



SAVE MY MARRIAGE TODAY!
BOOK 2: FOR MARRIAGES IN
***EXTREME* CRISIS**



DIVORCE HERE



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A Word from the Author...

One of the reasons you are looking at this book is that your marriage is in crisis. Your marriage is on the rocks, and at this rate it seems very likely that unless you do something fast it is going to end in separation if it hasn't done already, and divorce. Things between you and your spouse may have been going downhill for a long time now, or it may have happened suddenly. Either way, all of the people who have reached out for this book are in the same dire situation. For some people, this may be a last chance.

You are to be congratulated for your motivation and determination to save your marriage. That's a good start. Your motivation and the choice you made to look at this book may be just the thing that is going to save your marriage from divorce. It has been a pretty rough ride up until now, and the journey is going to be rough for a time yet. If you are looking for a fast or easy solution to your marriage problem, you might as well give up now. I don't promise fast solutions. I give couples in crisis techniques that work.

There are, however a few things that you need to consider before you begin this save marriage journey.

- What you have tried up until now hasn't worked, so the first thing you need to do is remove your preconceptions and ideas, and be prepared to LISTEN. I have helped many couples overcome their marriage problems, but the first step is to be prepared to listen and learn. People that come to me for counseling and already think that they have all the answers end up as divorce statistics. It also tells me a lot about the level of communication between them and their partner. If you want to get the most out of this book you will need to be prepared to try new things, think of things from a different perspective, and step outside your comfort zone.
- I can't guarantee that your marriage will be saved, and anyone who tells you that is fooling you. Whether your marriage is saved is up to YOU and YOUR PARTNER and how you manage to use the exercises in this book. I can help, provide advice and feedback, but ultimately the decision is up to you.
- A lot of people think that by buying the book they have done all they need to do. It's only the beginning. Even if your partner has left you and you feel you are the innocent party, there is plenty that you can do, even without your partner

The idea for this book was proposed when I started receiving a lot of feedback from customers in need of help when things have gone really bad. This is ambulance at the bottom of the cliff sort of stuff. I was getting a lot of feedback from people with serious problems, those where the partners have actually split and one partner is looking for a way to get that partner back. I got letters from people whose partners had shifted out many months ago, had a partner or themselves commit an affair, or have had divorce papers presented and now realize they want to save their marriage. For many couples the game playing and fighting has gone on for months or even years, and the bonds of love that previously kept the two of them together have been eroded almost to breaking point.



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But the remarkable thing that I find with some of these people is their determination to try and save their marriage, even in the face of hopeless odds. Even when it looks as though all is lost, these people still hang on to the hope that they may be able to salvage just a small part of what kept them together once, and make that little piece of love grow and flourish into something that they can rebuild a marriage on. Even in all the time I have counseled, I am still in awe of how determined and in love these people still are.

They say true love is worth fighting for... Let's hope they are right.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Rusbatch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew Rusbatch
February 2005





Chapter I. Staying Positive in a Negative Environment

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of marriage problems is the enormous amount of emotional energy that is involved. Especially in the case of serious marital problems, the problems and the emotions involved can be incredibly consuming, taking a heavy toll on the other aspects of your life such as work, family, children, and your relationships with friends and acquaintances.

There is no hiding the fact that the emotional turmoil of your marriage crisis is going to spill over into other areas of your life. Life would be so easy if we were able to switch emotions on and off according to the situation we are in. Unfortunately life isn't that simple. Moods and feelings can cross over and blend regardless of how different the situations may be. It is possible to mask your feelings and emotions for a short period of time, but eventually it becomes necessary to let your true feelings shine through.

The other negative aspect of your feelings at this time is the detrimental effect that emotions have on your physical health. Constant fighting and conflict wear down your immune system and make you more susceptible to disease and illness. The chemicals that invade your body during times of upset can also adversely affect your appetite, bring on headaches, and disturb sleep patterns as well as a variety of other complaints. Some people in high times of stress can also develop dry and flaky skin, rashes, nervous twitches, migraines, and swollen glands.

Stress is a highly destructive phenomenon, and its effects on your body can be far reaching. The frustrating thing is that in times of great stress, when you need strength and the ability to think clearly, stress can cause your body to shut down.

You need to find ways to remain positive in the midst of all the negative emotions that are around you in a serious marriage problem. You need the ability to take time out from your problems. As important as your marriage problems are, they are only one aspect of your life. There are so many other facets of your life that deserve and require a share of your attention, and it is important that you are able to pay the proper attention to these other tasks.

As well as a wife or husband, you are a friend, co-worker, acquaintance, parent, family member and person. You have a duty to yourself and others to separate yourself from your crisis, even if its only for a few moments a day to focus on something that makes you happy.

The road to recovery is a long and slow one, and whether you are making this journey with or without your spouse, it is going to take a long time. In order to prepare for your attempt at saving your marriage you need to be aware that it could be months or years before you really feel as though you are back at a level of comfort and intimacy that you feel happy with. If you are going to survive this ordeal, and I use this term with honesty, you need to develop mechanisms to stay positive and protect your health, both mentally and physically.

So then the question begs... how do you stay positive in the midst of your marriage falling apart?





At the time of your marriage crisis it feels as though your entire life is falling apart. The only thing I can tell you here is that it is not. Your life is undergoing a period of difficulty, and perhaps a period of change, but it is not the end of the world. What you do from here could very well determine how you live the rest of your life.

Couples in extreme crisis have usually gone way beyond the normal boundaries of conflict, and many of the couples that I have seen actually hate each other and can barely communicate without fighting and trying to hurt one another.

- Where does all this anger, frustration and bitterness come from, and what is it doing to you?
- What is the outcome of this bitterness, and how is it going to add to fixing your marriage problem?
- How is this bitterness and anger helping your body?
- Can you be certain that you are not taking some of this anger and frustration into other parts of your life? How receptive are you to support?

Anger and Frustration

When your marriage problem has got to this stage, the anger and frustration that you feel for your partner has developed from somewhere. Whether or not it was your influence, this anger and frustration grew. Part of the conflict resolution process is to slow the growth of these feelings and replace them with feelings of cooperation and acceptance. I will go further into the idea of acceptance in a later chapter.

Outcome

When examining the emotions you are currently experiencing, you need to consider the outcome of those feelings. What effect is this emotion going to have on the outcome, and how is it adding to your successful resolution of a conflict? Perhaps you need to consider this thought in a different light.

If someone spills a glass of water on you, how is getting upset and angry going to change the fact that you have a wet lap? How is getting upset going to change the outcome for you and the person who accidentally wet your lap? What you will realize from this is that what you feel will have very little difference on the reality of what has happened. Once it has happened it is in the past. How you choose to react to and deal with the problem is something that you can control.

It is the same with your marriage conflict. When looking at your emotions, particularly anger and frustration, you need to consider how relevant these feelings are to your situation, and how it is going to affect the outcome. Try not to allow yourself to feel emotions that are going to get you nowhere. I know this sounds easier than it is, but allowing yourself to feel feelings





that you have no control over is redundant. Yes, you will feel them from time to time anyway, as this is human nature, but you should recognize the futility of having these feelings and try and move on.

You need to be a bit ruthless with your feelings, and continually ask yourself about the appropriateness of those feelings as you are having them. Of course there are times when you will feel like screaming, or having a good cry, and I would encourage you to do so, but you need to process those feelings and move on. When you are feeling stronger you are better equipped to deal with your problems in an efficient manner.

Perhaps efficiency and effectiveness are good words to use when it comes to your emotions in the midst of a conflict. There are those of you will disagree with such clinical and sterile terms when it comes to describing your approach to your emotions, but in the midst of a conflict, efficient and effective use of your emotions are going to be a real help. When it comes to healing and rebuilding, which will come much later, we can take a different approach.

Your Body

The next point we will look at is how those feelings are affecting your body. It is important at this time that you are aware of your state of health and that you look after your body. Tension and stress can upset the delicate balance of chemicals inside your body and decrease your immunity. Again, you need to be aware of how your feelings are affecting your sleep, your appetite, and your immune system. It is important that you maintain your intake of essential vitamins and minerals, and in times of intense stress your physical health is overlooked, often until it is too late.

You need to realize that now, more than ever you are responsible for yourself, and this includes you making sure you stay healthy and strong. Take yourself outside of this environment, even if only briefly, and go for a walk, read a magazine, watch a movie, or do something that allows you to escape your mindset for a period of time. Stomach upsets and migraines or headaches can all be linked to stress. If you are suffering from any of these it is time to listen to your body and take some time out.

Support

Constant tension and bitterness can cloud your judgment and make it difficult for others to be around you. At a time in your life when you need the support of others, you need to ensure that you are able to receive this support. If you are an easy person to be around you are more likely to attract the support of others. Negative or angry people are difficult to be around. At a time like this it is difficult to focus on others, especially when there is the perception that your problems are so much worse than theirs. If you are able to take a breath and ask someone else how their day is rather than simply focusing on yours, it enables others to interact and connect with you. It is also a good exercise to take your thoughts away from your problems. There are a number of people that are happy to reach out and support you provided you ask for it, and



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you make it easy for others to both offer and maintain support.

Consider this: if you were in your friends' shoes, would you be willing to support and help someone in your position? At a time when you need the support of others most, many people in times of crisis make it difficult for help to be received.

A marriage crisis is a difficult thing to endure, but make sure that you are able to stay on top of your emotions. What I mean by this is that the correct emotions are conveyed to the right people. But with a little control and lots of support and understanding, there is a way out.

Staying Positive

The key to staying positive in the midst of the chaos of a marriage crisis is to develop exercises or ways of relaxing and removing your anxiety from your life. Think of it as a few minutes of sanity or an opportunity to escape from the pressure and stress of the situation you are in. Without the ability to escape, albeit briefly, your mental and physical health will suffer.





Exercise I. Remove yourself from your mind...

This exercise is the beginning of a series of exercises that you are going to do to further complement the material in this book. Each exercise is something you are going to be able to do alone, or with a friend. Given the crisis nature of your marriage relationship, these are not exercises that you need to do with your partner. I want you to be able to use this time to work on yourself and focus on your feelings and your happiness and relaxation.

I want you to try all the exercises, and if you want, you can go back and repeat the exercises as you wish. What you will end up with is a framework of marriage saving advice complemented by practical exercises that are designed to benefit you, and make you more able to save your marriage in crisis.

Breathe and Relax

Find a quiet warm place where you won't be disturbed. Choose a time of day when you don't have other commitments on your time. Ideally the room should be a comfortable temperature, and if you wish, you could burn some incense, scented oil, or some candles to create a relaxing atmosphere.

Lie down on your back, or sit in a well supported chair if you are not able to lie down. Try to get comfortable and close your eyes for a bit. Perhaps lie on a bed or a comfy chair or a comfortable area of floor with some cushions. I want you to work on each of your muscle groups. With each group of muscles, firstly tense the muscles as much as you can, then relax them fully. Breathe in when you tense the muscles, and breathe out when you relax.

To start with, concentrate on your breathing for a few minutes. Breathe slowly and calmly. Each time you breathe out say words to yourself such as "calm" or "relax". Then start the muscle exercises working around the different muscle groups in your body.

- Hands - clench one hand tightly for a few seconds as you breathe in. You should feel your forearm muscles tense. Then relax as you breathe out. Repeat with the other hand.
- Arms - bend an elbow and tense all the muscles in the arm for a few seconds as you breathe in. Then relax as you breathe out. Repeat the same with the other arm.
- Neck - press your head back as hard as is comfortable and roll it slowly from side to side. Then relax.
- Face - try to frown and lower your eyebrows as hard as you can for a few seconds, then relax. Then raise your eyebrows (as if you were startled) as hard as you can, then relax. Then clench your jaw for a few seconds, then relax.
- Chest - take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds, then relax and go back to normal breathing.
- Stomach - tense the stomach muscles as tight as possible, then relax.
- Buttocks - squeeze the buttocks together as much as possible, then relax.



