unconditional love and have faith that this unwavering support will sustain you through this.

Sometimes the greatest love can grow from the smallest seeds of support. Best of luck.



Hi,

I purchased your books a couple of weeks ago. I'm trying my hardest to deal with my current situation the way you describe to in the literature. To give you a little insight on my situation, my wife and I got married just 2 months ago yesterday. For some reason 2 weeks ago she said that she was confused and wasn't sure if she loved me any more. She said she just wanted to be on her own and try to figure things out. She doesn't know why she started feeling the way she is, and says it's nothing that I did or didn't do. She said that I couldn't have been a better husband but she just doesn't know why she is feeling like this. Last Friday she moved out to her friends place. This was the hardest thing I've ever had to deal with in my life. I love her more than anything and just want her to come home and try to work everything out. We've only talked once over the last week, she came over to the house the other day and we talked for a while. We both cried and were upset about the situation but never argued about anything. She is upset about putting me through this. For me I feel that I will do anything that she needs to help her through this. This next week she is planning on seeing a counselor by herself. I have been giving her the space that she requested and am trying to do everything that I've read that you suggest. I guess right now I'm scared and confused. She just started a new job this week and says that everything is going well. I hope you can give me some added guidance as to what else if anything I can do. Not being with her is killing me. We've been together for nearly 4 years and I've never spent this much time without her. I guess I'm willing to try anything. Please e-mail me back if you have any additional advice. Thank you for your time. I hope to hear back from you soon!

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Your situation is a most distressing one, so I would encourage you to have some clarity in thinking about what the next step is.

You have been married a very short time, and due to circumstances outside of your control, your wife is re-evaluating if she wants to stay in the relationship. The important thing to remember here is that your wife has not given up on the relationship. She is obviously upset about the situation and is seeking the services of a counselor. This indicates very clearly that she is committed to dealing with this process and establishing what her feelings are.

If your wife is requesting space, then it is in your best interests to do this. However there is room for compromise here. You could agree to this provided she set up a regular meeting time for the two of you to sit and discuss any other issues that the two of you have. This could be something as simple as a half-hour cup of coffee or a ride in the car. At the very least it is the opportunity for you to see her. If she is able to do this perhaps once a week, a compromise may be that you give her the space she needs for the rest of the time.

This is a very confusing and distressing time for the both of you, so it is important that you are able to support her without adding to the pressure she is already feeling. This is a unique situation as it is nothing you have done or have not done. This takes the control over what happens here out of your hands. All you can do is find ways to demonstrate your love for your wife and support her through this.

In particular I would like you to take a look at Book 2, and concentrate on Chapter 7: Love is a Doing Word. There may be some small ways you can love and support your wife through this without putting too much pressure on her. The fact that she is going to counseling is a good sign. This means she is taking it seriously.

You also need to find ways to process your anxiety and other feelings, so I would recommend you take some time out to pamper yourself and reconnect with friends. You are going to need to find ways to relax and refocus. You also need to hold on to your hope.

Keep up the good work.

HIS REPLY:

Thank you so much for the response. However over the weekend I have found out the most devastating news. She has had an affair and that is why everything started. Instead of letting me know about it, she chose to move out and runaway from what we had. I still love her to death and am willing to try to start over. I married her for a reason and want to make this work. People are never perfect and people make mistakes. She said she was out to the bar while I was out of town and had too much to drink, let her guard down and this was what happened. She still doesn't know if she can ever deal with the fact of what she did to me. But I feel that she still is in love with me and wants to try to figure out her feelings and why all this happened. If she is willing to work on this and start over, I will be willing to do so only if she is coming back 100% to work this out. Many couples work through this kind of thing every day. It won't be easy but I can't ever be sure if she will do this again, but I can never be sure if someone else down the road will do the same to me. I guess time will tell all. I really appreciate what you guys do for people like me. Even though my situation may be not what is perfect, it still helps to understand some things that your books have provided. Thank you so much for the help you have given. If you have any additional advice please let me know.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

I understand that knowing what has really happened must come as a shock, but this is lessened by the fact that you now know the truth. As hard as it may have been for you to hear about the affair, she has told the truth and will now have to face the consequences of her actions.

This is a complicated time for a relationship, and this is especially true for you considering the short time you have been married. The important thing to remember here is that there is hope. I am really encouraged by your attitude through this, and the fact that you still want to make this work is a very good sign.

The issue here is now not about how you have reacted or will react, but whether your wife is able to process the guilt and commit to healing the relationship. In many cases there is the perception that it is easier to run away than it is to face up to your problems and begin to heal the relationship, and I feel it is this that your wife is battling with.

I want you to consider for a moment what it must be like for her. She is recently married and she has had an affair. Now she has had to face you and tell you the truth. This is not an easy thing. Then she is going to need to talk about this and examine why it happened and whether your relationship can be repaired. The affair is something she is going to have to face every day for a long time, and it is this that is really scaring her. Facing you and the reality of what she has done is going to be a very painful process, and at the end of this there are no guarantees that the relationship will be saved.

What you need to do is assure her that you are as committed to this relationship as she is, and that you will support the idea of counseling and working your way through this. If she is able to understand that she has your support, the idea of running away is going to seem less attractive.

You don't need to know all the details of what happened, and it is better that you don't. A number of people believe that knowing all the details will help them understand. It doesn't work that way. Knowing all the details increases the hurt and makes it harder to forgive. You know she had an affair, and that is all that you really need to know. Your focus should now be on looking forward, not back.

I don't expect that you will be ready to forgive her, and forgiveness may be a long way down the track. But you can make sure she knows that she has your support and love, and that you want to heal this issue as a couple. Encourage counseling, both individually and as a couple. It is essential that you are able to do this as a couple.

Keep loving your wife. It may be the one certain thing that will help you both get through this.

HIS REPLY:

Thank you again. My words can't describe how much you help me understand what can be done. I'm still really scared of the entire outcome. Its just hard to put everything into perspective right now. I'm trying to be supportive to her through all of this but I'm afraid that I'm going to be too supportive and make things worse. I'll try my hardest to feel her out and let her tell me how much help she wants. I can only do so much, its now up to her if she wants my help and to work this out. Again thank you so much for everything!!



My husband of 4 years moved out Nov 8th. The previous 2 1/2 weeks were the only warning I had of the change in his feelings. He questioned his commitment to me, his love for me and said he felt trapped and that he is missing something. I was shocked and stunned that he didn't want to consider marriage counseling instead wants to head straight for divorce. Our anniversary was 2 months ago and my birthday 1 month ago. On both occasions he stated his love and affection for me and treated me as he usually had, with love and respect. However, he is telling me now that he hasn't loved me for years and that he was lying to himself in order to make our marriage work. On top of that he is saying that our marriage itself was a mistake and that he felt pressured into it. I'm still in shock as we have been quite close and always affectionate. He seems very angry and resentful but won't answer any questions I have other than to say "I don't love you anymore". I am not ready to throw in the towel. I want to do what I can to save my marriage. Help!



MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

I have read your email closely and looked at the situation you are in, and have a few areas that I consider worth mentioning and some areas for you to work on.

The situation you find yourself in is not uncommon, when your husband tells you he loves you but is not "in love". This would have to be one of the most commonly used phrases when it comes to identifying why there is a problem in the relationship, yet the explanation in itself serves little purpose.

I believe this phrase is used a lot due to the confusion surrounding what we are expected to do when the love for your partner starts to wane, which it will at some stage in the relationship. All marriages and relationships go through stages, from infatuation to lust, to romantic love or the honeymoon period, to utter chaos and the spawning of real love. The fact that you have been married for a few years would indicate you are well past the honeymoon stage, and into what we call real love. Real love is when you realize your partner is not perfect, but you still love them. You love them for their differences rather than in spite of them. However the trap people fall into with marriage is that real love does require maintenance. Every day we are called to find new ways of loving our partner and expressing this love as we grow in love and understanding together. If you neglect the need to maintain your love, it becomes easy to fall into habits, perhaps take each other for granted, and one day wake up and find your relationship isn't at all what you had imagined it would be.

I believe when your husband says that he hasn't loved you for years, he sees the idea of romantic love to be the only type of fulfilling love there is. This indicates to me that he lacks the maturity to recognize that love takes many forms, and a bump in the road or a loss of those strong feelings of lust and infatuation doesn't mean the love has died. It simply means that the love has taken a deeper and more meaningful form, perhaps one that he doesn't fully understand or know how to contribute to.

If your husband leaves the marriage in pursuit of love again, he will follow the same pattern. It will start with lust and romantic love, but the love will change. That is a certainty. Some men go their entire lives in pursuit of romantic love and never really grow.

