

A decorative graphic featuring a large, stylized red heart shape that forms a frame. Inside the frame, the words "meet your sweet" are written in a bold, sans-serif font. To the left of the frame, there are two overlapping hearts, one white with a red outline and one solid red. The background is white with a red gradient on the left side.

meet
your
sweet

Special Report

Re-establishing Commitment:

*Practical Steps to Reconnect
and Rebuild
Your Marriage*





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SPECIAL REPORT:**Re-establishing Commitment:
Practical Steps to Reconnect and Rebuild Love in Your Marriage**

No one likes it when they fight with their spouse.

Being married is supposed to be about loving one another. It's not supposed to be about yelling at one another!

But no one makes it through years of marriage without having a fight.

Nor should they.

Studies show that couples who *don't fight* are no more likely to make it than couples who *do fight*. (In fact, they're *less* likely to have a strong union.) What matters more than *how often* you fight is *HOW* you fight.

If you fight dirty, bring up baggage from the past, or refuse to let the argument go until you've won it, then your marriage isn't going to be much fun.

If, on the other hand, you TALK about how you fight ... and you make sure that you fight in a way that addresses the *problem*, not the *person* ... you will find that your fights accomplish a lot more with a lot less pain.

If you're newly married, you should feel lucky when you start fighting. Don't laugh – it's true! Your first big conflict in a marriage is a *test*. Navigate it successfully, and your marriage is going to grow even stronger. React to it with a tantrum, and your marriage bond will weaken.

Conflicts can start over the most random things. Life events that should bring us joy often bring arguments instead. Having your first child will be a challenging test of your marriage, as sleepless nights and stress shorten tempers. Buying your first home together or starting a new job can also cause conflicts. Tragedies like the death of a loved one or redundancy can push you apart rather than bring you closer together.

Sometimes, though, the change in the relationship isn't as easily identifiable. It's a creeping feeling of discontent, a sense that you are slowly drifting apart. It can start with feeling tired and not really wanting to communicate. You may notice that you no longer touch, kiss, hug, or have sex as often as you used to, but you shrug it off, telling yourself that it's

just a normal part of getting older and settling into the marriage. You may notice that you no longer spend as much time together as a couple, and in some ways it seems like you're living separate lives.

You try to pinpoint when you first started to feel things were drifting apart, but you can't. Your inability to do so disturbs you. If you could only pin your problems down to a moment in time or a specific *cause*, you think, at least you would know what went wrong and how to fix it.

If you're nodding your head here, then I have wonderful news for you.

What you're going through is *normal*. All marriages face this at some point. In my book, *From First Dates to Soul Mates*, I explain the six stages that every relationship must go through in order to reach the highest level of commitment. Your relationship is simply hitting one of those stages.

But if you don't understand this – if you think that your marital distress is caused by incompatibility or being the wrong partners for one another – then you may react in a way that rushes your marriage to the divorce court.

Think before you react emotionally. Ask yourself if what you're expecting from your marriage is reasonable, and take the time for some self-reflection. (My course contains a number of exercises that will help you do this.)

Stop feeling so afraid, and start listening to the voice inside yourself that believes you CAN create the marriage you always wanted. I call this "listening to your Inner Creator rather than your Inner Victim," and I talk about it in Chapter 5 of my book.

It's okay if your marriage isn't perfect. No marriage is perfect! Just because you're wearing wedding rings doesn't mean that you're not going to have problems.

Marriage, in any shape or form, is NOT a magic pill. It doesn't magically make your problems, insecurities, or fears go away. In fact, it may compound some of them. Marriage brings out the best and worst in each of us, and your challenge is to face the worst head-on without flinching.

Should You Fight or Flee?

When you start fighting with the one you love, you may feel an immediate gut reaction to strap on your boxing gloves and win the argument at all costs ... or just run away.

This is what's known as the "fight or flight" syndrome.

In facing a situation that's totally unfamiliar to you, you struggle to make sense of what is happening and what you should do about it. Do you stay and face the problems in the marriage, not really knowing what they are or how to fix them? Or do you leave the marriage, believing that the problems are too great or that your differences are irreconcilable?