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- Legs - with your legs flat on the floor, bend your feet and toes towards your face as hard as you can, then relax. Then bend them away from your face for a few seconds, then relax.

Then repeat the whole routine 3-4 times. Each time you relax a group of muscles, note the difference of how they feel when relaxed compared to when they are tense. Some people find it eases their general level of 'tension' if they get into a daily routine of doing these exercises.

Once you have repeated the routine a few times, you should feel relaxed. Stay very still for a while and let the feeling flow through your body. As you feel a negative thought enter your head, push it up and out of your body. Allow yourself to lay there quietly and feel the blood pulse through your body. Feel all the muscles relax. If you feel tired, let yourself have a little nap.

When you are ready, ease yourself back into things slowly. Make yourself a hot drink and sit for a while in your comfortable space, dwelling for a moment on your feeling of relaxation and how good you feel.





Exercise 2. Sounds of Your Life

Music is a good healer, and the association that people have with songs and different times of their life is often quite strong. You are bound to remember where you were when you heard particular songs that defined a time in your life.

This is an application of the same idea. I want you to go back to your comfortable place and relax... Then I want you to put some music on, preferably something soothing and relaxing. It can be something that is familiar to you, or it can be something new.

Easy listening, classical, jazz, or opera. It doesn't really matter, as long as you feel it is a piece of music or an album that will relax you and set your mind back into a relaxed and/or reminiscent state.

This is your time. Personally, I find classical music or opera very relaxing, so in my quiet time I light some candles, relax on the couch nestled in amongst the cushions, put on a CD, and relax for half an hour or however long I have.

The most important point here is that you are able to make the first few sessions as positive and relaxing as possible. After a few weeks, when you are feeling stressed, you can retire to a place where you can listen to these songs and relax. Your previous sessions in your comfortable will help reinforce those feelings of relaxation and calm.

Songs define moments in our lives. Happy moments, sad moments, and defining moments. By association, when you hear these songs, you are taken back in time to the person you were when you first heard that song.

Choose your songs for your relaxing session carefully. These are the songs that will carry you through the difficult times and allow you to escape, albeit briefly, from everyday life and immerse yourself in a feeling of calm and inner peace.





Chapter 2. Putting the Problems in Perspective

"My husband and I split up two months ago and it has been one of the most difficult times of my life. He had an affair six months ago, and when he told me my whole life came crashing down. We had been married for 11 years and have two lovely children. I have found it really hard to deal with, but we have been going to counseling together. I guess I have found it hard to trust him and as a result we haven't really been talking much. Things got better for a while, but then we started having some huge fights. The kids, money, his parents, it was always something. Now he has decided to shift out and I don't know what to do. I have lost so much weight with worry and lack of sleep. I want us to stay together and I will do anything to have him back. Please help me make him see that all I want is us to be back together, the way we were before all this happened..."

--Angie, Dallas

One of the most destructive things in a marriage crisis is your tendency to panic or overreact to the situation you are in. There is no disputing that the problems you may be having are significant and could have a wide-reaching impact on your life, both short term and long term.

But the first thing you need to know is panicking and letting your emotions overwhelm you are not going to help the situation. If you allow yourself to become upset and get all worked up, you are unlikely to be able to think carefully about what you want or need to say to your partner. The other consideration is that you need to be able to listen and understand what your partner is telling you. Neither of these skills are at their best when you allow your feelings to overwhelm you. In fact, your body goes into shut down mode as you defend yourself and try to process your emotions.

You need to calm down and think smart. Once you have dealt with the initial shock, you may need to take a few days to consider your thoughts and establish what your situation is and how you really feel about it. The old adage that you should sleep on a problem before you act is perhaps a good one in this situation. The possibility of a failed marriage and a separation or divorce is a lot to think about, so it's natural that you may have difficulty coming to terms with that possibility.

And it is just that. A possibility. You needn't be ashamed of your feelings of being overwhelmed or feeling stressed. But it is important here that you choose an appropriate outlet for those feelings. At this stage your partner is not an appropriate outlet. That's a mistake that a lot of couples in extreme crisis make. As much as you are feeling an emotional overload, the chances are your partner is feeling it too, regardless of whether they seem to be showing it or not.

Your first reaction to getting your partner back may be to beg and plead for them to come back to you, where you will be able to get things back to normal and back to how they used to be.





Well that's just not going to happen, and for several reasons:

- Begging and pleading for your partner may be perceived by you as a good way to let your partner know how you are feeling, however it may be perceived by your partner as yet more pressure in an already highly stressful situation. As much as you are feeling stressed, your partner is too, and your need to be aware of this. Consider how your actions are affecting your partner's stress. If they seem to be withdrawing from you or you can't seem to communicate without fighting, it may be an indication that you both need more time to think, and more time to consider what you want to say to each other.
- You want to get it back to normal. Well that's never going to happen. You can't change what has happened, and your marriage is never going to be the same again. You can try to get it back on track, but the dynamic of your relationship has changed in such a way that you are both going to need to make more effort. If you imagine things are going to return to your definition of normal you need to change your expectations.
- A lot of people have unrealistic expectations when it comes to saving marriages. Unconsciously, many simply want their old life back, back when they were in love and had no worries, and there was the expectation that they would be together for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately this is a misguided hope, as there is no way of getting your old life back. Who we are is a reflection of our values and the experiences we have had. A marriage crisis in most cases changes people. It is possible to rebuild a marriage, but that is going to involve a new beginning and falling in love with your partner again, rather than trying to recreate the past.

Change the way you think

If you are serious about saving your marriage and getting your partner to love you again, you need to change the way you think. Its time you let go of your idea of recreating your old life. At this stage your old life is little more than a memory, and a lot of the love that once existed in your relationship is lost. You can come back from the precipice of a marriage crisis, but you need to look at it as coming back with a new relationship with your partner. It is time to start your love journey with that person again.

With that in mind, you need to think smart. There are obviously problems in your relationship, and they need to be talked about, but you always need to have the final goal in the back of your mind. You need to put the problem in perspective.

- Is it going to split you up?
- Are you going to let it?





Prepare for the worst

In the midst of marriage crises it is easy to make the problem more than it is. It is human nature to automatically assume the worst. For your own benefit I want you to assume the worst and believe that you are going to divorce and live the rest of your life without that person. Yes, the thought may seem a pretty lonely and scary, but life as we know it is not going to end. You will still have plenty to live for, including other family, friends, and plenty of good experiences to have that lay in your future.

Your life will change, and parts of it will seem more difficult than before, but no matter how hard it gets, you always have the support of your friends and family. You will always have them, and a place to live, and that makes you luckier than most. No matter how bad you have it, someone out there has it a lot worse and they still manage to survive. You need to get yourself outside of your negative mind space and look at the problem from the outside.

The easiest way is to prepare for the worst. This sounds like a ridiculous thing to do if you want to save your marriage, but the sooner you become accustomed to the thought that it may not work, you have nothing to lose. Once you have learnt to accept the possibility of the worst case scenario happening, you are able to remove the fear and work on making the situation better. Divorce may happen, and you need to accept that possibility. Anything better than divorce is an improvement. This is a good attitude to have.

Learn to let go

Let the problem go. The sooner you are able to do that, the sooner you are able to begin your actions to rebuild your marriage, rather than resisting change that you alone are powerless to prevent.

At any moment in your life the people around you are the way they are. There is nothing you can do to change that. You can fight and resist the way it is and cause a lot of fear and upset and make your situation worse, or you can accept it and take action to discover solutions to your marriage crisis rather than trying to change something which you have very little control over.

The biggest thing you fear at the moment is that your marriage will fail. The more you resist this, the greater chance that your marriage will actually fail. As your fear and desperation increases, you hang on even more and try even harder. This creates a highly stressful and upsetting environment that is more likely to drive your partner away. That is the most upsetting reality. In fearing something, you increase its chances of becoming a reality.

Once you are able to let the fear go you are able to explore what is going to bring you back together. Learn to accept the situation you are currently in and set your mind at peace.

Whatever has happened to lead you to the situation you are in right now is something that is outside your control. It has happened. How your partner chooses to react to this crisis is also something that is outside your control. As frustrating as this is, you need to accept that the





only person you can control is you. Once you understand this, you are ready to move on.

So how do you let go?

The first step in learning to let go is trusting that you are going to be fine, no matter what the outcome. You need to stop resisting the change and accept that if it is going to happen, there is very little that you are going to be able to do to reverse that change. Accept what comes. You can achieve more by accepting that your life will change and letting go of your old life and the hurt and anger that is associated with resisting that change.

There are things in your marriage conflict that are always going to be outside your sphere of influence, and once you have accepted the things you cannot change you can concentrate on the things you can change.

The second and perhaps most important factor in letting go is acknowledging your emotions and feeling the hurt that is present within you. In order to affectively move on you need to purge yourself of the negative feelings in you and focus on what you can do now to get your partner back.

It is perfectly okay to feel emotions like sorrow and anger and hurt. You need to allow yourself to feel these emotions so that you can process them and heal the negative effect that these emotions are having. Once you are able to go through this process, you are ready to start on saving your marriage.

Consider this... If you are a negative person that is upset and hurt at the prospect of losing your partner, chances are you have been a difficult person to be around. The frustration you would be feeling at not being able to change the situation you are in would be contributing to a negative environment.

Accepting your situation and focusing on being a nice person will make it easier for your partner to be around you. Once you are able to be around each other without the hostility or hurt, it will be easier to foster an environment where you are able to make an effort with your relationship, rather than resisting change.

Effort and communication can flourish in an environment that is low on stress. It's almost about becoming indifferent to the possibility of divorce. Once you are able to put that out of your mind you can work less on getting your spouse back and more on getting your friend back.





Exercise 3. Your Emotions and You

In this exercise you are going to take a pragmatic approach to your anger and frustration. Let's take a look at your anger and the situation you are in and put the problem in perspective.

I want you to take some time out to consider your emotions. Choose the ones that are causing you the most distress and take some time to allow the feeling to develop, thinking about the things that trigger this emotion.

It is important that you are truthful with yourself. This is the same for all the exercises in this book. You are only going to get as much out of these exercises as you are prepared to put in. In taking the time to consider your feelings, be as honest as you can. That way the results you get are going to help you understand your problems and how they fit into your life.

I want you to list the advantages and disadvantages of having your emotion. You can do a separate list for each emotion if you have more than one. At the moment we will focus on anger. Alternately you could look at hurt.

Advantages of my anger	Disadvantages of my anger
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I have a right to be angry after the way I have been treated• My partner knows when I am angry and they might change their behavior• It feels good to let my feelings out• If I get angry, they will back off and my feelings are protected• They deserve to suffer and be made to feel bad like I have	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After I have calmed down I often feel bad for the way I have treated them• My angry thoughts upset me and make me depressed• It might drive my partner away• It doesn't always make anything change• It creates a really bad atmosphere and we don't talk for a few days• My partner will shout back and it all gets out of control

Now take the time to review your list and consider a few points.

- Which is the greater, the cost or the benefits of your anger?
- Is it beneficial for you in the long term to cling to your anger?
- Does being angry enhance your life and feelings in any way?
- Does your anger help you get what you want in the way that you want it?

Doing this exercise will help you put this problem in perspective, and establish what feelings are appropriate and how effective they are in helping you achieve your goal.





Chapter 3. Identify Your Issues

“Charmaine and I have been married for over 30 years and for the best part of those years things have been fine. The last couple of years have been really hard though, and it has got to the point that we are barely talking to each other any more. I’m not even sure if she even really likes me. We are sleeping in separate rooms and don’t go out to restaurants anymore. I have tried to talk to her a few times and she just tells me that she has tried too much and doesn’t want to fight anymore.”