You cannot control what your husband does, but you can control your reactions to him. When he says he doesn't love you anymore, it is more that he doesn't know how to love you. You need to maintain contact with him on a regular basis, and support him in any way you can. If you take a look through Chapter 7 of Book 2, I outline ways to love your partner and demonstrate this love in small but practical ways. You need to find ways to maintain contact and be a friend to him. You may also want to get a friend or a family member, anyone he will listen to, to talk to him and teach him about the different stages of love. The love for you he feels now is different to the type of love he felt when he first met you, but it is still love.

If he won't answer your questions, don't ask any. Simply be supportive and listen. Love him.

HER REPLY:

Thank you for your reply.

I've read through the chapter you suggested as well as other parts of the book. I notice in one response to a letter from a fellow named George (page 72 of Book 2) you replied that when that couple was in a trial separation the other relationship was not cheating. But in another reply you stated that if he wants to sleep with other people then the marriage is over whether you like it or not. Is there more clarification you can offer on the two replies?

I appreciate your encouragement & insight you gave to my e-mail. I plan to take the action you suggest and hope for the best.

MY REPLY:

I must applaud you on your close reading. The point I am making in the two emails is that when you are no longer living in the same home, the marriage as such ceases to function. While you may both wear your rings and have a marriage certificate that states you are married, once you are no longer living together you are no longer a functioning married couple. This was the point I was trying to make. Accusing a spouse of cheating when you are separated does not have the same power as when you are still living together.

The point I was trying to get across there is when couples separate, there is often the assumption that you are still in a functioning relationship and certain rules apply. The fact is, they don't. That is why it is so important to set ground rules for a trial separation regarding fidelity, communication, and regular contact to discuss issues and monitor progress. Don't assume anything. Once your partner leaves the home they are no longer in the relationship in this respect.

When I discussed the idea that the marriage is over when a partner sleeps with other people, the point I am making here is that if a relationship on some level starts up again, this is a new relationship. It is not okay to simply assume you will pick up where you left off. I see a lot of couples assume they can do this, and the result of this is that the patterns of behavior that threatened the relationship in the past quickly resurface. If you do separate and manage to get back with your partner, it is better to view it as a new relationship and use this opportunity to create new intentions and patterns of behavior in the relationship.

Remember, a marriage crisis is a call to change, and when you make the decision to separate, the changes necessary to rescue the relationship are a lot bigger than many couples assume. Make no assumptions. Communicate and discuss everything so that the new relationship has the best chance of avoiding the mistakes of the old.

I hope this makes this clearer for you. Your careful reading is a good indication that you are committed to this process and you are to be commended for this. Best of luck in applying these concepts to your marriage.



My wife and I are at a point of crisis. She has said several times now that she has never been so unhappy with our relationship. We have been together for seven years and have four children.. She is going through something of a sudden "mid life Crisis" or second adolescence, it seems as the youngest child is now at a point where we both are able to enjoy some freedom from baby care. She went to a conference in LA in January and she discovered a lot of very validating things about herself. She also has gotten an augmentation, new attire, taking up smoking, a new look and a bit of a new attitude which has included a desire for more space. I now know that these sudden changes were too much too fast with too little communication between us for me to feel secure. It was like all of a sudden she was no longer a mom and wife and transformed into a independent business woman. I am fine with that, and want to be supportive of that now, but we are talking about a 90 day period for her to make these sweeping changes. I am eager to relate to her on a new level as she experiences and learns more about herself, but at the time, it made me fearful, clingy and paranoid.

When she returned from LA (5 day conference) I had a funny feeling. She claimed that two guys were new Gay friends. It has come out that in fact they were not gay, she lied about that to "protect me" because I would have "Freaked out".

I found out that they were not gay by looking at her emails, invading her privacy. I feel that she did not do anything improper with strangers on the trip to LA or the second conference that she attended in Vegas about three weeks ago.

It was a tough time, but we moved through it...the problem is, I peeked at her emails and phone about a week ago out of weakness. I felt like crap for doing so, and told her what I had done. Now we are barely speaking - we did a couples therapy session yesterday -

I don't want to push her away any more. I am trying to find out what I should do. I want to be a good man at this point and want to know the "do's" and "don'ts" at this stage in our now fragile relationship.

I look forward to your thoughts.

MY REPLY:

The first thing I want to tell you is that you have no need to feel guilty.

Your wife is going through a heavy period of transition in her life right now, and she has indicated her dissatisfaction with the relationship, had an augmentation and changed her look and attitude, lied to you about her friends, and all in a very short period of time.

If your wife is unable to offer you much of an explanation for what has spawned this drastic change, it is fair for you to be concerned, and even feel insecure about where your place is in the relationship.

This is not about you feeling guilty for looking at her emails. This is about you looking for answers and needing reassurance in the relationship. Among all the changes she has made in her life in the last 90 days, has she considered how this change is affecting her relationship? What reassurance has she offered you in the midst of her lying about workmates and taking up smoking?

She may feel that these changes are liberating her, and to an extent they are. But when you put all of the changes together like you have, what is this telling you about the person your wife wants to be? What does she want to be in her life, and what role does she see you playing?

This is a time of great uncertainty, and a lot of your insecurity is coming from a lack of guidance on your wife's part. She seems very sure of who she wants to be, but has she taken the time to sit down with her husband and explain her motivations?

So what do you do from here?

You need to reassure her that you will support the changes she is making, but that you need some guidance from her to help identify how each of your roles will have changed within the relationship.

What does she dislike from her old life?

What changes does she want to make in the relationship and in the family?

Are you able to support these changes?

In what way do you need to change?

What changes can she suggest you make?

Is there room to make these suggestions for change as a couple?

You need to assure your wife that you do trust her, but that at a time of great change in her life you need reassurance of your place in the relationship. If she is unhappy, you need to know what is necessary to facilitate some changes. As long as she is able to communicate openly and honestly with you throughout this process, you are going to get through this.

Your issues here are about redefining roles for each other in the relationship, and finding ways to communicate. This is what you need to work on with your wife and counselor.

Hope this helps, keep doing some of the exercises in the book. They help.



Just today I bought your ebooks to help salvage my marriage. My wife and I have been married for a year and a half but have been together for about 4 years. In the beginning things were amazing, even at the start of the marriage things were really good. But recently I have noticed my wife getting more and more distant, partly due to her insistence of playing online games constantly (approx. 50-60 hours a week). This led to her having an emotional affair (not physical) which she confessed to me 4 months ago. We discussed it, I thought we were over it and things were back to being okay again. That was until the past few weeks, when I have started noticing behaviors that are similar to how she acted when she was having the affair.

I have read all through your books and I think I understand what I need to do. My wife and I even talked tonight and many things came out. Chief among them is that we don't connect like we used to, that I in particular don't communicate with her well, and that she is not sure that we can fix the rift between us right now. I did as the ebooks suggested....stayed positive, thanked her for sharing her feelings, shared



my own feelings, and made sure to listen (and made sure she understood I listened). I guess my question is this: is this the right way to go about this? What's the next step? For the first time in a long time we actually talked tonight...but in her words, we resolved nothing. My response was that one conversation wouldn't resolve anything, but it at least let out what the problems were so we can deal with them.

Does it sound like we have a chance? I dearly love my wife and do not want to give up on our marriage. Should I say this to her at this point? Do I continue to stay positive and loving, while continuing to talk on a regular basis? What is a good starting point for rekindling the spark in this marriage?

Thanking you in advance for your help,

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Recognition of your problems is the first crucial step in moving forward, and from what you have written you have mastered this aspect of it with some success. However, the next crucial step in recognizing and acknowledging there is a problem is in setting a plan.

What is the problem?

What is your goal?

How do you hope to achieve your goal?

Are the steps you are taking as a couple measurable?

Are your goals achievable?

How often are you coming back to each other to measure your progress?

You asked what the next step is. It is going back to your wife and inviting her input into finding ways to overcome the issues that are present in the relationship. You identified that there is a communication issue. What can you do to help rebuild communication? What can she do to help facilitate this process?

In doing this you are addressing the real issues in your relationship. Your wife is feeling ignored or invalidated in the relationship. Is this why she is reaching out to others through online gaming and emotional affairs? What needs within the relationship does your wife feel are not being addressed? Is it attention? Is it support? Is it love? What is she seeking?

You have acknowledged there is a problem. That's great. You are both invested in finding a solution. You need to work on actions that help rebuild communication. Your wife needs to address her addiction to online games and emotional affairs. Set goals. Make them achievable. And meet and chat once a week to address whether you are meeting your goals in coming back together or whether a different approach is needed.

Actions now, not just words.



