



SAVE YOUR MARRIAGE And Develop A Lifelong Love!

By JayKay Bak

<http://UnselfishMarketer.com>

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Chapter 1: To Find the Solution, First See the Problem	4
Chapter 2: Opening the Lines of Communication.....	6
Chapter 3: Let's Go Back to the Beginning!.....	8
Chapter 4: It's About Time!.....	10
Chapter 5: Dealing With Differences	13
Chapter 6: Who Are All of These People?!.....	15
Chapter 7: The Need For Boundaries	17
Chapter 8: What is a Power-Struggle?	19
Chapter 9: What is Happiness?	21
Chapter 10: Where Do You Go From Here? Dream Big!	23
Chapter 11: Helpful Tips.....	25

Introduction

Whether you have been married for only a brief period of time, many years, or even decades, you want your marriage to be the best that it can be! Not only do you and your spouse deserve happiness, this book will give you all of the helpful tips and advice to show you how to have exactly that!

You may have encountered some serious difficulties in your marriage, or you may simply wish to improve what is already a good relationship. The good news is you do not need to be content with wishing-- you can reconstruct your marriage, and start well on your way to building a lifelong love!

Read on-- and find the all-important keys to a happy marriage that will last for a lifetime!

Chapter 1: To Find the Solution, First See the Problem

If you think about it, you may have noticed how often people try to find solutions to a problem without being sure what the problem actually is. You may also have noticed that attempting to resolve a problem in this manner is futile-- in fact, it is nearly impossible!

In order to find a solution, it is essential to make acknowledging the problem the very first step. While it would seem that this should “go without saying,” you would be surprised at how many people miss it entirely, and try to rush headfirst into possible solutions without fully acknowledging what difficulties they are up against.

With this in mind, you can avoid the time-consuming, frustrating trap which too many fall into; and, instead, start at the beginning.

You can begin by asking yourself what problems you and your spouse are encountering. You will then know what difficulties need to be resolved, and what you wish to accomplish. A good way to go about this is to read through this book, and after you have thought about the topics contained within, get together with your spouse for a discussion. You can share your thoughts and feelings, and ask your spouse to share his or hers. Not only will this help in making progress toward finding solutions, it will also open up the lines of communication.

So, what kinds of problems are occurring in your marriage? Are you and your spouse losing touch with each other from basic lack of communication? Do you feel as if you are growing apart, and no longer feel as if you have an active place in each other's lives? Are there disagreements, or arguments, over such factors as money, jobs, children, and other people? Are you and your spouse considering a separation-- or, even worse, a divorce?

These, as well as most other factors which can cause a marital relationship to fall apart, can be resolved. You do not need a pile of “modern” books or other fads; and except in the most extreme cases, you do not need “couples counseling” or therapy. You can begin to put your marriage back together, reconstruct the joy that you both experienced at the beginning, and use both that initial joy and your mature experiences to make your marriage stronger and happier than ever!

After you have put some careful thought into acknowledging what problems you are confronting, it is also important to decide what you wish to accomplish. Do you want more quality time with your spouse? Do you want to be able to come to agreements, or respect for different stands, on various important issues?

One important point to keep in mind is that goals for a marriage are as individual as the people are individual. What this means is that what may be ideal for your friend or your sibling may not be so ideal for you and your spouse; unfortunately, it may also mean that what you want is not the same as what your spouse wants.

However, while the best time to have come to conclusions about the kind of marriage, goals and ideals that you both want was before you were married, even if you are just now encountering these differences it is never too late to resolve your differences and reach a common ground which you both should find acceptable.

Have you assessed the problem and discovered the specific difficulties which you are confronting? Have you put careful thought into deciding on the goals you wish to accomplish? Good for you! You have taken the first important steps! Your marriage is not only worth preserving and improving-- you can make it happier and stronger than ever!

Chapter 2: Opening the Lines of Communication

In order for any relationship to be successful, there must be consistent good communication. Although this is true for any relationship, it is most essential in marriage. In nearly every marriage which has begun to deteriorate, lack of communication is one of the main factors.

One of the best ways to resolve this problem is to go back to the very beginning-- your beginning! Was lack of communication a problem all along, or is it a something which started at some particular point in time?