“When the children left home she decided she wanted to sell the house and travel, like we had always planned to do. The only thing is that times have changed and the plans we made all those years ago don’t really seem relevant to me now. I’m not as young as I used to be and I don’t really want to go to places like Cambodia and Papua New Guinea. My wife does though, and she feels as though I’m stopping her from doing things. That’s not true, it’s just that I don’t want to go.”

“There have been lots of other fights, but this one comes up a lot. I know we need to talk about this, but every time we do it ends in another fight and days of silence...”
--Lance, New Jersey

Issue identification

Before you start on repairing your marriage problem it is generally a good idea to first identify what the issues are. This may seem like an obvious thing to point out, but can you identify exactly what your issues are?

There is often more than a single issue in a marriage conflict. The difficulty inherent in resolving conflicts is that there are so many variables and issues contributing to a disagreement that it is easy to lose sight of the issue. This is especially true if you are close to the conflict. Issues that may seem obvious to others that are removed from the situation are often missed by the couple in crisis.

Before you enter another conflict situation you need to sit down and think of what the issues are behind your conflict. I see a lot of couples that come to me that aren’t clear on what the issues are behind their marriage problems. Some of these couples have had serious marital difficulties for months and have never actually sat down together to identify exactly what they are talking about.

In some cases the communication has been so lapse that some couples can’t even agree on the issues that they are fighting on!





Therefore it is important that you make sure you are clear with your partner exactly what the issues are. As obvious as the issue may seem, you need to make sure you are both talking about the same issue. It is quite common for couples to have different perceptions on the same issue and misunderstand why the other person is upset or angry. Save the both of you the time and effort and make the time to establish clearly what the issues are.

Think outside the square

Further examine your perception of the issue. Is the reason you are upset directly related to a singular issue, or is it part of something bigger that has been building for a while?

An example of this would be when a woman is upset with her husband for not being able to attend their child's school recital. Is it really about the husband missing the recital, or is it about the husband's unsatisfactory relationship with his child, or is it about the hours he works and the balance between home life and work life?

When your marriage is in crisis, it is crucial that you reduce or even eliminate any chance of misunderstanding by making sure you are both arguing about the same issues. So many disagreements and conflicts begin with misunderstandings. Make sure yours is not one of them. Don't be afraid to ask them what the issues are. Also be prepared to listen.

At the same time, have a think about past arguments that you have had with your partner.

- What sort of things are they usually about?
- Do they tend to follow a pattern?
- When past issues are brought up in an argument, what are they usually about?
- When you or your partner brings up past issues in an argument, why do you suppose that happens?





Exercise 4

Take a good look at the mess your marriage is in right now. If you are able to, write your issues down. Write down everything you are feeling and where you feel the key issues are in your marriage conflict. Write down all the angry feelings and frustrations you are having and where you feel your problems are in the marriage.

Now I want you to get another piece of paper and write down things from your partner's perspective. What do you think their issue with your marriage is? What areas of the marriage do they think are a problem? What things do you do that upset them? Write down all the things you feel are key issues from your partner's perspective. Put yourself into their mind space and see if you are able to learn anything from it.





Chapter 4. Conflict Resolution

"Me and my husband Brian have been going through a bad patch right now, and to be honest, it's really wearing me down. It's never out of my mind and I have been losing sleep worrying about what is going to become of me and our two children.

"He has changed. He isn't the man I married, and it's scary to see. When we got married we were so in love and up until a couple of years ago things were like any other marriage. Now he goes to the local bar and drinks for a few hours before he comes home. He reeks of beer when he walks in the door and then wonders why I am not in a good mood! I wanted better for me and our children, but he can't seem to listen.

"We fight all the time, and it has got to the stage where I dread him coming home and having another fight like we do every night. I want him to see what he is doing to our family..."
--Cassandra, New Orleans

Most people in marriage crises want a resolution that is going to work, and one that is going to bring this negative time to an end. For some couples, the resolution to the conflict may mean the end of the relationship. But it doesn't always have to be this way.

One thing I have always found difficult is when I get couples that come to me and think that by coming to me their problems will magically go away. I wish things were that easy. If you want a successful resolution to your conflict you need to make the effort.

Responsibility

The first thing I want you to do is accept responsibility for your part in the problem. Nobody can fight or have conflict on their own. It will almost always involve someone else. You may not feel as though you have played any part in a marriage crisis, and in some rare cases you haven't.

But the majority of couples in a marriage crisis have both contributed to the situation they now have. You need to recognize the part you have played in this situation, no matter how big or small. Once you are able to recognize your part in this, you are better equipped to search for a solution rather than apportioning blame. Most of the couples that I see come away from my sessions realizing that they have both contributed to the problem, not always in the same way, but the involvement and responsibility of both partners still remains.





Actions

An important point you need to realize is that a person's actions are a reflection of their perception of an issue. No matter what a person's reaction, there is a reason for why they act a certain way. You may not know or understand someone's reasons for why they act the way they do, but you can guarantee that they will have their reasons.

An example would be if your partner gets angry and slams a door. You may not know or understand why they are so angry, but their anger is a valid feeling to them, and there will be a reason that they have become so angry. It may be something obvious like you calling them stupid, or it may be something less obvious like a repressed memory from their childhood. Either way the way someone acts is directly related to their perception and reasoning behind an issue.

You may not always understand the action, but if you are able to understand the reasoning behind the action you are one step closer to considering your partner's feelings and taking this into account in conflicts. Your partner's actions may sometimes hurt you, but if you try and understand the reasoning behind it you may realize that their actions may be more about self defense rather than a personal attack on you.

You know how you feel about things and the reasoning that goes behind it, and if you are able to apply the same theory to other people you are going to be able to diffuse and heal conflict situations much faster and more effectively than you could imagine. Remember, it is not just about your feelings. Your partner has feelings too and they are just as valid. Recognizing the validity of both your feelings is the key to maintaining your marriage in crisis.

Understanding others is a skill that is especially lacking in marriages in crisis. The person you love is the one person other than yourself that you should try to understand better. In the same way your actions are influenced by your thoughts, your partner acts according to their thoughts.

Motives

If what you are doing elicits a strong reaction from your partner, you need to consider your partner's motives for reacting the way they do. Is something you are doing threatening a core principle or value that your partner has?

Do you even know what your partner's core principles and values are? Do you know what things are important to them?

When thinking about your partner's values and beliefs, you need to consider the following:

- Their family background
- The values of his or her parents
- Religion



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- Political affiliation
- Life experiences
- Social standing
- The values of their friends and acquaintances
- Their role models

When you look at all of these influences on their life, you should be able to get a picture of what their values are and who or what they aspire to be. The biggest influences in determining this is often your partner's family and the friends and acquaintances they associate with. Friends and acquaintances are usually part of your partner's life because they share the same values or possess the same qualities that your partner has or wishes to have.

Or is it your partner that has done something to you? In what way have they threatened your values or upset you? In what way do you feel your values have been compromised?

However upset or angry you may be, you need to consider your reaction carefully. Your values are something that are important to you, as they are with your partner. Your first instinct when something threatens those values is to defend yourself and attack. Resist the temptation and explore this idea, and identify how and where either of you are threatening each other's values.

So where to from here?

You have both voiced your opinions and made your feelings known. Conflict resolution is all about negotiation. Negotiation isn't as hard as it sounds. It is something that is necessary in all facets of life so that people can work together.

You don't always get to have your own way, and that can be a good thing. Sometimes it is healthy to do things for other people's sake. It is a good reminder that you are part of a relationship, or friendship, or community.

If you are unwilling to negotiate, or your partner is unwilling to work with you towards a solution, you reach an impasse. How you deal with that impasse will determine whether you remain married or divorce.

Impasse

Once you have reached impasse you have a problem. Rather than apportioning blame you need to look at solving your attitudes to the issues, not the conflict itself. Blame creates hostility and resentment, so if you are serious about this you need to leave those thoughts and feelings at the door.

If you are unable to negotiate a solution to your impasse, you need to consider whether the issue is worth risking your marriage. If you are able to remove the issue or problem, you are





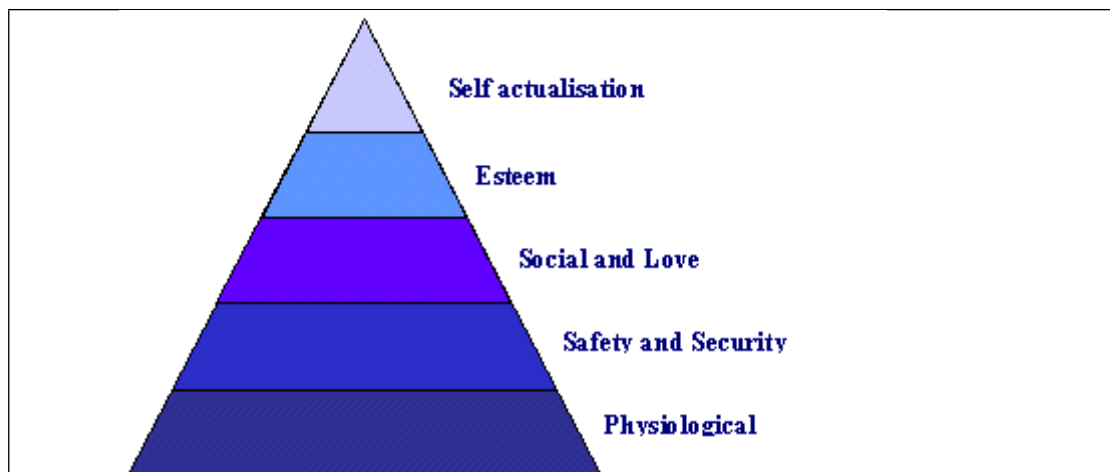
better equipped to deal with meeting some basic needs both for you and your partner.

It is right here that a lot of marriages finish. I am not going to tell you whether or not to finish your marriage right here, but if your partner is withdrawing from you or the distance between you is growing, its because in the midst of fighting and trying to hurt one another you are neglecting some very basic needs.

Basic Needs

We need to go back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs to further examine basic human needs and how the neglect of them can drive your marriage apart.

Maslow was an American psychologist who developed a theory of motivation in which a human can progress from basic needs such as food to the peak of developing full potential and making a worthwhile contribution to society. A person cannot progress up the levels until all of the requirements of the lower level are satisfied.



Maslow's needs are:

Physiological – these needs are the most basic, such as food, shelter, warmth and sex

Safety and Security – these needs reflect our desire for stability and order, as well as protection from injury or attack

Social and Love – the need for acceptance, the ability to give and receive love and affection, having a partner and friends, and be part of a group

Self-esteem – the need to build up a sense of personal worth, the recognition of contribution, and the respect and self confidence that you get from your achievements

Self-actualization – the need to develop your full potential, to be creative and to feel as though you are contributing to something worthwhile





In order to achieve self actualization as a couple, you need to pay close attention to your needs. In conflicts there tends to be an abandonment of many of these fundamental needs.

If you manage to neglect the very basic needs such as safety and security, which deal with your feelings of stability and order, your whole world can be turned upside down. Your first instinct is to protect yourself from the unfamiliar and increase your defenses.

Likewise if the feelings of acceptance, love and affection are neglected, defensive lines are drawn and your partner may search for this emotional fulfillment elsewhere.

The abandonment of basic and intermediate needs can further the progression of negativity and the reduction of communication and commitment within a relationship. Whilst I am not advocating that you should have sex with your partner in the midst of a crisis, the first step to a reunion is to address this deficit of needs both individually and as a couple.

You should always keep in mind that all people have a set of needs that are crucial to happiness and fulfillment. If you are unable to meet those needs in your partner, it is almost impossible to stop the rot of separation and withdrawal that occurs in serious marriage problems.





Exercise 5

This lesson is going to focus on addressing your needs as a person and work on your personal development.

It is possible to progress up the levels on the hierarchy as long as most of the requirements of the lower level are met. The higher you climb, the closer you come to personal fulfillment and completeness as a person.

For the sake of your relationship I want you to make a list of what you would like to be completely fulfilled. I want you to look at every aspect of your life.

