Stop Your Divorce!

How To Stop Your Divorce Or Lover’s Rejection When You’re The Only One Who Wants To Stop It

by Homer McDonald with Dean Jackson
Welcome to Stop Your Divorce!
Here’s How To Get Some Extra Help and Counseling If You Need it...

San Antonio, Texas

Dear Friend,

In this book, you’ll find lots of different strategies to help you do one thing... STOP your divorce or Lover’s rejection.

The strategies in this book are the same strategies I use every day in my counseling practice in real life situations.

The first thing you’ll want to do is scan the book for the parts that jump out at you immediately, then go back and read it cover to cover.

If you get stuck, or need help, I’m available for telephone counseling, and you can reach me by calling 210-602-7806.

I truly want you to save your relationship, and I’m available to help you. Sincerely,

Homer McDonald
Stop Your Divorce!
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Introduction

Welcome To “Stop Your Divorce Or Lover’s Rejection”

The name of this book is “Stop Your Divorce Or Lover’s Rejection.” My main purpose in writing this book is to show you exactly what to do and why it will work, to get your mate or lover back.

Now it may seem at times during the book, that I’ve lost that goal and that my mind is on something else. But if it’s on something else, it’s because that something else is essential to getting your mate or lover back.

I have had over 6,000 people call me and ask me for my help in stopping their divorce or getting their lover back. There’s no question about it, that I know exactly what works and what does not work. But first, I’m going to tell you the three sentences that you’ve heard about.

The man’s wife was telling him that she did not love him anymore, and that “this marriage cannot work and I don’t want it to work.” After talking with me, the next time she said that, he said to her in a very soothing tone of voice — “Sweetheart, I prefer that the marriage work, but you’re one hundred percent correct. It’s totally impossible. It’s totally impossible, so I will help you find an apartment and help you move out.”

Then there was quiet. She walked around the house about five minutes and came back and said, “You know, I think this marriage can work and I want it to work.” He was shocked! And so elated, he couldn’t wait to call me and talk with me.

We’re going to talk about the competition and how to win against the competition. And part of the competition is our addiction to ten strategies that never work. This book is going to tell you why and how to outsmart the competition, to win over the competition. Because you do have a lot of competition.

There are 4 different kinds of competition you’ll have to overcome…

1. Other people: In-laws, her man friend or her lady friend who is divorced and subconsciously envious of her marriage. Other people involved that are supporting her in her idea for divorce or separation.

2. Her negative feelings, her fear, her hurt, her anger, her pessimistic feelings.

3. Addiction to 10 strategies that never work, which I’ll go into very briefly.

4. Our pain and our addiction to the pain. That is, our hurt, our grief, our anxiety, our depression.
Now, by winning over the competition, and I guarantee you that you will win over the competition if you follow my strategies, we will get her back, after we have earned her back, after we’ve earned her respect and her interest and her positive feelings. And we earn all this by winning over the above competitors.

Here Are 10 Strategies That Never Work – Yet People Always Try

1. The first is to give her reassurance. “I’ve changed. I won’t be controlling anymore. I won’t lie to you anymore. I won’t have another affair,” and so forth. The efforts to give her reassurance. This almost never works.

2. The second strategy is to tell her over and over again, “I love you.” That never works.

3. Third is the use of prayer and hope, which is basically wishful thinking. Robert Ringer talks about wishful thinking in his book Winning Through Intimidation. He was in big commercial real estate, barely getting by financially. And then he discovered he was doing wishful thinking, so he switched over to doing reality thinking. In less than one year, he made over $800,000 in brokerage fees.

4. The fourth strategy is arguing, reasoning, trying to talk her into feeling different or doing different. That never works.

5. The fifth strategy is recruiting others, trying to get others to side with us. That always boomerangs.

6. Acting depressed. Now, sometimes that might work temporarily through getting her to feel guilty or afraid of what we’re going to do. But it increases her motivation to get away from us.

I had a man who attempted suicide twice before he heard about me and called me. He ended up in the hospital. I don’t even think she went to the hospital. But they’re back together and happy now. His acting depressed didn’t help very much.

7. Using the kids. That’s kind of like recruiting others. That always boomerangs.

8. Blaming and using moral pressure. One psychologist says, “The essence of mental disturbance can be put in one word: blaming.” Never works. It works negatively.

9. Pessimism. We become addicted to our pessimism. “I know I can’t win. You don’t know my wife. She’s very stubborn. She never changes her mind.” I say, “Never? About anything?” “Well, maybe about minor things, but not things this important.” I said, “Well, I think it’s about something this important is precisely what she has changed her mind about. She originally said she was going to stay with you and love you forever. And now, she can’t stand you. So obviously, she’s changed her mind. So obviously, she does change her mind.” But people fall in love with pessimism. That’s one of the strategies.
10. Exaggeration. One psychologist says, “The essence of mental disturbance can be put in one word: blaming.” I say the essence of mental disturbance can be put in one word: exaggerating. We exaggerate the good, and we exaggerate the bad.

All of these strategies are very human. This list almost exhausts the strategies that people use. These strategies always backfire. Now, how are we going to win against the competition of other people and her negative feelings and our addiction to these strategies and our addiction to self-pity?

This Book Will Show You Exactly How To Win Over All This Competition

Let’s picture that we’re in a contest. The one who wins this juggling contest is the one that will get the wife. Now, the one that wins the contest is the one that keeps the most plates juggled up in the air. These plates stand for factors, situations that we have to deal with, people that we have to deal with, and so on. In other words, our desires. Each one of these plates that we’re juggling up in the air is a desire.

Now, what everybody is doing is they’re thinking of their desires, particularly their more important ones like being agreed with, being approved of, being loved, getting their way and so on, they believe that that’s a need. And that is a big handicap in their competing.

Say the other man is involved with the wife, who is pulling away from the husband. He will gradually pressure her, “Give me more, give me more, give me more.” “What? You had lunch with your husband?” Or, “You haven’t fully divorced him yet?” And so he will turn her against him, because of his philosophy of needing. The thing that we want to realize and learn, which will give us tremendous, unbeatable advantages against all of the competition that I have mentioned – her feelings, other people – we will win in this juggling contest by realizing that we don’t have any needs. It’s only desires. If something isn’t going our way, we think it’s only a desire. It’s only a preference. That’s all that it is.

So we realize that we don’t need. That causes us to relax, lose our anxiety, and have fun. We’re having fun juggling. If we come from a philosophy that everybody does of needing, and we start to drop a plate, then we lunge after that plate. And that causes us to even probably lose that plate and several others at the same time. Whereas, if we’re relaxed and having fun, “Uh-oh, I dropped a plate. It’s okay.” We don’t lunge after it and drop a whole lot more plates. Relaxation and having fun are the keys to winning.
A movie not very long ago called “The Fan,” DeNiro is this fanatical fan. He practically worships this baseball player who’s a home run hitter. The home run hitter goes through a batting slump where he is never hitting anything. And then all of a sudden, he starts hitting home runs again. Well, this intrigued DeNiro, the fan, so much that he looked him up and said, “What happened so that you’re hitting home runs again?” He said, “I stopped caring, and that relaxed me so much.”

The more that we relax, we lose our anxiety, we have fun, and we become more efficient. Whether it’s sex or public speaking, it doesn’t make any difference.

Now, many years ago, I thought of anxiety as an anti-pleasure thing, that it works against having pleasure. The more anxiety we have, the less pleasure. And of course, when I get a new idea, I always argue against it. I said, “Hey Homer, you really enjoy suspense movies, and suspense movies have a lot of anxiety in them. That’s what suspense is. It’s got the anxiety. So you’re enjoying the anxiety. So anxiety is not always anti-pleasure.”

I said, “Wait a minute. Let me look at this more closely. Am I enjoying the anxiety? Or am I putting myself mentally in that guy’s place, who is in a situation where he feels a lot of anxiety. He’s in a dangerous situation. And then I jump back in my own skin and think, ‘Oh, I’m so glad that’s not me.’ It’s the relief from anxiety that produces the pleasure. Also, thinking about the anxiety on the screen takes me away from my everyday worries and concerns, so I get relief from that anxiety.”

A college coach that has proven this is Bud Winter at San Jose University in California. His athletic students broke thirty-nine world records. He taught them all to stay relaxed, say to themselves, loose jaws, loose hands. And he took our runners down to Mexico I believe in the year 1968. There was a lot of political unrest. Everybody was tense. He had all his runners lie down on the ground and relax their muscles totally, perfectly. They took most of the medals. He has a book called Relax And Win.

You relax, have fun. But you can’t relax if you exaggerate the importance of something. If you think that you need to get your mate back, if you need her, then there’s no chance that you’re going to get her back because you’re lying to yourself, you’re putting yourself down, you’re attacking her pride. You’re turning yourself into a baby and a tyrant. This makes you less attractive and less interesting. Relax. Realize that you don’t need.
Here’s What’s Ahead In This Book…

The book is divided into 6 chapters and, quickly, I’d like to introduce them to you.

Chapter 1: 5 Things You Can Do Right Away To Turn The Tide In Your Favor, And Six Key Concepts That Make The Strategies Work

In this chapter you’ll get off to a fast start by understanding some of the key concepts that explain why the strategies you’ll learn work. The five things you can do right away always work and learning how to use them will immediately turn the tide in your favor.

The six fundamental concepts are:

- Why Working At Your Relationship Isn’t Working And What To Do About It
- To Him That Hath, More Shall Be Given
- The More You Believe You Need Something – The Less You’ll Have It
- How To Overcome The Most Self Defeating Mindset
- Stop Coming To Your Own Defense – And Watch Your Mate Do It For You
- We All Want More Of Something We Can’t Have

Chapter 2: Understanding Masochism: Why We Keep Banging Our Head Against A Wall

In the 1950’s I struggled to understand masochism. Psychoanalysts said pain becomes a pleasure, but they didn’t explain how it becomes a pleasure. I asked some of them, “If pain becomes a pleasure, why doesn’t all pain become a pleasure so we have no pain left over? People who are depressed or anxious are in pain. Why doesn’t that pain change into a pleasure?” Of course there’s no explanation for it.

I uncovered a concept that explains why we keep banging our head against a wall – Even though it hurts.

Chapter 3: The 8 Attitudes That Prevent You From Getting What You Want – And How To Avoid Them

In this chapter you’ll discover eight different attitudes that are always present – always present – in a person who’s upset by anxiety or depression, which people almost always are when they’re in love and being rejected.
Chapter 4: The Most Common Reasons People Give When They’re Leaving – And Why They’re Never The Real Reason

In this chapter you’ll get a look inside the mind of the person who is doing the divorcing or wants the separation. There are some common mindsets they have and reasons they use to explain, defend and justify their actions. Later in the book, we’ll explain what we believe to be the real reasons, but these are the conscious excuses that they give.

Chapter 5: Here are 44 Strategies I’ve Developed Over 45 Years In Private Practice You Can Use Right Now To Stop Your Divorce

I’ve been doing marriage counseling in private practice for over 45 years. It’s been my lifelong career. These strategies have all been tested and proven to work again and again in real life. I put these strategies to the test every day. Thousands of people have used these exact strategies to stop their divorces.

Chapter 6: 34 Of The Most Common Situations I Hear From People Who Call Me Every Day – And How To Handle Them

In this chapter you’ll discover how to handle some very common situations. When I start working with a new client, the first thing I ask them is, “Tell me about your situation.” These are the things they tell me…and what I say to them.

This book is my life work. I’ve put everything I have into making it, and I haven’t held anything back. I know this book will help you…so let’s get started.
Chapter 1

Five Things You Can Start Doing Right Away To Turn The Tide In Your Favor...

When one person is wanting a divorce or is pulling away, and the other one doesn’t want it, there is a clash of wills. There is tension. There is stress. So I’ve discovered the psychology of applying the jujitsu wrestling technique, where the wrestler uses the strength, energy and weight of his opponent to his own advantage, and to the disadvantage of his opponent.

We cannot get to the good feelings of your wife, husband or lover. We cannot get to those good feelings as long as this war is going on, as long as you communicate to her that you want something different from what she wants.

I remember years ago, when I was using hypnosis. A woman was lying on the couch and I was suggesting muscle relaxing all over. And then I was doing the deepening and testing process of “your right hand and right arm are getting light, like a feather.” After suggesting that for about five minutes, at the most ten minutes, the person’s hand always begins to float upward because they’re giving in to their imagination and following the suggestion.

This woman’s hand didn’t move at all after ten or fifteen minutes. So I said, “Are you feeling anything in your right hand and right arm?” She said in a very relaxed, almost sleepy voice, “Yes. My right hand and my right arm are getting heavier and heavier.” See, the opposite of what I suggested. So I said, “Good. Your right hand and right arm are getting heavier and heavier. heavier and heavier.” And I kept on that way. In about two or three minutes, her hand was floating up in the air. And of course, this is what psychologists call negative suggestibility. When the other person is pulling away from you or wanting a divorce or wanting separation, they are almost automatically on the opposite side of any fence that they perceive you as being on. So use the jujitsu. Go with them.

Now here are five elements, five ideas, five strategies, all under the heading of the jujitsu technique.

1. Stop pressuring, stop criticizing, stop complaining, stop whining.

2. Agree with anything your mate says or does. Put a good name on it. Agree with their negative feelings. You see, when the wife has a closed mind and is divorcing a husband, she is in love with her negative feelings. So she puts her negative feelings in charge of the door to her mind. And when you try to reason with her, you’re telling her that her negative feelings are wrong. That causes her negative feelings to lock the door tighter. Agree with her negative feelings – whatever they are. “Yes, this relationship is hopeless.” “Yes, you will never be able to trust me. That’s exactly correct.” Do not defend yourself. Just agree, sound sincere, and shut up.
3. Act perfectly happy about everything as it is. The status quo – as it is. Act perfectly happy. Enjoy your space. Enjoy your freedom. Tell them that they are correct – that you all were getting too serious too fast – or whatever their interpretation is that they’ve given to you. Agree with it, and act happy about whatever it is that they want.

4. Date others. Make them jealous. Play hard-to-get.

5. Do everything instantly and happily, one hundred percent your mate’s way.

This uses jujitsu, and it always works. Now, you can’t do this for a week or a day or a month, and then switch back over to the old pressuring self. It’s not going to work for you. And you can’t do it partly in one part of the conversation and then slip back to explaining yourself about what you want and why you did what you did. You’ve got to practice consistency with this. No pressure at all.

Now, this does not mean no contact. If you’re separated, you can call and say hi, do small talk and happy talk. Small talk. Happy talk. You and professionals encourage, generally speaking, that you’ve got to do serious talk. Serious talk hurts the relationship most of the time. Small talk, happy talk, friendly talk. Make it brief. You can call. They will not feel pressured if you do that kind of talk or stick to practical things. “When do you want me to pick the kids up?” Or, “Do you want me to bring the check by or do you want me to mail it?” These strategies work immediately to reduce the feeling that there is a clash of wills.

Her negative or his negative attitudes towards you are being supported by you communicating what you want. Every time you say to her or him, “But, I love you,” you are saying, “but I want something different than what you want. You want to pull away, but I want you to come closer. I don’t really care what you want. It’s what I want that’s important.”

Lots of times men tell their wives, “I’ve changed. I’ve changed. Let’s get back together. I’ve changed.” I tell the husbands that “Every time you say, ‘I’ve changed,’ you’re communicating to her that you have not changed.” “Really? Why is that? How is that? I don’t understand that.”

“Of course, you don’t understand. But what’s your motivation? Why are you telling him or her how you’ve changed? What’s your purpose? Isn’t it to get your way?” “Yeah, I want her back.” “That’s your way. It’s not her way, right now. She said she may consider it later, maybe, but not right now. And every time you say, ‘I’ve changed,’ you’re saying,

‘Give me my way! Give me my way! Give me my way! What I want is more important than what you want. I don’t give a hoot what you want.” And subconsciously, she says, “He hasn’t changed. He’s still the neurotic, selfish, pressuring guy he always was. There’s no way I’m going to go back to him, or feel positive to him as long as he is this way.”

Now, these basic ideas that I’ve discovered that always work are in oriental philosophy. They are in the Sermon on the Mount. Now, I’m not trying to sell religion. I’m selling philosophy. I’m selling psychology. I’m selling what works. Jesus said, “Resist not evil.” You don’t resist it, go with it. “You want a divorce, it’s okay. I don’t blame you. I understand.” The more
you talk against the divorce, the more she wants it.

Another place in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him. Lest they deliver you to the judge and the judge to the jailer, and you shall not come out until you have paid the uttermost farthing.” Agree with thine adversary, quickly. Why? Because it saves your nerves. Saves your pride. Saves your energy. And you end up getting your way, much more than arguing or rebelling or disagreeing or pressuring. If you want to win somebody back, the worst thing you can do is disagree with them.

**Why Working At Your Relationship Isn’t Working And What To Do About It**

Now there are two kinds of divorce that happen, sort of at the same time. One is the legal divorce, and the other one is the emotional divorce. We get the two confused. We think we’re going to stop the emotional divorce by stopping the legal divorce. The more you try to stop the legal side of divorce, the more rebellious he or she feels. The more you use pressure, the less they see your inner beauty and your charm.

Everybody thinks, professionals and non-professionals alike, they say to have a happy marriage or a happy relationship, you have to work at it. But I say that it’s the working that makes it not work. Again, I find support for this in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. He says, “Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin. Yet, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

When you criticize, you’re working at improving your mate. When you complain to your lover, you’re working at improving him or her. When you argue, you’re working at improving them. When you try to reason with them. When you tell them how much you love them. Both when you’re reasoning and when you’re telling them how much you love them, you are trying to change them. You are working at changing them. And it’s that working at changing them, that is the only problem.

Proof? You want proof? Stop all of that, and watch the relationship get better. Stop all of that working. Allow and accept, one hundred percent, whatever your mate thinks, feels, or does is perfectly okay. It’s perfectly okay. And watch them improve themselves. Their negative feelings towards you will weaken rapidly, because their negative feeling needs something in you to fight with. And when you sincerely see what’s on their side, when you sincerely agree with them, and when you lovingly and sincerely go one hundred percent totally, instantly, and happily your mate’s way, when you do that there’s nothing for their negative feeling to build on.

You have put the white flag up. You’ve thrown your gun down. That forces them to do the same thing. They cannot shoot you when you have no gun. When you’re not defending yourself, they want to defend you. It’s not normal to not defend yourself, but it is healthy. It’s not normal; it’s not natural to not defend yourself.
Now, the idea of defending yourself is a fantastic idea. It’s a great idea. It’s a healthy idea. But when we tell the other person that they are wrong and we are right, and we pressure them, they become more negative and more hostile. So we’re not really defending ourselves.

We’re giving them a stick that they always hit us with. And our giving them a stick that they always hit us with is not defending ourselves. We call it defensive, because that’s what we think we’re doing. The way to defend yourself that works is to defend your mate or lover.

Agree with them. Do not disagree at all. It’s not to your advantage. It’s a dumb thing to do.

Now, I’ve seen these ideas work in my own marriage, and in hundreds and hundreds of other people’s lives. I’m 76 and my wife is 56. We’ve been married 30 years. She made better grades than any student ever has in the whole history of Our Lady of the Lake University, here in San Antonio. She’s gorgeous, she’s sweet, she’s a fifth-grade schoolteacher. She’s made “Who’s Who” among American schoolteachers. Everybody falls in love with her.

We’ve had rare, but sometimes serious problems. Immediately, I follow these principles. She loses her negative feelings right away, or within an hour or two. These ideas always work.

You see, they’re not natural because our feelings are spoiled brats. They want to choose the goal and they want to choose the methods. We want to go to London, England, and we want to go by horseback. Well, you can’t go to London, England by horseback. You’ve got to let your head choose something. Let your head choose the goal, so your feelings say, “I love this person and I want back with them.” This is what your feelings are saying.

“Okay,” your head says, “then you’ve got to do these things. You’ve got to agree and stop criticizing – cheerfully, happily – accept whatever your mate wants.” “But I feel I would lose.” There you go. The feelings want to choose everything. And the feelings, this time, are wrong. You lose with this method.

Your relationship will improve when you stop working at changing your mate and warmly allow your mate to be whoever they are. If they want to be cold, it’s perfectly okay. They want to be hostile, they want to think that you’re guilty of something that you’re not, it’s perfectly okay. It’s perfectly okay. It’s only a preference that I get her or him back, or that they be more loving. It’s not a need. The more that you think of it as a need, you’re not going to get it. If it’s only a preference, you have a lot of power there. If you desperately need a loan from the bank, the bank will say no.

**To Him That Hath, More Shall Be Given**

I’ve had some trouble with some people who don’t want to date others. Jesus said, “To him that hath, shall be given.” If you have a job, it’s easier to get a job. If you have another woman friend or another man friend, it’s easier to get your husband, lover, girlfriend or wife back.
I had a Baptist preacher into my office a few months ago, and his wife wouldn’t talk to him at all about anything serious. He said she wouldn’t talk to him about getting back together. No, no, no. So I tried to get him to date other women. He wouldn’t do it. So I said, “It’s okay. I didn’t say I’d do this miracle if you didn’t follow my ideas. It’s perfectly okay with me. It’s not my tail in the crack.” “Okay, I don’t need you to be happy. I don’t need you to get her back. I slightly prefer that, but if you don’t want to, it’s perfectly okay.” I said, “Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “For the meek shall inherit the Earth.” Meek? What’s that? Open-minded. Those who will let reality talk to them. You’re not letting reality talk to you.

I finally got through his closed mind, and he started dating another woman. Immediately, his wife started pursuing him. Jesus said, “To him that hath, shall be given.” If you sit around “I don’t have, I don’t have,” that “she doesn’t love me enough or he doesn’t love me enough and I’m losing him,” and whine, whine, whine, there’s no way that your relationship is going to improve. You’ve got to take on the responsibility of making yourself at least act happy and pretend happiness, even if you don’t feel it.

Now this is what world-class athletes are being taught by their psychologists. They’re being taught if you lose a point, instantly act confident. Act like it didn’t happen. Act confident. Act happy. Act energetic. Act positive, whether you feel like it or not. Take care of your feelings later on, but not during the game. Not during the game! During the game, you put on a strong front.

People tend to believe that, “She’ll think that I don’t care if I don’t communicate that I need her or him.” Well, is telling her that you care, is it working? Of course not. Does it work? Does it work? Does it work? Stop what doesn’t work. Try something that has a chance of working.

I enjoy a TV show called The Commish. The commissioner, at the end of one show, is putting his arm around his son of about 15 years old, I guess, and saying, “Son, I was told when I was younger that there are three kinds of people. One kind is the dumb ones who don’t learn. The smart ones who learn from their own mistakes. Very smart ones. But then there are the wise ones, the ones who learn from other people’s mistakes.” When you’ve already made enough mistakes on your own, I’m telling you that other people have done the same kind of mistakes – the mistake of saying, “But I need you and I love you – pressure, pressure, pressure. And it doesn’t work for them, either. It wouldn’t work for Jesus Christ.

In fact, in my study of scriptures, Jesus did not pursue anybody. He said in two different gospels, “I’ve not come to save the righteous. I’ve not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners.” Why not the righteous? They don’t need salvation? Why, they need it worse. They need it worse. They’re less healthy. They’re more lonely. These snobs, these insecure, arrogant, lonely people, they need salvation worse.

In another place, Jesus says, “There are none so blind as those who will not see.” In other words, I’m not going to waste my time with those that are stubborn, as long as they’re stubborn. If there was a rumor that a town that they were approaching was disinclined to believe, they’d go around that town. Jesus and his disciples would go around that town, when
they had a close-minded attitude. He wasn’t going to stupidly beat his head against a brick wall, see?