That's precisely the conundrum that faces couples the world over, and nothing – not fame, fortune, or supremely good looks – will protect you from it. Just look at the number of gorgeous, talented, smart, wealthy celebrities who can't make their marriages work. Britney Spears, Drew Barrymore, Pamela Anderson, Renee Zellweger, Jennifer Lopez, and Angelina Jolie – just to name a few – all ended at least one of their marriages citing irreconcilable differences.

Unfortunately, leaving the relationship is the easy option. You can avoid facing your issues by leaving this marriage, but I promise you that the same issues will crop up in your next relationship.

You can find the most *perfect* person in the world for you ... but you will still face arguments, disappointment, disillusionment, and a power struggle until you learn how to deal with those issues.

That's why I give you concrete tactics to master each of the stages of commitment in *From First Dates to Soul Mates*. You will learn how to deal with the disappointment and disillusionment of your relationship not ending up how you wanted it to be, and you will learn how to talk through those difficult feelings with your partner.

I know this from experience! It's easy to talk about how much you love one another, but it's not easy to talk about the things you'd like your partner to change. That's why my course sets out 3 Guidelines for Better Communication and clear instructions on how to talk about your feelings, your needs, and the things you disagree on.

But let's just say that none of these reasons are good enough to keep you in your relationship. You still feel that your life would be improved by the decision to divorce. Let me give you some facts that just might change your mind.

Unless you are a celebrity couple, chances are your standard of living is going to be drastically changed by your decision to divorce. According to Lenore Weitzman, author of *The Divorce Revolution*, a woman's standard of living decreases by 73% in the first year after divorce, while men experience a 42% decrease.

Either way you look at it, that's a significant handbrake on your lifestyle if you decide to go your separate ways. It will impact the type of housing you can afford live in, how well you eat, what type of clothes you can buy, what kind of car you can afford to drive, and what you can afford to do on your time off. Rather than simplifying your life, the divorce may end up sharply increasing the stress and pressure you feel as a result of your decreased standard of living.

Unfortunately, for many people divorce is an emotional decision that is made without considering the practical consequences. Unless you do your research, you may find yourself facing unexpected effects or consequences of the divorce that would have changed your mind about separating, had you known about them in advance.

So do your research. Know what you will face if you decide to separate. Just bearing in mind the potential consequences can make the decision to take divorce off the table and work on your marital problems an easier one.

Here's Where to Start on Fixing Your Relationship

The biggest problem you're going to face, once you've committed to facing your relationship problems, is not knowing where to start. You've had these problems for so long and they seem so entrenched that you have no clue where to begin.

It can be hard to see where you're going wrong without professional help or an outside opinion. Instead of being certain of what the problems are and how you feel about them, you find yourself on a slippery slope to emotional reactions and accusations. Objectivity gets lost as the rush of negative feelings takes over. You try to express what you feel but end up repeating the same phrases over and over again: "I'm confused," "I'm frustrated," "I'm shocked," or, "I'm scared and hurt."

Don't get mad at yourself for not knowing how to deal with such complicated emotional issues. If you're anything like me, you didn't take *Relationships 101* in high school. The only "training" you got in relationships was watching your parents relate. And if your parents yelled at each other, threw things, and refused to talk to one another ... well, let's just say that you're not working off the best model! (That's why my newest course, *From First Dates to Soul Mates*, includes a Conflict Style Analysis exercise that will help you see where you learned your arguing techniques.)

You need to forgive yourself for not knowing instinctively what to do. Think of it this way: you're trying to develop an appropriate response to a situation you were never trained to expect. We have to study and pass exams to graduate from high school, get a driver's license, or qualify as a professional in our field, but there is no exam or training booklet you're given to qualify for marriage.

So, when your relationship starts to go south, you basically have nothing to go on other than instinct, past experience, and the advice of family and friends. In the process of learning and reacting to a crisis all at the same time, it's hardly surprising that mistakes and lapses of judgment are made!

Once you can forgive yourself, it's time to tackle another difficult belief: the belief that you can't do anything about your relationship until your spouse agrees to change.

This is the single most *devastating* belief to marriage. If you believe that your spouse is responsible for all your marriage problems, and that it's up to THEM (not you) to change, then that belief is basically signing your future divorce papers.