- Personal life, including love life, friends and family. What would you like? What would you change?
- Work life. What would your ideal job be? Are you happy in your job? What would you change about it?
- What material assets would you really like? Let's assume money is no obstacle. What would it take to have an ideal life?
- What sort of person would you become? How would having all of your dreams fulfilled make you a different person?
- Emotionally, what would it take for you to feel at your peak? What things about your relationships with your friends and family would you like to be different?
- What would you change about your partner to complete this sense of fulfillment? What qualities would you like to change in your partner? What would it take to achieve those changes?

The ability to achieve personal fulfillment is to achieve your goals in life. You need goals so that you have something to focus on and something to work towards. Goals are important for achieving direction. Having a clear idea of what you want to achieve from the outset, will be of real benefit in helping you achieve your goals.

Some of the goals you have listed will be unattainable perhaps due to a lack of money, but you should look at the other goals you have listed and pay serious attention to what you need to do to achieve them. Some of them will be short term goals, and others will be something to aim for further into the future.

By making yourself aware of what your wants are, and which of those are attainable, you will be able to develop your full potential and sense of fulfillment. This is a fundamental quality to have regardless of whether you have a partner or not.

In what way does your partner prevent you from achieving your goals? Does having your partner with you complement you achieving your self fulfillment? Or are you relying on them



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to provide your happiness and fulfillment for you?

The objective of this exercise is to clearly establish a direction in your life, and a plan of what you need to do to meet your goals. Your plans and dreams can include your partner, but shouldn't need your partner. Let them walk beside you achieving your goals. Don't allow yourself to require them in order to achieve.





Chapter 5. The Anatomy of an Affair

"Everything changed after the affair. It really blew our marriage apart, and all at a time when I least expected it. We had been having a few minor problems, but nothing more than my friends had been having. Blair had been working long hours at the plant, I guess because we have a big mortgage and two sons to support.

"When one of his coworkers told me, I just felt numb. I confronted him about it and he admitted to seeing one of his coworkers for the last 8 months. I was devastated to say the least. We hadn't been talking to each other much or been intimate for a few weeks, but that was not all that unusual. After 15 years of marriage it was about normal.

"Nothing prepared me for this, and I don't know what to do. I don't even know what to feel right now. I'm so hurt and I don't know if I can ever trust him again. I don't know if I want him back, but I have to think of the kids. They need a father. Is there an easy way to get through this and forgive him?"

--Mel, Colorado

An affair is perhaps the most common cause of marriage problem, and it is the one that most directly threatens your marriage relationship. The decision to sleep with another person for many couples spells the end of the marriage relationship. For those of you that decide there is something worth fighting for, it is a long and difficult road to recovery.

The first thing I would recommend is that you take some time out to think. It is quite likely that you are upset at the thought of your partner cheating on you, and you need to take time to allow yourself to have feelings about it. Your feelings are what will help you through this time, therefore it is important that you allow yourself to feel everything. Suppression of emotions is only going to lead to significant problems later. Don't be ashamed of having feelings, whether they are anger, hurt, frustration, sorrow or whatever else you may feel. The important thing is that you have an outlet for those feelings and that you go through this process as smoothly and easily as possible. If that means you cry uncontrollably for a couple of days, that's fine.

Support

It is crucial that you make the most of any offers of support. Not only do friends and family offer help to be of use to you, but they also need to do it to make themselves feel useful. Any offer of help should be greeted warmly and in most circumstances if you give them an indication of where you might want help, it can be of huge benefit to you.

If you have children, a friend may be able to look after them for a few hours while you refocus,





or they may be able to look after them for the night so you can relax fully. Help with baking or cooking is always nice, and in a time of crisis can be one less thing to worry about. So too can the offer of a cup of tea or coffee and a willing person to listen. Sometimes just the thought of having someone there to listen can be a real help. Help can also come in the form of a cuddle. A reassuring hug can sometimes be all that you really need and can be a real strength when you are feeling weak or upset.

Allow yourself to talk about it, and allow yourself to feel your feelings.

Cheated on

If you are in the position where your partner has cheated on you, your trust in them is likely to be shattered. You are going to need a few days to rest and help clear your head. How you react to your partner's affair will determine whether you remain married.

- Do you know the reason for the affair? What reason has your partner given?
- Has your marriage been in crisis previous to the affair?
- Do you still love your partner?
- Do you have children together?
- Do you think that if you go to counseling you could start your marriage over?
- Do you want to throw your marriage and the love you once had for your partner away?
- How determined are you to make your marriage work?

All of these are important points to consider, and you need to think about these points as you contemplate your future. Initially you will be in shock, and that's understandable given the circumstances, but once this wears off and the reality of your situation sets in, you are going to need to think about your future carefully.

You need to know your partner's reason for having the affair. Even if it makes no sense, it is important that you get some sort of justification from your partner. It doesn't matter if the affair was meaningless, it is important that you get some answers. You will need to sit your partner down and get them to answer your questions truthfully.

Do you still love your partner? As much as you may feel betrayed and hurt, the love can still remain. The feelings of love and hate are very close on the emotional spectrum. Both feelings require a significant amount of energy. If you feel these emotions towards a person, it is quite likely they still mean something to you.

As difficult as your situation is however, you need to decide very quickly if you are going to let an affair beat you. As distressing as it is, some of the weakest and shyest people find an inner strength that they never knew they had. That is because they decided that as traumatic as the experience is, it's up to them how they react and deal with the news.

You have a choice:



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- Deal with the problem, making a little bit of effort and progress every day
- Or walk away and start your life over

It may be one of the most difficult stages you ever make, but if your partner still means something to you, it is important that you resist the temptation to punish them. If you want to rebuild your relationship with your partner, you will have to let go. Let go of your anger and revenge and seek some counseling as a couple. There will be a time for expressing your anger and hurt over the course of the counseling.

Forgive them. It may seem like the last thing you feel like doing, but in your anger and bitterness, you lose the ability to love. The forgiveness is about your ability to let those bitter feelings go, rather than retaining them and making yourself miserable. The forgiveness is less about the other person and more about you and letting go of those feelings.

One important fact remains. If you do not deal with your emotions and express them in an appropriate manner from the beginning, you will bring those feelings with you into the future. The incidence of further marital difficulty due to past issues not being resolved is quite high. Deal with the problems properly the first time round so they do not continue to affect your relationship in the future.

Cheater

If you are the one that has had an affair, the situation you face is going to be equally tough. So you did a really stupid thing. There. It's said.

There is no point beating yourself up about it, as it's not going to help. If you want to rebuild your partner's trust and try to rebuild your marriage, you need to be honest, both with yourself and your partner.

Honesty sucks sometimes, but the one good thing about it is that you always know where you stand with it. I have done things I am not proud of in the past, and equally I have had partners tell me things that have hurt me. But the most important thing is that the ability to tell the truth as well as receive the truth, no matter how much it hurts people is something that you should be proud of. You can't change what you have done, and the hurt you have caused, so your only focus right now is on what the right thing to do is.

And what is the right thing to do?

After honesty comes patience. As much as you might want to put the whole episode behind you, you need to accept that your partner is going to need some time to deal with this. You should not misinterpret this as your partner punishing you, or them not wanting to deal with this. An affair is a lot to think about, and your patience and understanding is required.

Some people will shout and scream, and others will withdraw quietly. Either reaction is quite normal. What you need to do is respect their need for expression and give them the space and time to deal with this. You might want to tell them you are sorry over and over again, but this



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is not going to help. What is going to help is your patience and understanding. When they are ready to talk about it you will know.

If they continue to withdraw you might need to get them to focus on the points I made in the last section. A marriage is a lot to throw away, and even though their first reaction may be to divorce, the process is seldom what people imagine it to be. It takes a long time, its expensive, it can be messy, and it doesn't deliver the sense of peace that people think it might either.

If you are unable to have the opportunity to put your thoughts in words, write them down and write a letter to your partner. Consider the following points:

- Do they know the reason for the affair? What reason have you given?
- Has your marriage been in crisis previous to the affair?
- Does your partner still love you?
- Do you have children together?
- Do you think that if you both go to counseling you could start your marriage over?
- Do they want to throw the marriage and the love you once had for each other away?
- How determined are you both to make your marriage work?

You should offer to go to counseling, both individually and as a couple. By showing that you are willing to go to counseling you are indicating that you are willing to undertake the process and that you are taking this seriously.





Exercise 6

An affair is a crucial turning point in your marriage, and for many couples it is the opportunity to refocus and reestablish what your roles and goals are in your marriage.

You are unable to change what has happened in your past, but what you do from this moment on is entirely within your control. Many couples whose marriages I have saved have used this opportunity to redefine their roles within the marriage relationship, and re-establish their personal goals. In many cases, an affair is an opportunity to redefine lots of different things that are wrong in the relationship.

In the midst of your marital problems you may find that your old life no longer has meaning. That may have even been a mitigating factor in yours or your partner's infidelity.

Perhaps this is a good time to break out of your old roles in your life and establish some new ones. Marriage and the idea of living together as a couple is about compromise, and after a few years of marriage the role you are currently playing may be far from what you imagined.

I want you to make two lists on a piece of paper, one titled "Old roles" and the other titled "New roles"

Old Roles	New Roles

I want you to list all the different roles that you play in life, and rank them in order from most important to least important. Then I want you to do the same for your future, looking particularly at where your priorities may have changed or where you wish your life to change.

- How do you want to see yourself?
- How do you want your husband to see you?
- How do you want others to see you?



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Take this opportunity to assess your priorities and the many different roles you play. You may find that your priorities have changed over time. You may also want to change your priorities to fit with where you see yourself in two, five and ten year's time.

You may find that after an affair you want to be a different person, or at the very least make a few small changes in your life. Your life is a brief and intense journey, and you only have one opportunity to get it right. This may be a good opportunity to make the necessary changes in your life to make yourself happy and reach your personal fulfillment. However this choice is yours. Don't rely on your partner to provide your happiness for you. Your happiness should be something that you are able to obtain on your own.

A friend of mine was dying of cancer a few months ago. Just before she died she told me that she had very few regrets. She looked back on a lifetime of happy memories, good friends and laughter. Hers was an unorthodox life by some standards, but she did what she needed to do to make herself happy.

It gave me cause to look at my own life. I may not be as fulfilled as she was in her life, but I have motivated myself to reassess my goals and make some changes. The happiness and inner peace that I have received as a result has changed my life and brought me closer to people. Some of my friends tell me I am happy in a way they have never seen me before. I would like to think that I took that message from my dying friend and inspired myself and others to have the strength and wisdom to make the changes on my own.

I discarded some old roles, and moved some of them up and down my list to fit my new life. What I realized however, was that if there were going to be any changes in my life I was the one that was going to have to make them.





Chapter 6. The Focus is on You

"Since my wife and I split 6 months ago she has been staying in an apartment block with a friend of hers about 3 blocks from our old house. I am trying really hard with her, and we maintain some contact. Some days she laughs and it seems like old times, and other times she comes over she is really hostile. I find it really hard to take, and I miss her terribly. I know I am hard to live with sometimes, but why can't she see how much I am suffering and shift back? I miss her..."

--Lucas, Ontario

Now it is time to stop focusing on your feelings and concern for your partner and take a good look at you. One of the biggest lessons you may learn from this is responsibility. You are the only one that is responsible for your happiness and if you aren't able to look after yourself you are not going to be able to achieve the self actualization that I have mentioned a couple of chapters ago.

If you are serious about getting your partner back, you need to look at things from a different perspective.

How capable are you of receiving love?

You need to consider this point carefully. In the midst of this marriage crisis with your emotions running all over the place, have you considered how easy it is for others to love you? Are you the type of person that receives affection easily? If you were in your partner's shoes, would you consider yourself to be someone that is easy to love?