The More You Believe You Need Something —
The Less You’re Going To Have It

Pressuring and pursuing never works. It always pushes the other person away, because you’re communicating low self-esteem. When you’re thinking, “need to be loved,” that is creating low self-esteem. It’s hogwash that we need to be loved. We don’t need romantic love.

I ask many people, “Before you were in love, what were you doing?” “Oh, I was enjoying friends and enjoying my freedom.” “Were you happy?” “Oh, yeah.” “And you weren’t romantically involved?” “No. I had friends, my job, my school, whatever.” In order to make it into secure happiness, you’ve got to start caring about facts. Now, you don’t have to make it into maturity. You do not have to make it into a secure happiness. But if you do, you have to achieve that by caring about facts. What’s true? What works?

It’s not true that you need to be loved, that’s boloney. It’s nice to be loved. But the more you need it, the more you’re equipped to get hurt, angry, criticize, complain, argue, show jealousy. All these bad feelings come from the intellectual belief that you need to be loved, that you need to be believed, that you need to be trusted.

“If it’s a nice thing, then I need it.” “Trust is a nice thing, so I need it.” No, you don’t. It’s desirable. And the more that you believe that you need it, the less that you’re going to have it. The purpose of needing is not to get the good thing, but to drive it away. It’s a subconscious trick. The part of our mind that wants to be unhappy, that wants to feel sorry for itself, that wants to be depressed, tells you that you need to be loved. You need to be understood. You need to be supported. You need to be agreed with. No, you don’t. Total boloney. And the more you believe it, you push it away.

If it’s only a preference, that’s all that it is, you get it. Let me give you an example of the power of preference. A man came into my office and he was feeling depressed because his wife had just told him the day before that she wanted a divorce. He said, “I asked her if she would take marriage counseling and she said no. I asked her this morning, and she said no, she wants a divorce.” I said, “Do you mind if I call her?” “It won’t do you any good.” I said, “Well, it may not. Do you mind if I try?” “Go ahead.” “Thank you.”

I called her and I said, “I’m your husband’s counselor. I’m not going to try to save this marriage against your will, but I’d appreciate it if you would come in...” “No, I will not,” she said in a loud voice, right in the middle of my sentence. I had her in the next day. Let me tell you exactly how I handled it. The moment that she said, “No, I will not,” in a loud voice, I knew she was ready for me, that she was negative before I called. I waited two or three seconds and then I said, “I certainly understand that feeling.” I repeated that. I said, “I
certainly understand that feeling. I’m kind of busy right now. Do you mind if I call you back later this afternoon?” “Oh,” she said, “I guess that’s all right.” I said, “Thank you very much. I’ll call you back.” And I hung up.

When I hung the phone up, I turned to the husband and said, “We’ve got it made.” “Got it made?! Did she say she’d come in? Sounded to me like she said she wouldn’t.” I said, “You’re right. She said she wouldn’t, but she will.” “Where did you get this confidence?” he said. I said, “Well, lucky for you, I’ve got it.”

Later that afternoon, I called her back and I said, “Thank you very much for letting me call you back. You don’t have to tell me, but I sure would appreciate it if you would tell me why you said you wouldn’t come in and talk to me.” “I don’t mind telling you,” she said, “it’s because you’re going to try to talk me into taking counseling and I don’t want counseling.” I said, “I promise not to do that. I promise not to do that. I just want some background information on your husband, which will help me help him faster and help him get on with his life. That’s all.” She said, “Oh, okay. Then, I’ll come in.”

So she came in, and I listened to her talk for an hour. And I just listened and empathized. “I understand. I see. Then what happened?” I just listened and understanding, and never pointing anything out or anything like that. Never trying to get her to think a new thought, just listening. And then I said, “Thank you very much. You’ve been a big help.” She said, “I have?” I said, “Yes, you sure have.” She said, “That’s it?” I said, “That’s it.”

She looked me straight in the eye and then she said, “I know, you think I need counseling, don’t you?” I smiled. I said, “No, I don’t think you do, I know you do.” “You know I do? Why do you say that?” “Because you’re confused and unhappy, that’s why.” “Yeah, that’s true.” It surprised me that she admitted it. Because when people want a divorce, they always act like they’re very happy.

She said, “That’s true. But counseling can’t help me with that.” I said, “My kind of counseling can.” She said, “Can it really?” I said, “Yes, it surely can.” “Oh. Okay. Then I’ll take it.” So she took counseling.

See, we cannot sell needs. Nobody buys needs. They don’t want the pressure. Have you ever heard anyone say, “Oh, I just love to be pressured?” When the person comes across needing, they come across with pressure, pressure, pressure.

Pressure creates stress and strain. It makes you nervous. The one doing the pressuring and the one being pressured. In reality, all we’re dealing with are preferences. We can lie. We have the human right to be wrong and lie. This is not a preference, we need it. We need to be understood. We need our mate to see how good our intentions were when we screwed up. We need… We need… We need them to trust us. We need this marriage to work. Baloney, baloney, baloney. Not true.

Now we have the right to lie, but it is a lie. And it’s very masochistic. It’s very self-defeating. The more you need something, the more you push it away. You try to use crying
and whining and depression and arguing as methods to achieve a happy relationship. It doesn’t work. It always works to get self-pity. The real purpose of believing the false belief that you need is not to get the good thing, but to feel bad. That’s the purpose of needing.

There is nothing wrong with you. You just believe that there’s something wrong with you that another person’s love or approval will cure. You’re not sick. You just believe that you are. We have songs, beautiful songs, that communicate to us that you’re nobody until somebody loves you. Well, if you’re nobody until somebody loves you, you’re going to have a heck of a hard time. Maybe not at the very beginning of a relationship, when everybody is putting their best foot forward. But gradually, in time, you’re going to have serious trouble – unnecessary trouble.

When you think of things as only a preference, that’s all that it is. So I’m happy to do it your way. You could just stay home or go out. A relationship works when you have that kind of attitude. And you can have the attitude “I’m happy to do it your way” when you think of things as only a preference. Because to go out or stay home, or see this particular movie, or do that particular thing, it’s only a preference. And I’m glad to give up a preference of mine for a greater preference, which is to have a good relationship, to have peace of mind, to have maturity. If you don’t have peace of mind, you don’t have a whole lot. And anything that you need destroys the peace of mind. That is, believing that you need. It makes you anxious or depressed, even while you’re getting the thing that you think you need. “Does she really mean it,” and “Will he mean it next week,” there’s anxiety coming from this. Putting excessive importance on something pushes it away.

How To Overcome The Most Self-Defeating Mindset

Now, the opposite extreme is to say something has no importance at all. That’s a mistake. I’m not trying to say that romantic love is for the birds. I have a happy marriage; I have a happy romantic love. It’s nice. It’s very nice. But it’s not essential for happiness. The more you realize that it isn’t, the more capable you become in achieving it. So some days you have icing on the cake, and some days you don’t, and that’s okay because you have cake. The cake is self-acceptance. Self-acceptance. Rational thinking. That I don’t need what I want; it’s only a preference. That’s all that it is.

When you go into Baskin-Robbins. They say, “What can I do for you?” You give them a preference. If they say, “I’m sorry, we’re out of chocolate almond,” you don’t get hurt. You don’t get mad. You have about three seconds, at the very most, of disappointment. Then you come up with another preference. If that’s not available, then you might end up with your third or fourth choice, and you might find out that your third or fourth choice you like even better than you did your first choice.

God sometimes knows better. Fate sometimes knows better. We don’t throw fits about that. We don’t get hurt and mad and run out of Baskin-Robbins place. And then the next day, we’re walking by and they say, “Hey, Homer. We’ve got your favorite flavor – chocolate
almond.” I don’t say, “Too little, too late. I’ve got my hurt feelings to keep me warm.” We don’t do that. We’re more rational. It’s that kind of rationality that we have about ice cream is exactly the rationality that’s desirable for us to learn in connection with getting what we want from other people.

Feeling hurt is a sick pleasure, which crowds out healthy pleasures. And the belief that you need is what causes hurt feelings and angry feelings. When we change that belief, then you have disappointment and frustration, dislike, but you’re not hurt, you’re not mad and you’re not anxious when something doesn’t go your way. You feel a degree of disappointment and a degree of frustration. But you accept it philosophically. It’s perfectly okay. And you don’t feel hurt and you don’t feel mad.

See, when you feel hurt and mad, you behave in ways to increase the hurt feelings and the angry feelings. You attack the other person’s pride. They get worse. Then you have more excuses for your bad feelings. But when you realize that what you desire is only a preference, that’s all that it is, then you behave in ways that reduce the frustration and reduce the disappointment. You take care of the other person’s pride, while taking care of your own.

When you have an attitude that it’s only a preference, only a desire, only a want, that’s all that it is, you relax. And you can imagine new ways. When you believe that you need what you desire, you’re quick to get hurt and mad, anxious, depressed, and you get stuck in that rut. So you are unable to come up with a new approach, a new experiment. Something new to try. When it’s only a preference, you relax and you come up with a new idea.

Now, for example, the situation where I talked with the wife who said no, she would not come in. I was able to, first of all, say, “I understand that feeling.” When you believe you need what you want, you don’t say, “I understand.” You say, “But I don’t understand. Why are you doing this?” And that works against you. So you stick with criticizing, complaining, arguing, jealousy, whatever, and you’re stuck in the rut.

I felt sincerely that I only preferred her to come in. So then, I was able to say, “I understand that feeling.” Now, something else that you do that works when you only prefer, is you ask for something much smaller – something less – something quicker and easier. When you believe that you need, you’re not in the mood to ask for a bite of food when you want a whole plate. “I shouldn’t have to do this.” So you end up with self-pity. But when you realize that it’s only a preference, then you can ask for something smaller. See, I wanted her to come in, she said no. So I didn’t get mad or argue or say, “The hell with it.” I said, “I understand that feeling. Do you mind if I call you back later this afternoon?” Ask her for something smaller, just to talk to her on the phone. Something easier for her to do.

And then when I called her back, I said, “Thank you for calling me back.” People who need don’t say thank you. They just criticize and complain. I said, “Thank you for letting me call you back.”

You are able to make a soft and gentle request, not a demand, when you believe in preferences. “You certainly do not have to tell me,” I said, “but I sure would appreciate it if
you would tell me why you said you wouldn’t come in.” She said, “No, I don’t mind telling you. It’s because I think you’re going to try to talk me into taking counseling, and I don’t want counseling.” I said, “I promise not to do that.” See, even though I prefer that she take counseling, I promise not to try to talk her into it.

So when you only prefer, you can break it up into little steps, and you can focus on only one step at a time. You are patient, and creative, and pleasant to be around. You don’t have a need to argue. I didn’t have a need to argue with her when she was in the office. I didn’t need her to take counseling. I preferred that she take counseling. If I needed her to take counseling, I would have argued with her. That’s why her husband couldn’t get her to come in. He needed her to come in.

Stop Coming To Your Own Defense
— and Watch Your Mate Do It For You...

Life will not give you what you believe that you need. It may sound unfair, but that’s reality. Because it’s not true that you need it anyway. You want it, and that’s all that it is. It’s only a desire. That’s all that it is. When you think that way, then you behave in a confident way, in a happy way.

“Okay, if you don’t want to, then I’ll dance with somebody else. Or I’ll sit at the table by myself and read my book.” You see, if we get a different point of view, if we see this world as just being full of pleasures, so that if this pleasure is not quickly and easily available, then another pleasure is. You drive down the street, turn on the radio to your favorite station and you get static, you don’t hit the radio. You don’t throw a temper tantrum. You don’t turn the radio off. You switch to another station. Not your favorite station, but you listen. You stay in a good mood. And then after a while, you try your original station again, and it comes through without any static. It’s cleared up, and you’ve kept yourself in a good mood.

Good things happen to people who keep themselves in a good mood. Bad things tend to happen to people who keep themselves in a bad mood, because of attacking other people’s pride.

Now, in analyzing romantic love, I’m not talking about humanitarian love or Christian love where you love everybody and his dog and cat you know, but romantic love where you are in love. I haven’t read this anyplace, but it makes sense to me. That the main thing that I am in love with in romantic love is my own pride. I secondarily fall in love with my mate because I rightly or wrongly believe that he or she is going to support my pride.

You see, my theory is correct. The only way to test it, very quickly. Do we know anybody that falls in love with somebody they’re ashamed of? I’ve never heard of somebody falling in love with somebody they’re ashamed of. They might be ashamed of how he slurps his coffee, or something else. But the overall feeling is pride. And as we develop more and more shame
for what he or she is doing or not doing, we move towards falling out of love. Because in romantic love, the main thing we’re in love with is our own pride.

You never hear a woman say, “I fell in love with this old, fat, lazy bum.” He might appear that way to other people, but she sees him in positive terms: his sense of humor, his sweetness, thoughtfulness, and so forth.

I’ve been thinking about this kind of thing passionately for many, many years. It’s been my day and night hobby – my day and night career – to understand human emotions. To understand what’s going on when a person is unhappy. What’s going on when things are not working for them. What’s going on when things work well?

So you really don’t know anybody who’s fallen in love with somebody they’re ashamed of. So then, it shows to us the importance of protecting their pride and our own. And the more you believe you need something, you attack their pride. And believing that you need whatever you desire is an attack on your own pride.

This is why criticizing, complaining, arguing, and showing jealousy are the worst things that we can do, because that is experienced as an attack on both people’s pride. You see, because the more you criticize and complain, the more your pride feels insecure or hurt, as well as the person that you’re arguing with.

Now, this is the idea of always agreeing with the other person, particularly their negative emotions. You see, if a wife is rejecting a husband, she is in love with her negative feelings, so she’s letting her negative feelings be in charge of the door. So when he agrees with her negative feelings and does not defend himself, shuts up, sounds sincere, immediately the door opens. And he goes into her mind and heart. But that’s not normal. The normal thing is to try to reason with her, which means to tell her that those negative feelings may be right to a degree, but they’re also wrong. And boy, those negative feelings, they have to be regarded as one hundred percent right.

When you take all the blame and put not one drop of blame on her, that works. You win by instantly and cheerfully losing. Jesus taught that on the Sermon on the Mount.

A few years ago, my wife and I were visiting relatives in Austin for two very nice days. As we were leaving in the car, my wife and I alone, she gives me a criticism. She says, “You shouldn’t have been confrontational with Margaret. You know Russell doesn’t like that.” Well, my thought was, “I wasn’t confrontational with Margaret. She was with me.” That thought zipped through my head, but I had already programmed myself to always agree. So I said, “Honey, you’re right. I shouldn’t have been confrontational with Margaret. I should have learned my lesson three months ago when we visited, and Margaret and I got into a discussion and it didn’t work out well. I guess I’m just a slow learner, and I want to thank you for pointing it out to me that I could have handled it better.”
Notice that I switched from the issue of whether I was confrontational or not, to that I could have handled it better, because it was even easier for me to agree with that. I could have handled it better by not even getting into a discussion with Margaret.

Okay, what happened then, when I agreed with my wife’s criticism of me? I did not defend myself at all. I got on her side and jumped on me. Immediately she said, “But you were just trying to help.” And I said, “That’s true. But my method was wrong, because it wasn’t helping.” She said, “But I think Margaret has a very closed mind.” I said, “I do, too. But my method was wrong because it was not opening that closed mind. And I want to thank you for pointing it out to me that I could have handled it better.” She was very friendly and affectionate the rest of the evening. Always agree.

I thought I was the only who would really dream up this idea. Now I know everybody thinks about agreeing, but they think that that is weak and hypocritical and won’t work. But I teach agree from a standpoint of strength, mature love. Because the other person is always right about something, even if they’re sixty, seventy, eighty percent wrong, they’re ten or twenty percent right. And if you talk about where they are wrong, they become more wrong. And if you talk about where they are right, they immediately become less wrong.

See, most people don’t know that if you agree and sound sincere to the other person, do not defend yourself, do not explain yourself, they will defend you. They will reverse their position. Amazing! It works like magic!

A person says, “You know, I want a divorce.” “I understand. I agree.” It looks you’re moving faster toward a divorce, but you’re getting at the roots of why she wants a divorce. She wants a divorce because you’re always disagreeing with her. She does not want a divorce from somebody who’s always pleasant and is always seeing her side and always agreeing with her. That’s not the person she’s pulling away from. She’s pulling away from the person who disagrees with her.

People don’t want to be married to somebody who’s holding a gun on them. “You owe me love because we’re married. You’ve got to love me because we’re married.” No, no. You’ve got to get rid of the hostility before her good feelings can show. And their hostility may seem to you like it’s totally independent of anything that you do. No! You are supporting her negativism by your attitude of needing and pressuring and whining and complaining, and trying to argue for your way. Just enthusiastically see it her way. You’re happy to do whatever she wants.

Wow! That takes the props totally out from under her hostility. And so we want to continue this attitude. You are acting secure now. When you say, “You’re the only one that I can love, you’re the only one that I can be happy with, you’re the only one,” you’re really saying, “I’m a pea-brain. I can’t really see that the world is full of beautiful women or good-looking men. I can’t see that. I don’t have any confidence at all. Don’t you want me?” No, they don’t. “I have no self-esteem, no nothing. Don’t you want me?” And the answer is no.
We Always Want More Of Something We Can’t Have...

Women all over the United States call me and say, “The man in my life is pulling away, because he’s afraid of commitment.” And I say, “You have been head-over-heels in love with him for three months or three years? You haven’t looked at another man since you got involved?” “That’s right. That’s right.” I said, “So the reason he’s pulling away is he has low self-esteem and he’s looking down on you for being in love with him.”

“Subconsciously, he wants struggle. You think he wants reassurance. So you’re trying to give him reassurance that you won’t hurt him and that you should be together, and so forth and so on. And this reassurance is never working. Therefore, the remedy is wrong, because it’s based on the wrong diagnosis. He gets afraid of commitment after he’s bored to death, because subconsciously he wants a project. He wants a struggle. You’re taking away any challenge to him that he wants. You say, ‘I’m all yours. I love you. I want to be with you forever and ever. I’d do anything to please you.’ So subconsciously, he thinks, ‘Oh, what an idiot.’”

I was telling this to a woman not very long ago and she started laughing. She said, “It makes me think of Groucho Marx. Groucho said, ‘I wouldn’t be a member of a club that would have me as a member.’ And that’s it, exactly.” So I encouraged the woman to relax, act independent. I said, “See? The more you pursue your husband, wife, or girlfriend, the more you pursue them, the more they subconsciously have contempt for you. They think you’re stupid to be in love with them, because they have such a low opinion of themselves, whether they’re aware of this or not.”

So by your acting unconquered, date others, act happy, agree with them we both need space. We need this separateness. You’re exactly right. This is going with their energy. This is jujitsu.

Sometimes I use an illustration. I say, “Draw a circle on a piece of paper,” and he draws a circle. I say, “Put a dot in the middle of the circle and put the name Dorothy. Then outside the circle, put a dot and put your name, Bob. Then inside the circle, anyplace, put a dot and put the name Bob.”

“When Dorothy perceives you, Bob, as being outside the circle, she will pursue you. And when she sees you as inside the circle, she gets bored and contemptuous and backs off. She loses all interest.” I said, “When you tell her that you love her, that puts you inside the circle. When you give up other women entirely, that puts you inside the circle. When you date others, it puts you outside the circle. If you stop telling her that you love her, stop calling her, that puts you outside the circle.”

In other words, that which is unconquered is appealing and that which is totally conquered loses its fascination.
Chapter 2

Understanding Masochism: Why We Keep Banging Our Head Against A Wall…

In the 1950’s, I struggled to understand masochism. Psychoanalysts said pain becomes a pleasure, but they didn’t explain how it becomes a pleasure. I asked some of them if pain becomes a pleasure, why doesn’t all pain become a pleasure so we have no pain left over? People who are depressed or are anxious are in pain. Why doesn’t that pain change into a pleasure? Of course, there’s no explanation for it.

Psychologists said it’s a matter of not knowing a better way. That didn’t explain everything to me. For example, I’m banging my head against a wall to produce a painting. Say I’ve got a bare wall in my office and I need a painting. So I’m banging my head against the wall to produce a painting.

Now, it never produces a painting, but I persist in banging my head against the wall. Psychologists say, “Poor Homer! It’s because he doesn’t understand and doesn’t know about paint brushes and paint sprays.” Well, that explains why I don’t use paintbrushes and paint sprays, but it does not explain why I don’t stop banging my head against the wall. And it’s quite observable, quite provable that people do bang their head against the wall and keep doing it.

So why do I bang my head against the wall, even though it causes me to feel depressed and cry, and I persist in doing it? Because simultaneously with my banging my head against the wall, I’m patting myself on the head. So I’m giving myself ego satisfaction.

Another metaphor. I keep reaching my hand into a hot oven. My hand burns and I’m crying about it, but I keep putting my hand in the hot oven because there is a bite of food there. There’s a bite of pie. If there’s no pie at all, I don’t do it. There’s got to be a bite of pie. So I have people see that there’s a whole lot more pie on top of the stove, and you don’t get burned.

I was explaining to a psychologist who was in for marriage counseling in my office years ago, I said, “I just finished with a client. He’s staying with his wife, who has open contempt for him.” I said, “I’ve discovered that the less love that a man has received from his wife, the more he’ll cling. And the more love that he’s received from her, the more he’s able to let go.” I told this particular client, “Jeff, imagine that my office here is full of refrigerators. They’re glass refrigerators, so you can look inside and see most of them have good food in it and the doors swing open easily. But there’s a refrigerator over here open easily. But there’s a refrigerator over here that has bad food in it and the door is stuck, and you’re fascinated with that refrigerator. And you say that you’re clinging to that refrigerator because you’re hungry for food. No way. You subconsciously want pain.”
Now, I don’t think people enjoy pain. I think people hate pain, but they want it. And when I discovered this, I said, “Oh, my goodness, it’s Pavlovian conditioning!” Pavlovian conditioning. I want my wife to put a stick out there, and I want to take this stick and jam it into my stomach, even though that’s painful and I hate the pain. I still want it. Because when I do that with one hand, I’m patting myself on the head with the other hand. That ego lift that I give myself, I do that simultaneously with the pain.

I have never seen a person upset who was not thinking, “I wouldn’t do this to you” or “I don’t deserve this!” That’s the ego pat. So when a person is upset, they are always feeling self-righteous. In fact, it’s the self-righteousness that’s experiencing most of the pain. If I think I’m a lowly peon like everybody else, if I’m not invited to the party that they’re having over there, it’s a little disappointing but it’s no big deal. It’s no ego shock. But if I think that I’m the king and they didn’t invite me to the party, then I am shocked and I can’t understand this.

It’s kind of like holding a big, heavy golden crown, glistening in the sun. This is a neurotic conceit. The need to be more powerful, the need to be perfect, the need to have everything my way. So I’m holding it up, this crown, and it’s very beautiful glistening in the sun. But I desperately need other people, since it weighs 50 pounds I desperately need other people to help me hold it up.

I teach people to get rid of that heavy crown and hold a small, light, halo up with 3 fingers in one hand. And when that hand gets tired, you hold it up with the other hand.

Interestingly enough, when you desperately need other people to help you hold up this neurotic conceit, it’s very difficult to find anybody to do it. But when you get rid of that heavy crown and hold up the little bitty halo, you’re so relaxed and likeable. Everybody wants to help you hold it up. Then you don’t need anybody to help you hold it up. It’s nice, but you don’t need it.

And when I dreamed up this metaphor years ago, a scripture came back to my mind. Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount. “Come unto me all ye that labor.” At first, you think he’s talking about economics. But then the last statement makes you know he’s talking pure psychology. “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. Take my yolk upon you and learn of me, for my yolk is easy and my burden is light. And you shall find rest unto your souls, for I am meek and lowly of heart.”