It's not about them. This is about YOU. This is about what YOU can do to break the old habits and patterns that are holding down your relationship.

Unfortunately, few of us like to think about our role in creating a problem. We can accurately discuss the mistakes our spouses have made in the past, and we can even recall historical mistakes made right back at the beginning of a relationship with frightening detail. We may not remember what part WE played in that chain of events, but it's easy to remember the behaviors of others.

It's time for you to lay the past to rest and start looking at the *present* with that same critical eye. Close that old book of memories, and forget about punishing your spouse for the past. Instead, ask yourself what you can do TODAY to make your marriage a happier one.

You need to become clearer about what kind of results you're hoping for in your marriage. Learn to set goals in positive language (e.g., what you want to accomplish in your relationship) rather than in negative language, (e.g., what your partner is doing wrong).

This can be a 180 degree shift for many couples, and it may feel strange at first. Instead of focusing on the feelings you have at the moment about your relationship – the hurt, the fear, the anger and disappointment – you will need to make a conscious effort to focus on the positive changes that need to occur in the relationship.

You may wonder whether or not this approach just covers up problems without dealing with them. In a traditional therapeutic approach, you would be expected to talk about your negative feelings and express them to one another.

But the very discussion about those feelings associated with the problems can actually make things worse rather than better. Research done by Kahn back in the 1960s suggests that expressing negative feelings can actually cause an increase in feelings of rage, aggression, and anger, rather than helping to gain understanding or releasing those feelings.

So don't hold onto your negative feelings about the relationship by rehashing them over and over again. Instead, move forward. Let the past stay in the past, and redirect your efforts towards *doing* something about the problem. Identify specific actions you can both take to make your marriage more fulfilling, and put them into practice immediately.

Here's How to Decide What You're Going to Do

When I mention "specific actions you can both take," you need to think of something more meaningful than, "We will make an effort to love each other more," or, "We will try harder to understand each other," or, "We will show one another respect."

These statements are too vague to be useful, because they don't commit you to a specific behavior or action that is *measurable*. For example, what does "loving each other more" mean, in practical terms? Does it mean that you'll say, "I love you," every day? Does it mean that you'll make love twice a week? Or does it mean something different altogether?

If you are serious about changing your marriage for the better, you need to commit to *specific actions*. Examples include: "I will cook my spouse a nice meal once a week," or, "We will go out on a date one night every week," or, "I will show my spouse respect by listening to them and not interrupting when they are speaking to me."

Once you've decided on specific actions that prove to your spouse that you're serious about turning your marriage around, you need to develop new strategies to deal with conflict. (My course includes 5 Good Arguing Tips that you need to follow if you're going to fight constructively.)

Experiment with doing something different. Think back to the last argument you had with your loved one. Consider what they did or said to you and how you reacted in return. Now, consider how you could have reacted differently. The *next* time you have that argument, try out your new behavior and see if this makes a difference.

It may take experimenting with several different actions and methods before you find one that works for both of you.

Let's see how this might work in practice with an example.

Jane and Simon have been married for three years. Jane works parttime at the local library, while Simon works fulltime at an IT company. Because Jane gets home earlier than Simon, she usually cooks their evening meal, timing it just right so that it's ready for them to eat when Simon comes home.

But Simon's just started a new project at work, and it's keeping him after hours. He starts arriving fifteen minutes later, half an hour later, even an hour later. After two weeks of this, Jane isn't going to take it anymore. Why take the time to prepare a nice dinner for her husband if he's not going to come home to eat it? Jane tells Simon that she's had enough. If he wants dinner, he can cook it himself. Her time is too valuable to waste sitting at an empty dinner table with plates of food getting cold.

If you'd just heard Jane's perspective, you might be tempted to believe that she was right. It was disrespectful of Simon to keep her waiting. But Simon had his own side of the story...

Simon was usually never late from work, but this project was out of the ordinary. It promised to generate lots of new revenue for his company, so it was important that he spend the time on it. He planned to apply for the assistant director's job when the position became vacant at the end of the year, and he knew that this project would be a stepping stone to that position.