I know you have heard it all. My marriage sounds like most of the ones I have read about in your books. My husband of 11 years decided that he was not happy. He said he had not been happy for a long time and without trying any strategies to save the marriage he moved out 4 months ago. He said he could not work on the marriage and if he stayed he would hate me. We have two children 4 and 7. I have been allowing him to come over to our home everyday he is not working and spend time with the girls and myself. He started staying over and even left clothes here again. But when I asked him to talk about what was going on he said he was not trying to give me false hope about our marriage. He was only trying to not leave me out of family activities. He will only say that he is probably going to divorce me but yet has not made any arrangements to legally separate. When ever I do try to talk to him about any part of our relationship he can only answer "I Don't Know". He asks me to help him find a place to live close by so we can transport the children easier. I have not been a very loving person. I have allowed my anger to take over these past few months. I have been down right awful to him. I cant seem to get him to have a conversation about our marriage but after reading you books I know he doesn't want me to "go off" on him. I have asked him to meet me in a public place to talk but he will not acknowledge me or give me an answer if he will meet or not. What do I do now? I cant give up on this so I would like the best path to follow in order to save my marriage. Thank you so much !!

MY REPLY:

I believe when your husband says that he isn't in love with you, he sees the idea of romantic love to be the only type of love there is. This indicates to me that he simply doesn't understand that love takes many forms, and a bump in the road or a loss of those strong feelings of lust and infatuation doesn't mean the love has died. It simply means that the love has taken a deeper and more meaningful form, perhaps one that he doesn't fully understand or know how to contribute to.

The key here is to not let your emotions get the better of you. I know this is easier said than done, but it is the one part of this process that you do have some control over. One of the most frustrating aspects of a separation is that it feels like a rejection on many parts, but it is important to have clarity of mind so that you can see things from a range of perspectives.

Let's look at the positives:

He hasn't made any formal arrangements for a divorce yet. He has started staying over. He is leaving clothes at your place. He is dedicated to his children. He is trying to find happiness.

I want you to focus on making every interaction with your husband as positive as possible. Focus on being the person your husband first fell in love with. In addition to loving your husband, I want you to focus on being the type of person that is easy to love. Make it easy for your husband to talk to you. Allow him to talk about how he is feeling. Support his feelings, even if you don't agree with them. See if there are ways that you can explore ways of being happy as a couple, rather than making this a problem that is only about him.

Find ways to channel and express your anger in positive ways. Identify what lessons your feelings can teach you. If you have strong feelings about something, consider why this is the case. Are you feeling rejected? Are you feeling powerless? Are you feeling scared? What is a good way to reframe these feelings? Your husband isn't rejecting you, he's finding ways to make himself happy again. That may or may not include you, but it's important that you don't write yourself or the marriage off. Your husband's

actions indicate that he hasn't yet. Feeling powerless? The one thing you have complete control over is your reactions. You have allowed your anger to take over, and this was your conscious choice. You can't control what he does at this point, but you can choose how you let it affect you, and how you react to it. Consider how your reactions are bringing you closer together or driving you further apart.

Love is not possession. You can love your husband even if he is unable to reciprocate at the moment. You can love him even if he isn't living with you. This is unconditional love. Focus on being his friend, not his wife. If you are able to love him unconditionally in his time of need you have the best chance of saving your marriage.



My wife and I are on the verge of divorce. She has made it clear that she is done. That she has no will left to be my wife. We would have been married 7 yrs this August and have a 2 yr old daughter. We have been going to marriage counseling for the last couple months. First together and now separate. Everyone including my wife is telling me to let her go that I deserve better. We have been together for 11 yrs I can't just let her go. She wants to sell our house and get her own place. I don't know what to do anymore. I have to move on and let her go. I can't force someone to love me. She says I have been controlling and emotionally abusive. I feel like she never wanted any responsibility so I had to take it on. So she gave me all the control and resents me for it. I would do anything to save this marriage, but I know she is done. Maybe having her get her own place and living on her own for awhile will change things. I never would have wanted to have a child with her if the life long commitment was not there. I feel like have been used and taken advantage of. I included a letter I sent to her a week ago that expressed my feelings in response to an email she sent me. One other note, which I feel bares a lot of the stress to this situation, is my wife just opened up a new business a few months ago and has felt overwhelmed ever since. When we first decided to start this business it was for our family's future. Now I feel like she is doing it all for herself.

Please help me. I don't know what else to do.

Letter from wife:

Hope you are o.k. Sorry if I was harsh- all very emotional for both of us. You've really been trying, I know. I don't question your devotion, just have my stuff to deal with and years of frustrations, disconnect and miscommunication. You can't rebuild when it gets broken beyond repair. I will always love you for our daughter, but am not capable of this. You deserve better. I'm sorry.

Letter I sent her:

I'm sorry I've been so upset. Yes, I'm an emotional person and I am in a lot of pain. It's been hard to accept that you don't want to be my wife any more. You need to stop thinking about yourself for once and realize the position you put me in. These feelings aren't going to go away over night. I have accepted the fact that I have lost the love of my life, but it does not make it any easier. I know you want me to just put aside my feelings for now and put on my game face so we can get the house ready to

sell and get you your little condo and let u get on with your new life. But, unfortunately, I haven't been able to so please stop being so cruel and throwing the fact that I am emotional in my face. It's not a bad thing and someday you will wish you had it back. I always new you had a rough childhood, but I never thought it would come back to bite me the way it has. I was always your number one cheerleader as you put it. I always supported you and your career. I accepted the fact that I was never going to come before your career. You have always had something to prove to the world and more importantly yourself. I guess it's true what they say "that you can't love someone if you don't love yourself". This whole experience reminded my mom of something your grandma told her on our wedding day. She said "I hope he will be happy with that girl". At the time, she thought it was weird and out of place, but unfortunately now it makes all the sense in the world. Your grandma must have known how your childhood really affected you and was hoping that it wouldn't affect our marriage and life together. I wish I would have paid attention to the signs more. I thought we were just under stress with all the things we took on. I wish you would have stood up for yourself and told me how you felt before we took on all these properties and all our financial debt. We both feel trapped because we are. I thought we would always be together and work through anything. When I said my vows, "For better and for worse..." they meant something to me. I feel so stupid, so naive. So manipulated and used. I don't know how anyone could do this to another human being. To have a child with me. To go through that whole bonding experience together and now to want to end it all. You have really hurt me and I because of you it's going to be a long time before I will be able to trust and love someone again. I hope this is truly what you want.

I ultimately want you to be happy and I thought I was going to be the one to do it. Like I've heard a thousand times over the last couple months "If you love something enough let it go if it doesn't come back then it was never yours to begin with". Unfortunately, I keep thinking about all the good times we had together. At least what I thought was together. I think about the first time I saw you, our first date, how we shared all our dreams and aspirations to each other. I think about the day I proposed to you. I think about when it rained on our wedding day. I think about dancing with you to "In your Eyes". I think about how strong you were at the hospital giving birth. I was so proud of you and hated the fact that you were in pain.

Hopefully, some day I will be able to forgive you for all this pain so we can be friends. I just needed to get this stuff off my chest. Hopefully, you will be able to as well. Sorry I wasn't your answer. I hope someday you find what your looking for. Anyways, thanks for all the memories, thanks for our daughter, and thanks for the dance.

MY REPLY:

Not being able to control your wife's actions or decisions is perhaps one of the most powerless situations in your whole marriage. Loving someone and them not loving you back is something a number of my clients are familiar with, and all of them come to me asking for ways to get through to their partners.

This isn't about you getting your partner to listen to you, and it's not about manipulating them into giving the relationship a second chance. This is about making them aware of the decision that they are making so that they can take a path of action and be fully informed. Does your wife have anyone that she listens to? A friend, a family member, or a pastor or priest?



If she does, it may be of some benefit to speak with them. Ask them to talk to her, not about you or for your benefit, but for someone to make her aware of the cost and impact of divorce. This is something that is going to impact on her life as well as your daughter's for the rest of both their lives. Has she considered how this is going to impact on her lifestyle? Has she thought about how this is going to affect your child? These are the issues that a friend needs to go through with her. Someone needs to be there to make sure she is making a decision based on all the information available.

The next thing you need to do is realize the power of self. What I mean by this is the power of your actions and reactions. I understand and hear the anger and hurt in your email, but you need to consider how this is coming across to your wife. Are you sharing your feelings with her because you need her to know you are hurting, or is it to make her feel guilt? Is it to hurt her? Is it to shame her into feeling bad about the way she has behaved.

I don't know your wife, but there is one thing I do know. There is no way to end a marriage and feel good. She is feeling bad, and whether or not she tells you, she is aware of her actions and how they have contributed to the current situation.

One thing we talk about in the course is responding with love. Every situation we are called to in marriage calls us into a new way of growing, and the opportunity to learn something. What are you being called to learn? What is your wife being called to learn? You have very strong feelings and emotions, but I am concerned that you are wielding them as a weapon.

It's okay to have feelings. It's okay to be frustrated and even angry. I even encourage people to have feelings. Use "I" statements such as "I feel" or "I am" rather than "you" or "you make me." It's perfectly fine to have the feelings, but what determines whether it is good or not is how you choose to express them.