When a person is in pain, they are always feeling neurotic conceit. Rejection doesn’t hurt a healthy ego, it hurts the conceit. I know that these lesser mortals down here are being rejected right and left, being divorced right and left, but me? So it’s the neurotic conceit by rejection. I’m a human being same as anybody else. Why shouldn’t I be rejected? So I’m rejected, I turn to somebody else who’s not going to reject me. No big deal. If I’m in pain, it’s the neurotic conceit that experiences the pain.

Another metaphor. We hate the pain, but we love something that causes the pain. I’m hugging a porcupine. And the porcupine quills go in, I’m bleeding and I’m crying. People think I’m talking about their mate. No, I’m not talking about their mate. If I put the
porcupine down, I don’t have the pain. But I love the porcupine. The porcupine stands for
the ideas, the irrational ideas that cause my pain. I love the idea that I need to be loved.
Barbra Streisand sings, “You’re nobody till somebody loves you” and “people who need
people are the luckiest people in the world.” Total nonsense.

Those ideas that we love cause the pain. And if you get rid of those ideas that cause the pain,
you get rid of the pain. People hate the pain, but they love the ideas. They really expect that
in some kind of magical way, that they can keep their ideas and lose their pain. There is no
way.

When I was explaining how husbands hang onto their wives stronger the less love that they’ve
gotten, he laughed. He said, “It makes me think of the chicken experiment.” He said,
“Homer, have you heard of the chicken experiment?” I said, “No, tell me about it.” He said,
“You can take any two chickens and do this. Chicken #1 and Chicken #2. Chicken #1, you
have a Ferris wheel in front of it, and every time it pecks it gets a grain of food. Chicken #2
has a Ferris wheel in front of it, and every seventh time it pecks it gets a grain of food. It gets
food the first time it pecks, of course, to get it started. But it pecks six times without getting
any food. So it gets food only every seventh time. “

“So we have chicken #1 pecking away, getting food every time it pecks. Chicken #2 pecking
away, but getting food only every seventh time that it pecks. So then the experimenter takes
all the food out of Ferris wheel #1 and all the food out of Ferris wheel #2. Chicken #1 that’s
been fed every time pecks once, maybe twice, then walks off. Chicken #2 just keeps pecking
and pecking and pecking and pecking. It has become addicted to frustration.”

Here’s an excellent book. How To Break Your Addiction To A Person – When And Why Love
Doesn’t Work And What To Do About It by Dr. Halpern. People assume that people want to
be happy and that people want to be loved. That’s only half of the story. People vigorously
want to be unhappy. Seeing that and understanding why can be extremely helpful. Let me
read a quote here. Here he’s doing therapy with this woman and on page 232 he says, “If you
want that loving support you never had, then why are you trying to get it from someone like
Peter? There are many men in the world who would be much more loving and supportive
than he is. How come you’ve never permitted yourself to having a relationship with a man
like that? Why do you have a history of relationships with men who have the same defect in
giving that Peter has, and who make you feel worse about yourself rather than better.”

In focusing on this and probing her thoughts and feelings, Eileen came to the crucial insight
that I wrote of earlier. Here’s what she says. “When I meet a nice, warm guy who obviously
likes me, it usually turns me off.” It’s a mystery to her. She doesn’t understand. “Maybe I
don’t trust it.” She’s looking for explanations. “Maybe I don’t trust it because I never had it.
Or maybe I don’t feel I deserve it. But I often think of him as a namby-pamby or even a jerk.
See, it’s not just the loving I want, it’s to get it from some hard-nosed bastard. Someone as
ungiving and cold as my parents. What I’m hooked into is the challenge of melting stones.”

I say she’s trying to put a good face on it by calling it a challenge. If we look on something as
a challenge, we don’t masochistically complain and moan and groan about it. And when
she’s talking to her therapist about how cold or rejecting the guy that she’s involved with is, she doesn’t say, “I really love this challenge.” She’s not looking on it as a challenge. She’s trying to understand why in the heck she goes after pain. She can’t come up with anything that’s really convincing. So she calls it a challenge. “I want to find a cold-hearted guy.” But it never does work.

When she’s talking about it, she doesn’t say, “This is a game that is exciting because it’s such a challenge.” She’s moaning and groaning how terrible, how selfish he is and so forth. She’s not looking on it as a challenge at all.

Awareness is extremely helpful. There are two different things we want to do. One is observe facts. The second is to come up with a theory that explains these facts. So far, I haven’t found any fact. I’ve found a lot of opinions, but no fact that goes against my theory that when a man is willing to do anything to save his marriage and the wife is rejecting him, it’s almost always due to low self-esteem on her part and the fact that she knows that he’s head over heels in love with her. She will give false explanations.

Here’s what happens. She moves away from him emotionally. The original excitement gets less and less. Either it can happen very rapidly, it can happen almost within an hour, or it might take months. But gradually, because of her low self-esteem, she begins to look down on anything that she’s accomplished. At first, she’s patting herself on the head for getting this great guy to love her. But then the negative part of her mind begins, “Oh, you never do anything great. So this can’t be great.” So she begins to look down on him and begins to feel bored.

I have women all over the United States call me and say, “The man in my life is pulling away. He’s pulling away because he is afraid of commitment.” There’s a lot written about men afraid of commitment because he’s afraid he’s going to be hurt. So I say to the women, “How long have you been involved?” She’ll say, “Three months” or “three years.” I say, “So why is he afraid of commitment?” She’ll say, “Well, because he’s been rejected before in marriage or a previous love relationship and he does not want to be hurt again.”

So I find out that any friends involved or any psychologist involved all accept that theory that he is afraid of being hurt because he’s been hurt before. He has been hurt before, and it’s normal to fear going through the doorway of commitment or marriage that has produced hurt before. But I go after facts first. Just like the old detective, “Just the facts, ma’am.”

I say, “Was he afraid of commitment at the beginning of your relationship?” The answer is always the same, whether it was somebody in Connecticut or California. They say, “No, he wanted commitment. He even talked marriage. He strongly wanted commitment.” I say, “The beginning of the relationship is the logical time for him to be afraid of commitment for two reasons. Number one, it’s closer in time to when he had been hurt before. And second, you had not been tested.” I say, “Now, you say you’ve been involved with this guy for a year or two or three, whatever? During this time, have you dated others?” “Oh, no. No, no, no. This guy is the only one for me. He practically walks on water. He’s the right one for me. I haven’t even looked at another guy at all.”
I said, “Well, isn’t that fascinating? Look at these facts. At the beginning of the relationship, before he knows you, before you’ve been tested, he has total faith in you that you’re not going to hurt him. And then, after you have proven yourself, that you’re not going to hurt him, that you’re there always and you don’t even look at another guy, then you have earned his trust, he takes it away? And before you have earned it, he gives it to you?

He’s not afraid. He’s bored to death. Then he becomes afraid. He’s afraid that he’s going to be bored to death the rest of his life. And he’s bored because he subconsciously wants struggle. At the very beginning that he had struggle, he was fascinated. You take all the struggle away by giving him reassurances, reassurances, and he gets bored because subconsciously he wants struggle.

So then I tell her, “Tell him that he is right, that you have rushed things even if it’s been three years. Say to him, ‘I’m not ready for commitment either. I want to date others. I need my space.’ Back off from him, agree with him, and instantly he will want commitment.” He’ll say, “Wait a minute!” because she’s giving him the struggle, the challenge, the frustration that he subconsciously wants.

This is a point of view that I have not heard from anybody. But it’s a theory that explains the facts. And also, another test of the theory is when she starts acting on the basis of this, she gets him.
Chapter 3

The 8 Attitudes That Prevent You From Getting What You Want – And How To Avoid Them

The over 40 strategies that we’re mentioning in this book, most of them are always together and are only separate on a verbal level. I want to mention very quickly 8 different traits or attitudes that are always present – always present – in a person who’s upset by anxiety or depression, which people almost always are when they’re in love and being rejected.

1. Exaggeration
2. Guilt
3. Self-pity (unhappiness)
4. Low self-esteem
5. Self-righteousness
6. Submission to feelings
7. Blaming and escaping responsibility
8. Believing that differences cause problems

We have self-talk almost continuously, constantly, and these become beliefs, which become attitudes. And these attitudes are reflected in outward actions. In the strategies of always agree and instantly and happily do everything the mate’s way and always act happy, act as if everything in the status quo is practically perfect. These strategies are extremely difficult to do when we are having these 8 different traits. So in order to be able to follow the strategies, we need to have insight into these things.

Dr. Albert Ellis has talked about that insights are not enough. We need to do work on top of insight, and that’s often true. But if we really have an insight, that almost automatically becomes an action. For example, if somebody hollers “FIRE!” and we believe them, we don’t have to use a lot of will power to get out of that building. We receive an official letter from an attorney that our uncle has died and left us a million dollars, and to please come in and sign some papers, we don’t need a lot of will power. That insight by itself becomes automatic action. We’re on our way to the attorney’s office.

1. Exaggeration

First of all, we are exaggerating, always without exception, when we are upset. We’re calling a desire a need, and it’s only a desire. We’re also exaggerating the other person’s wrongness. We’re exaggerating the degree of their wrongness and the number of things that they’re wrong about, and the importance of their wrongness.
A recent movie called *The Fan*, Robert DeNiro has a hero’s worship attitude towards a man who’s hitting home runs all the time. And then he goes into a batting slump, the home run hitter, and he’s not hitting home runs at all for a number of weeks. Then all of a sudden, he’s hitting home runs again. So the fanatical fan, played by DeNiro, goes to the home run hitter and says, “What happened, that you’re able to hit home runs now?” He said, “I just stopped caring, and that relaxed me so much.”

The implication, of course, which has been verified scientifically, is that if you are relatively relaxed, your efficiency at anything goes up, whether it’s sex, public speaking, or running, if you’re relatively relaxed. In terms of extremes, we tend to think we make something all-important or it has no importance. In rational thinking, we say it has some importance. My mate is rejecting me. It has some importance. We don’t say it has none. But it’s not all-important, either. What I desire is only a preference. That’s all that it is. And, it’s my exaggerating the importance of it that makes me drive my mate away. A woman almost never leaves a man who’s not exaggerating. She never leaves a man who she perceives is happy. She never leaves a man that is always agreeing with her.

So a man says, “Well, if my wife says she wants a divorce, I should agree with her?” Absolutely. Absolutely. Because that immediately weakens her motivation for divorce and leaving you. A woman never leaves a man who’s always cheerfully and sincerely agreeing with her. “You’re right. We do need more space.” Or, “You’re right, we should get a divorce. We’re just too different. You’re exactly correct,” or whatever.

Immediately, her desire for divorce or motivation for divorce is tremendously weakened. And it’s very funny to the husband how, all of a sudden, she becomes very slow about getting the attorney to send the papers and so forth, she stops talking about divorce and everything. It’s fascinating to the husband.

We’re always exaggerating. So we’ll take the exaggeration out and have the insight that we are exaggerating. All we are ever dealing with are desires. Many psychologists use the concept of needing, but that encourages upset. When we don’t get what we think that we need, we’re going to be much more upset than if we say to ourselves, “Well, it’s only a desire. That’s all that it is.”

2. Guilt

People are always feeling guilty. I remember a quote in Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Huck Finn and his companion are watching a community of people tar and feather 2 guys and railroad them out of town. Huck Finn and his companion are not taking part. They didn’t even know it was going to happen. I think the two guys that they were railroading out of town tarring them and feathering them and railroading them out of town had cheated the people. And Huck says to his male companion, “There we were, feeling ornery and sort of guilty somehow. But we hadn’t done nothing. That’s always the way it is. It don’t make no difference if you do right or wrong. A man’s conscience just goes for him.
anyhow. If I had a yellow dog that had no more sense than a man’s conscience, I’d poison him. It (meaning the conscience) takes up more room than all of man’s insides, and ain’t got no sense no how. Tom Sawyer says the same.”

Now this is Sigmund Freud’s basic finding in the 1880’s that Mark Twain discovered in the 1860’s. The main finding of Freud was not about sex. People tend to think that. But it’s about a sick conscience that he called the “super ego” bringing down a person, beating them down. And during the long psychoanalytic process, we are going to get that sick super ego into the conscious mind, and clean him up and make him a nice guy, so that he’ll treat us nice.

3. Self-Pity

My opinion is we tend to be very perfectionistic. So when we don’t have more power than God and make everybody do right, we hit ourselves over the head with, “Bad me! Stupid me!” What are we going to do when we hit ourselves with, “Bad me! Stupid me!” Then we’re going to cry with, “Poor me!” You never find guilt and self-pity separate. If a person is feeling self-pity, they’re always feeling guilt. And if they’re feeling guilt, they’re always feeling self-pity. It’s very simple, very clear, very convincing. And both of these attitudes are expressed by a whining tone of voice. Meaning is in tone of voice, just as much as it is in words.

In my opinion, there’s no such thing as guilt. What there really is, is pseudo-guilt. I haven’t read this anywhere, I made it up. I’m 76 years old this month, been in private practice over 45 years, so I’m entitled to an idea or two, particularly since I’ve been studying it so hard.

Sincere guilt would commit suicide. I don’t mean the person would commit suicide; the feeling would commit suicide. Because if I’m sincerely guilty about some wrong doing, I immediately decide and quit. So then the guilt is gone. Because I don’t feel guilty about something I’m not doing wrong anymore. So anybody’s feeling guilty, it’s pseudo-guilt. It’s very self-destructive. It doesn’t help you become a better person; it makes you a worse person.

4. Low Self-Esteem

That goes with the guilt and the self-pity, as I explained. And helplessness that goes with the self-pity also goes with the guilt. So when we are full of self-pity, we are focusing on what I can’t do, not on what I can do. So by switching over from what I can’t do, then immediately I begin to feel better. Some of the strategies have to do with focusing on what I can do.
5. Self-Righteousness

When people are upset, they’re always feeling morally superior to the other person. “I wouldn’t do this to you!” In my opinion, overly high and overly low self-esteem always go together. I remember when I was about 22 years old and joined the navy during World War II, and boot camp, and the first inspection. We were rolling our clothes and stenciling our name on it, and here comes the inspecting officer. He was standing in front of our bunks, and he sees my clothes rolled up and stenciled on there “McDonald.” He says, “Who’s McDonald?” I said, “I am, sir.” He said, “McDonald, can’t you roll clothes any better than that?” I said, “Good as the rest of them, sir.”

Today, if I was in the same situation and he said, “McDonald, can’t you roll clothes any better than that?” I would say, “You’re right, sir. I’ll do better.” Because my ego is a little more secure.

In doing my own psychoanalytic training, we seem to discover that I had a superiority complex hiding an inferiority complex. So the two always go together.

6. Submission To Feelings

Now, something else that people are always doing when they’re upset is they are submitting to feelings. They’re doing whatever their feelings tell them to do. People tend to do that. The feelings say, “I’m in love,” so I must be. The feelings say, “Let’s get married,” so we do it. Our feelings say, “Let’s get a separation,” “let’s get a divorce,” so I do.

I tell women in my office, “You think it’s wrong to be submissive towards your husband, don’t you?” “Oh, yeah.” I said, “But you’re being submissive to your neurotic guilt, your neurotic hurt feelings and angry feelings. Your hurt feelings, your angry feelings order you not to touch your husband. So you’re like a black slave in the south as you talk to your feelings. ‘Yes, sir. Yes’a, boss. No, no, no. I was real careful. I didn’t touch him, no, no, no. I know I had the opportunity, but I’m a good girl. I didn’t touch him.”"

Let’s say I want to become an auto mechanic, because my father liked to work on cars or whatever, and it’s an important part of our society. So I go to an auto shop and I say, “I’m a good auto mechanic.” He says, “Well, some cars are stacked up here. We’ll give you a chance.” So at the end of the day, he’s angry with me and firing me, because I’ve damaged all of the cars that I’ve worked on. He says, “McDonald, where did you get your training?” Comparing this to marriage. “Training? There’s nothing wrong with me! I don’t need any training!” You say, “Well, why did you cut the wires that go to the sparkplugs, and why did you throw sand into the oil and into the gasoline?” I said, “Well, I felt like it. Aren’t you supposed to do what you feel like?”

That’s the philosophy; the deep-seated beliefs people take into marriage. We’ve been brought up on compulsive honesty, too, which means always be honest about what you feel. That’s
one of the worst things that we could be advised if having a happy, romantic, in-love relationship is our goal, because it attacks the other person’s pride. And when you attack each other’s pride, everything goes to hell.

I dreamed of a metaphor many years ago. I am on top of 2 horses. I’ve got my left foot on top of one horse and my right foot on top of another horse. Now, the horse that my left foot is on is called “Kind.” The horse under my right foot is called “Honest.” As long as both of these horses are going in the same direction, I don’t have a big problem because I’m okay. I’m balanced. But, when these horses go in different directions, I’ve been brought up to believe that I can be kind and honest. So I try to stay on both horses, and of course I fall off of both horses.

So what I teach is to put three-fourths and keep three-fourths of my weight on the horse called “Kind,” one-fourth of my weight on a horse called “Honest.” And when they separate, and I know that they will go in different directions, then I put all my weight on the horse called Kind. Then later on, the horse called Honest rejoins, and I put the right foot back on the horse.

Let me give you a more everyday example. That’s a metaphor in trying to explain my philosophy. This is not typical. My wife does not wear hats, and she has better taste (like most wives do), in clothes than I do. But let’s say she comes in in the evening with a new hat on. As soon as I look at it, I think it looks terrible. With a big smile she says, “Mac? How do you like my new hat?” I’ve been brought up to be honest and kind, both. So I say, “That looks interesting.” I think I’m giving her a compliment. She starts crying. “Well, just tell me you don’t like it. I know you don’t like it. Why don’t you say you don’t?” So I haven’t gotten credit for kindness nor honesty.

See, if I’m honest, I start laughing, I say, “Your hat looks terrible! What clerk put that over on you?” And we have a terrible evening. So what I would do now when she comes with the hat on that I think looks terrible, I say, “Honey, that hat looks great! It really goes with the dress you’ve got on,” or whatever. I sound sincere, and I compliment and we have a wonderful evening.

But we’ve been brought up on compulsive honesty, which is a part of being totally submissive to feelings.

7. Blaming And Escaping Responsibility

What we’re always doing when we’re upset is blaming and dodging responsibility. It’s the other person’s fault that I feel terrible. She hurt my feelings. Totally impossible. Totally impossible. I hurt my own feelings by exaggerating the importance of my desires. And when I stop exaggerating, I’m not in pain anymore.
It makes me think of Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor, a typical parent. He wanted to give the best he could to his grown son, so over and over again, he’s writing letters to his grown son and he says this idea over and over again. He says, “It’s not the events in the world that disturb men’s minds, but their opinions about these events. Son, if you find something grievous to be born, change your opinion.”

8. Believing That Differences Cause Problems

My wife and I have lots of differences, no problems. We believe that these differences cause a clash of wills. But the truth is that it’s not the fact that she wants to stay home and I want to go to a movie that causes the problem. See, as long as I see it as a difference between what she wants and what I want, I will keep my emotional problems.

For example, if I give in to what she wants and I stay home with her, I’m browbeating myself for being so weak as to be submissive to what she wants. Or, if I go ahead and go to the movie, then I stay out much later than I want to because I’m dreading coming home, getting her coldness or hostility. And I’m feeling guilty about going to the movie, so I’m not really enjoying it as much as I could. Okay. Now, if I see it more truthfully, more honestly, then I see that my problem is because of a conflict between 2 of my desires. They’re my desires. I desire to please her and I desire her to be happy. One of my desires.

Another desire that apparently goes in conflict with that one is that I desire to go to the movie. Now, if I take responsibility for both of those desires as something within me, then I make a decision and I say, “My desire to please her and be with her is more important to me than my desire to go to a movie.” So I stay home and I’m not moping around and feeling sorry for myself, beating myself over the head. I’m praising myself for doing what I prefer to do.

And then of course, next week she says, “Mac, what movie was it that you wanted to see?” So then we go to the movie. Or, I say to myself, “Hey, I’m going to this movie. It’s not going to come back. It’s going to be only on tonight, and it’s a movie I really do want to see. So it’s more important to me than it is to please her.” And that’s okay. Then I go. I don’t feel guilty and I don’t dread coming home, because I cheerfully pay the price of getting my preference.

A guy carrying his brother says, “He’s not heavy, he’s my brother.” This is no sacrifice. I’m doing and getting to do what I prefer to do, which is to stay home or to go to the movie. So I emphasize the pleasure I’m getting from my choice. And it’s my choice, not her choice. We have a difference here, but no big problem.

Agreeing and always agreeing and always doing it your mate’s way sounds like a conquered position. So it seems in conflict with the idea of remaining unconquered. But that’s not so. The conquered person is always rebellious, argumentative, feels that agreeing or doing it the mate’s way is a sign of weakness. This is the emotional position of the conquered individual.
It takes strength and smartness and a secure ego to see that the other person is always right. Maybe not 100%, but at least 10% or 20%. And if you talk about where they are wrong, they become more wrong. And if you talk about where they are right, they become immediately less wrong. And if you always instantly and happily do everything your mate’s way, this gives you more time, more energy for doing your other hobbies. Pleasing my mate is not essential. It’s not my salvation. It’s only a pleasure. That’s all that it is. It’s only a hobby that gives me a lot of pleasure.

And if I put that hobby first, use my head in taking care of that hobby, then she says, “Mac, do you want to fly by yourself to see your kids in Dallas?” She feels so secure, so that I have more time and more energy for any other hobbies that I’ve got. So that conflict that I caught myself in is only an apparent conflict. The secure person, the self-confident person is eager to please, happy to please, happy to do it the mate’s way, and has the brain power to see, “Hey, you are right.”

Like if you’re a salesperson, “You are right. It does look like my product is more expensive than the other one. You’re right. It is at the start. It takes less upkeep and does a better job. So in the longer run, it’s less expensive. But you’re right, it does look more expensive.”
Chapter 4

Here Are The Most Common Reasons People Give When They’re Leaving — And Why They’re Never The Real Reasons…

Now we’re talking about mindsets that the rejecting party, the one that is doing the divorcing or wants the separation, mindsets that they use to explain, defend and justify their actions. Later in the book, we will explain what we believe to be the real reason. These are the conscious excuses that they give.

1. “I’m just not happy”

I’ve often heard the wife who is divorcing say, “I’m just not happy.” The implication is, “I’m 5 years old. Mother, come fix it. Bobby stepped on my toe again.”

I mentioned yesterday that New Woman Magazine, November of 1991, said that they were changing their editorial policy, that they had been immediately for divorce because looking on that as a step towards independence and freedom, and being true to yourself.

But they interviewed many ex-wives 2 and 3 years after the divorce, and asked them if they were happy. And in every case, they said no. The interviewer said, “Why did you divorce?” “Well, I thought that would make me happy.” The interviewer would say, “Do you regret getting a divorce?” “Yes, I do. If I had to do it again, I wouldn’t.” They were so impressed by these statistics that in this article they say, “We have changed our editorial policy. Now, we are recommending to women to work hard on improving themselves and improving their communication skills a long time before you even think about divorce.” So I found that impressive.

I remember a friend telling me about his ex-wife getting a divorce and not explaining at all why she was divorcing. Then 2 or 3 years after the divorce, she remarried and stayed married for 1 year. And she’s been unhappy and lonely for many years, according to the children. We can give many examples of this.

2. Following feelings

The second mindset that we come across is the mindset of following feelings. It’s very easy to see that the person doing the divorcing is focusing on the philosophy of following feelings. Many people are very acquainted with counseling now. If they’ve gone to a counselor, and
often they have, the counselor begins the session and almost repeatedly throughout the session says, “Well, what do you feel?” The old, traditional, classical psychoanalysis. If the patient asks the analyst a question, he would say, “What do you feel? What do you feel?” He would say, “I don’t want to know what you think, I want to know what you feel.”