For many couples, lack of communication was a problem since the onset of their relationship. If you and your spouse fall into this category, it is essential that you come to terms with this problem so that you can work on resolving it. Some people have had this lack of communication because they felt that "love would conquer all," and therefore did not recognize the need to discuss important issues; others have begun a relationship and even entered into marriage feeling unable to voice their thoughts, feelings, preferences, beliefs, and merely gone along with their partners on everything.

For people in these categories, the time usually comes when they are no longer content to simply "go with the flow," and find that major differences and disagreements occur when they attempt to assert themselves. They may find that their spouse wishes to remain in charge; or they may find that they and their spouse disagree on significant issues.

In either case, opening the lines of communication is the first, essential step in asserting oneself and in beginning to reach agreements. You will find that there will be a number of instances in which you and your spouse must "agree to disagree."

For many other couples, however, communication was a present factor in the beginning, but somehow managed to deteriorate over time. Lack of time with each other due to family and work responsibilities often account for many of these instances. Sometimes, also, a person's priorities shift-- while the marital relationship was once a person's number-one focus, other factors in his or her life led the marriage to take second-place, somehow not seeming as important as it was at the beginning.

In these instances, reassessing priorities is the main key to reestablishing good communication. It is necessary to give your marriage the time and attention it needs and deserves-- and to give your spouse the time and attention which he or she needs and deserves.

There are other instances in which people simply lack good communication skills. If this appears to describe you or your spouse, take heart-- good communication skills can be learned. Even if you are nonassertive, or do not know how to communicate effectively, it is a skill which you can learn-- by practice and experience.

Whichever of these categories describes you and your spouse, recognizing the foundation of the problem is the first step in resolving it.

What is good communication? When you and your spouse can talk with each other about all important subjects and even subjects which have no serious implications at all; when you can freely share what you think, feel, believe, want, like and dislike; when you can state your stand on important issues and listen to your spouse's, with mutual respect even when there are matters of disagreement; you can have good, effective communication.

Good communication comes from practice, experience, respect and the time which you are willing to put into it!

Chapter 3: Let's Go Back to the Beginning!

As every problem had a beginning, so did everything of a positive nature! Unfortunately, when many people set themselves to the task of trying to “fix” a failing marriage, they neglect to look at the initial positives-- all of those wonderful assets which were there at the very beginning of their marriage, and even prior to their marriage!

This is a mistake, when you are honestly looking at the problems which have arisen in your marriage which you need to resolve, it is essential to also remind yourself and your spouse of all of the positive strengths, qualities, and characteristics which brought you together in the first place!

Whether you have been married for a year or twenty years, this factor is equally relevant to all who seriously wish to improve their marriage. The reason for this should be obvious, while working through and resolving your difficulties is necessary, placing some focus and emphasis on your relationship's initial strengths is the main factor which will help you to strengthen it now and for the future.

What brought you and your spouse together? What accounted for you and this person making the decision to spend the rest of your lives together? Whether you and your spouse were starry-eyed young people who married after knowing each other for a very brief period of time, or whether you had been in each other's lives for many years, let your memory take you back to your beginning.

What qualities or characteristics did you find the most appealing in your spouse? What kinds of goals, hopes, plans and dreams did you both share? As each person is an individual, the answers to these questions will be equally individual-- and they are as relevant to reconstructing the strengths and the joys in your marriage as any questions and answers you can possibly ask yourself!

No matter how hopeless your situation may seem, taking this little trip down Memory Lane is one of the most important steps you can take in reconstructing your marriage. It is quite likely that you will find that the factors which influenced your decision to marry still do exist-- they just need to be noticed again and made fresh, all over again!

While you are thinking about these factors, you may also find yourself recalling many things which you and your spouse shared back then. You may have loved taking part in some kind of activity that you both enjoyed, for example, but somewhere along the line other priorities started to take precedence and you no longer had time for it.

When you are planning to reconstruct your marriage, another strength which you can build on are those shared interests. Whether you and your spouse liked to participate in a sport, attend rock concerts, have picnics in the park on Sunday afternoons, those activities which you both mutually enjoyed were bonding experiences-- and there is no reason why you cannot do them now!