You cannot control her actions, but you can control how you choose to react to them. You will always be in her life, and she will always be in yours. The child you share is something that will keep you in each other's lives, even if your wife doesn't want to be. I want you to focus on your child. How can you be a better father to her? How can you make her life easier? How can you love her more and support her through this?

Sometimes loving someone means you have to let go and stop fighting. The harder you fight her on this, the more she is going to dig her heels in and fight you back. You both lose. When people talk about letting go with love, this is what they are talking about. You can't fight something you have no control over. That's the easy thing to do. The hard thing is to continue to love your partner even when you don't possess them.

Thank your wife for being your friend. Thank her for giving you a lifetime of shared experiences and memories. Tell her you will always be her friend even if she doesn't want to be yours. You are connected to one another forever through your child.



## **Trial Separation**

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Hello, my husband left me almost 4 months ago. He said it was a trial separation, but 3 weeks ago he told me that he has been able to think a lot clearer now that he has been gone and he doesn't want the marriage.

I feel so much guilt because he came to me several times over the past 2 years telling me he was unhappy and that if things didn't change he wanted a divorce. He didn't feel important in my life and felt like he was always put 2nd next to my kids. I have apologized and accepted my responsibility for my part of our marital problems, but he still does not want the marriage. That's what really hurts! He has continued to deny that he is involved with someone else, but lately there have been a lot of things that are pointing to the fact that he has been lying and that there is indeed someone else.

I am willing to do anything to save our marriage, but nothing I say or do is changing his mind. I'm so scared that he is in love with this other person and that is the real reason he doesn't want to try to work on our marriage. Another reason I am so confused is because up until 6 weeks ago, we were still hanging out together, spending time with the kids, and being intimate. I felt like things were better and that we would eventually get back together. What happened? He says he still loves me, but he's not in love with me anymore and doesn't want me in his future. What do I do? We've both been divorced before and I don't want to go through this again.

I know I can't control how he feels and that I need to concentrate on myself and our kids now, but I still love him very much and want him back. Do you have any suggestions? Have I lost him for good?

MY REPLY:

Hi there Marcia,

You tell me in your email that your husband has come to you several times in the last 2 years telling you he was unhappy, and that he always feels 2nd in line to your children. You tell me that he warned you several times that if things didn't change he wanted a divorce.

It seems from the current turn of events that you didn't take him seriously until he actually left and told you that he doesn't want your marriage. This sounds like a real cry for help, one that has gone unanswered for 2 long years. If you haven't listened to him up till now, what is going to make him believe that you are listening and taking him seriously now?

You need to put your thoughts of him meeting someone else to one side for a moment, and focus on you and why you don't listen or communicate effectively with your husband. Accusing him of having someone else is only going to push him further away.

Is there any truth to his comments about you putting your children first? You should never let your children come between you and your husband. Look seriously at his concerns for a moment, and consider

how he feels. Do you put his needs behind that of your children? What have you done to change this since your husband left? What changes have you made?

I would encourage you to spend some time doing some self examination. Take a look at the *Save Marriage: Couples in extreme Crisis* book. You need to work on making yourself a person that is capable of giving and receiving love. You need to reassess everything in your life and sort out your priorities. Your husband is much more important than your children, and the sooner you understand that and reflect that in your actions, the better it will be for your marriage.

Your husband is feeling ignored and hurt. If you are going to save your marriage you are going to need to try and become the person he once fell in love with. You need to make him feel important and that he is the number one thing in your life, because if you don't, he will look for that fulfillment elsewhere.

What drew your husband to you in the very beginning? What attributes and qualities attracted him? Do those attributes still exist?

It may be too late to change your husband's mind. 2 years of ignored threats may have firmed his resolve to end it. But in addition to working on making yourself and more thoughtful person to be around, you need to concentrate on making every interaction with him a positive one. He needs to feel important, and most of all he needs to feel loved.

Take a look at Chapter 7 of my book, called 'Love is a doing word.' When your husband is in contact with you, try doing some nice things to let him know you are thinking of him.

Most of all you need to see a counselor. Have you discussed the thought of seeing a counselor together? You need a forum in which your husband really needs to let his feelings and frustrations out, and you both need to be part of this. A couples counselor is a good way to facilitate this process, and work through the emotions that you are both having.

Good luck. Read the *Couples in Crisis* book. I think there is a lot of material in it that is relevant to your situation.

HER REPLY:

I do hear what you are saying, I do believe my husband was crying out to me for 2 years but I just wasn't listening and that was very wrong. I feel terrible and I truly understand now, but unfortunately I think it's too late.

I have told my husband all of this, but it doesn't seem to make a difference. Why won't he give us another chance? How exactly do I make him feel that he is the most important thing in my life if he no longer lives with me?

MY REPLY:

I hear what you are saying. You can't change the past and what has happened, so you need to focus on what to do now, and how you hope to move forward.

You have shattered your husband's trust and his feelings for you and you need to work on making the time you spend with him as positive as possible. You need to look at the way you used to treat him, and examine your reasons for doing so. Was it a need to give your children all the things they want, or was that your way of making yourself feel more fulfilled? Whatever the reason, you need to look at your motivation for putting your husband's needs to one side for so long. Why did you do this? What motivated you to do this, or what took your attention away from your husband and his needs?

In answering this question you also need to look at whether anything has changed. How far have you gone towards addressing your husband's concerns? Have you changed the patterns of behavior that pushed him away?

Unless he can see some evidence of change, he has no reason to believe that you are taking him seriously. But most of all, you need to work on making yourself a calm and nice person to be around, and one that is not only able to be happy within yourself, but one that is also able to spread this goodwill to those around you.

When you see your husband what do you usually do? Is it a positive experience for him, or is his visits to you tainted with frustration and stress? You need to remove the negativity from your interactions with him, and focus on being happy, and being nice to him.

Take a look at the Couples in Crisis book, particularly Chapters 1 and 7. There are no guarantees that you are going to be able to make a difference, but you will be able to maximize your chances if you are able to make every interaction with him a positive and thoughtful one.

Be happy, be nice, and be thoughtful. Think of doing some little things to let him know you are thinking of him..

Good luck,

Andrew



What I am struggling with is for my husband to take a closer look at his actions and interactions with me. He will not examine the crisis he has caused by leaving me. He has not identified the issues so I have no opportunities for our growth back together again. It has been 37 days with him not telling me what the issues were and why he left me. He said he is just tired, tired of our marriage, just a bunch of little things.

I find that this method of attack by not telling me what the real issues are hurts so much because I don't know what's going on inside his head or in fact our relationship. I have been beating myself up now for 37 days trying to find why. I don't understand. He keeps telling me he needs time, space and no pressure. He will not talk about the issues. This does expose my insecurities and now my anger. He has not seen the anger. I do want to go to marriage counseling but he is undecided. Our breakdown in communication is working against us because he will not address the problems that need to be worked on.



I do want to take responsibility for my actions if I am told what they were and I have asked God to help me listen, really listen to my husband and what he needs. I see that I will need to be strong when we reach this point and not let my anger come to the service just listen.

He is not dealing with our problems like an adult and taking responsibility for his actions or the responses. He ran away. He just ran away. I want to take that next step and save this marriage but can one person save it? Is it a midlife crisis? I do hope he does take the next step and go to counseling but I guess this is not for me to decide.

I have never stopped loving him. If you can assist me with an answer to my next steps it would be much appreciated. I will not give him an ultimatum and I think that this is what he wants so it won't be him that has to make that decision. My decision is to save the marriage. So I play the waiting game. Thanks for understanding.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

This is a very powerless time in your marriage, and during this time it is especially hard for couples to define what is going on in their marriages and understand how to move forward or end the relationship.

In understanding where you are at the moment, you are a separated couple, however I can see some problems in the nature of your separation. A separation needs to follow guidelines if it is going to be effective, and the first point is in understanding the purpose of the separation.

What do you hope to achieve from it?

How long is the separation going to go for?

How often are you going to meet do discuss your progress as a result of the separation?

What rules are you going to have as a couple regarding sex and fidelity during the separation?

Without answers to these questions, a separation is simply delaying the inevitable split, but without the initial guilt of leaving the relationship. If he needs time out to think and get away from the pressure, he needs to counter this with his responsibility as a husband and partner. If he needs space to think about his issues, he needs to identify what the issues are that he needs space from.

You need to sit down and discuss this as a couple, so you have the benefit of knowing where you stand as a couple. This is important. Equally important is your husband's need for space, and once you have some answers about issues, you need to offer him space, and agree to meet perhaps once a week to discuss progress or areas for further discussion.

You also need to use this time apart to grow as a person and learn from what is going on around you. Rediscover what it takes to make yourself happy, and take responsibility for your sense of happiness and your reactions to others. Listen to music, read books, reconnect with old friends, or take up a new hobby. Become someone who is connected to themselves and knows how to receive love as well as gift it to others. Become the woman he first fell in love with.