If, for example, the wife keeps saying that she’s not happy and she has all these negative feelings towards the husband that she says he deserves and so forth, the counselor finds himself encouraging the woman to separate. I would say 90% of professionals encourage a separation on the basis of following what the person has strong feelings about.

You’ve got to go with what you feel.

In my office, when I frequently begin to attack negative feelings, the client would respond somewhat defensively with this rational way of thinking, “That’s anti-feelings. This shows you’re against feelings.” Let’s use as an example a metaphor. You’ve got garden, and you’re complaining that the roses are not growing and that there are a lot of weeds there. So I’m a professional gardener, and I go in and start pulling the weeds up by the roots. You say, “Don’t do that.” I say, “Why?” You say, “Because that means you’re against plants.” I say, “The 3 things to make you very pleased with your garden. One is to stop watering the weeds, start watering the roses, and pull the weeds up by the roots.”

I know we’re encouraged to believe that we’ve got to have a lot of weeds, that somehow, in some mysterious way, the roses are dependent. If you don’t let yourself feel great grief, you can’t feel elation, for example. But actually, the opposite is true. The more intensely you feel negative, the harder it is to get to positive feelings. The weeds are taking the space, drinking up all the water and fertilizer, and they’re crowding out the roses. So you can’t be for the roses and the weeds at the same time. The roses will not grow.

Now, reasoning is never presented as a clear alternative by counselors or professionals. Reasoning is presented as not as deep, it’s weaker, it’s less self-fulfilling, and it’s anti-being human and anti-compassion.

I’ve had many people in my office say that rational thinking was not compassionate. And I’d say, “This self-pity and hostility that you feel towards your husband, do you call that compassion? You’re not even caring about yourself. What you’re caring about is your self-pity. So rational thinking frees your compassionate feelings, because it tends to weaken your hostility because you give the other person the right to be wrong.”

Michelle Weiner-Davis, in her book Change Your Life And Everyone In It, it says that confrontation always works negatively when you confront your client. So she has ingeniously worked out a system of getting the person to reason without their feeling attacked, which is very clever and good.
3. “I’m punishing you”

The third topic, “I’m punishing you because you were so bad to me, you neglected me, or you had an affair(s).” The wife shows this attitude by always wanting the opposite of what she thinks her husband wants. He often wants to see the kids more than she wants to allow him. And the more he wants to see the kids, the more she doesn’t want him to. She always wants the opposite of what she thinks he wants. And if she thinks he doesn’t want to see the kids, then she complains to him, “You never see the kids.” She wants to force the kids on him if she thinks that he doesn’t want them.

I remember using hypnosis many years ago. A woman was lying on the couch and I was suggesting, “Your right hand is getting light like a feather and will float up.” And after 5 or 10 minutes of this suggestion, usually the person gives in to their imagination and lets their hand float up. And after 5 or 10 minutes, her hand was not moving at all. So I said, “Are you feeling anything in your right hand and right arm?” She said in a very relaxed, almost sleepy tone of voice, “Yes, they’re feeling heavy.”

So I took advantage of that and I went with it. I said, “Good. Your right hand and your right arm are getting heavier and heavier.” And then the hand floated up. I think psychologists call this negative suggestibility.

In NLP or another distinction for that would be mismatching or responding to differences. It’s a meta-program that people have, that you either respond to similarities or you respond to differences.

Yes. It’s a commonly observed phenomenon. It often happens in a marriage where there’s a divorce.

4. “Marriage is too much work”

Marriage is too much work and too much stress, and they often site money problems or disagreements about money or “your kids came between us.” They show this attitude by constantly dwelling on the negative. They refuse to see any positive.

5. “I’m unworthy”

I’m unworthy; because I don’t feel the way a husband or a wife should feel. They have not been acquainted with the fact that there are no shoulds. There is no one-way or certain way that a wife or husband should feel.
I remember a case given in a book called How To Win Friends And Influence People by Dale Carnegie, where this ambassador, a 30-year old guy, goes to this woman who’s 50. She’s super-wealthy. I don’t know if she’s a widow or what. Anyway, she’s single, and she’s super wealthy. And he goes to her and he says, “I’d like to marry you for your money. I’m not in love with you at all.” She chuckles and says, “Such honesty is refreshing. Let me study your character for a year, and then I’ll give you my answer.”

Well, at the end of the year, he asked her again. She said, “You’re a decent man, you keep your word, you’re a man of reputation. I’m not in love with you either, but for practical reasons, let’s get married.” So they got married with no romantic love at all.

Now, she always showed respect to him, and she had common sense enough not to spout economic or political opinions, if she had any, to the guests as they frequently entertained large crowds of people in her mansion. She always showed great respect for him, but there was no romantic love. Then 20 years later, he’s 50 and she’s 70, and he teasingly says to her, “You know I married you for your money.” And she says, “Yes, I know. But if you had to do it today, it would be for love, because you’re in love with me.” He said, “That’s right, I am.”

They didn’t feel that there were any shoulds, that it was okay to get married for practical reasons. But that’s not a popular way of believing.

6. “My counselor, friend or parents agree with me that I should separate or divorce.”

Well, he or she has fed them the negative about the mate. “My mate did this, and let me tell you how selfish he or she was,” and so forth.

I remember years ago, when my wife was teaching in special education. After a few years of that, she told her father that she was changing to teaching so-called “normal” kids. He says, “Good.” She asked me later, “Why did he say that?” I said, “Because he’s only viewing the negative about teaching the kids.” I said, “If a woman friend said to you, every time she talked to you almost, that her husband hit her or beat her or was verbally hostile to her, then she tells you that she’s divorcing him, are you going to say, “Oh, that’s too bad?”

7. “I’m too depressed to cope”

“I’m too depressed to cope with marriage. Sometimes they say, “I’m too depressed to cope with you or anyone. Sometimes they say, “I don’t want to be married to anybody.” And sometimes – not too often, but they do – say, “It’s not you, it’s me.” Believe it or not, I’ve
heard that a few times. “It’s not you, it’s me.” But they don’t add, “And I’m going to work on it. I’m going to improve me.” No, I’ve got to do what my feelings are telling me to do.
Chapter 5

Here Are 44 Successful Strategies I’ve Developed Over 45 Years Of Private Practice That You Can Use Right Now To Stop Your Divorce…

1. Attack Their Support

These are strategies that have worked. The first one, I probably have used only twice, but it gives you an idea about how wide a range you have in using strategies.

In 1991, I had been doing telephone counseling for probably less than a year. Chuck Jackson, a pharmacist in Sacramento, called. His wife, Lois, would not even talk to him. They’d been married about 20 years, had 2 children, 10 and 8. Handsome kids. We saw them later. The reason she wouldn’t talk with him was she was taking counseling under a lady counselor, who turned out to be a nurse with some sociology training. This counselor required Lois not to talk with Chuck at all.

So I was counseling Chuck, and after I’d counseled him for several weeks, I called Lois and purposely made the talk very brief so she wouldn’t feel that I was pressuring her or anything. We talked about 3 to 5 minutes, not about their getting back together at all. Her mind was totally closed on that.

I had talked to her 2 or 3 times, maybe once a week for about 5 minutes or something like that, and then one day her counselor called me. She sounded arrogant and hostile. “Are you Homer McDonald?” I said, “Yes.” “What are your credentials?” So I told her. She says, “Well, Lois tells me that you are interfering with her counseling.” And I said, “Well, I’m sorry. She didn’t tell me that.” “Well, she’ll tell you that right now. She’s in my office. She’ll tell you that right now.” I said, “No, she won’t, because I won’t talk to her while she’s in your office.” I said, “She can call me, or when I call her, if she tells me that she does not want me to talk with her anymore, then I’ll stop talking to her.” The counselor said, “Fair enough.” She said, “Well, it’s been nice meeting you. Thank you,” and hung up.

Then, Chuck said that he and Lois were going to go through mediation. Parenthetically, I should tell you in the book, The Case Against Divorce, by Dr. Medved, a female psychologist, took a brand new stand in connection with divorce. It’s a fascinating book. She said, “Always when the woman is divorcing her husband and he doesn’t want it, she’s someone. It doesn’t have to be a man.” She said, “It’s often a divorced friend who is subconsciously or consciously jealous of her marriage. So she wants to destroy that marriage.” So the woman has this support. This is the support that we are going to attack.
So after this particular telephone call, one day Lois calls Chuck because she’s very upset. She never calls him, but this day she’s very upset. Something has happened at work, gossip and so forth, and Lois calls her counselor, Marilyn. Marilyn says, “I think we’re going to have to put you on some kind of medication.” That upsets Lois very much, so she calls Chuck out of the blue, the first time in several months.

So he calls me and asks me if I would call Lois. So I called her. She tells me about some kind of gossip or something that’s upset her. I said, “Lois, spell motel backwards.” She says, “L-E-T-O-M.” I said, “Okay, now what does that say?” “Let ‘em.” I said, “Let ‘em talk. Let ‘em think whatever they want to.” She says, “Yeah!”

So she calls Chuck again and says, “When can you get 4 days off?” He said, “Well, within a week probably, why?” She says, “Because I want you and me to fly to San Antonio. Even though it can be done on the phone, I want us to take some counseling over the weekend with Homer McDonald.”

So they fly to San Antonio, and my wife and I take them out to dinner. As I’m talking to them in my office, I say, “Why did you all of a sudden start rejecting Chuck?” He was about 25 years older than she was. She said, “I found out all of a sudden that he’d had 4 previous marriages that he had not told me about. One day, one of his grown kids knocked on our door just to get reacquainted with their father, and Chuck had not told me about this during the 20 years we’ve been married.” I said, “Oh, I see. It certainly was a shock.”

Chuck said, “Well, I thought it would interfere with our relationship. I was very much in love with Lois, and everything was going great,” and so on and so forth. So I said, “Well, Lois, you could handle if he was totally honest, couldn’t you?” And she says, “Yeah.” I said, “Okay, I want the two of you to go walking on the river here in San Antonio this evening.” It was a Saturday. “And Jack, I want you to tell her in detail about all these previous marriages. Why you fell in love, why you ended up divorcing. Just tell it all to her. Okay?”

I saw both of them the very next day, on Sunday, in the office. It had worked perfectly. She was very understanding, very forgiving. She was seriously considering going back to him. In a short period of time, she was back.

The attacking, this is important, happened before Lois called Chuck and said, “When can you get 4 days off?” I told Chuck, “You are going to go through mediation in just a few days.” He said, “Yeah.” Now, of course, mediation is never for the purpose of getting back together, it’s who gets what. I said, “Now, during the mediation, I want you to announce. Lois will be there, her attorney will be there, and your attorney will be there. I want you to calmly announce to everybody that you’re going to sue Lois’ counselor for ruining your marriage.” He said, “Okay.”

Now, I knew he wouldn’t have to follow through with it. But he did that. And it was just a few days after that, that Lois called him and said, “When can you get four days off?” Because she was leaning emotionally so strongly on her counselor, who was encouraging her to not
even talk with Chuck, that I knew if we could rattle her counselor, that would stimulate Lois to do some thinking on her own. And it worked.

Another time, a high school shop teacher named Jim Hearth called me. His students had won statewide and nation-wide contests. He said, “You guarantee to get me back with my wife?” I said, “If you do exactly what I tell you to do, yeah.” “Well, she’s moved to Victoria, Texas, and she almost never talks to me. She’s living with her parents and the 2 kids. My attorney says you can’t guarantee to get us back together.” I said, “Well, tell your attorney if he’ll give you $500 and you hold it, I’ll give you $500 and you hold it, and then if I get you back together I get his $500, and if I don’t get you back together within a certain period of time, he gets my $500. Tell him that.” Of course, I’ve used that many, many times and have never had a taker, because they don’t know me and don’t know what I can do.

Jim says, “Now, I’m going to go to court against my wife’s boss”, (having nothing to do with the marriage.) But my wife is the only witness that I have that can testify against her boss. Boy, it would upset her if I subpoena her. So I’m not going to subpoena her.” I said, “I want you to subpoena her.”

So I got him to agree to subpoena her and she was subpoenaed on Monday. On Thursday, she called him for the first time out of the blue; she hadn’t talked to him for several months. She said to him, “I’ve got problems and I don’t know who to talk to.”

Well, I had gone down to Victoria, so she had met me. I had called her and lied and said, “I’m going to be in Victoria next Saturday.” I had said, “When you come to San Antonio, can I meet with you?” “I never come to San Antonio.” I said, “Well, I’m going to be in Victoria next Saturday. Could we meet at a restaurant or something?” “Oh, sure. I can do that.”

So then she met me down there with the stepdaughter. I asked the stepdaughter as we were having lunch, “What are you going to do when you get out of high school?” “Oh, I’m going to teach shop, like my step-dad.” I said, “Oh, you learned all that from him?” She said, “Yeah.” I didn’t even hint that they’d get back together at all. I just met them and talked with them and so forth. Said, “It’s been a pleasure talking with you. You’ve been a big help,” and so on and so forth.

So when she called Jim on a Thursday and said she had a big psychological problem. He said, “Have you met McDonald?” She said, “Yes.” “Well, why don’t you talk to him?” “Well, I thought he was only a marriage counselor. He said, “Well, he can do a lot of things.”

“I don’t mind talking to him, but I’m too afraid of traffic in a big city,” and so forth, “so I don’t drive in San Antonio.” Jim says, “Well, I could come and get you.” She said, “Yeah, except I don’t want my parents to know.” He said, “I’ll meet you at a restaurant someplace, okay?”

So that Saturday, they were sitting in my office holding hands, and it was a very short period of time until they were back together again.
But she was leaning emotionally on her boss, so I knew it would rattle her cage to be subpoenaed in that case. It went against common sense. It went against Jim’s idea, “Oh, it will upset her. She’ll never talk to me again,” or whatever. But the opposite happened. She fell back in his lap.

2. Act Happy

About 3 or 4 weeks ago, Paul, in Houston, called me. He was depressed, his wife wouldn’t talk to him. He desperately wanted to be back with her. I told him to act happy. Why? I said, “A woman never leaves a man that she perceives as happy.” I’ve told this to husbands all over the United States, and they always say, “But I was happy.” And I say, “That’s not the issue. The issue was the way she perceived you. Were’t you often complaining about work or the weather or something, that she wasn’t communicating enough or logical enough or affectionate enough or sexual enough or whatever? “Well, yeah, yeah, yeah.” I said, “So a wife makes herself feel guilty. Because no matter what she consciously thinks, she subconsciously feels responsible for his unhappiness. So she thinks, “If I get away from him or especially if I divorce him, then I’m not responsible for his unhappiness anymore. So therefore, I don’t have to feel guilty about his being unhappy.” “So I want you to act happy.” “Okay, okay.”

About 2 weeks later, he says, “My wife is crying now about us going our separate ways. She’s acting like she would seriously consider getting back together. But I don’t know if I want her back. I’m feeling so good.” That’s exactly the attitude that I want, Paul. Stay on this track for a while.”

Another man, George, called me from London, England. He was depressed. His wife wouldn’t spit on him, no communication at all. He didn’t keep his appointment, and I was wondering to some degree what was going on. A few days later, he called me out of the blue and said, “I’ve been acting happy now for about 2 weeks, ever since I talked to you. And last Saturday, my wife phoned me and said she definitely wants to come back to me.” I said, “Well, that’s great.”

3. Act As If Everything Is Perfect

The wife is hostile. “You can’t see the kids except once a month. That’s all I want. You’re not good for them. I just want you to see them once a month.” So the father is threatening court action and he’s all upset. He doesn’t have the money to pay to attorneys for all this, but he’s torn between being depressed and being angry. I said, “I want you to act as if seeing the kids once a month is perfect. That it gives you more privacy and more freedom to do other things.”
The wife in this kind of situation always wants the opposite of what she thinks the husband wants. So then when he acts like he’s perfectly happy, all of a sudden she begins pushing the kids on him. This is what psychologists have called “negative suggestibility.”

I remember using hypnosis years ago. A woman’s lying on the couch and I’m suggesting, “Your right hand and right arm are getting light like a feather.” And after about 5 minutes of that, the hand usually floats up, and her hand’s not moving at all. So I say, “Are you feeling anything in your right hand and right arm?” She says in kind of a sleepy voice, “My hand’s getting heavier.” The very opposite from what I’m suggesting. I said, “Good. Your right hand and your right arm are getting heavier and heavier,” and her hand floated up.

I use this technique with husbands, because people tend to value independence — the idea of independence. They don’t know what the hell it is, but they want it. So they define independence the way a maladjusted 15-year-old does. “If I can spit at the principal or the teacher or my parents, that proves how independent I am.” So they define independence as rebellion.

Now this takes advantage of the wife’s urge to rebel, and it frustrates her neurosis. It frustrates her desire to fight, because the husband takes away some of her excuses for fighting with him.

I remember the man that started “Dare To Be Great.” A long time before he became a multi-millionaire, he was going through bankruptcy and they were picking up his furniture because he couldn’t make the payments on it. Well, he used this technique of acting as if everything is perfect. “Isn’t this great?” he said. “I don’t have to make any more payments on that furniture.” And it worked for him.

This acting like everything is perfect forces the husband, in this case, to act rationally, maturely, and forces him to stop exaggerating. We normally exaggerate the bad and we normally exaggerate how desirable our mate is if we’re losing our mate. We act as if she’s a goddess and is perfect and so forth. I don’t care if the man’s in Connecticut or California, it doesn’t make any difference, when he’s being divorced, he fills the session with complaints about his wife. Everything is “she” from the moment the conversation starts. He says, “Well, she…” I’m supposed to know who that is. “Nothing is happening because she hasn’t called. Nothing is happening.” And when he talks about her, every single thing is bad.

He doesn’t talk about how sweet she is or how logical or what a good mother she is. He’s just constantly talking about how bad she is. She’s so unfair. She’s so illogical. She’s so selfish. She won’t communicate. And at the same time, he’s feeling depressed.

So I say to him, “Here you are standing in this big supermarket, and you’re holding an apple. And you’re telling me over and over that three-fourths of the apple, if not more, is totally rotten. And you’re going to have to put it down and pick up another apple that might be good. And you’re crying? What kind of sense does that make?” And he sees it.
So we are normally and naturally masochistic. We’re normally and naturally focusing on the bad and exaggerating the bad. That’s not unusual. That’s popular. That’s what people do. This idea of acting as if every detail in the situation is perfect goes against the habits. A person really has to use their head to do this.

Did you ever stop to think that in everything that works, we use our head? Our outer space program is working, because we use the scientific method. We use our head. People are living longer and healthier than ever before, because of the medical profession and nutrition.

Half of the marriages are ending in divorce, and most of the rest of them just don’t have the guts or the money to get out. So we’re failing all over the place. Most love relationships are short-term. They burn out. Why? Because we’re following our feelings, not using our head. If you want something to work, use your head. But our feelings are spoiled brats. They want to choose the goal and the method. They want to go to London, England by horseback. And they insist on London, England. They say, “No, no, I don’t want to change my goal. I want this particular one back. She’s selfish as hell, but I’ve got to have her.” And they want to achieve the goal by criticizing or complaining or arguing, in spite of the evidence that that always pushes them further and further away. So we’re not using our head.

So this is a brand new idea. Use your head in your personal life? Oh my goodness, that will make me an unfeeling person. No, it will make you a feeling person with happy feelings, rather than depressed feelings or hurt feelings. And it works. It works over and over and over again.

4. Date Others

“When I’m married?” “Oh, yeah, unless your attorney tells you not to do it. Even then, you can go ahead and do it very discreetly. But particularly enjoy others.

I had this preacher in my office not very long ago, and I said, “How do you feel?” “I’m depressed. My wife’s divorcing me, we’re separated, and she won’t listen to reason. Her mind’s made up.” I said, “What method are you using?” “I’m talking with her, I’m praying about it.” I said, “Well, are any of those methods working?” “No.” I said, “Not only that, she seems to be getting further away from you, doesn’t she?” “Yeah.” I said, “It never works for anybody. It wouldn’t work for Jesus Christ, because those methods show her that you have low self-esteem. You’re really telling her, ‘I’m a pea-brain. Don’t you want to live with a pea-brain?’” “Well, how am I telling her that?” “Well, you’re telling her that you can’t see that the world is full of thousands and thousands of gorgeous, sweet women, who would do anything to have a guy like you. You’re telling her that you can’t see that. You just can’t see that, you’re such a pea-brain.”

So you ask a woman, “I’m a pea-brain. Do you want to live with a pea-brain?” She says, “No thank you!” He said, “But that’s against the Bible.” I said, “Baloney. I didn’t say fall in love with anybody. I didn’t say take them to bed. I just said date them.” I said, “I thought
Jesus said, ‘Follow my steps. Be like me.’” “Well, yeah.” He said, “I thoroughly enjoy the company of women.”

“Here is this woman putting perfume on her hair and washing my feet with it. And I was thoroughly enjoying it. Others criticized her for that, and I said, ‘Leave her alone.’ Jesus thoroughly enjoyed the company of women. You’re not enjoying the company of women. You’re not enjoying anything except self-pity.” And I said, “Also, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, ‘To him that hath shall be given. And from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he has.’ As long as a man is wallowing in self-pity and saying, ‘I don’t have. I don’t have. I don’t have,’ he doesn’t get anything. Jesus said the key is to develop a have-consciousness.”

Dr. David Burns, in his book Intimate Connections, Chapter 8, “How To Deal With A Person Who’s Giving You The Runarounds,” he calls it the Harem Principle. He says when you get one, all of a sudden there’s a bunch of them.

Two weeks after dating a woman, his wife starts phoning him. Wants to know what’s going on. And gradually, she talked to him more and more, initiative coming from her. So they gradually got back together.

My wife graduated Suma Cum Laude, making better grades than any student has in the whole history of the University. They looked it up. I say that because a few years ago, the phone rang on a Sunday. This is before I was doing telephone counseling. She said, “Who was that?” I said, “Aaron.” She said, “Oh, I hope you didn’t promise to save that marriage, because that one is impossible.” She chummed with Wendy. They were high school teachers together. And I said, “Why do you say that, honey?” “Well, Wendy’s hates Aaron’s guts and is head-over-heels in love with another man. She’s filed for divorce and moved out. So that situation is hopeless.”

Well, Aaron’s in my office the next day. I said, “Aaron, I want you to let the divorce go through and date other women.” “Oh, I don’t want to do that.” I said, “Well, that pleases me very much.” “This is kind of confusing. You tell me that you want me to date other women, and then I say I don’t want to do it and you say that you’re pleased about that. I don’t understand.” I said, “Aaron, I’m setting a good example for you. I’m teaching you that anything that looks bad has a good side, and the smart person sees the good side. Wisdom is the greatest virtue, not loyalty, not courage. Wisdom is the greatest virtue. And wisdom sees the good side of anything. And now, I’m advising you to go through the divorce and date other women. Now, if you do that, you’ll get Wendy back. And that will please you and that will please me.”

“Now, if you openly tell me what you’re telling me, that you’re not going to do what I’m recommending, that pleases me too. Aaron, is anybody guaranteeing to save your marriage?” “Well, you.” And I say, “Yeah. I’m the only one. I’m the only one that says we can pull off this miracle with a little help from you. But if I don’t have the help from you, that pleases me a lot because then I don’t have to do this miracle. Can you imagine what a relief that is?” He says, “Okay.”
Two weeks later, he’s been dating 2 different women for 2 weeks. He says, “Homer, I didn’t know women could be so sweet. I don’t even know if I would take Wendy back if she wanted me to.”