He felt that Jane was being unreasonable by getting so upset. She benefited from Simon's income as much as he did, so she should be happy that he was investing in securing that higher position. He felt that she was being ungrateful and irrational at a time when he was stressed out and had enough pressures on him already. If she couldn't see that, then perhaps he'd chosen the wrong wife.

It was a serious situation that had gotten blown up all out of proportion. Being late for dinner should *not* make anyone reconsider their relationship!

The key to resolving this situation was *not* deciding who was at fault but rather finding some form of compromise. However, neither Jane nor Simon could give up on their argument easily. Jane wanted Simon to admit that he was to blame for spoiling their evening meals, while Simon wanted Jane to admit that she was making a mountain out of a molehill. As long as they remained trapped in this, "I'm right, you're wrong," attitude, they would never be able to solve the issue.

They needed to try something different, and that “something different” was thinking about what concrete actions they needed from one another. Jane couldn’t reasonably demand that Simon never be late, but she *could* ask Simon to call in advance next time he was delayed. Simon couldn’t reasonably demand that Jane never get upset, but he *could* ask for more support when he was feeling stressed at work.

Suddenly, instead of one person being right and the other person being wrong, they were *asking for help from one another* to fulfill their needs in the relationship. Simon was more than happy to help Jane by calling her if he was going to be late, and Jane was happy to support Simon when he needed a hug and a happy smile after a hard day at work.

All of us want to help our partner in any way we can. That’s what love is, after all! But our partner needs to be able to ASK us for help rather than get angry at us. That’s why my course includes an exercise that helps you identify your needs in your relationship and discuss those needs with your partner using a 6-Step Method designed *to enlist your partner’s help*, rather than criticize them.

You might want to think of ways that you can turn around the mood in your marriage right now, simply by demonstrating your love, affection, and appreciation for your partner.

- *“I will buy my partner a special gift, like flowers or their favorite coffee, once a month.”*
- *“I will thank my partner each time they help me with a task.”*
- *“I will stop whatever I am doing when my partner comes home and give them a hug and a kiss.”*
- *“I will give my partner a half-hour of uninterrupted down time when they come home from work so that they can unwind before I ask them to do anything.”*
- *“I will sit down with my partner for fifteen minutes every evening so that we can talk without any interruptions.”*
- *“Each time I do the shopping, I will ask my partner if there is anything they need that I can pick up for them.”*
- *“I will tell my partner how much they mean to me and how glad I am to have them in my life as often as I can.”*

What Does Your Ideal Relationship Look Like?

We don't always agree on what the "perfect" relationship looks like. To you, the perfect relationship might look like what you have now, while your partner is longing for more weekend trips away and more socializing together as a couple.

In *From First Dates to Soul Mates*, I include a number of exercises that ask you to talk through these kinds of ideas with your partner. You need to know how your partner sees the future and what, to them, is the perfect relationship, before you can create a shared vision.

You also need to know what YOU want from your relationship. What do you need to make you happy? What would make your relationship just absolutely *perfect*?

Try a visualization exercise where you sit down with a sheet of a paper and a pen, and think of this phrase:

"The perfect relationship for me would be..."

Close your eyes and hold that phrase in your mind. See what images come up for you. When you feel ready, start writing down what came to your mind. Write down every detail you can remember, including where you were, what you were wearing, how you were feeling, and so forth. Ask yourself questions like:

- *What are you doing in this "perfect relationship" that makes it perfect?*
- *What is your partner doing?*
- *What parts of the perfect relationship do you already have in your relationship right now?*

Part of the "perfect relationship" is having the "perfect partner." Your real partner is going to fall far short of this ideal, but that shouldn't upset you. There is no such thing as *perfection* in reality, and that's a *good* thing. We'd get bored if everyone was perfect all the time!

But you may have some negative beliefs about your partner that are actually keeping your marriage stuck. Ask yourself: do you feel that your partner is a negative person? Do you feel they are selfish? Do you feel they are difficult? Do you feel they exhibit behaviors that will never change?

I often hear clients saying, "He has always been like that. He will never change," or, "She can't do that because it would never work or she would never stick to it."

Your beliefs and perceptions of your spouse are influencing the relationship you have, for better or for worse. If you think that they're selfish, then you're going to find evidence of their selfishness. If you think they won't change, then they probably won't.