You are not in control of what is happening around you but you can control your reactions to it. You can immerse yourself in the frustration you are feeling or you can learn from it and grow. No matter how old we are, there is always room to grow and learn.

Love is not about possession. But you have to have some answers in order to understand what you are going through. As a husband, he does need to offer you that insight. But you have plenty to keep you occupied making yourself a better person while you are waiting for answers from him.



Well here goes,

I have bought your book and applied your advice as much as possible, we have gone through the trial separation to no avail, she insisted on getting a divorce. The divorce became final yesterday the 12th.

We started out like everybody else with just problems and she wanted to separate to work on these problems, my thought were the only way we could quit feeling like we were was to give the separation a chance to work. We separated last March and I thought we were working on these "so called problems" things went OK for a little while but she all of a sudden changed to talking about divorce. She could not or would not tell me why, all she would say was too much water under the bridge. She filed for divorce in September (our anniversary), she also filed a restraining order with no just cause, so she would not have to talk to me about the situation. Yesterday our divorce became final, and she also asked for an extension on the restraining order which was denied.

We have been married for 18 years we have never had any real big problems. We moved to Colorado 3 years ago for health reasons with our 15 year old son, the youngest of the 3 sons we have. We had an agreement to live here till he got out of high school and return to Texas where all our family lives. We own a large home and land there and have lived there most of our lives. She is a hairdresser and has a very good clientele with several wealthy single business women she has become what she calls friends. I think her new desire is to be like these women she has met. We started to argue about returning to Texas and it totally took over our lives. She insists she would never move back and I really don't care about that now I just want my marriage back.

I know it's a little late but if you have any advice on what to do after divorce I would like to know. She seems to be very bitter about everything and does not want to talk to me at all. I want to know how to approach this without making things worse. I have tried all the advice about not pushing the issue, being happy, trying to act like I have gone on with things but nothing has changed.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Regarding your marital problems, I believe that the separation in this case might have been the beginning of the end. You are right when you mentioned that a separation is an opportunity to escape the

intense feelings that you both feel in the midst of conflict and for this reason a number of people choose to separate. However, without setting very clear guidelines regarding regular contact, talking about the best way around the issues, seeing if progress is being made, and establishing very clear rules regarding acceptable and unacceptable behavior during the separation, the separation very quickly becomes a way of life. I noticed you separated in March. Trial separations should last no longer than a few weeks, no longer than six or eight weeks. Any longer than that and you both fall into routines of living as individuals, and you no longer make the space for each other in your lives. You start living as single people.

A trial separation is a last resort, when both of you feel that there is no other option. If you have been separated for too long however, it becomes easier to continue without your partner than it is to face the problems in the relationship and adjust to living together again. I think your wife has gone for the easier option for her since she got used to living as a single person for six months.

Without knowing specifically what your marriage issues are, the advice I can offer you is limited. However the fact that your wife has filed a restraining order indicates very clearly that she doesn't want to communicate with you.

At this point you need to choose to love her despite the fact that she doesn't want to see you. Love is not possession. Love is about knowing when to let go and stop hurting each other. You cannot control what she does at this point, but you can control how you choose to react to her. She may have to figure this out on her own, and it may mean she has to hit rock bottom. However it is important that she knows you are there to support her when she needs it.

Thank her for being your wife. Tell her you will always be her friend even if she doesn't want to be yours. Even if you are no longer her husband, you will always be her friend. You can fight this and push her further away, or you can react with love. I would encourage you to go through some of the exercises in the book to refocus on your needs and finding ways to release stress and relax. It is important that you are able to stay calm and focused at this time.



## Conflict



We have been married for 20 years and have had a relationship for over 24 years. We have two adult married children. We have one grandchild and another on the way. We are both 52 years old. I am a CA (CPA in the US) in public practice and my wife has her own bookkeeping practice, with the majority of her clients having been referred by me, and are my clients as well. I believe that this business partnership is a large part of our problem. We would have disagreements over how to deal with business issues that would degenerate in to fights because my wife would take any kind of criticism personally because it was coming from me. It didn't seem to matter how I approached it. This fighting would at times become unfair and loud on both sides. The only other item that seemed to become an issue toward the end is that my wife helped my family out a lot due to health issues and she began to comment that they did not seem to appreciate what she did for them. There is nothing else significant that I can think of.

My wife moved out on Aug. 23 while I was away and then phoned me to meet her for a drink so she could tell me. I have since tried to find out why she left. She says that it has been coming for a long time and that it was not a snap decision. She really doesn't tell me much. She has said a few things, as follows: 1. She says that I don't respect her and I think she is stupid. I finally was able to get her to tell me that she said this because, she says, no matter what she says, I always know better or have a better idea. I guess there is some truth to this but, for the most part, we had give and take on both sides and neither of us dominated the marriage. She says that she still cares for me but that she "doesn't feel the same way any more." She has also said the she has to find herself, that she doesn't know who she is any more. We have both gone to the same counselor, but separately. She absolutely refuses to go together because, she says, there's no point. She has told the counselor the there is no one big thing about me that caused here to leave. I have suggested staying apart for now and trying to work with the counselor to see if we can find a way back together but she flatly refuses. However, she still wants a relationship with me on the business side. I do not know that I can do this for the long term as it is too emotionally painful for me. My feeling is that we have to do the same work to keep that relationship going as for our marriage and I just don't think I have it in me to do that work just for a business relationship. If that fell apart, it would be devastating for her business and she needs it to be kept together. I am trying for now but don't know how long I can do it. One thing that she has said is that one of the reasons she can't come back is that, if it didn't work, she would find it too emotionally devastating and she doesn't want to take that chance.

One final thought I had is to tell you how our lives have been in recent years, especially the last two. We have been going flat out. We always seem to be putting on a party, working overtime, participating in sports or running around for other people. We haven't made much time for each other. We have both been stressed out as a result. I believe this made us both become more irritable and short-tempered with each other and to allow little things to become big things. There was a lot of stress with my daughter's wedding which took place on July 30. It seems like that she had decided to move out after that event. I knew that we needed time together and tried to get her to take a holiday with me. We had even booked a weekend at a local hotel but she left before that could happen. One of the things I find particularly confusing is that two days before she left, we came back from a golf weekend together with another couple.



We had a good time, laughed a lot and just relaxed. Then, two days later, she left.

This is a very brief synopsis of my situation. If you need more, please let me know. Anything you could suggest would be greatly appreciated.

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

Having a living and working relationship between man and wife can place a strain on even the most strong and stable relationships. Quite often in business people can exhibit different characteristics to what they may do at home, and this can be either alluring or disconcerting for the other partner. It seems in this circumstance that your approach to business relationships has hurt her and damaged her self esteem to the point of crisis which you see now.

I understand that you may not have meant to undermine her self-confidence in your business approach and your subsequent arguments over business issues, nevertheless it is something that has happened. Feelings and self esteem issues don't always follow logic and don't always have concrete reasoning. Despite this, your wife's feelings are still very real and valid. You don't have to agree with her feelings, but you need to understand that she has her reasons for having them.

Looking at why she feels these undermined feelings and how she might better express these feelings might be something for her to examine in individual counseling. In marital counseling we would look at how you can overcome the feelings that your wife has in order to come to some sort of middle ground where her contributions to conversation and her contributions to your marital and business relationship are validated.

You need to examine how important it is to always be right, and how important it is to let your wife have her opinions. Choose your battles, examine the outcome, and ask yourself: Does it really matter? Let her make some decisions and have more input into decision making in your marriage. You may find that her way of doing things is also right, but just different. If you always know better or have better ideas you are dominating the marriage no matter which way you choose to look at it. You might not always do things the best way if your wife makes the decision, but making her feel validated and happy may be worth more.

Examine your reasons for always needing to be in control. Why is this more important to you than your wife's happiness? What do you think you need to do to overcome this? What changes do you need to make?

I understand your reluctance to maintain a business relationship if this feels like it is too much effort, however if you end your business relationship at this point, it may signal the end for any chance of a reconciliation in your marriage.

Your wife mentions that she isn't prepared to take a chance in case it doesn't work out. That makes no sense. In making no effort she is living the worst case scenario. If she tries, there is a chance that it may work. Is that not better than living the worst scenario out like she is right now?

You need to talk to her about your feelings, and the need for you to both make efforts to change the way you deal with conflicts. Tell her that you are finding it hard maintaining any type of relationship, business or marital when she is unprepared to make any effort if that is the way you feel. Be careful here though, as she might take it as a threat. You both need to be open about your feelings without being accusatory.

She needs to be prepared to meet you half way. Take some time out. Take a few days off and encourage your wife to do the same. If you are going to save your marriage you need to initiate the dialogue once more. You don't need to push her into shifting back in, but you need to start the process of you both sharing your feelings and letting your feelings be heard.

Good luck with that.