When you are surrounded by the negativity and insecurity of a marriage in serious trouble, it is easy to forget how you may not be the most positive and attractive person right at the moment. In order for love to return to your relationship, it needs to be able to be given, and in turn received. If you want your partner to show their love for you, and you in turn show love for them, it needs to be in an environment where this is possible.

Before you can tackle the world, start on you.

When is the last time you smiled? This might seem like a strange reflection, but a human smile can warm hearts. Even when you think people are not looking, they are.

Most people let themselves become consumed with their problems because they lose sight of what is important in their lives. At the time of your marriage crisis there is the perception that your marriage, and holding it together, is the most important thing in your life and you will do anything to save it. Such desperation is precisely what is going to damage your ability to save your marriage. You need to stop fighting change and let it happen if it is going to. There are factors that you cannot control in a marriage crisis, and the reaction of your partner is one of them. It may sound like really strange advice, but you need to let it go.





Letting it go

The situation you are in right now has most likely been building for a while, and had escalated to the point where your marriage really is in crisis. I understand that you want to save your marriage, and that you don't want to lose your spouse, but in order to do this you have to first let them go. If they want to shift out and ignore you, you can make your opinion known, but beyond that you need to let them make their own mistakes. The more you try to hang onto them and stop them from leaving, the more you are going to drive them away. Only when you let go and learn to accept the situation you are in are you going to be able to focus on a way out.

In addition to letting go of the situation you are in and accepting that you cannot control certain things, you also need to let go emotionally. Fighting your emotions can be exhausting, and long-term it is going to inhibit you from loving your partner again. All the time you spend feeling angry, upset, and frustrated is time you haven't spent working on making yourself a better person to love, and time you haven't spent on doing small things to show your love for your partner.

Don't invest your emotional energy in things you cannot change. Instead, choose to stop fighting your circumstances and start looking for a way out.

Change of mindset

Part of this process involves a change of attitude. You are going to need to look at the type of language you use and how this affects the way you look at things. When I refer to the type of language you use, I mean the reasons you give for doing things, and the excuses you give for not doing things. Reasons, excuses, and feelings are all things that can sharply affect the way you look at issues.

It is all about attitude, and this in turn affects our behaviors. This can influence the way we react to the situation we are in. You can either blame others or outside factors for the situation you are in, or you can take control of how you get yourself out of this situation. It all starts with a good attitude.

Negative Attitude	Proactive and Positive Attitude
I can't	I choose
If only	I will try
I have to do it	I will choose an appropriate response
There is nothing I can do	Let's look at the alternatives
They made me do it	I choose to react
They make me so angry	I am in control of my feelings
I must	I prefer
I don't have the time	I choose to let time control me
That's just me	I can choose to act differently





What you need to understand is that you can't always control what others do to you, but you do have a choice when it comes to how you react. Yes, things from the outside can influence the things you do, but ultimately the reaction you have is entirely your choice.

Another example of this would be when someone makes you feel upset. Someone saying something mean to you can make you feel bad, but it is up to you how it is going to affect your day. Sometimes people don't mean the things they say, and insults are said in the heat of the moment, specifically with the intention of hurting you. You can choose to be upset by things, or you can choose to get past it and move on. It is important to acknowledge your feelings, but the level of the reaction and the actions you take are within your control. You are in control of your feelings.

Looking after you

Perhaps a valuable lesson you learn in this whole process is how important it is to look after yourself. Couples in crisis suddenly realize that when one partner withdraws, you are ultimately responsible for your own wellbeing. For some this can be a chilling and lonely experience, but for others, it is a liberating and rewarding time. Going from thinking as a couple and putting the partnership before you, to realizing that there is nobody to watch out for you other than yourself can be a challenging yet satisfying time.

So if there is nobody to watch out for you, it is important that you take control of your wellbeing.

The comment I made earlier springs to mind:

- When was the last time you smiled?
- When did you last laugh?
- When was the last time you smelt a flower?
- When was the last time you lay on your back and looked at the clouds?
- When was the last sunset or sunrise you saw?

Life goes on around you, and you become so caught up in your immediate world that you forget the small miracles of nature that go on around you.

Now is a good opportunity to spend some time focusing on you. Nobody is as aware of their wellbeing as you are, and only you can make the decisions that are going to directly affect your wellbeing and sense of fulfillment.

Timeout

Remember what I said before: You are in control of your feelings and reactions. If you cannot remember the last time you took time out to spend on yourself you need to set the procedures



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in place that are going to make it happen. You need to set aside your partner and their needs for a while and focus on what it is going to take for you to be a happy person. Even a few moments a day or a few hours a week will make a lot of difference.

A new CD, a haircut, a new top, or a walk in the park and an ice cream may be all that is necessary for you to process your emotions and put things back in perspective. I used to find a trip to the beach was very relaxing, and I would walk to the end of the pier and sit there for an hour or more, just watching the waves and feeling the breeze in my face. I didn't need to do anything in particular, but it felt good to get away from it all and let my mind go free.

You need time to let your mind wander, and you need a place to escape from the madness. Sometimes your life seems so overwhelming you forget what it takes to be happy. An emotional outlet or a private place where you can let your emotions go is a good thing to have, and as you struggle to deal with the emotions of a marriage problem, it may be something that is a real asset to you.

For many couples, a serious marital problem is foreign territory to them, and they will not know what to do or how to deal with it. The realization that you are solely responsible for your own welfare is daunting for some, but the sooner you come to terms with it and find relaxation techniques and ways to escape the negativity the better you will be to let go of the frustration and focus on positive outcomes.

Love me, love you

If you want others to love you, you must first love yourself. If you don't have room in your heart for you, you are going to be unable to give love to others, and you are going to find it difficult to accept love.

People are drawn to positive people, and confidence is perhaps one of the biggest attractions. If you want to attract your partner back, you need to be a pleasant, positive and confident person.

What did your partner fall in love with the first time they met you? What sort of person were you?

I don't want you to focus too much on becoming someone you were many years ago, but you need to think about what attracted your partner to you when you first met. What sort of things did you do for fun? What sort of pursuits did you do together? What special things did you do for each other?

After a few years of marriage it is easy for couples to stop trying. Marriage should be something you are always working on, even when things are good. If you are serious about attracting your partner back, you need to focus less on pleading and getting frustrated when your partner doesn't respond. Consider what is going to make them respond. A happy and positive person, with the qualities that they first fell in love with may be a good start.



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What qualities did you have when you first met?

- Honesty
- Strength
- Integrity
- Compassion
- Gentle nature
- Thoughtfulness
- Loving and caring
- Chivalrous
- Fun
- Spontaneous
- Carefree
- Courageous

The person your partner met and fell in love with may be a former shadow of the person you are now.

Spend the time on making you a happy person, and one that is able to both give and receive love. It is the best chance of getting your partner to respond.





Exercise 7

Look through some old photos, ranging in age from your childhood to the present day. Arrange them in order of age, so that you have a timeline of photos spanning your life.

- How do you feel when you look at your earliest photos? Were you smiling?
- What were your dreams back then, and what did you picture yourself doing?
- What did it take to make you happy in that photo?

Do the same for each photo. You can write down your thoughts if you wish.

After you have done a few photos you might begin to see a pattern developing, or a time in your life where you reached a crossroads and changed direction.

Now look at your wedding photos, or the ones where you first met. You are smiling, and you have the appearance of two people who are very much in love. Where did you change? Where did you become unhappy?

You have control over your feelings and reactions. You can be happy and in love again, but it is up to you. It is within your control.





Chapter 7. Love is a “Doing” Word

So how do you offer love and let your partner know that you love them? How are you going to get your partner back?

I am not going to offer you manipulation techniques or ways to con your partner into coming back to you. If you want your marriage to work, your partner needs to make the decision to come home. You firstly need to regain the trust of your partner before you can win them back.

It's what you don't say...

Your partner needs to know that when they see you it is not going to end in another fight. Perhaps that can be your first goal. It takes two to fight, and it is an easy cycle to get into. Your partner hurts you, so you retaliate. Then your partner retaliates to you hurting them, and the cycle goes on.

What you need to do when you are in this situation is look beyond your fight. Where is it all going to end? What is it going to take to make the fighting stop? The first thing you need to do is stop reacting to the hurt. When your partner makes a hurtful comment, you need to be the one to rise up above it all and break the cycle. If one of you don't break the cycle it is going to cost you your marriage.

So once you have stopped reacting, you need to start acting.

Your partner is more likely to start communicating with you if you create an environment where they feel comfortable seeing you and knowing it is not going to end in a fight. It is important that you have your say, and have the opportunity to express your feelings, but you need to choose the right moment.

Put your feelings to one side for a moment and focus on making the time you spend together a positive one for the both of you. If you are able to meet with your partner and do so without fighting, you are making real progress.

Giving love

So many couples come to me and tell me that they can't stop fighting with their partner, and how their partner makes them so angry. It makes me sad to see couples that once loved each other now fighting and hating each other so much.

Stop the negativity and start loving your partner. It is as simple as it sounds! Love is more than just a feeling. Love is also an action. You can begin the giving love process by starting to do nice things for your partner. Start with little things, like leaving the coffee pot on for them in the morning, or buying their favorite cereal. You may want to make them breakfast as you are making yours. If they are no longer living with you, you may want to do some baking, or leave



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them a nice phone message asking them over for coffee. Don't make any grand gestures like flowers or poems. Just start with subtle small gestures and see how your partner reacts. Often it can be the smallest thing that starts the growth of love once again.

There are all sorts of little things you can do to demonstrate your love for your partner, and you should choose one that applies to them. It may be as simple as ironing a shirt or blouse for them, or making sure the bathroom is clean. Buying your partner their favorite bagel or muffin when you meet for a chat might be a good start.

Acts of love are physical demonstrations of how you feel about your partner. A small indication can often draw a favorable response. The most important lesson is that if you are falling out of love with your partner, you need to love them again. Love is an action. It all starts with something small, but there is the chance that it may grow into something where you are able to let go of the hurt in your relationship and start healing.





Exercise 8

Make a list of things that your partner would appreciate doing, from the smallest things to the larger gestures. Then make a list of things that you would appreciate your partner doing for you. Be as specific as you can, even listing putting out a fresh towel if you feel you need to.

If you are detailed enough, you should have a detailed and lengthy list of small things you can do to make life more pleasant for your partner. You should not be seeking any recognition for these actions. The most important thing is that you are able to show your partner in a small way that you are thinking of them.

Do one nice thing every 2-3 days.





Chapter 8. So Where To From Here?

"When my wife Jan left me 3 months ago it left me totally unprepared. Apparently she hadn't been happy for a while so she thought she needed a change. I must admit I hadn't been all that happy either, but I never had any intention of leaving. I just figured we would work it out.

Since she left my entire life has been on hold, and I don't know if I can live like this much longer. I don't want to pressure my wife, as she has shifted back in and is living in the spare room. The rent at her apartment was too expensive, so I offered for her to shift back. We have a 5 year old son, Toby. He is happy to have his mom back, but I don't want to continue living like this. What is the right thing to do?"

--Randy, California

As much as you may want your old life back, you need to come to terms with the fact that this is not going to happen. The marriage that was once your dream has turned into a nightmare, and you now need to decide whether your marriage is worth salvaging or not. It is time for you and your partner to make a decision. There is no changing what has happened, so the only way from here is forward. Your focus is going to be on your future and whether that includes your partner or not.

As much as you may want to save your marriage all on your own, you will need some input from your partner at some stage. I don't teach mind control tricks or ways to manipulate your partner into your way of thinking. What you need to do with your partner, even if they don't want to try or even talk about it, is present the facts. You are both in a situation, and you both have a range of different options open to the two of you.

What you will learn here is the options that you face. You have a few options open to you and each of them has various benefits and pitfalls. You and your partner are best equipped to identify with your marriage issues, so I am not going to advocate one method over another. Your options are simply here for you to review.