We all form judgments and beliefs about ourselves and others based on past experience. Past behaviors are *usually* a good indicator of how someone is going to behave in the future...

...That is, until you make a commitment to change.

You have to believe that you can change, your partner can change, and your marriage can change.

Change *is* possible. Anything can happen to anyone. Even though, for the past ten years, your partner may never have bought you flowers, it is possible that he *can*. Your partner may have never backed down and apologized in an argument before, but that doesn't mean that she *can't*.

From this day forward, I want you to give up the belief that things won't change. Look at yourself in the mirror and tell yourself, "I am a different person today than I was yesterday. I am free to make new choices. I choose to be a new person with a strong and happy marriage."

(In my course I teach you the *Letting Go Affirmation*, which will help you feel comfortable and confident in letting go of control and allowing magic to unfold in your marriage. It can be hard to trust that things will work out, but you must have faith that they will.)

Always tell yourself, "*Anything is possible.*" No matter how bad your relationship is, or how far gone it is, or how much you think it's too late to save it, a transformation *can* happen.

Simply believing that you can change if you want to is enough. You have more choice in life than you think. You don't have to be unhappy. You don't have to feel unfulfilled. You don't have to feel that this is the best that it can get.

Your marriage can be as good and strong and positive as you want it to be ... as long as you believe that *it is possible*.

But if you decide to believe instead that change is impossible and your partner will never change, you are limiting your beliefs and limiting your chance of future happiness. Ultimately, the choice is yours.

Don't Expect Things to be Perfect (They'll Be Even Better)

I'm not sure where we get our idea of the "perfect relationship" from, but it usually isn't from experience. Movies, songs, and books teach us that "true" romance should be larger than life.

But we're not characters in a romance novel. We're *real people*. And, as real people, we're life-sized. Our love lives are complicated and messy but all-the-more satisfying for their realness.

Some people have an unblinking view of the "perfect" relationship and believe that anything less is failure. It *isn't*.

You're just shooting yourself in the foot if you expect perfection in your relationship. You're only human, after all. It's great to aim for a perfect relationship, but be aware of getting too caught up in the details.

Aiming for the ideal relationship means taking into account the idiosyncrasies of people and allowing flexibility for creativity and freedom of expression. A relationship, like you, will grow, and your goals and vision of the ideal relationship will change and evolve as you do.

Your ideal relationship is a fluid thing that can (and should) evolve. It's important to encourage that growth as you learn more about what works for you and your partner and what doesn't. Being too rigid in your beliefs can stifle your relationship and keep it harnessed to an outdated model of what marriage *should* be like, rather than what it *is*.

How to Set Couple Goals

An important part of your commitment to one another is having milestones to work towards and ways of measuring the progress you are making.

Setting "couple goals" is one way of doing it.

A goal sheet isn't just some vague wish list. Your couple goals need to be measurable and contain specific actions, so that you can be sure that the goals have been met before you set new ones.

Resist the temptation to set goals like:

- *"Fall back in love."*
- *"Stop fighting."*
- *"Make love more often."*
- *"Feel more committed to one another."*

These goals are too vague, as you will have no way of measuring your progress and no way of knowing if you have actually achieved them.

Ideally, your goals need to be a mix of major goals and minor goals, so that you can feel the satisfaction of achieving smaller goals while still working towards larger goals.

Start with small goals that you can achieve in a few days or a week, such as:

- *Thank your partner for something once a day.*
- *Give your partner a back massage once a week.*
- *Leave your partner a nice note in their lunch or briefcase.*
- *Organize a date.*
- *Buy one of your partner's favorite foods.*
- *Start saving \$25 a week to go into a "weekend-away" fund.*
- *Take a photo of you together the next time you go out.*

If possible, break down your larger goals into smaller goals like the above. If you want to cut down on your arguing, for example, try using "I" statements each time you argue. (I explain how to do this in my 3 Guidelines for Better Communication.) Try setting a time limit for your arguments, after which you'll break and come back to the argument later. There are a number of ways you can improve your communication that are small, measurable, and easy to do.