Andrew



My wife and I have some issues that may destroy our marriage. At this point she holds a very large amount of anger from verbal comment in the beginning of our relationship. She says she has no love or feelings for me anymore. It all started when we started dating 8 years ago. We were young, she was 18 and I was 23. I was a very shallow person and told her that weight on a woman was very unattractive. A year later we had our first child and we both gained weight and I would bring it up on what she says was a daily basis. I don't remember it being that bad. I also have an addiction to pornography. When she would catch me watching a movie or looking at a magazine she would explode. This did not help with her self esteem. She saw it as if I wanted the women in the movies. I would explain that I did not think that way. Like I said I have learned about sexual addictions and this is one of the addictions. Anyhow I would not stop the porn. She would keep catching me with it. This would always lead to an argument and any little problem we had would come up. We would usually walk away and intend to talk about our problems later. This would never happen. So through out the years this anger would build up. Other areas in which she is angry at me is when she told me she was pregnant. I was happy but the scared feelings were the feeling and emotion that came out. To her it seemed like I did not want our children. We have 3 beautiful girls and this happened with each girl. I did support her during and after the three births. Every Dr. visit, every false alarm, every scare about the development of the last child. The birth of each child is in the top 5 happiest times in my life. The other 2 are meeting her and our marriage. When we would argue mean things were said by both of us. All the mean things she would hang on to. Which kept building up. In the beginning I would always tell her I love you and hold her all night long. Well as our relationship grew I lost sight of that and didn't show her as much. Now to her it feels like I do it out of habit. So ultimately she lost her feeling for me and now that she does not want this marriage she is putting no effort and me all effort, unlike before she would put all the effort and I would not so much. I know I took her for granted and the past 8-10 months I would show her all the affection. Now she does not want it. We don't sleep in the same bed and she looks at me and all the anger clouds her sight of love. I feel she still loves me and I see it in her eyes sometimes. She won't even let me touch her. Is our marriage over or is there a way to let her let go of that anger and forgive me. I haven't been that person in a very long time. I'm scared I've lost her. how can I show her I love her with her creating this wall between us.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Once you have known your partner for a few years it is easy to fall into habits and take each other for granted. I believe that your situation is much the same, other than a few incidents that have wounded your wife deeply over the last 8 years.

It would have been beneficial if your wife felt as though she could share her feelings with you at the time of her hurt, and the strength of her emotions right now is partly due to her inability to express and process the emotions she felt at the time.

You mention issues like weight comments, an addiction to pornography, poor conflict resolution and poor communication skills, and a gradual decline in intimacy. What have you done to remedy any of these?

An addiction to pornography can be a very serious problem for couples, and if this has been an issue that you have been fighting over, you need to realize the strength of her disapproval for you doing this. She fights with you because she really doesn't like it. You mentioned that you would not stop looking at porn, and this indicates to me a problem. Your reluctance to deal with this problem is sending a very clear message to your wife, and coupling this with the weight comments would indicate to her that you no longer find her attractive.

Everybody needs to be made to feel attractive, and your actions have all worked towards eroding her self-esteem. If you love your wife you need to start showing her you love her by dealing with each problem in your marriage as it comes up. The first thing you need to do is work on building your communication as a couple, and creating an environment where she feels encouraged to share her feelings with you and not be dismissed. She needs to feel safe when you want her to share her emotions with you.

It is going to take a long time to undo the damage you have inflicted over the last few years, and it is going to take longer than 8 months of effort. You have disregarded her efforts for the last 7 years. If you want to save your marriage you need to show her that you are prepared to learn. You need to understand what message your wife gets from your actions and how you make her feel when you look at porn, make comments about her weight and gradually see that your intimacy is performed out of habit rather than out of love.

Have you considered going to counseling for your porn addiction? Have you considered going to couples therapy where your wife may feel more comfortable sharing her feelings? Show her you are taking this seriously and that you want your negative patterns of behavior to change.

If you love your wife, start showing her your love. Take a look at Chapter 7 of Book 2, where I discuss love being a "doing word", and work on rebuilding communication and the gifting of love.



My partner and I seem to have so many issues that we are unable to resolve and therefore keep repeating the same arguments over and over.

This is our second time around and although we are not married we treat it as such. My partner is a musician and I am an Executive Secretary. Our careers are at the opposite end of the day and we don't have much time together. I leave for work around 8am and return 5.30ish and he starts at 2.30pm and finishes at 9pm on some nights, 11pm on others and gets home from a gig at 2.30am on 2 nights a week. He also works Saturdays during the day and we look after his aged father on Sunday afternoons for about 3 hours. I feel that there is so little time to develop a relationship and do enjoyable things together although I guess there are many people that have this problem who seem able to overcome it. We now lack intimacy even though this was enjoyable early on in the relationship. We have developed over reactive behavior and often take offence to the smallest things we say. We now argue everyday which ends with me in tears and leaving late for work. We desperately need to break this cycle and I feel it will need to be me that implements something. My partner is in a financial crisis with his studio business that he hoped would allow him not to work at night but it has not been a success. He thinks that I hate his work, his studio, his house, nearly everything about him. I don't at all and have said that I love his music etc but that I do feel there is little time left over for us. He tells me that at the moment the only thing that he thinks about is getting his financial affairs in order. I guess I don't believe in putting my relationship and happiness off. I feel I have given the control of my happiness away as I have been very happy and independent before. I need to re-gain control over my life but find it incredibly difficult around him. I am ok for awhile until we try to discuss something and then I just end up in a heap.

We have talked about me leaving as the house we live in is his home and was he marital home.

I do hope you have some ideas.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your submission.

I believe you need to look beyond your small negative behaviors and identify what they are symptomatic of. As a couple, you have allowed your communication to be opened to misinterpretation rather than making it clear what each of you are trying to say.

Your husband is interpreting your wish for more time together as a couple as a dislike for his music and his studio, and he is reacting as such. You believe that your husband prioritizing his work and getting his financial affairs in order is putting your relationship second. This is where it sounds as though your relationship is at, however I wonder if you have communicated these beliefs to each other.

I also believe that the lack of time you spend together has contributed to this problem and added to your communication problems. What you need to have faith in is the fact that you are both trying to do your best for the relationship, only in your own ways. Your husband believes the key to your future happiness is in making his studio business a success in order to avoid working at night. That is not an uncommon way for men to approach a problem like this. You might not understand his approach, but you need to have faith in the fact that he is approaching the problem with a practical intensity that only a male could understand.



The time you spend together needs to be precious. The key here is in quality time rather than quantity. Any time in which you are both together, having a coffee, going for a walk, sitting down together and having a chat, having a meal together. All of these things are quality time.

Instead of placing pressure on each other, love your husband. Take a look at chapter 7 of Book 2, in which I look at the idea of love being a “doing” word. Small gestures of love and support can make all the difference. A cup of coffee, a shirt ironed for him, a slice of toast, a hug, or a reassuring caress. All of these are small things that show your husband that he is appreciated and supported. In addition to this, it makes it easier for him to reciprocate.

It starts with you. If you want to break the cycle you need to have faith that you both have the same final goal even if your approaches are different.

Stay strong.



Good morning, my immediate concern is my wife is in the process of leaving me. She is furious and feels she can no longer trust me because of money. I over extended myself financially, trying to overcome some difficulties about four years ago trying to provide, keep a roof over our heads, and move in a mother-in-law that was in crisis. Are there any immediate things that I can do to start the recovery process for a marriage and wife that I hold to my heart so dearly, God knows I never would have hurt my wife or marriage on purpose and want her back in my life so much. I want grow old with my wife.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

The first thing I would encourage you to do is read through the books and do some of the exercises. The exercises at the end of every chapter are there to help you apply the concepts you learn to your marriage situation.

The majority of marital conflicts come down to a few issues, namely money, infidelity, falling out of love, and poor communication. In your situation, it is most obviously money and communication. If you over extended yourself financially in order to keep your home and assist your mother-in-law, your intentions were clearly in the right place. Your primary motivation was for the benefit of your family and you are to be commended for this.

However, in keeping the details of your financial situation from your wife, you have compromised the relationship you have with your wife. Even if everything else in your life is a mess, the one thing that should be sacrosanct is the relationship you have as man and wife. You are a partnership and a team. You should be able to make decisions as a couple and face the consequences as a couple. In keeping the details of your finances from your wife, you have betrayed her trust, and I feel it is this that she is reacting to. The money is a huge situation, but the betrayal of communication in your relationship will be what is feeding her reaction to you at the moment.

If you are looking for immediate things you can do to turn things around, your primary objective is to regain her trust. The first thing you need to do is validate her response. She is quite entitled to feel betrayed and angry at finding out what has happened. Validating her feelings is going to enable her to understand that you are listening to her concerns. However you do need to consider your approach. If she is angry simply for the sake of being angry, you need to explain to her that this is not an appropriate form of expression. It is important to understand her reasons for being angry, and it is important that she is able to communicate this to you and for you to hear it.