Do nothing

Yes, this is an option. If you are both in a bad situation, you could continue to live together and try your best to reduce your arguments. This is an option explored by many couples, especially those who have children, and wish to preserve the appearance of a functional family unit. The arrangement may not necessarily be a happy marriage, but it allows both parents to be there for their children.

You may or may not choose to remain in the same bed, and for many couples in crisis, it is necessary, and in many cases wise, for both partners to have separate rooms, at least initially as a temporary fix. It may seem like a strange fix to your problem, but for many couples it is





still easier to live in an unsatisfying marriage than face the expense, frustration and finality of divorce

Trial separation

This is something that is increasingly popular amongst couples, as it allows both parties the time and space to put the issue in perspective without giving up on the marriage straight away. There are a lot of issues surrounding affairs, and the decision to divorce should not be taken lightly. In order for a trial separation to work effectively and not end up as a pre divorce arrangement, it is important that the both of you sit down and work out a plan for how this trial separation is going to work. It has the potential to be a highly effective mediation tool if it is used correctly. However there are a set of guidelines that you should follow if this option is going to work for you.

You need to establish how long the trial separation will go for, which of you has to shift out, how to arrange your finances, particularly your credit cards and bank accounts. You will also need to establish clear guidelines regarding whether or not you choose to date other people in that time. The most important aspect of your trial separation is that you maintain a level of regular contact with your partner. This should be regular phone contact every few days, and perhaps a meeting once a week where you can have a coffee together and discuss any thoughts and issues that you may feel you have.

This is assuming that your partner is receptive to the idea of maintaining regular contact. If they are not, you need to tell them that this is not acceptable. If you are going to make your trial separation work, you need to set clear guidelines and stick to them. Do not let your partner shift out without a clear indication from them that they are prepared to take this seriously. If they are unable to make any commitment to you in regard to setting clear guidelines, then you need to stand your ground and tell them that without rules your marriage is over.

The key to an effective trial separation is that you are both clear on what is expected of each of you. At this moment you are still married, and you both need to consider that. If your partner does not want the restrictions of a trial separation, you need to make your feelings clear that this is not acceptable.

A trial separation is recognition of the fact that there is a possibility that your marriage may fail. Things are bad, and sometimes it takes the thought of a partner leaving the marital home to force the other partner to look at saving the relationship. A temporary removal can also put an end to the day to day arguments and help both of you to stop taking each other for granted. A trial separation is a taste of being alone, and for some couples it is a sobering experience that confirms the strong feelings they have for their partner and their willingness to keep them in your life.





Counseling

Counseling is a good way to inject some new ideas into your marriage crisis, and help you put your problems in perspective. Emotions, and the expression of these, aren't always clear and it's not uncommon for couples to struggle with their emotions and find it difficult to express their emotions and thoughts clearly and appropriately.

Even if your partner is unwilling to go to counseling, there is no reason why you cannot attend counseling and get some help to deal with your situation. I need to make an important point here. There is nothing to be ashamed of in going to counseling. In no way does it indicate that you are not coping, or that you are falling apart, and it in no way apportions blame. Many couples and individuals without serious problems go to counseling on a regular basis. Perhaps you might like to think of it as life coaching.

You can't control your partner's decision to go, but you can choose how to deal with the trauma of your marriage crisis yourself, and develop healthy and effective ways to process the emotions that you feel. In doing this you will be able to let go of the hurt and focus on outcomes and ways to start loving your partner again.

You can't make your partner love you again. But if you work on your love for them, it will make it easier for them to respond to this love and rebuild your trust in each other.

Divorce

Some couples have a lot of significant problems, and for many the obstacles may prove too much to bear. The decision to battle to save your marriage comes at too high an emotional cost for many couples, and for those it is often better if they finish the suffering and divorce. It is sad that problems can escalate to this level, and perhaps if the problems had been dealt with effectively at the time of their inception, it may not have come to this.

It is never an easy decision to make, and it is not one that should be reached without a lot of thought and contemplation. Even with children, sometimes parents that live apart are better parents than when they lived together.





Exercise 9. Relaxation exercise

Find a safe and comfortable spot. Sit in a comfortable position or lie down. I want you to find a quiet spot which is warm and comfortable. Relax and read this short script. You should take about 30 to 45 minutes for this exercise.

Take a deep and lingering breath, allowing your eyes to close as you hold the breath, then exhale all those tensions and worries away... Feel them all draining out of your body as you breathe out... You will feel more and more relaxed as you feel the tension leave your legs, your arms... your neck, your eyes... and your mind.

Take several more breaths, letting the tension flow from your body and mind.

Concentrate on your breathing... in and out. Feel the tension and worry flowing away. Take a moment to enjoy the moment and notice how all the different parts of your body feel. Let the tension go and lay still. Feel the blood move around all the different parts of your body.

Notice how relaxed you're feeling right now and how good it feels to have this time to yourself.

With every breath you exhale you are getting deeper and deeper in your state of relaxation. Focus on the toes on your feet and let the muscles in them relax... Let them go all heavy and loose.

Let the feeling flow up your body and over your ankles, letting all of your muscles lose all of their tension... They are going to feel very heavy... but the feeling will be so good.

Take a moment to savor the feeling that is coming over you and putting your whole self at peace.

Let the feeling come up your calves and thighs until the whole of your body from the hips down feels supremely relaxed...

Your eyes are closed and you are experiencing the feeling of total relaxation over your body. As you take long, deep breaths you let the feeling creep up your chest and across your shoulders.

Let the feeling flow down your arms and into the ends of your fingers... you are squeezing every bit of tension and feeling out of your muscles. It feels as though you are immersing yourself in a warm and soothing bath.

The warm and easy feeling of relaxation moves up your body and over your head, easing the tension out of your neck. Your head feels heavy as the tension leaves your neck and you go all limp... You are so relaxed and carefree you almost feel a little giddy.



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The muscles in your neck and shoulders are relaxed and loose. You don't have a care in the world.

Let the muscles in your face all go slack. Let all the muscles relax around your mouth... and eyes... and forehead. Your whole body is immersed in a total relaxed state. You are floating on peace and tranquility and you are deeper in rest than you could have ever imagined. Let this warm and numbing feeling take over your whole body...

Your limbs will feel heavy and relaxed. You are enjoying this moment... as you breathe yourself into a deeper, more relaxing state than you could have imagined.

It feels as though you are floating on a cloud... It feels wonderful. Your entire body is free from worry and strain and you feel as though you are floating.

You feel as if you don't have a care in the world. The only thing you should be focusing on is the total feeling of calm and peace that you are feeling right at this moment. The calm and tranquility is your total existence, and you feel the blood, and calm pulsing through your body. Let it flow from your chest, down your arms and legs and into your hands and toes. The feeling goes around, and around, and around.

Let the good feeling flow over you and lay still. Pay close attention to the feeling in your body and how good this feels. Take the rest of the time to listen to the music in the background and relax. If you feel tired, let yourself sleep.

You will awake feeling calm and refreshed.





Chapter 9. Common Issues

As part of the membership benefits that SaveMyMarriageToday.com offers, members consult with the team here at SaveMyMarriageToday! to get personalized advice for their marriage issues.

I really love immersing myself in helping people, as it keeps me involved with dealing with real people and real problems. In doing this, I see a few common issues arising from time to time. I have included a few of these submissions to give you an idea of the sorts of problems people are facing out there. I have changed the names and the places mentioned in these submissions to protect the identities of the people involved.

Some of my replies are straight to the point, and you may or may not agree with my approach. The justification I give for my approach to these problems is that by the time your marriage has got to this level of crisis, you need no-nonsense advice, and in some cases

My intention in giving these to you is to illustrate that you are not alone in your crisis. As well as that you may be able to identify some common themes recurring in these submissions.

Every couple has a unique perspective and reaction to issues in marriage, but in reading these and my replies, you may identify some parallels with your own marriage crisis and get some benefit from the advice I give to these couples.

I have changed the names and a few details in these submissions to preserve the anonymity of these couples in crisis.





Submission I

Hi Andrew,

I have tried everything and am at a loss as to how to progress. Here is the scenario. The background is a very difficult past year for me in which my Dad passed away from cancer. I spent a whole year caring for him and trying to help him get better to no avail. During this time I did not feel I received the care I needed from my husband, I felt I was constantly giving out all of the time, but getting nothing back. To do something for me I took a trip to Jamaica with an old school friend. I knew my husband and I were on shaky ground but I missed him and I hoped we could get through all of our problems. However on the trip I met someone who I got on with instantly. He literally saved my life when I was ill and we bonded in a big way – I guess for the reason that he seemed to give me the care I felt I was lacking.

At the same time I was dreading going home. My father's death was imminent and my husband and I still had our problems. I literally wanted to escape, I wanted my current life to be not happening, mainly because I couldn't face losing my Dad, and this alternative guy represented a door to another world. My dad died a week after I got back home, and the alternative guy was the only one that seemed to be able to keep me afloat so to speak. I guess he was a distraction from the pain of losing my Dad. He would also talk to me and listen to me in a way I hadn't experienced with my husband for a long time. A cliché maybe, but true nonetheless. As the weeks drew on it became clear to me that I still really loved my husband, more than I cared for the other person, and the relationship ended, by which time my husband knew all about it. He moved into the spare room and refused to even talk to me about it.

It is 6 months now since we separated and we are still sleeping in separate rooms in the same house, but we are now back to being best friends. With the pressure of our marriage gone, we have been able to live very harmoniously together, getting on better than we have in a long time. We no longer bicker and I felt that with time passing, our relationship was healing. I hoped we would get back together with this healing of time. But I discovered he was interested in (not yet dating) another person. This made me jump into action and relay to him everything I had been feeling. He agreed we were getting on really well, but as friends he said, not as a relationship. He agreed he still cares about me and that he wants to still live in the same house as me. He said he didn't know if we could go back to a proper marriage.

I have obviously let him know how devastated I am by my actions and the hurt I have caused him. I have worked really hard on being a good person, looking after him, and building bridges by spending time together, joint outings and projects that I thought would bring us closer. Though that has worked in a minor way, the emotional separation is still very much there and I am at a loss as to how to pursue this. Sometimes it seems he wants my attention and I see some



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progress then he withdraws again. It's like a constant see-saw. I can see us living eternally as housemates, which I have made clear to him. I am not very happy with, but I feel he is burying his head in the sand. I need a new angle, and I can't seem to find it. I know my actions must have hurt him incredibly but I really believe we can have a good marriage if we want to.

Any suggestions?

Many thanks for your time and assistance.

Jeanette

My Response:

Hi Jeanette, thanks for your email.

Your submission gave me plenty to examine and think about. I can see some significant issues coming from your email that you may not have previously considered.

The first is that it seems as though neither of you has confronted or talked about the real issue. Why was your husband not there when you needed him emotionally while you were caring for your father? I can understand the emotions you went through as you were nursing your father, and it is natural for you to feel a sense of betrayal that your partner was not there to support you emotionally in your time of need. I really feel that this is where the problems started, and if you are serious about dealing with your problems as a couple you need to go back to the beginning and look at his reasons for withdrawing at that time when you so obviously needed his support. Part of the healing process is acknowledging the feelings you had with your partner, exploring the reasons for how and why that situation happened, and then using that as a learning process.

You mention you had an affair of sorts with a man in Jamaica. Was this a physical affair or an emotional one? I understand the feelings you had at the time and how his concern for you filled the emotional need that your partner was unable to provide at the time. This is a common factor in affairs, and is indicative of how important it is to fulfill the emotional needs of your partner. At the same time however, your husband must feel very hurt at discovering the affair, and you need to allow him to open up with his feelings of betrayal. Your husband has withdrawn again, in a different way to how he did when you needed him emotionally when your father was ill, but it is a withdrawal again.