The purpose in going back to your beginning is to assess both the strengths which contributed to your marriage and the interests which you had in common. In doing so, you will recall the passion which you both had for your relationship and for each other. And when you can recall your initial passions, you will then be in a position to reclaim them--the favorite pastimes, the goals and dreams, they are all still there, waiting to be uncovered and appreciated again!

Chapter 4: It's About Time!

It does not matter how old you are, how long you have been married, or how full of a daily schedule you and your spouse may happen to have-- for a troubled marriage to be reborn, or for an adequate marriage to be improved, after good communication the second most important factor is Time!

In order to thrive, a relationship needs attention; and in order to thrive, so do both partners!

These days we often hear a lot about “quality time.” In many cases, however, this comes to mean trying to squeeze as much as possible into a small amount of time allotted for it. People whose everyday lives and schedules are full to the overflowing point with job and family obligations usually consider this to be the only alternative; but there are also many whose personal interests, hobbies and pastimes take precedence, leaving the marital relationship to be resigned to this version of “quality time.”

There are two problems associated with this concept. First, obviously, pre-scheduled quality time is simply not enough. However, the other significant factor in attempting to have a marital relationship without giving enough time to it is that when one spouse or both begins to see that neither the relationship nor he or she is a priority anymore, both the relationship and the spouse will suffer from the neglect.

If you think back to your early days with your spouse, you were in the majority if you and this person wished and attempted to spend every minute together. In a healthy, normal relationship, “I only have eyes for you” is indeed a truism-- there was nothing and no one that could compare with your new partner, nothing and no one that could pry your attention away from this person!

As is the case for normal, healthy couples, this begins to change. In most instances it is a matter of needing to work, tending to family responsibilities, and even having one's own particular interests and friends which causes the spouses to shift their focus off of each other and off of their relationship.

If you are preparing to reconstruct your marriage, rebuilding that initial relationship is necessary. One very important point which many in this situation miss, however, is that while being more generous with your time is essential, getting back to the way it was in placing more emphasis and focus on your partner is also essential. As the quickest way to cause a substantial feeling of neglect

Is to make that person feel as if he is not as important to you as he used to be, reemphasizing the fact that he is indeed a priority in your life will do wonders to bring the sense of connection and joy back into your marriage!

If you truly want your marriage to be the very best that it can be, you cannot afford to be stingy with your time! Granting someone an hour per week, after all of the “more important” factors in your life have been taken care of, simply will not do it.

If you are like most people, you probably do not have the faintest clue in how to get more time for your spouse in your already-full schedule. The theory is correct: if you cannot find the time, you must make the time. We all know that finding free time is a luxury which most of us do not have; so if you look at it in those terms, you are not giving it a chance.

Instead, seeing your spouse and your relationship as a real priority in your life which you must make time for is the key. Perhaps you can look at it in a manner similar to the way in which you view your job: it is necessary, it is good, and the time will be taken for it.

If you have come to or past the point where spending a significant amount of time with your spouse is something which you have not done for a long period of time, it may feel like an unfamiliar venture. We all know people who have been married for many years, and rarely see each other because one or both individuals are “too busy.” Perhaps this describes you-- or perhaps you see yourself heading in this direction, and are unsure as to what to do about it.

In addition to setting your spouse and your relationship as a priority again in matters of giving enough time, what you do with that time is also relevant. For example, you may know couples, such as retired older people, who spend a great deal of time together, yet do little together and have little to say to each other!

While being in each other's presence is generally a good thing in itself, simply “being there” can benefit from a little boost. While planning in advance for what you wish to do is not always a good idea, having something in mind can be quite helpful.

If you are as many people who have full schedules and little time, it is most beneficial if the time you put into your relationship is focused on your “togetherness.” There is an aspect of this which many do not consider-- and that is that there are two very different manners in which couples spend their time together. One is a matter of focusing on each other; the second is a matter of putting more focus onto activities and/ or other people. And even though both are good, the former is much more helpful when the basic goal is to regain communication and togetherness.

If you are uncertain as to what this means, and what the difference is, you can think about it this way: if you and your spouse go out to dinner, a movie, a party, or participate in an activity, your general focus is on the activity. You are not giving your spouse the attention he or she may need, nor communicating effectively, when the focus is on enjoying a movie or interacting with other people at a party!