Wendy came over and visited with my wife, always talking about her boyfriend. On a couple of occasions I was involved, and I said, “What about marriage counseling?” “No, no!” She’d shut me up real fast. Mind totally closed on that deal. Okay, now this is before Aaron’s had time for her to find out what was going on.

Then several weeks later, Wendy called me, sobbing. She could hardly talk. “Can I see you today?” “Sure.” So she comes into the office, and she’s sobbing so much that she can hardly talk. The story came out, the divorce was over, and she and Aaron were dating. They were going to movies. And she had asked Aaron if he would remarry her. And he said, “Not yet.” And she’s crying, sobbing. I said, “He didn’t say no, he just said not yet.” “I know. I know. But he means no. He never will. I feel so guilty. I didn’t give the marriage a chance when he desperately wanted to make it work” and so forth. So I switched my guarantee from him to her.

I said, “Wendy, you do exactly what I tell you to do, and I guarantee he’ll ask you to remarry him.” She said, “What’s that?” I said, “Enjoy the status quo. Enjoy things as they are. Act as if you are perfectly happy with things exactly as they are. Forget how to spell marriage. Don’t talk about a future together. Don’t show the slightest jealousy at all. Just enjoy dating him.” She says, “That’s all?!” I said, “That’s all. That’s all there is to it.” She said, “Okay.”

Six weeks later, she calls and we go to their re-wedding, and we double-dated with them going to movies and eating out and talking about the movies later for about 10 years.

One man in San Antonio came to me. He and his wife had separated, and she was taking counseling with a lady counselor who was telling her that she could never forgive him for less than 2 years. It would take at least 2 years for her to be able to forgive “Bill.” I said, “Bill, what did you do?” “I yelled at the kids sometimes.” There were 2 small kids. I said, “No affairs, no drug addictions, no abuse, nothing?” “No!” I said, “Okay, I want you to date others.” He said, “I already am.” But every time I’d see him in the office, he never would bring up another woman. I said, “Are you sure?” “Oh, yeah, I’m doing that.” I said, “Well, you must not be dating women of the caliber that you could become serious with. Would you upgrade the caliber of women? Because your wife feels that she has gotten you addicted to her because you’re addicted to the kids. So I want you to say you can’t see the kids this coming weekend.” He was seeing them every weekend. “Just tell them you can’t see them, you’ve got other plans.” “Oh, I can’t do that.” I couldn’t get him to do that. So I said, “I want you to upgrade the kind of women that you are dating.” So he said he would try to do that.

Weeks go by. Then one day, out of the blue he says, “Oh, I met this woman at work, and we’ve been glued together for the last 2 weeks, because we have so much in common. She says she’s in love with me and I think I’m in love with her.”
Then his wife called him. This was just a few days before Thanksgiving. She invited him over. She said, “I’ll be here and we can spend the day together.” He would have done anything to be with the kids, especially to be with the kids and her. And here she is making this offer. She’s going to cook Thanksgiving dinner, inviting him over and everything. And he says, “I’m sorry, I have plans.” She immediately said, “You’ve got somebody else!”

Now she knew that he had been dating, but obviously he had communicated to her that he could not possibly be serious with another woman. But he said, “I’ve got plans.” She said, “You’ve got another woman!” He said, “That’s right. I do.” From that moment on, she began pursuing him, she was quite willing to forget all of the past and everything.

These methods work, and they work because of the low self-esteem of the wife. She values what she can’t have, and does not value or looks down on what she can have.

5. Enjoy Friends, Hobbies, Work and Children

The reasons for this strategy are that it helps you be happy. We discussed that people leave their mates when they perceive them to be unhappy, because then they use that as an excuse to feel guilty and they think, “If I get away from him or her, then I don’t have to feel guilty because I won’t be responsible for their happiness or unhappiness.” I have said what sounds like an extreme statement, that a woman never leaves a man that she perceives to be happy.

Another reason is that it makes you more attractive and more interesting.

The third reason is that if friends and other people like you, that encourages your mate to like you also. Of course, a movie that illustrates that very clearly is My Best Friend’s Wedding.

The fourth reason is it helps remove pressure on your mate to make you happy. And pressure is always a negative thing. Pressure always pushes the mate away.

I’m thinking of a case in Portland, Oregon, we’ll call him William. Just a few weeks ago, a rancher with 2 prior marriages had met this woman at a bar. She was a waitress at the bar and very attractive. She made a beeline for him, threw him in bed, fell in love with him, and said she wanted to marry him.

He said, “Okay, I’m in love with you, too.” She said, “Now, I’m strictly Catholic, and I need for us to get married in the Catholic Church.” So he went to all the trouble of getting his 2 previous marriages annulled. So he’s doing everything that she asks, and he drops his hobby, which is playing the commodities, the futures. He’s enjoying it and he’s making some extra money, but he drops that. He loses interest in his work. He stops seeing his friends. And he pulls away from his children. In less than 1 year after their marriage, the wife files for divorce and moves out.
My theory is low self-esteem and that the wife does not know this. All she knows is she’s feeling very negative. So then she looks for excuses. So in her case, she says it’s the stress, meaning the stress of his being involved with his grown kids.

Any psychologist worth their salt knows immediately that when we give up everything for our mate, we’re going to lose our mate, or at least we’re going to lose a happy relationship. Because part of the things that make us interesting to the other person is our other interests, so we have something to talk about, something else that makes us happy.

If we lean on our mate for all of our happiness, we’ve got an ego problem and we’re pressuring our mate. We’re trying to make romantic love do something that it cannot do, which is solving our ego problem. So people who have low self-esteem, they move rapidly towards boredom and contempt and pessimism and rebellion.

So by following this strategy of enjoying friends, hobbies, work and children, we take away the mate’s excuses for blaming us for their pessimism, rebellion and boredom. And in this case, it worked surprisingly fast – about a month or 6 weeks. Things were back together, because he followed exactly what I told him to do. She was so impressed by the change in him, that she started taking counseling from me on the phone. And after a few weeks, they were talking about how happy they were and everything’s going great. So I graduated them.

6. Always Agree

Now people think that agreeing is a sign of submission, a sign of weakness, and they believe that weakness is shameful. I teach that generally speaking, weakness is undesirable, although not always. Sometimes there’s advantages in being weak. It may be undesirable, but it’s not shameful. And that when you agree, you are showing intelligence and strength.

All over the United States, I have women call me and say, “The man in my life is pulling away, and he’s pulling away because he’s afraid of being hurt from commitment. So he doesn’t want commitment.” And I say, “Was he afraid of commitment at the beginning of the relationship?” They always say, “No, he wanted commitment then.” I say, “So the fear of hurt is not what’s going on here. He’s afraid of being bored to death the rest of his life, because he’s totally conquered you.” So I tell her to agree with him and say, “You’re right. I’m not ready for commitment either. In fact, I think we both should meet and date other people.” Of course that always works.

When you agree with the other person, they become more confident and instantly change and take another step in the direction that you prefer. It’s like client-centered therapy. In my kind of therapy, I’m very directive. Say we’re down in a cave, and you are confused which tunnel to take. You want to get out into the sunlight. So I say, “Tell me very briefly where you are.” And then I say, “Yeah, yeah, yeah. I understand. I know where you’re coming from.” I take a flashlight and I guide the person. I take this step and that step, so I’m very directive. And I direct them out into the sunlight.
But in client-centered therapy, you don’t take any lead at all. You just follow. You say, “Where are you?” And they describe, and you empathize. This empathizing with them gives them the strength to take an experimental step on their own.

Dr. Carl Rogers, who invented client-centered therapy, over and over in his 1951 book says, “Now, this is not agreeing with them. It’s empathizing. It’s a very different thing. It’s not sympathizing with them. It’s a very different thing.” I thought, at the time, “I’m pretty educated. And if I have trouble understanding the difference between agreeing and accepting or agreeing and sympathizing, my clients or patients are certainly going to have a lot of trouble with it too. So I decided then to teach agreeing, always agree, and always sympathize.

Now there’s a famous best-selling author, Dr. David Burns, with the University of Pennsylvania, who is saying the same thing. He doesn’t try to get real technical about it. He says, “Always agree. Always agree.” And he gives an example of a woman patient who said to him one day, “Dr. Burns, you’re the coldest therapist I’ve ever had.” It shocked him, but he said, “You’re right.” Because he had already programmed himself to always agree. “You’re right. I have treated you coldly and I’m very sorry. Maybe it’s because your wealth intimidates me. But that’s no excuse. I have treated you coldly, and I’m very sorry. And I wouldn’t blame you if you terminated therapy right now.”

And she says, “Wait a minute. No, now that I think about it, you’re really very empathetic.” So she totally reversed her opinion. He says that they will always do this.

The way to improve the other person is to always agree with them. If you talk about where they are wrong, they immediately become more wrong. If you talk about where they are right, where they always are at least 20% right, and if you talk about the 20% where they are right, immediately they become less wrong. Now do you want them more wrong or less wrong? Well, it makes sense to want them to be less wrong.

Always agree. Reality is the big boss. Reality is our friend. Reality wants to help us. It says, “Look at reality and you will see that agreeing works. Agreeing works.”

7. Stop Needing And Fake Indifference

Fake indifference about sex or about romance, about possessiveness. Act like you don’t care about it, but be friendly. Be friendly, but indifferent about whether you live together or not, whether they think and feel the way you want them to or not is perfectly okay. So stop needing. Reality tells you over and over again that needing works against you, that the surest way to not get the loan from the bank is to desperately, need it. But if you only prefer it but don’t need it, then they’ll probably say yes.

Now, Robert Ringer, in the best selling book Winning Through Intimidation, says in the early part of the book that as a broker in big real estate, he was barely getting by financially. Just barely getting by. And he said every broker that he knew was barely getting by. So he went
to a rock by the river every day and sat and wrote for hours, analyzing his experiences. He discovered that he was spitting at reality, that he wasn’t listening to reality, that he was going with his wishes, that he was going with what he believed should work. So he decided to go with reality.

In less than a year after he adjusted to reality, he made $800,000 in brokerage fees. So “stop needing” does not mean to be unfriendly. It means gratify some, and then back off. Gratify some, and then back off.

Let me give you an example of how we fall in love with our theories, and we believe that our mates know the full truth.

My friend; now, and ex-client in Montana, when he called he had attempted suicide twice and had been in the hospital twice. They had gone to a marriage counselor and it wasn’t working at all. He heard about me and called me. So I said, “Okay, you’re having this affair that your wife does not know about?” And he said, “Yes. She’s very loving and very sexual, and she’ll do anything for you” and so forth. I said, “Right now, let her move in with you, and don’t hide it.” He said, “Oh, I can’t do that. I can’t do that. That’s why Carolyn is divorcing me – for affairs.” I said, “Oh, really? Okay.” So I asked him a bunch of questions to find out what had been going on. Then I said, “Well, correct where I’m wrong. But if I understand correctly, for years before you retired at age 55 and moved home, you were having flings. Nothing serious. And Carolyn knew about this?” “Yeah.” “During that time, did she threaten or say anything about divorce?” “No, no.” I said, “Let’s look at the time of this. Then at age 55, you move home, and you’re home all the time. You’re under her nose. You’re following her from room to room. So she knows that you’re not having an affair. And that’s when she leaves you. So it’s not the affairs.”

That was a hard sell, but he adjusted to it and started doing what I told him to do. Reality has the answer. This wife changed her mind, fired her attorney, and went back to her husband.

This guy on the phone said, “My ex-wife was condemning me for 2 hours yesterday. I deserve better than this.” I said, “No, you don’t. Reality says you don’t deserve better than that. Was anybody holding a gun on you, making you talk to her or listen to her?” “No.” “So you deserved exactly what you got.” So reality is the big boss.

Janet, a nurse in Baltimore, Maryland, a very nice and intelligent lady, used my techniques and got her ex-husband back when he wouldn’t even talk to her. Then she began to slip. She wasn’t in counseling at this time, and began to slip back and become needy and argumentative. So her husband left her. So she divorced him, and now she’s interested in finding a man. She tells me how everybody says she is gorgeous and very healthy.

She’s very intelligent. She works as a nurse for a hospital on the weekends for a law firm during the weekdays. So she’s a hard worker, she’s buying a 3-story house, and saving her money. But she meets a guy and they click, and she thinks he’s the maturest, nicest thing in the whole world, and she goes to bed with him. Of course, shortly after that, his interest goes away.
I think Dr. Ellis is definitely a genius, and he’s been a tremendous pioneer, and I agree with most everything he says. In the 70’s, he wrote a book *The Intelligent Woman’s Guide To Manhunting*. And he says if everything is clicking between the two of you and both of you have the urges to go to bed, go to bed with him. I disagree. He said the reason is that he will think that you don’t really care for him or you’re not attracted to him, or that you’ve got a sexual hang-up. So you want to prove to him that he is attractive to you, and that you don’t have a sexual hang-up. But I disagree. I still take the position that when a woman goes to bed with a guy real early in the relationship, that she’s communicating to him that she’s totally conquered, so that he moves quickly towards boredom. Every time she would do this, the guy just immediately lost interest, he’d be kind of friendly but never call her for a date. Finally, I got it through her head not to do it. So then she got a guy that gradually worked out.

But reality has the answers. Where are the answers? A woman says to me, “I gave my kid a beating. Did I do right or wrong?” I said, “Did you break any bones or anything?” “No, nothing like that.” I said, “Well, I don’t know. Tell me the results.” And if she says, “Well, he became very depressed and very bitter and still didn’t take the trash out or clean up his room, then we’ve made a boo-boo and we want to do something different. But if he says, ‘Damn, that hurt. But mom doesn’t take any stuff off of me,’” and he took it in a good way, no bitterness, no hostility, and he took the trash out and cleaned up his room, then it was a good thing. Reality is the big boss. Reality is your friend.

I’ve been to 10 different universities. I don’t get my answers from those universities. I don’t get my answers from books. I get my pet theories out of the way. I get my wishes out of the way. I try to get my ego out of the way. And I study, study, study reality. Because reality is the big boss.

Reality has the answers. Jesus taught this in a similar light. He said, “For the meek shall inherit the Earth.” Those that don’t spit at reality, those that have respect for reality, those that can be humbled before the truth, those that can be open-minded, then reality will become your friend and you will be happy. You’ll have peace of mind and you’ll get your way.

### 8. Stop Calling

Don’t call her or him. Return calls, sure. And then when you do, talk less than 10 minutes.

I remember a single man in Houston that I was counseling. After a couple of weeks, one day he said, “Oh, I’ve been talking for hours and hours with this woman on the Internet, and we have everything in common. And then we moved over to the telephone, and we just talked for 5 hours a day. Boy, it’s got to working good.”

So then they got together and she liked what she saw. She saw him as a very handsome man and he saw her as a goddess. You’d think that, my goodness, they’re going to get married
next week. The very next week, she won’t even return his calls. She dropped him like a hot potato. He tried to contact her on the Internet, he tried to phone her. Never any response back at all.

Now at the same time, I’m counseling a single man in North Carolina. This woman is telling him every day how much she loves him. They’re spending a lot of time on the phone, and they’re being together a lot.

Now the lady with the Houston man did not say why she dropped him. I found out her conscious excuse later on. But the lady in North Carolina gave him an explanation. She said, “I’m not ready for a commitment.” But she dropped him totally. Didn’t even date him at all after that and wouldn’t see him. It’s like she couldn’t think consciously between a total commitment and casual dating. Why did she go to the opposite extreme? Why did she drop him totally? If she wasn’t ready for a commitment, how did that prove that she wasn’t ready for dating?

The reason is, when you spend hours on them, they feel like you’re totally conquered. So they move towards boredom and contempt for you. In phone conversations, when you do return the call, always be the one to say, “It’s been nice, but I’ve got to go.” Be the one to hang up.

Now, the harder it is to follow these strong recommendations, the more important it is for you to do it, because it shows how over-dependent you are.

9. Stop Staying “I Love You”

When a person is being rejected, they’re always coming on real strong with “I want you” and “I love you,” and “you’re the most important thing in the world to me.” Of course, they buy the reasoning the wife says, “You’ve neglected me” or something like that. There’s always a deficit. “You don’t love me enough,” so on and so forth. Whereas, the real truth as why she is moving away is the theory opposite of that. He’s loved her too much.

When you say, “I love you,” that means “I’m totally committed and you’ve totally conquered me.” So total conquest along with low self-esteem, which is 95% of the people, move away from being interested.

I’ll give you 2 books. Married Men Make The Best Lovers by Ruth Dixon. She says at the end of 3 years, all love affairs begin to be over, strongly over. And she says, “Reject your married lover when you see him begin to cool off.” I saw her on the Phil Donohue Show a few years after I was recommending her book. I was recommending her book not because I agree with everything she says, but there’s a lot of sense in what she’s saying. She was recommending a book then, her second book, Marriage Is A Bad Habit. She’s very attractive and comes across non-defensively. They attacked her, criticized her and everything. It didn’t bother her at all.
Now, this was her own private research. Then Columbia University came out in about 1983 with *Lover to Lover*, by Nora Harlow, professional medical journalist. Her husband is the head sex therapist at medical school at Columbia University. Now, of course, Columbia University’s football team never wins a game, because they spend their money on education and research, of all things.

Anyway, for this research, they interviewed hundreds of couples. And all of them had the same story. They’re making love 2 and 3 times a day, every single day. And by the end of 3 years, at the longest period of time, sex has become boring at best. This is research. Reality has the answers. Of course, they have in there how to keep it new. A person is married and everything is boring, so then we’ll say the wife has an affair. Immediately, she thinks, “Oh, it’s so exciting. I found the right man this time!” But in a little while, the enthusiasm goes out of it. So then she has another affair and has the same feeling. Finally, it dawns on her that it’s not who it’s with, but whether it’s new or not. So in the book *Lover To Lover*, they teach the 10-day plan, which keeps sex always new, always exciting.

We’ve been taught being unselfish and give, give, give until it hurts. I remember a male nurse and a female nurse married to each other. They came to my office a few years ago. She worked the first shift, he worked the second shift. Well, she’s a human being, so that means complaining. What was her complaint? He works the second shift, so she never saw him. Okay, so he changed from the second shift to the first shift. What happened? Immediately, she left him.

See, if the wife or the husband knows the truth, and the mate is willing to work at it or shows that they are, like if the guy has a temper and works on his temper and controls it, if that were the reason, reality tells us she would be pleased at his improvement. She might not be totally suckered in on it. She might say, “Hey, I don’t know if you can keep this up, but I sure want to help you because I sure do like it.” She never does that. She backs away faster and says something like, “Too little, too late.”

The fact is that that’s not the real reason. But the poor guy, he’s got the wrong key to open the door. So instead of changing keys to open the door, he just tries to force it. He does more and more of that which doesn’t work. And the real reason is the same old thing, that he was totally conquered and she had low self-esteem. Therefore, she looks down on him. So that’s the reason to stop saying, “I love you.”


Stop asking any questions like that. People being rejected almost always do this, and it puts the mate on the defensive and turns them off. Yet it is so natural to do this, so difficult to not
do it. But it always pushes the mate away. It is pressure. Your mate is allergic not only to pressure, but to the slightest pressure. The total absence of pressure works like suction. It works like the lift above the airplane wing to lift the airplane.

11. Stop All Criticizing

It is so obviously wrong to criticize, but it’s like an instinct that we’re driven to give in to. Yet it goes against the all-important pride principle. If our mate puts us down, we fall out of love. Even church-going people have a big problem with this, even though Jesus said, “Judge not, lest you be not judged. With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged.”

When I suggest to people that they date others while their mate is rejecting them, they often say, “Oh, this is against the Bible.” And I say, “It’s kind of interesting. The Bible is against worry, but you seem to be very worried. And you’re not aware that that’s going you’re criticizing your mate and you’re not aware that that’s going against the Bible.” So we use the Bible to defend our neurotic attitudes. And overlook the scriptures that would build our healthy attitudes. So we have all kinds of evidence and so forth that criticizing pushes the mate away.

12. Stop All Complaining

When we complain, we are waving a flag to get attention and we’re communicating, “Look at me! I can’t handle it!” Does it build a wife’s pride to be with a husband who complains, who is saying over and over, “I’m a baby. I’m a spoiled brat. And I can’t cut it unless everything is going my way?” Does this turn her on? No.

13. Stop Showing Jealousy

Jealousy is a con artist. Jealousy is to be admired from the standpoint of how clever it is. Your jealousy says to you, “I’m on your side. I don’t want you to share her with another man. I don’t want you to lose her to another man. I hate that stuff.” And actually, that’s exactly what jealousy wants. It wants you to criticize her, show suspicion, complain, and thus push her into another man’s arms. That’s exactly what it wants. So that you can have a dramatic excuse for your favorite hobby, which is poor, sad, miserable me.

Now, the husband shows jealousy and criticizes if there’s another man, but we can also show jealousy in connection with our relationship with her kids or her parents. And when we attack anything that she is emotionally attached to, she feels that we are attacking her pride, because her pride is attached to her friends, her choice of music, or whatever.
Again, the mistake is following our feelings. When we follow our feelings simply because they’re feelings, our feelings get worse and worse.

14. Stop Controlling

Many wives tell me that their husbands are controlling. I say, “What’s he controlling? He wants you to be happy, and you’re not. He wants you to be sweet and loving to him, and you’re not. He wants you to agree with his ideas, and you don’t. Tell me one thing that he’s controlling.” They often laugh and say, “That’s a new point of view.” I say, “What you’re observing is accurate. He is needing to control. But the purpose of needing to control is to not control. You get something if you prefer it. If you need it, you destroy it.”

And if your wife says to you, “You’re controlling,” you’re tempted to be defensive and say, “Hey look, I’m working on it,” or “I’m not as controlling as I was,” or “How can you say that?” Then they become even more sure that we’re controlling them because we need to control them right at that moment.

Always agree. If she says, “You’re controlling,” say “you are right. I still am controlling. Thank you for pointing that out.” Immediately, she feels you’re not controlling. A wife never says that a man is controlling when he is agreeing with her. She always says he’s controlling when he’s disagreeing with her. It’s so simple and so powerful, and goes against the feelings. But it always works.

15. Stop Trying To Talk Her Or Him Into Doing Anything Different – Into Thinking Different Or Acting Different Or Feeling Different

Everybody, professional and non-professional alike, says that to have a happy marriage, you have to work at it. My point of view is that the working is what makes it not work. Because when we criticize or complain or argue or show jealousy, we are working at changing our mate or working at improving our mate. We are working very hard. And in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Don’t work. Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not. They don’t work. They toil not and neither do they spin. Yet, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Look how beautiful they are, and they don’t do one ounce of work.”

Now, what we want to put in the place of working is accepting. Accepting them as they are and putting a good name on whatever they do. If they’re angry, call it caring. Call it courage. Put a good name on it, immediately they’re less angry.

Now this stopping working saves your energy, saves your pride because you’re defining your pride as a steel ball in your pocket, rather than a big balloon that anybody can break. You
save your nerves, you save your peace of mind. So it’s really worth considering and worth doing.

16. Bribe Your Mate

That sounds strange. Here’s a true case. A doctor in San Antonio married to a lady counselor that had a master’s degree in counseling. She caught him repeatedly having affairs. Finally, she had her fill of it and was pouring lots of money into 2 very expensive attorneys. He was pouring a lot of money into 2 or 3 expensive attorneys. He came to see me. He had seen me every day in the office or called me on the phone.

One day, I remember he called me and said, “I went to the gymnasium and watched the teenage kids play basketball. She was there, and she sat as far away from me as she could sit. She won’t talk to me on the phone or in any way. Do you still guarantee to get us back together? How are you going to do it?” I said, “Watch.”