This is perhaps the crux of your marital problem. Your husband's withdrawal from you emotionally signifies that he has some significant issues to deal with. At this stage I would recommend that he receive some individual counseling. Perhaps you could suggest you both go to counseling as individuals, and following this you may be able to have some joint sessions where you are able to discuss some of your mutual feelings of betrayal, yours at your husband's continued emotional withdrawal at what is a very difficult time in your life, and your husband's feelings of betrayal at your relationship with another man. Suggesting you both go to individual removes the implication that only one of you has a problem.





Another point you raise is your current situation with your husband. Is there any physical interaction at all now? If you want to rebuild your intimacy if you are going to move from housemates back to a married couple. It can start with casual touching on the arm, tickling, caressing and if appropriate, hugging. Your husband has his defenses up, and part of this is his fear of getting hurt again.

I'm wondering what motivated your husband to withdraw and to have such high emotional barriers. This could be a sign of depression. Take a look at page 82 in *Save My Marriage Today* to familiarize yourself with this. This is not the whole problem, but it may be a small part of the overall motivation that caused him to withdraw.

Regarding your husband's interest in another person, you need to be firm. If he is going to have an affair you need to set down some clear guidelines. You need to tell him that if that is what he wants to do, that one of you needs to leave. Every action has consequences, and if he wants to have an affair you need to make it quite clear that you will not put up with this. Either you leave or kick him out. This is a huge problem for your marriage, and at no stage can you let him think that it is okay to do this. If he still wants to have an affair, then there is little you can do to influence this. If he wants to sleep with other people then your marriage is over, whether you like it or not.

Looking through the book, I can identify areas in chapters 7, 12, 14, and 15 that will be of benefit to you. The exercises are there for you to do alone or if you are able to, with your partner.

The issue here is his withdrawal. You need to explore his reasons for withdrawal, either in individual counseling or later as a couple.

Good luck.

Kind regards,

Andrew





Submission 2

Hi,

I'm well aware of all the techniques in communication towards repairing marriage but it all feels too late for me now..... We have been through a lot of ups and downs and perpetual hurt and insecurity created by my husband's habit of cutting and physically running whenever we had a problem which eventually ended in him seeking comfort in a series of emotional affairs and one night stands.

Our dynamic has for 8 years been him creating this environment of disconnected, reckless insecurity and me always trying to fix it and feeling resentful and hard done by, and paranoid blaming and trying to create some control. We tried therapy but that focused on the problems and negative feelings and ended up with Ian leaving our marriage. Then we had a year of mixed messages that was 2 years ago of him not being able to decide whether he was in or out until I eventually left with our 2 boys then 6 and 8 home to peace for a summer in Australia. I became involved with a mutual friend of ours and had a brief passionate affair at that point I felt it was definitely over as I had for the first time lost my feelings for him. But that relationship ended. That brings me to this last year I returned to Portland for the boys education and planned to be apart from Ian but his huge care and energy to win me back finally had effect and we moved back in.

We were so scarred by therapy and the emotional drain these last years we just decided to "live" and see if we could get past the hurt and destruction naturally. But a lot had died and neither of us had the idea or drive to know what to do about it. We got caught up in our work and practicalities just ended up in us drifting apart.

Ian travels and is away a lot with his job and we realize this is a problem, but circumstances have made this situation hard to change. It took me a year to get over my romance and although I tried it was obvious I wasn't fully in the marriage emotionally until very recently Ian's continued efforts to unconditionally give me sexual pleasure began to warm me up.

This last year took its toll and hurt him, and I think my selfish absorption of thinking I had the right to be indulged finally wore him down and he now has just left the marriage saying enough pain has been had, and life is too short and we need to rebuild our lives separately and that we have never been in sync. There seems too much to even begin to unravel, I would agree, but for the deep love and care we have ironically built up and we both acknowledge painfully exists.

My feeling is if we had only had help at the right time we might have been able to salvage it and beware of where it was going. Only now in my misery do I see where I went wrong!



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I have read all the self help ads on the Internet and they and yours gave me hope there might have been another way or still might be. Unfortunately I feel I can only move this direction alone as he has gained strength in his conviction and I can't see him opening up to the possibility.

Can you advise me? I'm sorry this is long I couldn't think of a shorter way of explaining such a tangled mess.

Thanks for your help.

Barbara

My Response:

Hi Barbara,

Thanks for your email.

You must be a very strong person and a dynamic woman to have endured the peaks and pitfalls of a turbulent marriage. You have two beautiful children together, and above all the welfare and emotional wellbeing of your children should be paramount. Your boys, I'm assuming are 8 and 10 now, and are still in need of a combined and unified parental influence, whether that means that you and your husband live in the same house or in separate homes. You are to be commended on your motivation to save your marriage, no matter how hopeless the odds may be.

You were right when you described your marriage as a tangled mess. Your marriage has followed a very destructive pattern the last few years from what I can see, starting from when your husband felt motivated to run from his problems and communication with you and into the arms of another woman. The first problem is that you imply that Ian left because of the therapy. In order to fix a problem, you first need to acknowledge that a problem exists and deal with the feelings that are associated with this. This is a difficult process, but if you are looking for a successful resolution you need to finish this process. It sounds like that is where a lot of the problems started to escalate. You and Ian never allowed closure to that period of your life, and as a result you dragged on, bringing your unresolved issues with you.

You speak about being scarred by therapy and emotional drain. I think your inability as a couple to find a resolution and the fact that you could not make therapy work is the cause of the scarring rather than the therapy itself. When things are left to themselves they generally go from bad to worse. If you ignore the problem or think you can get past it "naturally" it will not go away. In fact, the unresolved issue is more likely to fester.

You got back into a relationship with him while still trying to get over your romance. I really wonder why you did that.



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You then spoke of your selfish absorption and of thinking you had the right to be indulged. I can accept that you have deep love and care for each other. You both just have an appalling way of showing it. When you are both together you seem hell bent on hurting each other until you consider the thought of breaking up again. You have reached love in your relationship, but at different times. He hurt you first while you loved him, then you split up, then you left him and had an affair and he realized he loved you. By that stage you were still not over your romance and were being self absorbed. I wonder if part of that was revenge for the way he made you feel when he had his affair. At times you have both made it very hard to be loved.

The one recurring theme through your email I can identify is your lack of communication with each other and your inability to solve any of your issues. I don't mean the day to day fighting, but the underlying issues and factors that lead to this breakdown in communication and intimacy. This man loved you and you were punishing him. Now he is worn out and is ready to leave. At this stage you are ready to win him back. In all honesty I think you may have left it too late. You have both done a lot to hurt each other, and that can take a real toll. I can imagine you must be left feeling exhausted too.

I still think there is a lot this book can teach you, however. You need to learn how to let go of all your past hurt and anger and learn how to be a happy and complete person again. You need to become the happy individual that Ian first met, the one that he first fell in love with. You are relying on him to provide you with your happiness. I think you are capable of having that and finding it yourself. If you are happy within yourself, you are ready for someone to love you. You haven't been that person for a very long time.

Winning him back? I think you have a lot of work to do before that is going to happen. He is the father of your children, and in that respect he is never going to be out of your life. Put him to one side. There is time to work on him later. But you need to work on becoming a nice person to be with, and you need to work on being happy as a single person. You are responsible for your happiness. You cannot expect someone else to provide the happiness for you. You need to focus solely on you and what you need to do to put the 18 years of angst and fighting behind you. Your therapy needs to be all about you and what you need to do to rebuild your own personality. I really think some of the exercises in this book will make you more self aware of your thoughts and actions. You don't need a partner to be able to do a lot of these exercises.

You may find at the end of this process that you don't want him back. But if you do, you will be better equipped to calmly and rationally work towards a successful resolution.

Kind regards,

Andrew





Submission 3

Hi, My husband & I had been married almost 2 years when he announced to me that he had been having an affair. The exact duration of this affair to that point I don't know - approx 3 ½ months. As I am sure many women in this situation would claim it was completely out of character, please believe me when I truly say in this case it was.

There had been this woman at work that had been showing him more attention than 'normal', calling & texting him for lifts to and from work. When I expressed my thoughts on this he said I was just being paranoid and that he'd never do anything to cheat on me or hurt me (this was 3 months before I gather the affair approx started). I let it go - after all, I trusted him.

In the years we have been together as a couple we have rarely argued, that is to say that we had discussion on things, but if we had differences of opinion that was exactly what we would put the down to: differences of opinion - but on the whole we agreed anyway.

Shortly before the time I expressed my concerns about the unhealthy interest this woman at work was showing, I experienced a suspected miscarriage. We had not planned to have a child at that time so it came as quite a surprise. Then shortly after I lost my job and took my employer to an industrial tribunal as they had dismissed me for having information of fraud they were committing, which I refused to carry out.

All in all it was an extremely harassing time for myself and anyone close to me. Our sex life had always been healthy up to this point, but took a severe dive. I put this down to the hormones & stress.

My husband left, initially without explanation; just a note saying things hadn't been right for a couple months, as I was aware (I had put this down to the pressures of the tribunal, for which I had taken a settlement out of court in my favor only a few days before, in order to release the pressure off of our marriage). He left approx 70% of his belongings behind too. When I called him, finding the letter on my return from work, I asked what this was all about. He was in floods of tears saying he was sorry for what he had done. I asked if we could meet so I could find out what this was all about. He told me where he was and I went to him. He explained that he had started seeing this other woman and that he had developed feelings for her.

I asked what about the feelings for me and our commitment to marriage - I can't in all honesty remember his reply, only that I never seemed to be happy anymore and he assumed it was him that made me unhappy, and that he didn't feel I loved him anymore. I explained that it wasn't any of that, just that there had been a lot of pressure and stress and that I still loved him as much as ever. This reduced him even further to tears, as it was then that he admitted that it



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had been more than "just seeing" this other woman, but that they had been having an affair.

Angry and upset I tried to stay calm and expressed that under the circumstances of what we had been facing: a suspected miscarriage & the tribunal, as much as I thought he was better than that; I could understand why he would be lead to do such a thing. I also explained to him how I almost strayed in the early phase of our relationship, when his parents split & we were under excessive pressures then - that I had found a male friend to talk to, that he wanted more, but fortunately I had stopped things before they progressed to a full blown affair.

He then told me that he was in love with this other woman. I expressed that I believed he may think that, but that under the circumstances he may not actually know what his feelings were at all at the time. Just that she had filled a void I had neglected. He moved back home for 3 days, but left again. All the time she was still at work and contacting him. I asked that he cut ties with her if he wanted our marriage to work. I called her and told her this and then deleted her number from his phone. The next day her number was back there as she'd called him "to see how he was"!

I tried to express to him, that surely if it was what he wanted & I was willing to "give it a go", then that was all that mattered. He just kept saying he couldn't come back after what he had done. That was a year ago.

We have had 3 brief contacts since. I don't believe a divorce is what he really wants - I think it's her pushing. He changed his mobile number a couple of times, so I don't have this. He was living at his brothers flat - & his brother has been of no help at all; in fact has encouraged the affair. The only way to contact him that I have is his works email address & for obvious reasons don't really want to use that. In all of this, the one thing that stays with me; is the love I still have for this man, the forgiveness I give him and that I really believe we are meant to be together. As hard as I know it would be to come back from this - I want us to save our marriage.

Yes, I've tried the getting on with my life as it is, that after-all is all I can do. He doesn't have the opportunity to 'get jealous' though, as I've said we aren't in touch for him to know. I gather he's not happy in the relationship he's in, although I haven't heard this from him himself, but even if we were talking; would he admit it? It seems he thinks he has to punish himself for what he has done.

All I want us to do is move on from this together & make a better relationship. Why should we both suffer when we could be happy again? I don't think I've missed any crucial details out, but if there is anything you'd like to ask that I hadn't explained, please let me know. Thanks again for agreeing to help - It really is much appreciated.

Mandy





My Response:

Dear Mandy,

You're in a really difficult situation. First of all, congratulations for thinking so clearly and honestly about what led to your current situation. You've shown great maturity in the way you've been open and communicative with your husband, the way you tried to rebuild your relationship, and your insistence that he sever all interaction with the other woman.