You cannot control her anger but you can control your reaction to it. Being able to actively listen to her without reacting to her is a skill that may take quite an effort to master.

The next thing you need to do is re-establish communication. You listen to her talk about her feelings, then it is time for her to let you talk about your intentions to do your best for your family. Explain why you felt motivated to keep the details from her and why you now realize this was wrong. Your intentions were honorable, but your method was hurtful. You need to indicate to her that you understand why she is upset before you can look at ways of mending it.

You may need a mediator to supervise your discussion if you are unable to listen to each other. It might also be helpful to get a friend or family member to talk to your wife and present the facts of a separation or divorce in an objective fashion. The financial situation you are in sounds serious, however divorce is only going to make it worse.

Look through the book and concentrate on exercises and applications that can rebuild trust in your relationship and validate her input.



Hi Amy, I've been married for over a year & I love my husband very much! We have our normal problems like any other couple but there's one that I can't seem to get past. I don't trust my husband to not deceive me. His desire to look at other women, either in everyday life when we got out or naked online, causes me to have very intense feelings that make me feel as though I've made a giant mistake in getting married. Last year when we started seriously talking about getting married I told him I couldn't marry someone who wanted or needed to look at other women naked. It's just something I've learned about myself & I felt he deserved to know how I felt before we decided to get married. He said "I don't want or need that & I'll never look at anything that would upset you again." I said "Yeah, until I have to go away for some reason." & he said "No, I swear to God I will never look at porn or anything else that would upset you." I half expected him to tell me that was not something he could do & we'd go our separate ways but when he said the above I was so full of hope that this might actually work out. We got married a few weeks later. One month later I was at work (he was unemployed at the time) & I had this overwhelming feeling come over me. I just knew he was going back on his promise. I asked him "Are you doing anything that would upset me?" He said "No baby. Just love me & trust me the way I love & trust you." That night I found he had been looking at porn all morning. Specifically "Angelina Jolie naked" and "Naked pictures of Angelina Jolie" were his Google searches. He kept going through these trashy sites until he found her naked. He couldn't give me a reason for doing what he did just that he was "being an idiot." Well, here we are a year later & I think he lies to me about many things. I don't feel as though I

can trust him to be honest with me & not deceive me. Every time I see Jolie's face (& it's everywhere) I feel like I'll never be good enough for him. I'll never be sexy enough, beautiful enough, fill in the blank enough & it keeps me from living out a normal life. I don't want to go anywhere because I think he's looking at other women. I see him look at them but he insists he's not looking at them in a sexual way.

I can't keep going on like this. I don't want to leave him but I don't know how much longer I can continue feeling this way. When I try to talk to him about it he says he should just go do all of these things (watch porn, buy porn magazines, strip clubs, bars with out me) because I don't believe him anyway. We've gone to counseling but that didn't help. As a last chance effort I'm considering going to a hypnotherapist in hopes that they can make me not care if he looks at them & make me trust that he won't betray me.

Do you have any suggestions/advice?

MY REPLY:

This is a serious issue in relationships, and is for a number of reasons. This isn't as much about viewing porn as it is about lying to you about it. When he tells you that he will no longer look at sites and you later find evidence that he has been, it becomes an issue of trust.

Looking at trust, you need to make it clear to him that this is the issue, not the porn. While you have beliefs about porn and feel that you may not be good enough for him, it's not that simple. This is not about you. I'm going to be honest. Angelina Jolie is unlikely to ever leave Brad Pitt for your husband. This is not about you not being sexy or beautiful enough. Porn is not a stepping stone to infidelity. There is no causal link between naked pictures of Angelina Jolie and your husband wanting to have an affair. This is about men being visual creatures and porn is an expression of this. Women are emotional creatures and visualize the emotive aspect of intimacy and sex, notably the expression, the mood, the feeling. For men, it's simply just a picture, and a fantasy.

When your husband and you are out, he is going to look at other women. That's just life. Expecting him to walk around with his head down is unrealistic. Looking at a woman does not mean he wants to have sex with her. It does not mean that you are not good enough. That's plain ridiculous. You may not understand why he married you or why he loves you, but you have to have faith in the fact that if he is married to you he is there because he wants to be. Stopping him from looking at women isn't going to prevent him from having an affair or leaving you. In fact, it may push him to have an affair. If he wanted to have an affair it is easier than you think. It only takes a few minutes. Are you able to account for every minute of his day? If not, you are going to have to have faith. That is your issue, not his.

You are scared he is going to leave you or betray you. The message he gets from this is that you don't trust him and don't believe in his integrity. That is a huge problem, and one that YOU need to work on, not him. Nobody makes you feel this way. You feel this way because you choose to. Hypnotherapy is not going to work. You need to face your fears and examine why you have no faith in your marriage.

Consider your reactions. Do your reactions make your husband want to tell you the truth? If you want him to tell you the truth you need to accept that it may not always be what you want to her. But you need to respect the fact that he is telling you the truth. Marriage is not always about having it all your own way. It is about receiving information and encouraging each other to be honest and open with each other.

Let's put this in perspective. If he was peering at your neighbor getting undressed it would be a problem. Angelina Jolie isn't. Is his viewing of porn serious enough to be an addiction, or is it just a mild interest? Sit down with your husband. Talk to each other about finding valid ways to express fantasy, either through role-play or porn. There is room for flexibility here, if both of you are willing to talk about it together. Both of you need to exercise a little flexibility, particularly in the way you react to things you don't like hearing.

You also need to look at why he lies to you. If you want truth in your marriage, you both need to work on creating an environment where you are both able to speak and hear the truth without consequences.





## Intimacy



I've been married for 17 years and have a 15 year old son.

Sex life has never been totally brilliant but about 12 years ago our troubles started when I experienced some loss of erection which I thought was a one off but led to more of the same. A spiraling fear of failure leading to more failure. This eventually led to big upset between me and my wife. Sometimes it was ok if I achieved penetration before I 'lost it' and we would both orgasm.

This carried on for years with fallouts of varying degrees of seriousness. Sometimes the sex was ok sometimes not. Sandie felt that the non performance was because I didn't find her attractive.

Through all the sex problems we got on fine I suppose as a loving couple giving each other affection.

I get really moody and the sex thing just compounded it. Following a non performance or non attempt I would shut down, blocking her out, blaming myself and not knowing how to fix the problem. I went to the docs years ago who said it was psychological and referred me to marriage guidance. We tried a couple of council ling sessions but it didn't seem to help so we didn't go again.

I can get an erection so I think the problem is psychological. About a year ago after yet another serious argument over sex I went to a different doc. who prescribed Cialis. This was great for a while but my wife said it took any spontaneity out of sex and that I had complete control over when we made love. It's not that I don't want to make love but things always seem to scupper any chances that come up, illness, (mine and her's), tiredness, periods, etc, etc.

About a month ago my wife started being quite distant from me, being polite and cool and didn't seem to want any intimate contact, no kissing hugging, when I said 'I love you' she would say 'thanks'. She stopped smiling or winking at me as she used to do. Being my usual moody self I withdrew into my self until after a couple of weeks after all came to a head with 'the big conversation'.

She said she had had enough and that she felt I had given up on our relationship. She said she was on the verge of packing her bags. After a long conversation she said that she loved me but 'as a friend' and that we needed to focus on our son's next couple of years at school. We also talked about the sex. We haven't made love for months and she told me that she could write me a list of men who would have taken her to bed. She regularly works away from home and I know she has lost of male work colleagues. She didn't say she had done anything. On a positive note she said she believed you only get married once and that it would take a looong time for us to get ourselves back on track.

I was devastated that things were so bad, I admitted to burying my head in the sand about how things had gone so bad. She said I had to deal with the 'demons' that were causing me to be like I had been, i.e. moody, distant, not dealing with things, etc. She said she wanted me to be independent rather than

lean and depend on her for day to day support. She said I had to be positive and optimistic about the future and that things would take a long time to change if at all.

I did some serious soul searching and we spoke a week later. To be brief I came up with some of the reasons I am like I am, too deep to go into here but it's to do with my dysfunctional childhood family life.

This seemed to help the situation by showing her I had done something positive but she was still keeping her 'distance'. I wrongly went into a week of being distant with her in a 'see how she likes it' sort of attitude.

This resulted in another conversation a week later where she said that she had again been on the verge of going. I'm sure she would have gone if not for our son. When I asked about where we were as a couple she said that our relationship was 'in the deep freeze' and that we in the meantime we should be civil to each other, (like friends).

This last conversation was a week ago and in-between being civil we seem to be talking about our lives and problems every weekend.

We do hold hands sometimes when we are out and she says that if it feels natural to hold hands then that's ok. We also kiss goodnight but when she comes in from work she will sometimes walk straight past me without a kiss. Does she really want to save our marriage? It's like she's blowing hot and cold which is confusing me as to how she really feels. Is it an act so we stay together for the sake of our son or is she genuinely trying to make me act? It makes me want to give her the same treatment back. Wrong I know.