So one day in the office, this is in the middle of a hot divorce where she won’t talk to him at all. I said, “I want you to write up a marriage contract in which you say that if she will take you back, if she ever catches you again having an affair, that she will get $1 million immediately and divorce totally on her terms.” Immediately he said, “I’m glad to do that. But I can’t talk with her, and I can’t talk with her attorney.” So I said, “I’ll fix it.”

So I called her attorney, Terry Callahan, still practicing law here in San Antonio. “Terry, would you do me a favor?” “Well, if I can.” “Talk with your client and get her permission to talk with my client one time.” I lied to him and I said, “I don’t know what my client wants to tell you.” He said, “Okay, I’ll do that.”

So he got his client’s permission, called me and said my client could come talk to him. So my client went and presented the new marriage contract. The attorney, Terry Callahan said, “I never heard of such a thing.” My client said, “I know, but is it legal?” Terry said, “I’ve never heard of such a thing.” My client said, “I know. But in my situation, my counselor has to be innovative, so I’d like to know if it’s legal.” “Oh yes, it’s very legal. I’ve just never heard of such a thing before. I’ll present it to my client.”

So he presents it to her and then she calls me. Now, I’d come from her point of view and neutral positions. I was indifferent about whether the marriage was saved or not. I could care less. So she expected a professional, objective point of view.

She called me and asked me what do I think about the idea. I didn’t tell her I thought it was great, because it was my idea. “Hey, I think that’s a good idea. You can’t lose. Even though you’re telling everybody you’re not in love with him anymore, I think you’re still in love with him. You’re just afraid of being embarrassed or hurt again.” She said, “That’s right.” I said, “I think you’ll have a happy marriage. I think he’s burned out on having affairs. I think he’s learned some things in counseling and I think he truly and deeply loves you. And if he does
have another affair, it’s easy for you to catch him. He doesn’t seem to be very good at hiding it. So then immediately you’ll get a million dollars and a divorce totally on your terms. I don’t see how you can lose.” She said, “I’ll think about it.” I said, “Well, that’s good.”

So then she called her attorney and said she’d do it. I found out later that my client, instead of hurrying over to her attorney’s office and signing it, called her and said, “I’m real busy. I can’t go over there today, but I can go over there in 2 or 3 days.” To my surprise and showing how much importance she put on the bribe, she said, “No. You can’t come home until you sign that.” So he hurried over there, of course, and signed it. And every Christmas for about 10 years after that, Terry Callahan and I got a Christmas card from her that they were still very happy and thanking us.

Of course, most of us don’t have a million dollars to bribe with. But, there are many things that the person wants just as bad. Promise her space. Promise her freedom. Promise her that there’s no obligation to have sex. “I promise to never criticize or pressure you about anything.” You can offer that kind of a bribe or whatever she really wants.

17. Act Indifferent About The Divorce or Separation

Now this is a situation where the wife is separating or divorcing. Her mind is made up. As much as possible, ignore her. She respects you for doing this. She knows this is what she deserves. She has contempt for you when you are catering or soliciting or begging. She can’t feel proud of being married to a wimp for a husband.

I have seen indifference work many times. With an 80-year-old, happily married professional blind man in San Diego, and young women calling him in the evenings. He was a switchman in Dallas, Texas, married with 4 kids, always in debt. He didn’t look very attractive, yet I saw young women throwing themselves at him.

These guys are very, very different. The professional man in San Diego was very educated. The switchman probably barely graduated from high school. What do these guys have in common? They were both indifferent.

I remember one young woman throwing herself at Marty, this railroad switchman. He said, “Oh, I’m too old for this.” She said, “No, you’re not, Marty. Let me prove to you you’re not.” She looked on it as a challenge.

18. Act Hostile

If it’s unlike you, if you never disagree or argue or if she feels you’re trapped into always being nice and this is all you can be, then disagree. Snap at her. She respects this if you rarely do it. Don’t do it more than once every 6 months at the very most.
What was the scene in Gone With The Wind, where Clark Gable says, “Frankly, Scarlett, I don’t give a damn.” That’s hostile.

19. Act Selfish About Money

I remember a young woman who came in, a lieutenant, came in and said her sergeant husband was divorcing her because she wasn’t outgoing enough to his friends. Well, I talked with him and I said, “She’s improving about that.” He said, “I don’t care. It’s too little, too late.”

I told her, of course, get the divorce and date others, which she did. She said, “Now, in the settlement, there’s $20,000 that’s mine,” that she had inherited or something. But it was legally and morally hers. And she said, “Now, I have the right to take it. But if I do take it, he’s going to be really mad.” I told her that temper is the spoiled brat’s way of showing respect. He’s saying, “What?! I can’t continue to run over you? This is shocking!”

So she was able to do it. And just a very few weeks later, he’s back in love with her. He called me and said, “You were right. I was wrong. Please help me get her back.”

In another case, a client in upstate New York discovered his truck was breaking down. So he want to a savings account where they had saved $20,000 together, and it was gone. She had taken it out and put it in another account in her name only without discussing it with him. I was surprised that he wasn’t really upset about that. He wasn’t really angry about it. He didn’t like it, and he thought it was very unfair, and he didn’t chew her out about it or confront her. I encouraged him to do that, which is a story in itself. But here she acted very selfishly about money. It didn’t turn him off.

20. Use A Soothing Voice

A soothing voice says, “I’m on top of the situation. I’m in charge. I can take care of you. I can take care of the situation.”

Most of the time, the tone of voice of ladies and men in the movies, Clark Gable, Maurice Chevalier, their tone of voice is very soothing.

21. Scare Them That They Can Lose You

I remember a case of a husband in San Antonio. They were separated; the wife was going to a counselor who was telling her that she would not be able to forgive her husband for 2 or 3 years, at least. I said to him, “Why should it worry you? Have you been abusive of her?”
Have you had an affair? What is the problem?” He says, “Oh, I yell at the little kids sometimes.” That’s all he would say.

I said, “I want you to date others.” He said, “Well, I’ve been doing that.” I said, “Oh, okay. That’s good.” But it was fascinating to me that as the weeks went on, he never volunteered information about any woman that he was dating. He never brought it up. If I brought it up, he would just agree, but give no details. So I figured it out. I said, “She feels that you are addicted to the kids, because you’re always talking about them and want to be with them. I want you to call and say you can’t see them this weekend because you’ve got other plans.” I couldn’t get him to do that. He saw my point, but I said, “You need to find a woman of a caliber that you could be seriously interested in. Obviously, you haven’t dated anybody like that.”

Well, one day after I hadn’t seen him in a couple weeks, he said, “About 10 days ago, I met this woman at work, and we have so much in common that we’ve been glued together ever since. She’s head-over-heels in love with me and wants to marry me, and I feel pretty much the same way towards her.”

So his wife called me and told me she called him just a few days before Thanksgiving. She invited him to join them for Thanksgiving dinner and to spend the day with them. Now he would have jumped for joy to do that with the kids alone, especially with her being there. But he said to her, “I’m sorry, I’ve got plans.” Now she knew he had been dating. But immediately she said, “You’ve found somebody else, haven’t you?” She started pursuing him then.

My idea is she was afraid that she was going to lose him.

There’s a true story from a few years ago, about a financial man with his own finance business with a female business partner. He was in love with her and was telling her so. She said, “Don’t touch me. There will never, ever be anything between the two of us.” That was her point of view. She was rather consistent. However, she would even bring it up inappropriately and say that nothing was ever going to happen between them.

I told him to date others. He said, “I can’t. I’m working all the time.” I said, “I’m sorry. I didn’t make the rules. You’ve got to date others.”

I would talk to him once a week on the phone and he would start out, “She’s still the same.” My comment was the same, too. “She’s still the same because you’re still the same.” I’ll bet you’re not dating anybody.” “No.”

Then one day, he called me out of the blue and said, “About 3 days ago, she threw me in bed and made mad, passionate love to me, and told me that she was in love with me and wanted to marry me.” I said, “Well, we knew that would happen.” He laughed and said, “No, we didn’t. You did. But it really surprised me.” She was very serious, because they followed through on that. In fact, 2 weeks later he talked to me and said, “We’re making love every single night. I don’t know if I can keep this up.”
When he called me and said that she made mad love to him, I said, “Well, you must have dated someone else.” He says, “No, no I didn’t.” I said, “Then, this is the first time in over 45 years that I’ve seen a man get a woman back without having another woman. So I need to look at this very closely, because maybe I can learn something.” I said, “I want you to go back 48 hours before she threw you in bed. Was anything different?” “No, we were just working from sunrise until midnight every day. That’s all. Work, work, work, all the time. Everything’s still the same.” I said, “It might have been very small, but there had to be something that triggered that. Something different.”

He said, “Oh, we needed a secretary, so I put an ad in the newspaper and a woman applied.” I said, “Was she pretty?” He said, “No, she was gorgeous.” I said, “Did you tell your female business partner that you wanted to hire her?” He said, “I sure did.” I said, “That triggered her jealousy button right there.” He said, “I think you’re right!” So she became afraid of losing him.

22. Show Sympathy

Sympathy is very powerful, such as saying to them, “You’re really handling a very tough situation,” or something like that. A real good example of the power of sympathy is in Dale Carnegie’s book How To Win Friends And Influence People. An agent is working for and representing a very famous singer. I think he’s a bass singer.

Anyway, he’s supposed to go on that evening, and like many very famous singers, he’s rather a Prima Dona and very nervous. An agent calls him and he says, “I can’t go on today, my voice is terrible. I just can’t go on today.” The agent says, “Of course, you can’t. My goodness, look what this would do to your reputation to go on stage. Of course you can’t go!” Then the man says, “Well, give me a call this afternoon.” So the agent says, “Sure. I’ll call you back this afternoon.”

So he calls him back and he says, “I just can’t go on. I can’t go on. My voice is just too terrible.” So again the agent says, “Of course you can’t. Of course you can’t. That’s expecting way too much for you to go on.”

So then the time comes and he says he’ll go on. So that is something that’s not used very often, but it really does work.

23. Use A Sincere Compliment

“Of course, you’re divorcing me. You’re a very independent lady. It shows you’ve got guts, it shows you’ve got courage. It’s a smart thing to do.” Any kind of a sincere compliment.
It’s rare for a man who’s being divorced to pay a compliment to his wife. But any kind of a sincere compliment. “Thank you for having the kids available on time,” for example. Or, “Thank you for being agreeable,” about anything that they happen to have in their personal relationship.

I remember one situation which is extremely unusual. Usually, the wife who’s getting the divorce is under the thumb of her attorney, and will do whatever the attorney says. Once case that I remember, she stood up to her attorney and said, “No, I’m not going to do that. I’ve already agreed with my husband what the financial arrangements will be. So I’m going to stick by that.” Of course, her husband paid her a sincere compliment about being able to do that, and their relationship continued to get better.

24. Pursue Legal Divorce

When a husband is being divorced, he often is in a state of panic. He says, “Only 10 more days until my divorce if final. How can you stop the divorce?” I say, “Well, we have 2 kinds of divorce going on simultaneously. One is the emotional divorce and the other is the legal divorce.” I say, “Let me give you an example or a hypothetical situation. If you had only 2 choices,” I say to the husband. “Let’s say that you’re not divorced and you’re living together. Nobody’s mentioning divorce, but you’re in arguments all the time, there’s no affection, there’s no sex, nobody’s happy. But you’re legally married. No question about it. Or, let’s say that you are divorced, but you’re living together and you’re both in love, you’re both happy, and you’re both faithful. You’ve got everything, except legal marriage. Now which of those 2 would you choose?”

Almost always, the person will say, “Well, the second situation.” I say, “But you’re acting as if everything good comes from the legal situation. My experience is the more you try to stop the legal divorce; you definitely rapidly increase the emotional divorce which is the cause of the legal divorce. So the more you try to stop the legal divorce, the more you’re going to get emotional divorce and legal divorce.”

I say, “Two weeks before you were married, were both of you happy?” “Oh, yes!” “Were both of you in love?” “Oh, yes!” “Were both of you faithful?” “Oh, yes!” “Were you married?” “No.”

So we’re putting way too much importance on the written word. A man says to me, “I got my divorce papers today!” It makes me think of 2 different movies that help us put the written word into perspective. In the movie Lawrence of Arabia, a true story about an Englishman who goes to Arabia, rides a camel like a native, dresses like a native. He’s at home on a camel. And he says to one tribe, “We’re going to conquer this tribe over here. We’re going to attack them and we’re going to conquer them.” And they say nervously, “No, no, no! You can’t do that!” He says, “Why not?” “Because it is written in the Koran. It is written. Lawrence says, “Nothing is written,” and goes out and conquers the tribe.
Another movie, one of the first Airplane movies, 747 I think it is. Anyway, we’ll call it 747. It’s stuck in the snow, and is the only runway that this airplane that’s coming in with lots of passengers on it can land. So they’re going to have to bulldoze this 747 that they can’t get to move out of the snow. There’s the bulldozer out there, gunning the engines, 747 and get it off the runway. Well, the last thing that they do is call George Kennedy. He’s in bed making love to his woman, but he comes and gets in the airplane and the airplane is trembling, shaking all over.

The junior co-pilot is looking at the manual, studying the manual, and he feels the vibration of the airplane shaking all over and he says very nervously, “The manual says she can’t take any more.” And George Kennedy says in his deep masculine voice, “Well, she’s going to get it,” and he pushes the throttle further forward and the airplane trembles a whole lot more, like it’s going to shake to pieces. But it pulls out of the snow, totally off the runway, out of the way. He saves the day, saves the airplane, saves the lives of the people coming in the other airplane.

The junior co-pilot is still looking at the manual, the written word. He says, “The manual says a 747 can’t do that.” And George Kennedy says chuckling, “The 747 can do everything but read.”

That helps them sometimes put things into perspective.

Now, by agreeing to the legal divorce, the man is doing 2 different things. He is being very independent and saying, “I’m self-sufficient. I can handle this.” And he’s also being very agreeable. He’s being non-hostile, non-controlling.

So to give him that perspective about it helps him know what to do.

25. Get An Aggressive Attorney

Sometimes, a man has an attorney that’s just too agreeable and too nice, and doesn’t stand up for him. Get one that will fight for you for all kinds of reasons. Number 1, she respects this. When you roll over and play dead financially, she does not respect this.

I had one client, a medical doctor in the East, who was already doing a number of things. He still wasn’t independent of his wife. He had been married to her for only a year. She thought she was going to get $50,000, but she got $5,000, because he got a very aggressive attorney. But it worked. It maintained her respect, and she kept sending messages back to him about being open for reconciliation, possibly. Not real strong, but open for continuing the dialogue.

I recommended that he date others and he did. He found somebody else that he liked a whole lot better.
Another thing that’s satisfying in getting an aggressive attorney is it’s good for the man’s ego. Also, then he doesn’t refuse to discuss anything of the settlement with his wife, which I recommend. He can say, “Well, that’s worth thinking about. However, it’s not up to me. It’s up to the lawyers and the judge. They have the power. They have the final decision. I don’t have the final decision. You’ve got a good point there, and I’ll think about it, and I’ll relay it to my attorney. But in the last analysis, it’s up to the judge. It’s not up to me. It’s not up to her either, but he doesn’t say that.


A person might think that doesn’t deserve mentioning, because it’s so obvious to keep on doing something that is working. But it seems to be widespread human nature to be masochistic, and if something is working to change it. Michele Weiner-Davis, in the book *Divorce Busting*, and her second book *Fire Your Shrink*, which she changed the title later to *Change Your Life And Everyone In It*, mentions that after she instructs people to act happy in a new, independent way, and the mate starts coming around, she says then they are tempted to revert back to the original way that they were. She says the gains are always lost when you do that.

I’ve listened to some marketers on how to market direct mail products, and they keep running into people who are doing something that’s working and they want to do something new and different. The marketers will say, “Well, is what you’re doing now working?” “Oh yeah. I just want to try something different.” It’s fine to try something different, if you hang on to the thing that’s already working.

The marketers Trout & Ries, who authored *Positioning*, give example after example of big companies such as Western Union. They’re using a marketing approach that’s working real good and it keeps working better and better, and all of a sudden they’ll change it. So we need to be reminded that if something is working, just keep on doing it.

27. If Nothing Is Working, Do Something Very Different

Again you say, “That’s real obvious. If nothing is working, do something very different.” But people don’t normally do that. When they find something that isn’t working, they just do more of it. It’s like taking a key to open your car door and you have the wrong key. Well, you change keys. But in our personal lives, we just keep sweating harder and pushing harder, using pressure.

For example, criticizing doesn’t work. That’s a key that doesn’t work. Well, when it doesn’t work, what do we do? Stop it? No, we do more of it. Arguing doesn’t work. Complaining doesn’t work. All the keys that don’t work, we think the solution is we’re just not doing enough of it. So we increase it.
But when nothing is working, do something very different. For example, if you’re the kind of husband that’s been going out with your friends a lot, and you go out regularly with them, stay home. If you’re the kind of person that stays home, go out. If bringing her flowers on her birthday or Valentine’s Day, if she does not appreciate that or resents it, then start ignoring her on those days. Don’t bring flowers.

Our mate leaves us because we are in a rut. We’re not using our imagination, and therefore are boring.

28. Do Not Defend Yourself

Now, why do professional and non-professional people call it defensive? If I tell my mate she’s wrong and I’m right, they call that defensive. It’s masochistic. It’s not defending yourself.

Now, defending yourself is a great idea. It’s a great goal. It’s a good purpose. But, when you think you’re defending yourself by telling her that she’s wrong and you are right, you are not defending yourself. You are giving her a stick to hit you with, and she always hits us with it. Therefore, giving her a stick is not defending yourself.

Now, why do they call it defensive? My guess is because that’s what we think we’re doing. It’s wishful thinking again and departing from reality. Remember, reality is our friend. It will show us what does defend us. Reality shows us to use the all-powerful pride principle and defend her. And then she will defend us, or at least stop attacking us so harshly.

Personally, I say what about honesty? Well, here again, feelings take us in one direction and our reasoning power takes us in another direction. Say we’re at a shooting contest and we want to hit the bull’s-eye and win the prize money, the cheers of the crowd, and the loving cup. But the gun is heavy, so it’s natural and easy to shoot at the ground. Everybody else is shooting at the ground. And every time I shoot at the ground, I pat myself on the head about how honest I am.

In counseling, people’s marriage gets better and better. And then all of a sudden, they’ll slip and go back to the old way and they’ll defend themselves. “But I was honest.” I said, “Do I teach honesty of feelings? No. Use your head.”

People say, “Be true to yourself.” I say, “Which self? The self that wants to shoot at the ground and end in self-pity or the self that wants to hit the bull’s-eye and win my goal?” When there’s a conflict between your feelings and your reasoning, you better follow your reasoning.

In connection with honesty, she’s always right. Of course, she’s wrong too. But if you talk about where she is wrong, she becomes more wrong. Reality shows you that. When you talk about where she is wrong, she becomes more wrong. When you talk about where she is right, she’s always at least 20% right. And when you talk about the 20% where she’s right, she
immediately becomes more right and less wrong, which is what you’re mature self, your happy self, and your head wants.

29. Stop Trying To Talk It Out And Reason With Her

Everybody thinks that all we need to do is sit down and talk and communicate, and it will solve all our problems. Trout & Ries, in their first book on positioning, on the very first page mentions that everybody thinks that communicating will solve all problems. And that if we have a problem, we’re just not communicating enough. They say, “Hardly. That’s not true.”

Why stop trying to talk it out or reason with her? Because you’ve tried that. That’s why you revert to arguing, that’s why you stop talking. It doesn’t work. Not only does it not work, it makes things worse. Avoid serious talk. Everybody, professionals included, tend to believe if you don’t talk about the problems and how they came up and so forth, you don’t really solve them and you can’t be happy and get on with your life.

But the facts show that the more serious talking you do, the worse the situation becomes, because you attack each other’s pride, you become more defensive, and so forth. Do small talk and happy talk.

For years, I was trained in and used the classical Freudian psychoanalytic approach. I got to thinking. Freud studied abnormal people. And then I got to thinking why not study happy people? What are happy people doing? Are they doing serious talk? Most of the time, no. What are they doing? Small talk. Happy talk. It works.

30. Get Yourself Out Of Pain

This has to do with a person getting out of pain. Pain is connected with the tone of voice of whining or screaming. So we want to learn to whine and interrupt our self-talk, saying, “Shut up.” “But how could she…” “Shut up!” “But how could she…” “Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! I’m not a 3-year-old being abandoned in the woods by my mother. The world is full of sweet, beautiful women who would do anything to have a guy like me.”

In the book How To Fall Out Of Love, by Deborah Phillips, she teaches when you think of the person who’s rejecting you, you are in pain. So stop thinking about them. Now, stop and switch over to something positive that you’ve prearranged on a positive list. And it works. The purpose is to get out of pain. She says that you’re in pain when you’re thinking about the person. And I think it’s the whining when you think about the person. You can think about the person, as long as you don’t whine about it. Then you’re not in pain. So you practice whining in a sentence that you’re usually thinking, “How could she do this?” “Shut up!” Do that over and over.
31. Say “Shut up!  Shut up!  Shut up!” Very Fast, Energetically, Non-Stop For 30 Seconds

This is a variation of strategy number 30. That will get you out of pain very quickly. I’ve used it for claustrophobia. My wife and I would be on vacation and use a rent-a-car. Let’s say she would be driving, and click! She locks the doors. Instantly, my adrenaline shoots up and I don’t holler or scream or anything like that. But I feel like it. Then I start looking to see how I can open this door. How can I get out. Then, I hit on this technique. The moment that that clicks locked, and I’m locked in, I say to myself very fast, “Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!” very fast for 30 seconds. Now, of course, it works in about 3 seconds, because you get better at it. Immediately, my phobia is totally under control.

Just last night, Andy Rooney, who’s on 60 Minutes, was interviewed by Larry King Live. He said, “I hate to fly, because I’ve got claustrophobia.” John Madden has claustrophobia and hates to fly because of the same reasons. But this technique of shut up displaces the whining and screaming. This can be used against guilt or irrational fear.

32. Concentrate On Smooth And Relaxed Breathing

Smooth and relaxed breathing relaxes your body, and therefore relaxes your emotions. You see, the man who is being divorced thinks, “Oh, if I get my wife back, then I’ll be happy.” “After I get my wife back, then I’ll be happy.” “If I can only get my wife back, then I’ll be happy.”

It never works. Switch it around. Make yourself happy first, then you can get your wife back. A wife never comes back to an unhappy man who’s pressuring her to make him happy. Reality shows us that. So smooth breathing calms our negative emotions down.

In a book published in 1981, Relax And Win, by Bud Winter, an experiment was done in the Navy/Air Force. Then young men, World War II, in 1942, were being trained to be pilots and officers. So anything they could do to help these men, they wanted to do. And they had the idea that maybe relaxing techniques would help, but they didn’t know for sure. So they took a control group and a second group. The second group was taught relaxing, where they were put through 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the afternoon of relaxing by suggestion. “Your scalp is relaxing, your forehead is smoothing out,” and so on. It doesn’t make any difference if you start with your head or start with your toes. It doesn’t make any difference.

They kept on doing it for 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the afternoon. Then they compared the 2 groups at the end of 1 week. The relaxed group was running circles around the first group. They were boxing better, they were running farther and faster, everything.
A test of the history of the Navy, they did better than the control group. It was an easy test, so therefore they outdid them less dramatically. The more difficult the test was, the greater the difference. For example, one very important test was identifying enemy aircraft in 1/50th of a second. If you didn’t identify the airplane correctly, you’d shoot down your own guys or get shot down by the Japanese yourself. So identifying enemy aircraft in 1/50th of a second was very important.