Having and sharing common interests, taking part in hobbies and pastimes, and socializing with other people is important to the individual as well as to the couple. However, viewing

it as a significant part of “couple time” or “togetherness time” is a mistake, because it cannot fulfill that purpose. Instead, granting your spouse your undivided attention is the factor which will help this all-important person to realize that he or she still takes center-stage in your life!

Chapter 5: Dealing With Differences

Each person is an individual; and, as such, no two people can reasonably be expected to agree on everything. Being able to recognize this as a fact-of-life is one of the most important signs of maturity. It is also the first step in learning how to effectively resolve differences.

If you think about it, you probably know many people who do not have that level of maturity. Even though it affects every area of life, it can quickly spell “disaster” in a marriage! You may know someone who, due to flaws in his or her upbringing, always has to “have his own way.” It may be someone who always had and did whatever he wanted as a child, and became older without growing up, still asserting his entitlement over “getting his way.”

It may be someone who had to fight for everything that he had, and even as an adult sees any differences as a threat to “his rights.” Or it may be someone who was spoiled, with “his way” never being challenged by anyone. While such a person can learn how to respectfully acknowledge differences, and learn how to compromise, it all depends on the willingness of that person.

Fortunately, difficulties in a marriage are not always to such an extreme. Perhaps you and your spouse did not fully acknowledge your differences in the early stages of your relationship; or perhaps you felt that time and love would solve the problem.

While effective communication is essential in resolving this type of problem, respect for each other's differences and the motivation to reach a solution are also necessary.

As differences come about primarily from a person's background and upbringing, there can be many or few, minor or serious. But whether the subject is a matter of a minor disagreement or something of a very serious nature, getting the hang of resolving differences before they become matters of confrontation is the most important factor.

In other words, what the issue is not nearly as relevant as what you do about it. Whether you and your spouse are disagreeing on something as tiny as where to hang your towels in your bathroom, or something of large proportion such as whether or not your sixteen-year-old is ready to get a driver's license, learning how to resolve differences is the deciding factor between reaching conclusions which both spouses can happily live with or allowing every difference to be a power-struggle of who wins and who loses. The fact of the matter is that in a marital relationship, if differences are settled by power-struggles, everyone loses.

If this has become a problem in your marriage, you may be wondering how it can work. There are two basic manners in which differences can be resolved-- by compromise, or by “agreeing to disagree.”

In most cases, you will find that compromise is indeed the best solution. This way, a conclusion is reached which both persons can be relatively comfortable with. In some instances, however, agreeing to disagree is the only viable solution. The reason why it is most beneficial is that it eliminates power struggles and promotes respect between both people.

Although many people fail to grasp this fact, mainly due to their upbringing or popular trends, “fighting” is most definitely not an unavoidable, par-for-the-course part of any relationship, including marriage. The fact of the matter is that most arguments can be stopped in their tracks by setting yourself to the task of learning effective communication and how to resolve your differences through compromise and agreeing to disagree.

It is simply not necessary for any disagreement to escalate into a “fight”-- nor is it healthy! It causes more problems than were there to begin with, and diminishes the respect between the two individuals. Learning how to resolve differences is not only essential-- it is also possible!

Chapter 6: Who Are All of These People?!

Regardless of how long you and your spouse have been married, you may have noticed that over time, more and more people have begun to populate your lives. On the other hand, it is possible that you have not even noticed it, or else have not yet realized that it can have a significant impact on your marriage.

While it is a fact of life that your marriage cannot be “an island unto itself,” the influence of other people can often prove to be quite negative.

There are a number of ways in which this problem can occur. You or your spouse may have a family member who likes to meddle, or insists on being included in everything. You or your spouse may have a longtime close friend who displays those same characteristics. Your lives may also be populated by buddies-- the types of people with whom you enjoy various activities, in which your spouse may or may not participate. For many working couples, there is also the addition of co-workers and business associates.

In any normal, healthy adult's life, there are many people other than simply one's spouse. The problem with this can occur when one of the partners finds himself or herself in the position of “divided loyalties”-- who needs more time, who needs more attention, and which subjects and places should be “off limits” to everyone other than one's partner.