Don't Overlook the Little Things

When you look at your marriage, it's easy to overlook the things that *are* working. It's tempting to focus so much on the aspects of your relationship that need improvement that you forget about the many things that you both do every day to foster and nurture each other.

Your spouse may help out around the house when all you would like is a bunch of flowers. Your spouse may buy you flowers, but never say those three magic words.

There are lots of times in our lives when we feel we aren't getting the love or attention we

believe we deserve, and we fail to see the many other forms of love that our spouses and others show towards us.

Your partner may be showing you affection by that rub on your back as you pass each other in the bathroom. They may be showing their love through washing and folding your clothes. They may demonstrate love through taking the children out for the afternoon so you can have some quiet time.

Love takes many forms, and it's important that you both *see* and *acknowledge* them.

Think about the things in your relationship that *do* work. Think about the things that you do that your spouse likes: a kiss on the cheek, a smile when they come home, an arm slung casually around you when you're out socially, or a quick call or email to say, "I love you." Think of the things that help create those moments. Write them out on a sheet of paper if it helps. Then, repeat them as often as possible.

It's important to make a conscious effort to do those things that keep the zest in our relationship on a daily basis, because the stress and pressures of everyday life often leave us too tired to put much into our relationships.

When you come home at the end of the day, the first thing on your mind tends to be unwinding, with all the chores that need doing, like cooking dinner, in the background. Your partner is somewhere in your distant consciousness, but you don't bother more thinking more than twice about them because, well, they're an adult; they can take care of themselves.

If that sounds like you, then your partner needs to move up in priority. Connecting with your partner, even if it's just with a quick hug and kiss, should be the first thing on your mind when you come home. The chores can wait; love should come first.

Make a Commitment Today

"If what you are doing doesn't work, do something different."
Steve de Shazer, *Keys to Solution in Brief Therapy*

What is the difference between those marriages that survive crisis and those that don't, then? Is it that, in the former, they picked the "right" person for them, and in the latter they picked the "wrong" person?

Nope. Quite frankly, it's the *commitment* you make to one another.

Commitment isn't for the good times. When you're in love and can't keep your hands off one another, you don't need commitment.

You need commitment for the *bad times*, when you're arguing and don't really like one another very much.

It's the same way with love. Love comes easily in the good times. It's during the bad times, when your overriding feeling is frustration, that you really see what your love is made out of.

If you are struggling to hold onto the love and commitment in your marriage, then I recommend getting my course, [*From First Dates to Soul Mates*](#). You'll learn exactly what challenges a relationship must face on its way to the highest level of commitment and how to deal with them.

Plus, you'll learn concrete techniques for dealing with any feelings of disappointment, disillusionment, and despair over the state of your relationship. Once you master the mindset of commitment, you'll find that your relationship problems no longer seem so insurmountable, and you'll find strength inside that you never knew you had.

You'll also learn about:

- The biological basis to commitment,
- How a truly committed relationship develops over time,
- What you should expect from a committed partner,
- The 3 qualities that any long-term relationship must have,
- How to stop worrying so much and start having fun in your relationship,
- How to talk about hard stuff,
- Why we fight and how to do it constructively,
- The 3 Relationship Principles,
- How to cheat-proof your relationship...

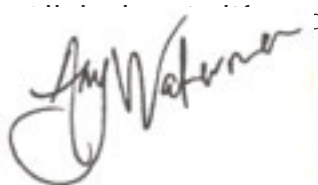
...And much more.

Plus, my course includes exercises for you to work through on your own or with your partner, so that you can apply the techniques in your own life.

I'm very proud of this course, and I believe that it's the definitive guide to creating a relationship that will last the test of time.

To try *From First Dates to Soul Mates* out for yourself (check out my \$5 trial offer!), go to:

MeetYourSweet.com/commitment/



... love!

Amy Waterman
Author of *From First Dates to Soul Mates*
and *Save My Marriage Today!*

P.S. Also, you'll get an audio version of *From First Dates to Soul Mates* ABSOLUTELY FREE with your purchase. That's over 10 hours of audio, read aloud by myself, that you can download to your computer or MP3 player and listen to any time. Plus my course comes with some superb bonuses, so don't miss it!

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