Now, everyone in the non-relaxed group flunked that test. A very important test, and everybody flunked it. Everybody in the relaxed group passed it. And after 2 weeks, the difference was even more dramatic, and the men volunteered, “Oh, my personal life is getting better, too.”

So the smooth breathing is just a technique on extreme muscle relaxation. It’s been proven that we do not think with the brain, but brain plus muscle. If you relax both arms to zero degrees tension, your mind is a blank. The brain does not think.

33. Use The Whisper Technique

Do it only 3 minutes a day. You bypass the resistive analytic mind, the doubtful mind, the mind that when you start trying to say something positive to yourself, it says, “Oh, that’s not true.”

In this system, you don’t concentrate on imagery. If imagery happens, that’s fine. So many people have trouble imaging. They say, “I can’t image vividly enough.” Well, in this you don’t have to worry about imagery. If it happens, fine. If it doesn’t, that’s okay, too. You don’t need imagery. You focus on the tone of your voice. You put pleasure in your voice and sincerity in your voice. And all the words are present tense. They’re not future tense of what I plan to do or I’m going to do. It’s an ongoing state.

A man who’s been married for 14 years and doesn’t feel like meeting new women. He feels like he’s out of the swim and he hates the thought of the dating scene. He’s resistant. He doesn’t want to do that. But that’s one of the most important things to do. So, he uses the whisper technique.

You say to yourself, “I love to meet new women. It’s so easy to talk to a woman. It’s so easy to meet and date new women. It’s fun. I do it all the time. It’s so easy to talk to a new woman. It’s so easy to meet and date new women. It’s fun. I love it. I do it all the time. Hi, my name is George. What’s yours? Where do you live? What kind of work do you do? Oh, that’s very interesting. How did you get into this kind of work?”

It’s present tense, as if you have already achieved it. You bypass the resistive conscious mind, and go straight to changing your subconscious. Very powerful.
34. **Do Other Things You Fear To Do**

Break it up into small steps. I had intense claustrophobia for many years, so I could not fly. My son was going to get married in Las Vegas and I live in San Antonio. I wanted to go. So 6 weeks before time to fly, I had broken it up into about 26 different steps, and did one thing at a time. Like for example, getting on a sky ride or riding a bus. I wouldn’t ride a bus. I wouldn’t get on a bus. I felt too trapped. So I broke it up into smaller steps, and did each one of these steps over and over, and conquered my claustrophobia. I get excited about flying now. I love to fly. And of course I used my whisper technique on myself. “I love to fly. It’s exciting to fly. It’s adventuresome to fly.” Brother, it worked. I feel genuinely excited about the idea of flying anywhere. I tell myself, “It feels great.” I don’t care how long it will take to get there, whether it’s 2 hours or 5 hours. I could care less. So break it up into little steps.

Look at self-made millionaires, such as David Sandler, who has 200 franchises teaching his Sandler system of selling. In his book *You Can’t Teach A Kid To Ride A Bike At A Seminar*, he says that one of the most important things that they have done or that anybody can do towards getting rich is to get over their fears.

So do anything that has an irrational fear, that you’re shy about. Meeting new people, making public talks, whatever it is. It’s very powerful. It makes you interesting to your rejecting mate. It makes you fascinating to your mate. It earns her respect.

35. **Stop All Arguing**

Why and how? Many counselors teach fighting constructively. Dr. George Bach, Ph.D., who’s been in private practice for 50 or 60 years, wrote a book called *Your Intimate Enemy*. Arguing doesn’t work. You can see that. You’ve tried it. You’ve quit talking because arguing doesn’t work.

Why doesn’t it work? Because it attacks the pride, the source of romantic love. Certainly the source of happy, romantic love is building each other’s pride. Happy people who are in love are a mutual admiration society. They don’t spend time arguing. But it’s so natural to argue.

So keep reminding yourself that arguing is masochistic. It’s worse than shooting yourself in the foot. It’s shooting yourself in the groin. Remind yourself that arguing is stupid, that when you argue, you’re not sticking up for yourself.

Now, the habit of arguing and being unhappy wants to live. Everything wants to live. The little ant on the wall wants to live. You touch it and it will run. Your habit of arguing will not die a quick and easy death. Your feeling of being unhappy, which always goes with arguing, a person arguing is unhappy, those feelings want to live. And it will argue for itself. It will say, “If you don’t argue, you’re not human. Everyone argues. If you don’t argue, you don’t have feelings.” That’s like saying if you don’t have weeds in a garden, you don’t have a
garden. That’s like saying if you don’t love weeds, you can’t love the roses. But the weeds are choking out the roses. They’re using up the space, the water, and the fertilizer.

Bad feelings are not helpful towards happy feelings. They war with happy feelings. But about these feelings of wanting to argue and being unhappy he says, “It shows self-assertion. It shows that you believe in yourself.” Nonsense. It shows weakness. It shows you are believing that you need support, that you need the other person to agree with you. Arguing says, “Hey, look at me! I’m a baby! I can’t stand alone. Please agree with me, because I can’t stand alone.”

Remind yourself that it is smarter to see where she is coming from, and empathize with her. Agreeing with your mate’s negative feelings works to change his negative feelings.

I remember a psychoanalyst psychoanalyzing a 21-year-old young man in New York City in the 50’s. The young man was down on himself and negative about everything, and the analyst was trying to build him up during every session. But, it wasn’t working. So the analyst thought, “I’ll change.” So he said to the young guy when he came in at the beginning of his session, “I’ve been thinking about it, and you’re absolutely correct. You are a total no-good. You are totally dumb. You are hopeless. So we will terminate the analysis today.”

Immediately, the guy who only talked negative, started talking positively. “Wait a minute! It’s not that bad. I’ve been making progress in this way and that way.” He switched over and started talking positively. This is also a point that Michele Weaner-Davis makes in her best-selling book Divorce Busting.

There was a case in World War II that even worked on a psychotic. You’ve heard of the movie Rebel Without A Cause? Dr. Robert Lindner, who went to the same psychoanalytic institute in New York City that I went to, is the author of the true case that movie was based on. He wrote a book that was a collection of true cases called The 50-Minute Hour, by Dr. Robert Lindner. One of those true cases, he called “The Jet-Propelled Couch.”

World War II is on. This atomic scientist begins taking flights in his imagination into outer space, and not doing his real work. In these imaginary flights into outer space, he’s making all kinds of documentation, working at it, and neglecting his real work. So the government pays for his psychoanalysis, and he’s assigned to Dr. Robert Lindner. Lindner is seeing his patient every single day. Week after week, month after month, no progress at all. No progress at all. He’s still psychotic.

At a cocktail party one evening, Dr. Lindner is talking to another psychoanalyst about this case, that he’s not making any progress with. He was taking flights in space and believes that these flights are real. The analyst, of course, doesn’t know what to say, so he says, “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.” So Lindner thinks, “You know, I’ll try that. I enjoyed science fiction when I was a kid.” So Dr. Lindner starts pretending to his patient that between sessions, he’s taking flights into outer space also.
So every day, they’re excitedly meeting and sharing notes of what did you see on your trip and what did you discover, and what are the notes that you’ve made about that. So every day they are sharing this new approach. After about 3 weeks of that, at the end of the session, the patient says, “Dr. Lindner, I’m cured. I don’t need to take those trips anymore. In fact, I’ve been cured for one week.” Dr. Lindner says, “You’ve been cured for one week?!! You knew that these trips were not necessary and that they were totally imaginary? You’ve known that for a week?” He says “Yeah.” Dr. Lindner says, “Why didn’t you tell me?” He says, “Well, you were having so much fun.”

But it certainly shows the power of empathizing with the other person’s negative feelings.

36. **Take All The Blame For Anything That’s Gone Wrong**

Although this may seem unnatural and difficult, it really does work. Sound sincere. Do not sound sarcastic or patronizing. This also is agreeing with her negative emotions, which we covered in the last strategy.

I’ll give you an example. Years ago, I filed bankruptcy and my wife suddenly got very upset. She said she felt extremely embarrassed and so forth. I could have been defensive and said, “Well look, who used the credit cards and who needed the vacations and the new cars? I didn’t! I didn’t! I didn’t!” Let’s really look at this. I could have done that. Big mistake.

I didn’t do that. I was on my good behavior and I said, “Honey, it’s all my fault. I have not managed the money very well at all. I managed it very poorly and I’m very sorry. Now, I know a way that you can get out of this problem. Let’s get a divorce, and I’ll take on all the creditors. You won’t have any obligations, any debts. Obviously, I’m the problem, so you’ll get rid of the problem that way.” I was sincere.

Immediately, she says, “No! I don’t want to do that.” And she never mentioned it since. That was years ago. She never complained about the bankruptcy since then, because I took all the blame. That will work for you also.

37. **When You’re Tempted To Become Anxious, Upset Or Nervous, Use This Mind Conditioning Technique That I Invented**

My wife and I were on our way to hear Peter, Paul & Mary at Trenton University here in San Antonio. And all of a sudden, the traffic came to a total stop. In fact, it was stopped so long that people were getting out of their cars and walking up and down and visiting with each other. My wife hit the panic button and I said in a friendly tone of voice, “Let’s go home. We don’t need to go.” “Oh, no. We’ve got to go hear Peter, Paul & Mary,” her favorite
singers. She was screaming, having a panic attack all the time, complaining and screaming, complaining and screaming.

I was using this technique on myself. And it worked so well that when we got up to the University on the sidewalk, she gave me kind of a half-hearted apology. She said, “Not only do you have to be late, you have to listen to a bitchy wife.” I said, “Honey, it’s perfectly understandable.” She kept saying we were going to be late, and I kept saying we wouldn’t. After we were 30 minutes late, still in the traffic jam, she said, “You still say we’re not going to be late?” I said, “We might not be, because they may start late.”

But after we got there, her mood changed totally, and she was very friendly and very affectionate all the rest of the evening. Now, if I hadn’t kept my cool, she would not have been friendly or affectionate the rest of the evening. And as she was complaining and screaming, what I was doing was saying in a soothing tone of voice in my mind, “My wife is upset, and that’s perfectly okay. My wife is upset and I feel good about me.” She was having a panic attack for 55 minutes, so I used this technique a lot. I just kept repeating that to myself. It doesn’t mean that I like it, agree with it, or approve of it. It just means I can handle it. It works.

There is a funny movie where they express this philosophy. Donald Sutherland is a minister performing a wedding ceremony. It’s called “The Little Murders.” At the very beginning, he’s performing a wedding ceremony in a very formal church. He has his priestly robes on, but he’s sitting down on the platform, very casual in manner, and he says, “I have performed 789 marriages, and 769 of them have divorced. But that’s okay.” He kept talking about negative stuff, and he kept saying, “But that’s okay.” Then he says, “Rick, in the congregation, we know that you’re gay, but that’s okay.” And of course, Rick jumps out of the congregation and knocks him down and starts choking him. It’s a comedy. But he’s expressing that philosophy in a very humorous way. But it works.

### 38. Totally Giving Up

That’s not natural. But by using your head and realizing that that’s what works, you can start by thinking it and acting as if you’ve totally given up on the marriage. Because showing her how much you’re trying and how much you want it has the negative effect of making her move further and further away. So until you can totally give up, pretend it.

Now don’t pretend it half-heartedly or just for a while. Don’t pretend one day that you’ve given up, but then the next day show that you’re very eager about getting back together. That won’t work. You’ve got to be consistent day after day.

The more you can do this, the more inner peace it provides, and a kind of euphoria. I discovered many years ago that it worked, and I called it the suction principle. When you back away, it creates a kind of suction. They become interested. This is illustrated in the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes*. The woman is trying real hard to get her husband’s interest.
He’s glued to the TV, never talks with her, never even looks at her. He gives one-word answers to anything that she says. She tries all kinds of methods, but all of them are pursuing him. Finally, she totally gives up and starts enjoying her friends, enjoying her activities, doesn’t even cook for him anymore, just totally neglects him. Immediately, he starts pursuing her.

Now in the book by Monty Roberts, The Man Who Listens To Horses, he discovered by studying wild mustangs that he could train any wild mustang in 30 minutes, while it was taking his professional parents 5 and 6 weeks to do it. And in that book, he mentions that the Indians discovered a technique that by using direct pursuit, they could never catch the wild mustang. But they discovered that about 200 yards away from the group of wild mustangs, they just laid down, relaxed, and napped for a few hours. The mustangs could smell them, hear them, and see them. But they don’t feel nervous because the Indians are not pursuing them.

So then the Indians get up from their nap and go back to their camp. And as they get into the camp, they see the Mustangs right behind them, walking straight into the corral. They must have discovered this from just getting fatigued by chasing them, so they gave up. In my opinion, they discovered this method after they totally gave up. Totally giving up works. This technique also works on deer and buffalo. They’re just totally giving up, staying very still for a few hours in one spot, and then going back to their camp. The deer, buffalo or mustangs followed them straight into the corral. Amazing!

I discovered this a few years ago on people, and I call it the suction principle. I was using the metaphor that the shape of the leading edge of an airplane’s wing is very, very important because that’s what creates the rushing air above the wing and a suction called “lift.” Without that lift, the airplane would not get off the ground.

39. The Power Of “The 3 Sentences…”

I often tell this true story. I was on a radio station talk show in Illinois, and a man calls me and makes an appointment for the following Monday. He tells me that his wife is saying over and over to him that she doesn’t love him anymore and that this marriage cannot work, and that she didn’t want it to work. So I told him 3 sentences to say at the appropriate time.

On Saturday, he calls me very elated. He says, “I know I don’t have an appointment until Monday, but I can’t wait. I’ve just got to tell you. I can’t believe this. Let me tell you what happened. Yesterday, she came home and flopped on the bed, said that she didn’t love me anymore and that this marriage cannot work, and I don’t want it to work. So then I used the 3 sentences that you told me to say, and the tone of voice you told me to use. She got up, walked around for about 5 minutes, came back, and sat in the chair, looked me straight in the eye and said, “You know, I think this marriage can work. And I want it to work.”
Now, the 3 sentences that he said to her were showing an attitude of totally giving up. He said to her, “Sweetheart, I prefer that the marriage work. But you’re right, it’s totally impossible. So I’ll help you find an apartment and help you move out.” And it was the attitude behind the 3 sentences of totally giving up.

Now, the advantage in this case of him saying that he preferred the marriage to work, he’s really communicating to her that, “I will take the responsibility for what happens if we try to make the marriage work. Because that’s my decision. But your decision is to leave. So then you’ll be responsible for the consequences of that decision.” This was important subconsciously, in my opinion.

40. TRW – Tantalize, Reassure and Worry.

Tantalize her, reassure her, and worry her. Now tantalize means all of your virtues – your intelligence, your good looks, your self-confidence, your education, your ability to make money, anything that is attractive to the market. You tantalize her with that. She already knows about that.

The reassure means you reassure her by your actions and your attitude that you are not going to get too close to her, that you’re not going to be possessive, that you’re not going to be jealous, that you’re not going to be controlling.

And worry her means worry her that she can lose you. Of course, that sounds very strange to a man who calls and I teach him the TRW strategy. “She’s not worried about losing me. She wants to lose me.” That was Steve’s attitude in Minnesota. “Kathy is not jealous at all.” But when I got him to start having an affair out in the open, she decided one Sunday that she wanted to visit with Steve. So she drove up to the cabin that they had lived in for years. But somebody else’s car was there. Another woman’s car. She turned around, didn’t even go up to the door. She just turned around and went home. About midnight, she phoned him very angry. She was always very respectful. She would never call anybody after 9:30 or at least 10:00 in the evening. Here she calls him late at night. She had been divorcing him, and didn’t even want to talk to him before then.

He comes over and visits with her. They’re rolling on the floor, hugging and kissing, and she’s apologizing. “I don’t have the right to this kind of feeling. I didn’t know I would have this kind of feeling.” He was very understanding.

A woman does not feel that she’s losing her husband by divorcing him, because she’s become so addicted to her picture of him as clinging and begging and totally in love with her that that’s the picture that’s controlling her emotions. So she doesn’t feel that getting a divorce really loses him.

So often, a wife will say to her husband, “Oh, I hear you were out with Karen yesterday.” He says, “I was just having coffee with her. She doesn’t hold a candle to you.” So he
immediately gives her reassurance that he is still waiting in the wings for her. It’s like she’s got a Mercedes Benz in her garage and she’s gotten bored with it. So he gives her reassurance that the Mercedes is still in the garage, if and when she ever wants it. “I’ll always be there for you.” So she doesn’t do anything any different, just keeps on divorcing him and having nothing to do with him.

But if she sees another woman jump in her Mercedes Benz and drive off, she hits the panic button and starts chasing him. “That’s my Mercedes! Get out of my car!” Then we’ve got her chasing the husband. He was chasing her, and now the roles have been reversed.

41. Keep A Happy Attitude

People who are being rejected, of course, have hurt feelings. They have grief. They have depression. In this technique, you imagine hitting some object, a table, pillow or wall. You attack with each word, and you deny that it hurts at all. “It doesn’t hurt. I feel great. Nothing else matters at all, because I feel great.” The hidden logic there is that if you feel great, everything else is going to get better and better, because everything comes from your mood and attitude.

Of course, the old traditional way that most people still believe is, “Oh, this puts you in denial when it’s really hurting. You’re just covering up the hurt.” No, you’re kicking out the hurt. You’re displacing it. It stops the whining.

42. Use Mental Judo

Instantly and happily do it her way. I may be repeating this incident, I don’t know, but it fits in here.

After my wife and I had been married about 4 years, all of a sudden on a Sunday morning she said, “I’d like to go to church.” I didn’t even know what church she had in mind, because she was raised Methodist and become Baptist during her first marriage of about 4 years. And then, she had gone to an Episcopal church. She and I had never been to church in the 4 years we were married. So as soon as she said, “I’d like to go to church,” it was out of the blue. I said, “Fine. Let’s go.” She said, “I don’t want you to feel obligated. I know you hate church.” I could have said, “I never said I hated church. Where did you get that idea?” But that would have been defensive. I didn’t do that. I said, “You’re right. That’s not my favorite cup of tea on Sunday, but I’d like to be with you.” I didn’t have the feeling she was trying to get away from me. She said, “Okay,” so we went.

I was careful not to criticize anything about the church service or the sermon. I acted like I enjoyed it. She didn’t say anything about going again. But instead of giving the appearance that I’m the tail of the dog, on Wednesday I said, “Honey, let’s go to church next Sunday.”
She looked very surprised. “Do you mean that?” I said, “Sure.” So we went almost every Sunday for about 3 months. Then she was saying, “I’d rather stay home.” So finally we got to where we would go to church maybe 2 or 3 times a year. A few days ago was the first time we’d gone in probably 5 years.

There are two kinds of things we can get from a mate. One is action or service, the other is attitude. If my wife brings me a cup of coffee, that’s a service. If she bangs it on the table and says, “There’s your damned coffee. I hope you choke on it,” that’s an attitude. My methods get good attitudes and plenty of service.

Always, instantly and happily do it her way. I call this mental judo.

In his 1996 book You Can’t Teach A Kid To Ride A Bike At A Seminar, David Sanders also uses this same martial arts technique as a metaphor. In Chapter 8, he says, “You’re using the momentum of your opponent against him.”

### 43. Understanding Pain

It helps to understand what pain comes from, what causes it. Pain comes from the whining or the screaming tone of voice. Many years ago, in my 20’s, I was working for the railroad. I really saw that the tone of voice was important. A man could call another one a son of a bitch, and only get a friendly response. “Hello, Roscoe, you old son-of-a-bitch you!”

Meaning is in tone of voice. The real sentences that you’re thinking are in the tone of voice.

Now in 1974, I discovered that there are 4 basic muscle tension patterns. One is whining or screaming of some form. It could be sobbing, whimpering, moaning, or groaning. Another muscle tension pattern is attacking. Any kind of attack – hitting, kicking, squeezing. Another muscle tension pattern is laughing. Another muscle tension pattern is relaxation.

Now, these patterns compete with each other. So the theory hit me that you have to whine and scream in order to be in pain. And if you’re attacking, that blocks out the whining. Or if you’re laughing, that blocks out the whining. You can’t be in pain while you’re laughing. In 1978, 4 years later, I discovered that Dr. Cousins, Ph.D. psychologist, had terminal illness and so much pain that he could not sleep. He thought that laughing could help him, so he brought in some slapstick movies. He started belly laughing from watching the movies. After 10 minutes of belly laughing, it provided him 2 hours of pain-free sleep. The medication hadn’t been able to do that. He was in so much pain that he couldn’t sleep at all. Of course, then the pain came back after 2 hours and woke him up, so he turned the movie on again. So he discovered that 10 minutes of belly laughing would provide 2 hours of pain-free sleep.

One problem. The noise of the movie and the noise of his belly laughing kept the other patients awake. So he said, “Doc, let me move to the hotel across the street. If I need the hospital, I’m close by.” The doctor said, “Okay.” Dr. Cousins kept taking his massive doses of vitamin C intravenously, and spent hours every day laughing.
Well, after a few weeks, his terminal cancer was totally gone. Of course, the doctor said it was a misdiagnosis. Dr. Cousins laughed and said, “Yeah? All 6 of you?” So he felt that it was an accurate diagnosis, but that his massive doses of intravenous vitamin C cured him. The other doctors argued against his taking massive doses of vitamin C. They said, “That will destroy your kidneys.” He said, “I’m going to die in a few weeks anyway. Why do you care about my kidneys?” So they finally gave in and let him do it, and obviously nothing happened to his kidneys.

Another way of putting this is that you can use anger to displace fear. When I was a 14-year-old kid, riding my bike around on a tennis court. Nobody was there, and I was riding around during the summer. I started to leave, and there was a gang of ruffian boys who grabbed my bike and wouldn’t let me leave. Every time I’d come to the opening where I could leave, they would hold my bike so I couldn’t. I felt panic and fear.

So somehow, I decided to get angry. So I drove around and drove around. And the moment that they grabbed my bike, I jumped off and was swinging my fist right and left. I will never forget. “You take him, Bill!” “You take him, George!” I was much more motivated than they were. They were probably just having some fun. I was doing serious business. It weakened my fear.

Any kind of intense negative emotions, such as guilt or grief or self-pity, is dependant on the tone of voice of whining. And if you use any other muscle tension pattern, such as attacking or laughing or cooing, you lose the whining.

I remember I was testing this theory about the importance of muscles and so forth years ago, and I got kind of a hurt feeling. My wife had said something that hurt my feelings. I went to the bedroom, lay down, and relaxed my face totally. And after about 3 minutes, the hurt feeling was totally gone. I always challenge the theory. “Homer, it wasn’t the relaxing that did it. It was that while you were concentrating hard on relaxing, you were distracting your mind from what she said, her tone of voice, or facial expressions.”

So I said, “Okay, I’ll take the challenge.” So I pictured her and heard the words, her tone of voice, and pictured her facial expression that had hurt my feelings. I relaxed my muscles, except just enough tension to hold that picture. There was absolutely no hurt feeling at all. Relaxation will cancel out an intense bad feeling.

Guilt and self-pity are always together. We have a frustration. Something doesn’t go our way. And then we’re perfectionist and act like we should be more powerful than God and make everybody do right. But we don’t, so there’s a frustration. Then we hit ourselves over the head with “bad me,” which creates guilt, or “stupid me,” which creates guilt or shame. Then we cry from that self-whipping with “poor me.” Anytime you find guilt, you find self-pity. Anytime you find self-pity, you’ll find guilt. They are just two different names for the same emotion.

So it’s helpful to really understand how we are causing our own pain by our whining, by our irrational thinking, by our muscle tension. We are doing it to ourselves. It’s not the situation
at all. If I said to myself, “Oh boy, I’m so lucky to be rid of this selfish bitch,” and find a nice, sweet, loving woman, I don’t feel depressed. I’m not in pain.