If one or both spouses have always been socially active, or extremely close with his or her family-of-origin, this can add to the difficulties. Spouses who have separate friends and separate interests can also encounter problems in knowing where to draw the line.

While it is unreasonable-- and unhealthy-- to expect two individuals to share all of the same associates, it can seriously damage the marital relationship if these other associates demand or receive significantly more time and attention than one's own spouse.

For example, even though spending every Sunday watching the ballgame on television with your buddies can be enjoyable recreation, it becomes intrusive and unfair to your spouse if your buddies take that afternoon pastime to mean that your food supply is up-for-grabs, or that they can simply stay and spend the night at your home whenever they wish to do so.

Similar difficulties can ensue if your parents or siblings feel that your home is theirs, without needing a phone call or an invitation, or if people with whom you associate in business expect your home to be little more than an extension of the workplace.

The problem of divided loyalties often reaches an extreme and places an unnecessary strain on a marriage when one spouse's friends are of the opposite sex. While many people have grown up with platonic friendships and do not see anything unusual about it, it can cause stress under any circumstances but most especially so when the other spouse did not have such arrangements in his or her own background.

In such instances, your spouse's concerns need to be addressed. While it is normal and important for each person to have friends, in the interest of both marital harmony and the well-being of both partners, it is nearly always unwise to pursue or persist in friendships which make the other spouse uncomfortable.

Whether the person or people in question are your family members, friends, or co-workers, the most important point to keep in mind is that your first loyalty is to the person you chose to marry!

Chapter 7: The Need For Boundaries

One difficulty which arises in many marriages is the lack of boundaries. In some instances either or both spouses may not be clear about this subject; in other cases, other people in their lives can go a long way in creating the problem. It cannot be stressed too strongly: the very best, healthiest, happiest marriage is one where clear boundaries exist and are consistently respected by both spouses and those around them!

For some people, boundaries are a familiar way of life; for others, however, the concept is something which must be learned. A person's nuclear family and the environment of his or her upbringing makes up the manner in which the person views this subject; but it is no less relevant, regardless of one's background.

There are a number of boundaries which are essential for a healthy, happy marriage. One of the most important is the marital relationship itself. In a healthy marriage, both partners are aware of, and respect, the fact that certain things are between the two of them and should remain between the two of them.

Keeping each other's confidences is absolutely essential. The privacy between a husband and a wife is so universally-recognized that it is even protected by law! When your spouse shares with you something which is extremely private to him or her, he or she should be able to feel completely confident that you will not repeat this information to anyone. It does not matter whether you think the subject to be silly or frivolous, or a difficult burden which you may not wish to carry by yourself, or something which you think your friends may find "interesting"-- being able to keep private communications private is one of the main foundations of trust.

While we are on the subject of friends, it must also be said that you should resist sharing the problems of your marriage with your friends. Airing your grievances about your spouse, especially if done so on a regular basis, will not only undermine your marriage but can also serve to generate bad feelings between your friends and your partner. Even though everyone has a legitimate complaint every now and then, you should make a point of resisting the urge to fill your friends in on "What a jerk George is!" This habit does nothing but cause strife for everyone involved.

It is unfortunate to hear how many married couples believe that their sex life is also something which should be "up for discussion" with other people. The sexual relationship between a husband and wife should never be brought into the public view-- to do so destroys the intimacy which is

One of the main parts of married life. Unless there is a serious difficulty which necessitates the assistance or intervention of a medical professional, a married couple's sexual relationship should never go any further than between the two of them.

Important boundaries are also violated when a spouse feels the need to solicit other people's opinions and input on subjects which should remain between the couple themselves. Although it is natural to want to know what others think about various issues, if there are matters of disagreement between you and your spouse it is unfair to attempt to get others on your side.

Some couples also experience problems with boundaries when one or the other person does not realize or does not respect the partner's individual boundaries. Even though it may seem odd in this modern day, there are still far too many married people who fully believe that their partners have no reason or right to personal privacy, personal space, or personal possessions.

In such cases it should be clearly and firmly stressed that simply because one has gotten married this does not mean he or she has ceased to be an individual person, or has ceased to have the right and the need for personal boundaries. Whether the problem has arisen due to one spouse's lack of full trust in the other person, or does not acknowledge the other person as a separate individual, or has the distasteful and destructive characteristics of needing power and control, it is a problem which must be resolved-- not only in the interest of the marriage, but also the well-being of both spouses. Such a person must learn that there is a difference between "Yours," "Mine," and "Ours"!