That's where we are up to. I have looked at further uncovering and facing 'my demons', embarked on a 'Change your Life' book/CD, I am considering going to therapy although I know she won't come and of course bought your book!

I don't want to loose her but don't know exactly what to do. I don't want to make her think I'm not doing anything but don't want her to think I'm trying to please her all the time.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

The first thing I am going to tell you is that you are not alone. Some studies suggest that nearly 20% of married couples have sex less than 10 times a year. Complaints about low sexual desire are the number one complaint brought to sex therapists.

The first measure of success is in finding an effective way to deal with your lack of sexual desire in your marriage. Stopping sex therapy or counseling didn't make your problems go away. In fact, it only made it less spoken about, but nevertheless bubbled away below the surface in your marriage.

Looking at it from a very basic standpoint, your wife has sexual desires and a need to be loved. She needs a level of intimacy in her life to feel attractive and valued. If you fail to fulfill this role, you make it easy for her to seek this fulfillment, not necessarily sex, outside of your marriage. If you want to keep

your marriage together, you need to recognize the seriousness of intimacy in your relationship, particularly the power of physical contact such as touching, kissing and fondling. It doesn't have to always be about intercourse. A lack of physical attention goes deep into a woman's heart, and makes her question her value in the relationship, missing the way she was once desired and pursued by the man she has made a lifetime commitment to.

To a woman, it is the lack of emotional connection that's associated with sex that is important, and it will be this deep emotional connection that she will be grieving.

The lack of sexual contact in your relationship has pushed you both apart, and without it you are simply living as friends, familiar and supportive, but without the strength of feeling that touching, kissing and love-making provides. Without the reassurance of being desired by you, your wife has stopped investing energy into the relationship in the same way you have.

From what you have written, your wife does want to save your marriage. She did you a favor by identifying and talking about how bad things have become in your marriage. Many wives would have simply walked out. Your wife didn't. However she now needs reassurance from you that she made the right decision in talking to you about it rather than simply leaving. Now it is your turn to show her how committed you are to the marriage.

You need to go back to a sex therapist to work your way through your sexual issues, and look at ways to reintroduce touch into your relationship and convey your love and attraction to your wife. Make her feel loved, make her feel attractive, make her feel sexy, and above all make her feel as though she is valued! She told you that she could write a list of men who would have taken her to bed, had she wanted that. This is a cry for help from someone who wants to be touched and valued.

You need to invest in your relationship. This is not about pleasing her. If that is what you believe then your marriage is doomed. This is about reconnecting with your wife and reminding each other of the strength of your commitment to each other. You should do this because you want to be able to touch her, caress her, and make her feel loved and valued. You should want to do this for you as much as for her.

You firstly need to acknowledge what you need to do. The next step is to commit to doing it. Get yourself back to sex therapy, and find ways to recreate the feelings of love and togetherness that once flourished in your marriage.



I am confused about something.

I do not feel that I am satisfying my partner. Both in bed and out.

When I suggested getting someone to be a part of our relationship so that I can help in pleasing her more she then said that it puts her down!!

Why is this? maybe it is just a fantasy of mine so that I do not have to "work" so hard at home :(

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

I'm not surprised your wife is upset, if you suggested that to me as a realistic approach to fixing the marriage problem I might have reacted the same way.

If your wife is sharing with you that she is not satisfied, then that's a great start. She is communicating with you, and inviting you to participate in the relationship and help find ways to love each other and fulfill each other's individual and intimate needs.

It's a two-way street. Have you read Gary Chapman's "*The Five Love Languages*"? Try it. Identifying your love language as well as the best one that your wife responds to is your first step to reconnecting.

Don't invite third parties into the relationship, especially into the bedroom. Sex is a sport best played with two.

HIS REPLY:

Andrew,

I am not sure you understand what I am saying What I am saying is that I FEEL that I am not pleasing my partner.

She says I am and that we don't need anyone else to help please her!!

I believe that I am inadequate in pleasing her not the other way around

Not sure about that book and I will check tonight but I do have '*Passionate Marriage*' by David Schnarch

MY REPLY:

Thanks for elaborating. I wasn't sure if you were serious or not. Suggesting that you bring someone else in to help please her is probably the last thing you should suggest to your wife, even if that's what you think.

The great thing you have pointed out is that your wife is happy with the way you please her, so in that respect it's something that you can work on and get some really great results. One of the most frustrating aspects of marriage counseling is convincing or finding ways to get through to your partner. Since this is something that YOU feel and affects you, not your partner, then working on you is going to bring some really great results.

"*Passionate Marriage*" is a good start, but I want you to think outside the square. Is this just a sexual issue, or is this about your emotional and intimate connection as well? One book we recommend in our Premium Course is "*Getting The Love You Want: A guide for couples*" by Harville Hendrix. Parts 1 and



2 are the theory of what you should be looking at and exploring in your relationship, and Part 3 contains exercises to apply the material and find new ways of reconnection.

I want you to think of this as a connection issue, not a sexual one. Your wife tells you that she is satisfied by you, and this tells me that the issue is not as prolific as you may believe it is.

Another book I would recommend you look at is "*The Couple's Comfort Book: A Creative Guide for Renewing Passion; Pleasure and Commitment*" by Jennifer Louden. This book is probably a bit more hands-on, and is a more holistic approach to the relationship and reconnection. Still a good read though.

If you want to please your wife, it's not just about sex. It's about making her feel safe, secure, and protected. These two books talk about ways of reconnecting so that your sexual connection develops a greater sense of intimacy, feeling, and love. Focus on it that way, not just the sex, and see what happens.



## External Influences



Last night my husband and I had a disagreement about family issues. He has a sister that is going through a divorce plus has just sold her house and their mom has been staying with her, but know the time has come were she has to start packing and relocating. My husband has been helping his mom financially and basically she has being supporting her daughter.

My husband spoke to his sister yesterday about his mom's health and she has not been well. I know she has been under a lot of pressure due to her daughter's divorce etc...

My husband has agreed that she come and stays with us for a few weeks but it's putting me under a lot of pressure.

The reason why I feel about this is that she is very demanding and like's to manipulate a person. I have never being rude to her in anyway but what do I do?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

You may not like the situation with your mother staying with you, but if it is important to your husband, you need to come to a compromise. If you feel that his mother is manipulative and demanding, it might be appropriate to talk to your husband about this in order to formulate a plan to deal with this if it happens to you. The most important thing is that you and your husband support each other as a team, so that his mother is not able to come between you.

If she is staying in your home, you need to respect your husband's wishes, but a way of compromising may be in setting some ground rules for determining appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and doing this as a team. As long as you are able to communicate and support each other through this, you and your husband will be able to cope. You can't allow you and your husband to be drawn into his sister's divorce or his mother's manipulation.



My mother in-law will be coming to stay with us from this weekend. I am feeling extremely stressed and hope that I will have all the strength to deal with it. I told my husband that he needs to lay down the law. He said that he will do that but I know when the time come's then it will never be.

Our marriage has been in trouble for many months and I said to him we always seem to deal with outsider's problems before we deal with ours.

I just feel like I am a shadow standing next to him. We never seem to agree on anything, may it be his kids, money, and just day to day things. I just feel I do things to please him to keep the peace. My husband can get very aggressive; yes he has raised his hands. I do love him and he is the most important person in my life. I was 19 years old when I meet him, I am now 34. There is a 12 year difference between us.

Thanks for listening to me, it feels so good to be able to share what's on my mind.

Hope to hear from you soon.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

We have already discussed the issue of your mother-in-law in a previous email, and our hope would be that you are able to discuss your feelings to your husband so you can approach this issue as a team. You also need to consider the fact that your husband is going to feel torn in loyalty between you and his mother, so "laying down the law" may not be the most diplomatic way to approach your issues with his mother. This may simply be a case of your husband needing to tell his mother to take a step back from offering her opinions and letting her son live his own life.

A blog post was written about this issue, and I would like you to take a look at it:

<http://www.savemy Marriage Today.com/live/2006/06/06/in-laws-and-outlaws/>

If you feel that your marriage seems to take second place to other people's problems, this is something you need to discuss with your husband. When you do this, I would encourage you to be honest about your feelings, and explain to him how you feel when you don't receive the support you expect from your husband. However in saying this, there always needs to be room for compromise in a marriage. If you find you never seem to agree on anything, you need to take a step back from the issues and consider how important it is that you get your own way. It being right all the time worth the stress this places on your marriage? Are the issues you disagree on really worth the effort of a fight?

Marriage is a partnership, and sometimes this involves compromise. Next time you disagree on something, consider how important it is to make a compromise and to come together in love. The fact that you have been together so long and are still in love is something to be celebrated. Don't let the day-to-day stresses of life erode the love that brought you two together.



*Consults Book*

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