Second, I hope that you have a strong support network of family and friends around you. A strong support network is essential for anyone dealing with a partner's infidelity, because you need to express and work through your own feelings of grief and pain.

You assessed correctly that the period of stress created fertile ground for an affair. The number of affairs that start at the workplace are startling, because both individuals are usually well-known to each other well before thoughts of an affair surface. When you were preoccupied with your legal challenges, your husband was not receiving emotional support from you. As a result, the advances from the other woman filled the temporary vacuum. She may have seen your marital difficulties as the perfect opportunity and pushed your husband beyond where he'd normally go.

However, it was YOUR husband who agreed to the affair. There is NO excuse for cheating. It was not "that woman's fault"—he bears 50% of the responsibility. NOTHING you did "caused" your husband to have an affair. ALL relationships have stressful periods that are hard on both parties. It is what happens during those stressful times that proves the mettle of the relationship.

What surprised me was how soon he left you after the affair started. I assume it was around three months? When things aren't right for a few months, especially when a crisis situation like your employment situation is occurring, most spouses realize that their partner's feelings of stress are not due to the relationship but rather to the circumstances, and that things will eventually return to normal. Your husband did not. He told you rather lamely that he thought your feelings of unhappiness were due to him. This leads me to believe that your husband was trying to place responsibility to the affair on you (you were unhappy) rather than accepting complete responsibility for his actions and understanding why he agreed to the affair.

Affairs are like addictions. Your husband is addicted to the other woman, and he seems to have little willpower to resist. This is common in affairs. If your husband tries to leave her, he will experience withdrawal symptoms such as depression. Therefore, for him, it is easier to stay with her and feed the addiction than go through a painful withdrawal followed by the difficult process of rebuilding a marriage.

If there is any hope for you and your husband, he must agree to never see the other woman again. Period. That means quitting his job, changing his cell phone number, and preferably moving away to another city or part of the country to completely eliminate any possibility of running into her or contacting her. You know how serious it is to remove temptation from a recovering alcoholic: it will be the same for your husband.



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However, your husband HAS to make the decision for himself. You can't hasten that process. The hardest thing for you will be to give up all contact with him, continue with your own life, surround yourself with loving family and friends, and let him work it through. Some infidelity counselors even suggest that you move to a new city and tell him lovingly but firmly that you love him and hope that someday he can free himself from the addiction of his affair, but that if he wants to see you again he has to quit his job, move to be with you, cease all contact with her, and start over completely.

I must be honest with you: your husband may not have the strength to give up his addiction. Pray for him, seek the advice of your pastor or someone you respect, and best of luck to you.

Sincerely,

Andrew





Submission 4

Good Evening,

Well here it goes all my problems. I hope you have a minute or two. My husband left me 2 months ago, moved in with his mom. He said that he was not happy with our lifestyle. Not sure what he meant. Then he came home and then left a week later. He came over about twice a week wanting to spend time with me and stay the night and kept telling me that he wants this marriage to work if it can.

I tried to not show my anger but sometimes I slipped. I don't find myself angry as much just lonely and confused. And very disappointed in him and the way he treats me. He treats me like I have destroyed his life after 10 years I feel like I should be treated better than a total stranger. He is very cold to me like I don't matter. That has been very hard to deal with.

It really got worse about 2 weeks ago when we got into a big fight and I was really mean to him. I received flowers from a coworker and he read the card that said you are heavily on my mind and I am here for you. Just a friend. My husband complained and was very upset about it to his family members. He asked me why are they in just a intimate spot "my bedroom" My response was that they are pretty. I said I threw them away since they made you so mad. He said with a big smile I couldn't care less and I am not mad in fact it is about time you found someone else. That hurt. But the strange thing is he was stopping by every night to check on us for a few minutes until I reassured him that I did not have another boyfriend.

Since then he has not made contact for a few days. I don't understand why he wanted to work on this marriage and then after one fight he changed his mind and told me he was done. He tells family members that if April will change then I might think about going home. Honestly I have been depressed and to myself for the last couple of years. I know it was hard for him to deal with and I have shared that with him. He does not seem to care he just does not want to deal with it any longer. My fear is that one day he will realize that he is making a big mistake and it will be too late. His mother has kicked him out of her house because he parties all the time and she does not think it is right for a man almost 30 living with mom so he can hang out with friends.

His personality has changed completely and he is very selfish and disrespectful to others. I can't help but wonder if he wants to come home but he thinks he is so macho and that he is the alpha male. Yes he thinks it. That he would not lower himself and ask to come home. He acts completely happy like life is great around me but his mom says at home he is distant and has a lot of anxiety and he is having a hard time paying his bills plus finding a new place to live. She said he is very withdrawn and does not talk hardly at all. Can you help me with what to



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do about this? I am trying to act like I am okay and that life is good but it has been hard.

Thank you

Dawn

My Response:

Dear Dawn,

Thank you so much for your letter. I'm glad that you feel a commitment to saving your marriage and want to work on improving your relationship with your husband.

I want to address a few of the things you said in your letter. You said that your husband left you, saying that he wasn't happy with your lifestyle, and you said that you were "not sure what he meant." You need to know exactly what he meant. You may not want to know, and it may be very painful to hear the criticisms he has of your relationship, but you **HAVE** to know if you are going to save your marriage.

To do this will be hard. You need to let him express how he feels without resentment, bitterness, or **EVEN** defending yourself. That's right—you can't say anything in your own defense. Why? You and your husband have not been communicating clearly about your problems, and you **MUST** open communication if your marriage is to succeed. You both have to feel comfortable talking to one another without being mean, playing mind games, or saying things designed to hurt the other person. This is going to take a **LOT** of work, but it's **ESSENTIAL** if your marriage is going to become healthy again.

The way to do this is by calling him and telling him that you want to know exactly what he feels is wrong with your marriage. If he's sarcastic, don't rise to the bait. Tell him that you want to meet at a safe third place, like a restaurant or a coffee shop, that's public yet has a place for two people to talk intimately. You want to be in a public place where you can't raise your voices or make a scene. When he comes in, tell him that you really want to know what went wrong with your relationship, because you don't want to make those mistakes again. Listen to everything he has to say, even if you know it's not true. Afterwards, thank him and tell him that you need to go home and think about everything he's said. Don't give into the temptation to stay longer, ask him to come back home, make a comment that you'll regret, or allow him to come back with you.

In the next few days after the conversation, don't try to contact him, although he may try to contact you. Instead, spend some time thinking about what he said and what you can do so that he doesn't feel that way. Again, it doesn't matter whether what he said was true or not. What matters is that he felt the way he did.

Finally, spend some time looking at Chapters 4 ("Combating Conflicts") and 5 ("Banking in Your Relationship") of *Save My Marriage Today*. You and your husband both have feelings of resentment and bitterness of one another. If you don't act **NOW** to turn those feelings around,



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your marriage may not recover. You may not realize how your feelings of disappointment in your husband affect your behavior towards him. What man would want to stay around a woman who feels disappointed in him? Being mean to your husband **POISONS** your relationship. It may feel like the easiest course of action, especially when he is mean to you, but remember that acts of **LOVE** and **INTIMACY** build a relationship while resentment and anger poisons it.

YOU must be the one to act. Your husband's pride is at stake. Something has to change in your relationship, and this change in your husband is the only way he knows how to deal with it. He is acting withdrawn and quiet because he no longer has any emotional support, and your behavior towards him, caused by your feelings of resentment and hurt, has pushed him away even further. It may hurt, but tell him how much you need him in your life. Don't "act like everything's fine" and pretend that you're indifferent to him—that's exactly why he's acting coldly towards you! He wants to pretend that this situation doesn't hurt him.

I strongly suggest that you offer to seek individual counseling for your marriage problems. If your husband sees how willing you are to change and improve your marriage, he'll feel like you've finally listened to him. Counseling will teach you strategies to avoid having big fights or doing or saying things that hurt one another.

I wish you the best of luck.

Andrew





Submission 5

Hi Andrew,

I have downloaded your book, but have some questions as it is not covered by your book. I decided to leave 2 years ago trial separation, due to financial problems, but I was quite happy visiting a few times a week...she told me last year before our vacation that she wanted an answer one way or the other at the end. Prior to our holiday I said to her that I was unsure how I felt for her. On our return I said I was not ready to come home but didn't want a divorce. That was November of last year...When Xmas arrived I moved in for Christmas as always and I decided to tell her I wanted back as I knew I wanted her, then the bomb shell hit ..now she doesn't know how she felt. I went through hell for the next 4 months as she said she was trying but in fact she was killing me as she is very friendly with another male and there was all kinds of suspicious behavior and I even got a text from her brother and her strange friend to say she was having affair...It was anonymous but I found out...and all was denied by my wife and her male friend. She has now said she will give us ago but I only stay on weekends and she goes out on a few of them. It is affecting everything in my life and I have lost 16lbs...She says we need a new home away from Dallas as there are too many bad memories at our house. I have 3 children with her (2, 4 and 7) she is 32 and I am 40. We have a few financial problems that I am trying to sort out. Really need your input to see if this book will help get my life back. I really feel like I need someone to talk to.

Thanks

George

My Response:

Hi there George, thanks for your email.

Your marriage situation sounds quite complicated from the way you have described it, but I can identify several points in your email that need working on. I will outline them:

You left your wife 2 years ago and decided to have a trial separation. In that time you maintained a level of contact, and before your vacation last year you were given an ultimatum of sorts by your wife... "she wanted a answer one way or the other at the end" At the end of this holiday you were still unable to provide her with an answer. That is a long time to leave your wife hanging while you sort out your own thoughts.



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Have you considered how that must have made her feel? You took 18 months to decide whether you wanted to be with her. It is not all that surprising that after that she has decided to move on.

An important point to make here is that if you and your wife do not live together, there is no such thing as cheating. A trial separation is not a marriage. If she has decided to start seeing someone else then she is not cheating. When you shifted out you gave up that right.

It is important that you understand this. Your wife has emotional needs that need to be fulfilled, and you have not been that person for some time. When you were given an ultimatum in August you should have listened to what you were being told. It sounds as though she wants closure to that part of her life, and that means that at that time she needed a definite answer if you were in or out of her life.

Communication seems to be a huge problem in your relationship. You were unable to communicate your reasons for not wanting to shift back in. You took far too long to reach a decision, and the consequence is that your wife is ready to move on, with or without you. By the time you had made up your mind, your wife had already moved on.

So do you want to catch her cheating and apportion blame to her? Or do you want to save your marriage?

Her indication that she wants to move away from Dallas indicates that she wants to start afresh with you. That is a really good sign. But if you are serious about saving your marriage you need to let the accusations of an affair go. She did not have an affair because you were no longer together.

It sounds as though she wants to try again with you, and a new start may be a good thing for the both of you. You have 3 children together, which is a good reason to want to try.

It sounds as though she has a lot of residual anger still directed at you, and that is something she needs to work on. This can be quite common when she has been made to feel unloved at any time. This must be very difficult for you, and hard to sit and take.

When she tells you that she wants this to work you need to be honest with her about how you feel. You mention that she sounds so happy with her friends and you wonder why it can't be like that with you. Talk to her about that. When she says she wants this to work you need to tell her that you want to go to couples counseling. I really feel you need to work on communication techniques between the two of you and perhaps in time the intimacy will come.

Have a really close look at the Save My Marriage Today book. You can look at this book as a couple. It sounds as though despite everything you are still committed to each other, and for that you need to be congratulated. The techniques and exercises can be either done separately or as a couple.

I'm worried about you too. You say you have nobody to talk to. You need an outlet so that you can process and acknowledge the many feelings you are having. I know it may not be the



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blokey thing to do, but it is vital that you have someone to talk to. Maybe a close friend, male or female, family member, pastor, or if you do not feel comfortable with them, a counselor. It is vital both for your mental and physical health that you have someone you can share feelings with.

Kind regards,

Andrew