When other people do not acknowledge or do not respect your boundaries, this too can create huge problems if it is not addressed and resolved as quickly as possible. For example, you may have a meddlesome relative who consistently pries for information about your personal life, or a friend who believes that your home should be accessible to him or her at any hour of the day or night. In such instances, the best manner in which to deal with the situation is for you and your spouse to present a "united front" so that the intrusions are ended.

You may be familiar with the old saying about "building a hedge" around your marriage. Far from being an outdated concept, it not only continues to be true but continues to be the most important thing you can do to ensure a healthy, happy marriage.

In addition to the topics you just read about, which are universal to all married couples, individual needs also play a role. For example, you or your spouse may be uncomfortable with physical contact from the opposite sex, and feel that hugs should be reserved only for each other; or you may object to the other person's friends having an "open-door policy" on your refrigerator. These, and any number of other topics, are often very important to one spouse yet seem trivial to the other.

The point in resolving such potential conflicts before they become real problems is to reach a conclusion which both spouses can comfortably accept. The key is in taking your partner's needs and feelings into consideration-- and that should be your main priority. For you to place a boundary which is necessary for your spouse's well-being and peace of mind should not be seen as a sacrifice, but rather as a positive act.

Chapter 8: What is a Power-Struggle?

One might be tempted to think that power-struggles are a thing of the past-- but anyone who has ever been in a relationship where one is present is fully aware that this concept is as valid, as troublesome, and as potentially destructive in this modern day as it ever was!

Power-struggles go way beyond one person wanting to be the deciding factor in topics of disagreement-- a true power-struggle exists when one partner insists on “running the show.” In the worst of extremes, as often does happen, the result is that there is really no “marriage” at all, and the other partner begins to lose more and more of his or her personal selfhood.

If you are one of the lucky ones who has not experienced this, or if you have and need to understand it better in order to begin resolving it in your own marriage, it is difficult but it is not impossible.

Power-struggles usually begin from one person's ingrained beliefs about what is “right.” One example is the notion that a man must have “authority” over his wife and his home; on the opposite side of the same coin is the idea that a “modern woman” is one-hundred-percent on her own, with little “use” for her husband at all. Needless to say, these are not very positive beliefs on which to build a marriage! It does need to be said, however-- because far too many people have already entered into a marriage with these types of concepts, and find that happiness and harmony will not occur.

When these extremes of power-struggles exist, unless they are resolved there can be only two possible results-- either the marriage will fail, or one spouse will fall apart. If both spouses have the willingness and motivation to resolve the problem, as well as the intelligence and personality traits needed to make doing so possible, it can often be resolved. In many cases, however, counseling is necessary-- because it is very difficult to shake destructive beliefs from a person when he has held them for much of his life.

There are generally two forms of power-struggles. One is the type where one person insists on “running things,” and the other is the type where one person shuts the spouse out of his or her life. The ability to resolve this problem rests in both spouses' willingness and readiness to acknowledge two main points: first, that a true marriage “takes two,” and, as such, each person's beliefs, needs, feelings, and input are equally essential; and second, that each is an individual person who cannot be taken advantage of, silenced, or dismissed.

Whether you have been married for a short period of time or many decades, a common factor in this problem is that many fail to recognize when a power-struggle becomes actual abuse. Although this word has become a popular “catch-phrase,” used far too lightly and when it does not apply, it often exists without a person being fully aware of it.

A power-struggle does not have to result in physical, sexual, or even verbal violence in order to be “abuse.” This fact is the reason why many-- usually, but not always, women--

are in the position of being abused for years and even decades. They believe, erroneously, that if the person has not hit them, they are not being abused.

However, even if a power-struggle never escalates to physical violence, other forms of abuse which often occur are equally devastating, and equally destructive. If this sounds odd, the fact is that if a person is abused for a period of time, it has a damaging effect on her mind, her emotions, and her self-esteem.

It is abuse if your spouse exerts control over you, your actions, your life; this can range from telling you what you can and cannot wear, with whom you can and cannot associate, or where you can and cannot go. It is abusive if he monitors your actions, your whereabouts, and your privacy. It is abusive if your feelings, thoughts, beliefs and needs are dismissed as irrelevant or inconsequential. It is abusive if you are frequently put-down, ridiculed, accused or threatened. It is abusive if you are made to feel that you are accountable to your spouse, or if you are made to feel weak, small, helpless, afraid, unintelligent, unattractive, or unworthy.

While these actions are the foundation of an extreme power-struggle, they are also abuse. It is not something which you should tolerate; it is not something which you should ask advice from your friends about; it is a life-diminishing situation for which you need professional assistance.

Depending on the magnitude of the situation, its duration, the personality of your spouse, and the effects which it is having on you, this can mean professional counseling, legal intervention, or both. Do not make the mistake of believing or hoping that it will get better on its own, or that your spouse will “change”-- if you are being abused, reach out for help!

Chapter 9: What is Happiness?

Of course it sounds like a ridiculous question! How could anyone possibly not know what the word 'happiness' means?! The fact of the matter, though, is that many people have never really thought about it-- and, if you are reading this book, you and your spouse may not even know if you both have the same definitions!

As an individual, and as a married couple, you want happiness! As an individual, and as a married couple, you deserve it! Fortunately, it is one of those elusive subjects which, with a little careful thought and consideration, can become very clear-- and when what happiness means to you is clear to you, you will then be in the best position to claim this wonderful, life-affirming quality for yourselves!

If you and your spouse are like most average American adults, when the question is posed to you "What does the word 'happiness' mean to you?" you will probably not have a quick answer. Perhaps you have never put much thought into it, assuming that happiness is something which is either "there" or not. The only problem with this is that in order to attain and maintain happiness, you must first have some ideas as to what it means to you.

There are a number of ways to look at this subject. Some people define happiness in terms of something external, others in terms of the internal, and still others in terms of acceptance.

It is not as complicated as it may sound! The key is in realizing your own personal definition, and, in order to greatly enhance your marriage, "compare notes" with your spouse!

Those who view happiness in external terms are generally those who are the most driven. These folks see happiness as being the result of what they do, have, and accomplish. This type of person is happy, for example, when he has earned a great job promotion through hard work, has purchased a brand-new car, or is taking the family on a two-week vacation. His ability to be happy is directly influenced and affected by what is around him.

The person who finds happiness from an internal source is usually the type of person who is calm, rational, and content. He is the person who cares more about who he is rather than what he has or does, and sees other people in the same manner.

The people who define happiness in terms of acceptance are sometimes mislabeled as settled, unmotivated, or boring. While this kind of person is fully capable of dealing with whatever comes his way, and is as effective at doing so as anyone else, his general outlook involves not wishing to make waves, taking things as they are, and not liking any type of radical change unless it is necessary.

While these three types of people are different from each other and approach life much differently, it is nothing more than basic personality-traits. The good news is that even

those who are married to someone who possesses a different style can have a happy, harmonious marriage. All it really takes is understanding your own personal “happiness style” and being aware of and respecting your spouse's! With that in mind, happiness can be yours-- for a lifetime!

Chapter 10: Where Do You Go From Here? Dream Big!

Yes, you read the chapter title correctly-- and it is so much more than just a figure-of-speech!

It does not matter whether you have been married for one year or thirty years; it does not matter what kinds of career or family responsibilities you may have, or the state of your health, or how much money you have. What does matter is that in addition to saving your marriage, your wish is to make it the very best, the very happiest-- and doing so means stepping aside for a moment, stepping aside from your average, daily life, and reconstructing those all-important factors which gave your marriage its initial vision.

Take just a moment to look back throughout the duration of your marriage. How much of its original strength, vibrancy, and all-out enthusiasm gave way to general day-to-day life with its obligations, worries, and routines?

Instead of focusing too much energy on how much has been lost, take heart in the fact that much of it can be regained.

If you are like most adults, you are probably thinking this is foolish. After all, you are not as young as you used to be; and after all, there are also many time-consuming factors in your everyday life which you did not have in the past!

Some of us, however, have duly noted that one amazing benefit to growing a little older is the ability to stand in the present-day while looking both backward and forward-- at the way things were and at the way we would like for them to become.

Regardless of your current age or situation, you can have this benefit, also! You can begin by looking back at the early days of your marriage, and invest a bit of time in recalling what was important to you and your spouse. I'm not referring to how ideal your everyday life was at that time; but instead, the visions which you both had-- your dreams, your goals.

If you were like most couples, those dreams and goals probably included you both together. Perhaps you were both socially-aware, and dreamed of someday joining the Peace Corps together and helping those who were less fortunate. Perhaps you had an idea of beginning some type of

Business of your own. Whatever your particular dreams were, they somehow took second-place and then eventually vanished when you and your spouse began to take on the basic responsibilities of adult life.

Now is the time to assess your dreams-- and when you do, you may be pleasantly surprised to find that the idealistic dreams you had in the past are still an option for you. These days, we are all much more fortunate than generations past-- for even growing older does not

impose the limitations as it once did. In fact, there are more and more opportunities opening up for older people than ever before-- careers, travel, and numerous other options.

You and your spouse may decide that the dreams of your youth are no longer relevant or are unreasonable, for one reason or another. If this is the case, you can decide on new dreams together-- and begin putting them into motion. Perhaps it is something you can do ten years into the future, or perhaps it is something that you can do now!

What is the purpose of dreaming, and of making plans to put those dreams into action? One important factor is that everyone needs something to look forward to; but the other, equally-essential factor, is that it will go a long way in re-creating the bond that you and your spouse once had.

Having a dream is great-- but sharing a dream together is even better! And when you are in the process of turning those dreams into reality, you will see that the love and connection of your early marriage is not only still clearly present, but stronger than ever before!

Chapter 11: Helpful Tips

If you have read this far, you should be well on your way to improving your marriage-- not only resolving the difficulties which led you to read this book in the first place, but also to make your marriage stronger, healthier, and happier than you had ever expected it could be.

Instead of summarizing a book which you have already read, perhaps you will find some additional tips to be helpful! Depending on your own experience, you may or may not already know how often seemingly-small things can add up to huge problems or confrontations; and this is especially true for overworked, over-tired adults who can occasionally or frequently say or do something without realizing that it may have an impact.

When you are in the process of reconstructing your marriage and your relationship with your spouse, one important point to keep in mind is that while spontaneity in action can create enjoyable results, being too spontaneous with speech often does not! While this does not mean having to carefully guard everything that you say, it is most beneficial to your newfound communication if you develop the habit of thinking before you speak. Too often it happens that a person at the end of a long, exhausting day will blurt out something hurtful, or something which will be misinterpreted. Be careful with your words-- for they have great impact, for better or for worse!

You may be familiar with the old saying that honesty is the best policy. In the interest of your marriage and your relationship, it is a good idea to balance that saying with "be kind." Whether the subject is something which you yourself would consider trivial, such as your wife appearing ten pounds heavier in her new outfit, or whether you have made the mistake of being drawn into the popular "honesty kick" where nothing whatsoever should be kept private, balance your truthfulness with the knowledge of how what you wish to say will impact your spouse's feelings.

If your marriage is your priority, do your best to eliminate distractions. In an average couple's life, there are already more than enough distractions in everyday life; it is neither necessary nor recommended to emphasize the past over the present-day. Unless there is something which could truly have an impact on your marriage or your life, leave your past in the past.

While adult life does contain some degree of negativity, you will be promoting the health and happiness of your marriage, as well as both your spouse and yourself, if you develop the habit of focusing on the positives. In other words, if there is something which needs to be dealt with or addressed, by all means do it-- but resist the impulse to make complaining a part of your everyday life.

When you have come to terms with the differences between Yours, Mine, and Ours, it is essential to grant enough time to each. Constant togetherness is not only unhealthy, it is a direct opposition to many people's personalities. While you should be sure to make plenty

of time for togetherness, it is just as important to grant personal time and space to both your spouse and yourself.

If you feel the need for professional advice or intervention, by all means seek the help that you need. If, however, your marriage simply needs a little closer examination, resolving of basic difficulties, and better communication, all it takes is the willingness and motivation on your part and your spouse's part to gain all of this valuable insight and turn your marriage into a lifelong love!

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