44. Stop Wanting Her

If she’s rejecting you, stop wanting her. When I first hit this idea, I had been teaching “don’t need her, but continue to prefer her,” which makes some kind of sense at the beginning of counseling. But after a few weeks, the man is still hanging onto her. And every time he talks about her, he’s talking about something negative that she did or said that was bad. They never say anything good about her. I say, “Why do you want her?”

So I hit on that I was suggesting a contradiction, because the whole format was to get her back. And now I’m saying not to want her. If we get her back and we don’t want her, we’ve crossed purposes.

Then, immediately, the solution to that apparent contradiction came to my mind. The facts are that she’s not one person. She’s two people in the same body. She’s a cold person, and she’s a warm, affectionate person in the same body. Now, as long as she is the cold woman and you want that, you’re never going to get the warm woman. You’ve got to reject the cold woman, before she will respect you and turn into the warm woman.

As long as the man is pursuing the cold woman, the hostile woman, she never changes toward him in becoming the warm woman. But if he acts indifferent, not interested in her because she is a cold woman, she immediately begins to respect him. Because she knows that she does not deserve any catering, loving treatment that he’s desperate to give her. So she just disrespects for pursuing her.

It makes me think of the book How To Be The Jerk Women Love, by Shark. He wrote this book a few years ago, when he was only 26 years old. He’s been on national TV, but I’ve never seen him. But there was a radio talk show that a woman called in to and said, “Mr. Shark, I disagree with you. I like nice guys and I don’t like jerks. And I know a lot of women who like nice guys and don’t like jerks.” He said to himself, “Boy, she sounds so convincing, I’ve got to do something quick.” So he says to her, “Have you had relationships with nice guys?” She says, “Yes, I have.” He said, “Have you had relationships with jerks?” She says, “Yes, I have.” He says, “Well, think back. How long did the relationship last with the nice guys?” She says, “Oh, in every case, 2 or 3 weeks.” He said, “How long did it last with the jerks?” “Oh, in every case, 2 or 3 years.” He said, “Case closed! Next caller.”
Chapter 6

The 34 Most Common Situations I Hear From People Who Call Me Every Day...And How To Handle Them

1. “I don’t love you anymore”

Usually when someone calls me, they’re separated. But when let’s say the husband calls me, the most common complaint that he hears from his wife is “I don’t love you anymore.” The implication is that of course they have to separate. I try to help him see that most people, and in this case the wife does, have low self-esteem and that he is head-over-heels in love with her and she knows that. So therefore, she subconsciously looks down on him as being an idiot for being in love with her. He has the diagnosis that she doesn’t have any reasons for not being in love with him anymore, and sometimes she does. She’ll say, “Oh, you neglected me. You were not there for me when I needed you.” That’s a real common one.

So I help him see that those are excuses and not the real reason. Because if they were the real reason, then when he said, “I’m willing to work on that. Let me help you understand why I wasn’t there one hundred percent for you.” Then she would respond positively and say, “Well, you’re going in the right direction. What can I help you do to keep moving in this direction of being there for me, of being more understanding?” She never responds positively to that, showing that’s not the real thing.

She will say, “It’s too little, too late.” Well, why is it too little, too late? That’s not really what’s going on. What’s really going on is since he’s head-over-heels in love with her, she has lost respect for him. She has an ego problem, and she can’t conquer her ego problem by saying to herself, “I’m so proud of myself that I conquered this idiot.” Most of the time, the man sees it and begins to move in a more independent direction.

2. “I found someone else”

A common one is “I found someone else.” Sometimes, she does not admit she’s found somebody else or “He’s only a friend. Nothing has happened.” “I didn’t plan it. It just happened. It’s not like I went out looking for it.”

A woman never leaves a man that she perceives is happy, nor does she leave a man who’s always agreeing with her. So the solution is to instantly agree with her. “Of course, you didn’t go out looking for it. I can understand this kind of thing, and I wish you the best.” Being very agreeable makes it very difficult for her to really continue to separate.
3. “I found someone who treats me better than you do”

Another one is “I have found somebody who treats me better than you,” which is a variation of “I found someone else.” “I have found someone who treats me better than you do. You wouldn’t expect me to turn down better treatment, would you?” Of course, the answer is, “Of course not! I’m glad you found somebody who treats you better than me. Of course, it’s kind of a blow, but that’s all right. I can handle it. I can get on with my life.”

4. “I’ll do whatever it takes…I’ll quit my job”

Another thing that I hear from the person that calls me is he tells his wife, “I’ll do whatever it takes. I’ll quit my job. I’ll make love to you every night,” or whatever. And of course, I have him see that that’s under the heading of the diagnosis that she needs reassurance. When the wife is seriously pulling away, reassurance of a direct, verbal kind never works, because the husband is telling her over and over again how desperately he believes that he needs her, that he does not know how to be happy without her. In fact, often people feel that they’re saying something very good about the relationship when they say, “I would be totally devastated without you.” That’s the old idea of “you’re nobody ‘til somebody loves you.”

5. “The problem started when she started to work”

Another thing that’s often said is, “The problem started when she started to work. In other words, other people have led her astray. Her new independence has worked against our marriage.” Husbands often feel that if the wife becomes too independent, that pulls her away from the relationship. But that’s a false idea of independent, in my opinion. The maladjusted 15-year-old adolescent defines independence in hostile terms. Being able to say no, being able to spit at the principle or at the parents, they think of rebellion as independence. So I help the men see that actually her genuine independence is a friend of the relationship, because the more genuinely independent she is, the sweeter she is to him. It doesn’t mean that she necessarily chooses to stay with him.

Often, in my office, a woman will say, “I’m getting a divorce because I’m miserable in this relationship.” And I’ll say, “That’s the worst reason for getting a divorce, because if you’re miserable in this relationship, you’re probably going to be miserable by yourself or in any relationship. The rational reason for getting a divorce is after you have learned to be relatively happy in a relationship, but you feel that you could be happier divorced and single or with somebody else. But you’re not miserable. Miserable is your doing.”
6. “I’m just not happy”

There’s another statement similar to “I don’t love you anymore,” that says, “I’m just not happy.” Well, the woman who says, “I’m just not happy,” is waving a big flag that says that she’s very immature, because she’s saying that the other person is responsible for making her happy. She’s saying, “It’s not my job to make me happy. It’s not my job. So obviously if I’m not happy, I’ve just got the wrong person.” And of course, we can see through that. The other person can help us be happier at times, but not always. Our happiness is basically our responsibility.

So I help the husband who’s being rejected see that he’s got the cart before the horse, so to speak, because he’s saying, “I will be happy after we get back together.” But the only way they’ll ever get back together is for him to learn to be happy; learn why and how to be happy before she comes back. Then she’ll want to come back, because she’s got a happy, productive husband to be around.

7. “Her parents have never liked me”

Another one that I hear is “Her parents never have liked me,” meaning that the parents are influencing her in the wrong direction. And the attitude is almost always helpless and hopeless. “They’re going to have more influence over her than I do.” The husband never feels, “That’s okay. I like challenges. I can win her over them.” His attitude is very pessimistic. So I help him learn how to think and feel optimistic about it, that as time goes on, she will see the new independent me and she’ll get tired of living with her parents, which she often does. That’s only a temporary solution for her, not a permanent one.

I’ve seen this happen over and over again. A man was engaged to be married to this woman. They got into an argument and she left San Antonio immediately and went to North Carolina. Her mother was a counselor, and this man said that her mother didn’t like him at all and she had a job there that she loved. So he was seeing it as totally hopeless. But I told him how to handle it. Continue communication with her, but do small talk, avoid serious talk. People always believe, like most professionals, that we’ve got to do serious talk. My observation is that serious talk never works, that it ends in both people being more hurt, more angry, and more defensive, so the negative feelings grow. The idea that we’ve had for a long time is that expressing a negative feeling gets it out of your system. My observation is that it puts it into your habit system, puts it into your self-image, and gets more excuses from the other person for you to feel more and more frustrated, hurt or angry.

8. “Her kids came between us”

Another thing that I hear is “Her kids came between us. They wrapped her around their little finger. She could never say no to them. She always put them before me.” Of course, I can
understand that, but I help him see how to handle that so that he stops criticizing her kids and allows her to handle the kids however she wants to.

Both professional and non-professional people have said through the years the way to have a happy relationship is to work at it. My observation is the working at improving the other mate that makes it not work.

Jesus talked against working in the Sermon on the Mount. “Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not. Neither do they spin. They don’t work, they don’t sow. Yet, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

Allow your mate to be wrong. Allow your mate to pamper kids or let them run over her. We define our ego as needing to control our mate, so that we feel guilt or shame if we don’t have perfect power over our mate. And that’s a very masochistic thing to do.

9. “She was jealous of my kids”

Another thing that’s often said is “She was jealous of my kids. She couldn’t understand they had been through a lot.” The same solution applies. Stop trying to control her. Allow her to be jealous of your kids. It’s okay for her to feel the way that you don’t find comfortable or that you don’t like. You don’t have to have your way all the time. It’s perfectly okay for her to feel jealous. It’s perfectly okay for her to be wrong.

And of course, by the time they call me, they’re already separated and she’s claiming she wants a divorce and so forth. So I teach him to say, “It’s perfectly okay if you want to divorce me. It’s not what I prefer. But I agree with you that our relationship is totally hopeless.” So it’s the power of the totally giving in and totally giving up as a method of getting what you want from your mate.

This is illustrated in the movie “Fried Green Tomatoes.” The wife is trying to get attention from her husband. She tries all kinds of ways. Doesn’t work. Doesn’t work. Doesn’t work. So then she totally gives up. It works. Totally giving up works. The Indians found out in pursuing wild mustangs that they never could catch them. But when they totally gave up and went back to their camp, the mustangs would follow them straight into the corral. This also worked on buffalo and on deer. This is written up in the book The Man Who Listens To Horses. He learns so much from the horses that he’s had over 400 companies and corporations employ him to teach communication skills to their employees.

10. “My wife complains that I won’t listen to her”

So this husband says to me, “My wife complains that I won’t listen to her. But I do listen to her. She says she keeps telling me until she’s blue in the face, and that I’ve just shut her out...
enter the cold.” So I said to him, “Do you tell her that she’s wrong, that you do listen to her?” He said, “Yeah, I do tell her that.” I said, “Okay. Does that work? Does she say, ‘Yeah, you’re right. You sometimes do listen to me?’” He said, “No, she never agrees with me or see that I do listen to her and that I don’t always shut her out into the cold.” I said, “So, why do you keep clinging to a method that doesn’t work? It isn’t logical to use logic, if logic isn’t working.” “Oh,” he says, “I hadn’t thought of it that way.” “I’ll tell you very quickly and very simply what does work. Just agree with her and sound sincere.” “You’re right. I do shut you out into the cold. You’re absolutely right.” That will immediately soften her hostility.”

Immediately, always agree with her, especially if you don’t. Always agree with her, and sound sincere. And then be quiet.

11. “We had a beautiful relationship for two years”

Another thing that I hear is “We had a beautiful relationship for two years. Then all of a sudden, she lowered the boon. She wants to be friends only.” I say, “Well, how did you handle that?” “I told her, ‘After what we’ve meant to each other? Friends only? No, sir. I don’t want to be friends only.’” I say, “My opinion is that it would be better if you acted delighted to be friends only, that the friendly part of a happy relationship is the best part. It’s the part that makes the relationship happy is being genuine friends toward each other.” I get him to see that, and that the way to improve a relationship is to act as if it’s perfectly exactly the way that it is.

People don’t realize that. And the books encourage you to ask for more. Of course, sometimes that works, but most of the time not. Most of the time, when the other person is pulling away, they’re giving you less time, less energy, less interest. When they’re giving you less and you reach for more, you get even less. You get more hostility, but you don’t get more pleasure, more love, more happiness. So act as if you are perfectly happy with the status quo.

12. “She spent money every day, like there was no tomorrow”

Something else I hear sometimes is “She spent money every day, like there was no tomorrow and no limits. She could make a millionaire go bankrupt.” I say, “Well, what I hear you say is this woman is impossible and I must have her. Why do you believe that you must have a woman that is so unrealistic or so selfish? Do you enjoy feeling sorry for yourself, that you like going into bankruptcy? Why do you insist on keeping a woman that’s so bad?” I get them to begin to really think about that. And of course, they had thought about it to a degree, very briefly, and kicked it out of their mind.

It’s a good thought to consider. Why do you want somebody that is so unrealistic that they have this tremendous ego problem that they’ve got to be spending money all the time?
13. “What did we argue about? Everything!”

Something else that I sometimes hear is “What did we argue about? Everything! What time I should go to bed. What I should say to the kids. You name it and we argued about it.” So I say, “Both of you have an ego problem that you think that you’ve solved by arguing. You pat yourself on the head for being a superior arguer, but you end up losing. You might win the battle, but you lose the war, and you most probably don’t even win the battle. Because at any point, does she ever agree with you?” “No.” “Then why do you pursue a method that doesn’t work?”

We human beings are fascinating. When we start to get in our car, we get the keys out of our pocket or out of our purse and open the car door. But the key’s not going into the lock. So we look and we see that we’ve got the wrong key. So we change keys, and it slips into the lock and opens the door. That’s sane. That’s constructive. That’s rational and very simple.

Do we do that in our emotional relationships? No! We get the wrong key, and of course it doesn’t go into the lock. So then what do we do, change keys? No! We force it. We get more and more frustrated, more and more angry because the key is not opening the lock. If something is not working, we just do more of it. If arguing doesn’t work, we do more of it. If criticizing doesn’t work, we do more of it. If condemning doesn’t work, we do more of it. If pessimism doesn’t work, we become more pessimistic. We think we just don’t have the right amount of something, so we think we just haven’t argued long enough or loud enough, etc. But it’s the wrong key. We need to relax and see other options, and choose other options. And the other option for arguing is to always agree with the other person.

“Well, Homer, how can I agree when I don’t agree?” I say, “What is your purpose? If your purpose is to encourage and get the other person to be more wrong and be more hostile, your method is great. Is that your purpose? I thought you wanted her to be sweet and understanding?” “Well, of course I do.” “Then here’s how to do it. Realize that she’s never one hundred percent wrong. She’s at least twenty percent right. And if you focus on the eighty percent where she’s wrong, what are the results? She always becomes more wrong. If you talk about the twenty percent where she is right, immediately she becomes less wrong. She moves in the direction that you want her to move in, when you take care of her pride. When you act like you don’t care about her pride or her feelings, then she acts towards you like she doesn’t care about your pride or your feelings also.
14. “She pursued me for two years, and everything was good. Then we got married and everything went downhill from there”

One man said, “She pursued me for two years, and everything was good. And then we got married, and everything went downhill from there, and I don’t know why.” I remember Bill Moyers, the author who’s been on national education TV a lot, he was on the Charles Curalt program interviewing a young man who said that they had lived together for seven years, and then they got married less than a year ago. And now they’re divorcing. So Bill Moyer says, “Oh, so the marriage destroyed the marriage?” The man giggled a little bit and said, “Yes, I guess you could say that.”

Now, the reason that that happens is because of low self-esteem. So the person begins to look down on the person who’s stupid enough to be in love with him and live with him and so forth. Also, at the same time, we become more critical. Let’s say a woman goes to a nightclub, and she observes a man at a table close by. He’s a little loud and has been drinking too much. She just thinks he’s kind of funny, maybe kind of interesting. But she doesn’t get angry with him. But if it’s her husband, then she gives him holy hell all the way home for being so loud and being so arrogant.

When we become married, that encourages over-dependency, so that our ego becomes too dependent on our need to control the other person. We feel guilt or shame if we don’t have more power than God, and make the other person always do right.

15. “She’s in love with her boss”

Another guy says, “She’s in love with her boss and she’s not going to quit her job, so our marriage is shot.” There’s the pessimism again.

Pride is like a big wad of chewing gum. It will stick on anything. Pride is always involved. If we’re atheist, we’re proud of it. And if we’re religious, we’re proud of it. If we believe in war, our pride is connected with that. We’re proud of that fact.

The old hippies, I don’t know if it was the 40’s or 50’s, they were proud of the fact that they were barefooted and had no job because it showed that they were unconventional, they were in love with life, and they had the courage to be different. So our pride gets attached to pessimism.

I’ve had people call me locally and say, “My attorney says you can’t guarantee to get us back together.” And I say, “Well, tell your attorney to give you $500, and I’ll give you $500. And if I get you back together, I get his $500. And if I don’t get you back together, he gets my $500. Haven’t had any takers so far. But people become very proud of their pessimism.” I know that bad things will happen. They become proud of that.
16. “My wife says she doesn’t love me the way a wife should”

A common complaint that I hear from the husband is “My wife says that she doesn’t love me the way a wife should.” Her attitude should be “I don’t love you the way I could, so I’m going to see what I can do about that. I’ll do what it takes to improve in that department.” But again, it’s showing her immaturity. “I don’t love you the way a wife should, therefore I’m with the wrong guy, therefore we should separate.”

Again, the solution is always the same. Act happy, agree, enjoy others. Act happy, agree, and enjoy others. “I agree that we could be more loving. You’re right. Maybe having a little more space between the two of us or a separation could help our relationship. You could be right.”

I wonder if there are people who take that in a constructive way. Here, we’ll say, is a mature wife. She says, “Well, I don’t love my husband like I would like to, so let me see what I can do, like talking with him and doing new activities.” She takes it as a problem that they can handle. She takes it as a challenge. She takes it in a constructive way. “The love isn’t there as much as I would like for it to be there, so I’m going to get busy and put it there.” But you see, when a man is being rejected by, separated from or being divorced by his wife, she never thinks of that possibility.

It makes me think of a kind of formula that I hit on. For sixty years, I have been studying history and philosophy at ten different universities. I came on the idea that first mankind believed in magic. When he had fears, like fears of wild animals, fears of nature, they didn’t understand that. It must have scared him very much. So he dreamed up magic to help him cope with that. For example, the Indian rain dance. We can call it wishful thinking. We wish that the Indian rain dance would produce rain. So gradually, magic gave birth to the belief in religion. For example, we hear the church bells on Sunday and we get a good feeling about it all. And we don’t know that the first church bells were for the purpose of scaring away demons, showing a belief in magic. Of course, we have some charming examples of belief in magic, like mascots at football fields and things like that.

And gradually, the belief in religion gave birth to abstract philosophy. And gradually, abstract philosophy gave birth to pragmatic philosophy and the scientific approach was discovered, in which we observe facts, face facts, and change our wishful thinking to fit the facts.

Now, the magical way of thinking is, “Oh, the love isn’t there. It just isn’t there. It’s like two people standing with folded arms, one on each side of the dining table and they’re saying, “The meal isn’t cooked yet.” We’re the cooks. If the love isn’t there, let’s see what we can do to put it there. And of course, I give familiar suggestions to the husband who has called me, about how to get her to put the love there. All the regular things that I recommend, act happy, enjoy others, give her plenty of space, always agree with her, those make her fall in love with him because he’s pulling away.
17. “I need time and space”

I hear this sometimes, “I need time and space. If we separate for a while, maybe my feelings will change. I don’t ever miss you. Maybe it’s good for me to see if I will miss you. The meaning is I’m helpless in the face of my feelings. One should or has to follow their feelings. Don’t they? Again, it’s immaturity, a belief in magic.

Freud’s psychoanalysis encouraged people to look on their feelings as a giant and their thinking as a dwarf. A woman who wrote *Fight Against Fears*, Lucy Freeman, got a national award for covering the Texas City explosion, writes about her very lengthy psychoanalysis. At the beginning of Freeman’s analysis, the analyst said to her, “Lucy, I don’t want to know what you think, I want to know what you feel.” And then six years later, he’s saying to her, “Think, Lucy! Think!”

Without even being aware of it, everybody’s thinking has been tremendously influenced by psychoanalysis. And of course, it’s very easy to be influenced by psychoanalysis when so many of the concepts dovetail with what people commonly believe. People commonly believe that their feelings are giants and their thoughts are dwarfs that happen after the fact, rather than that the thoughts are what cause the feelings and it can be scientifically proven over and over. And it has been in many universities, that our thoughts don’t go down one road while our feelings go another. They both go down the same road.

Now, we might have a superficial thinking or something we’re trying to think but don’t really think. But the thoughts that we really do think, that we really do believe, go exactly in the direction of our feelings. No matter what we’re feeling, we’re arguing for that feeling. If you don’t like the feeling, just change the inner argument and you change the feeling.

18. “I don’t love you and I never did. I just wanted to get out of the situation I was in”

That’s an ego booster for the poor guy who has to hear that.

Well, I help him see that she’s just rewriting history, that at the beginning she really did love him, said she did, thought she did, felt she did. She’s just rewriting history. It makes me think of the way the communists used to do. They would say, “Today, things in Russia are great. They’re just great.” And then five years later, about these great days they say, “Oh, things were really terrible five years ago.”

So we rewrite history, depending on what our mood is and what we want to prove. But the answer for him is the same. Learn to like himself, be happy without her, and that will move her towards more and more positive feelings towards him.

*Why is she saying that, “I don’t love you and I never did. I just needed to get out of the situation?”*
Because she doesn’t have confidence about anything. She doesn’t want the responsibility for divorcing. She doesn’t want the responsibility for making the marriage work. Anything that takes brainpower or responsibility, she doesn’t want. So it’s a passive copout. She’s saying love isn’t there and you don’t have anything to do with that fact. It’s a way, in her mind, of defending and glamorizing her low opinion of herself.

It makes me think about years ago, when I was doing big group therapy of thirty people. I was giving a very attractive, young woman kind of a hard time because she was clinging to her husband. And he showed no interest in her and had moved out. They had no children or anything. I was giving her a hard time. I thought the group might be getting a little bored. I said, “But you have a distinctive asset.” She was very gorgeous. I turned to a retired colonel who was divorced, that all the women were crazy about. He was just in his 40’s. I said, “Frank, what’s her big asset I’m talking about?” “Uh… uh… uh…” This leader of men didn’t know what to say.

An older woman said, “Well, I think she’s beautiful.” “Yeah, so she’s got something going for her.” So I said, “Frank, didn’t you think so?” “Uh… Yeah. I thought she knew that.” In other words, he didn’t realize the value of his own praise.

I have discovered that people with low self-esteem, which is most people, have a negative attitude about praising. Now, they’ll praise people outside of their romantic relationship, but they have a hard, hard time praising their mate.

19. “Without her, my whole life has no meaning. I just can’t go on without her. I love her so much, it hurts."

Again, it’s an intellectual problem. Sick love or immature love and healthy or mature love go by the same word. They both call themselves “love.” So that makes it confusing to most people. My idea is that mature love doesn’t hurt. Maybe a little bit, but not a whole lot. It’s over-dependency that hurts. And of course, I teach the man, “No wonder she’s left you. You have such a low opinion of yourself, why should she value you?”

Where is the virtue in hurting? Where is the proof that that shows mature love? It’s masochistic. I remember in the 30’s, when I was a kid, every one of the medicines that we got at the drug store tasted badly. There wasn’t a single one that tasted good. Then you had to mix it with fruit or something. In fact, when we’d get the castor oil home, we’d mix it with orange juice. Of course, it ruined orange juice for a long time.

People believe that there is virtue; there is value in pain. You can go to Hone, Mexico and different cities, and people will be crawling barelegged over people, over broken glass so that they’re bleeding, as they crawl towards Jesus on the cross. And the idea is, of course, the more I bleed, the more it shows that I love God. Or the more I bleed, the more it shows I have faith. So I’ve got a sense of virtue attached to pain. It’s masochistic. It’s ridiculous. So I help the guy see the big fat difference between having the kind of love that hurts so much he
feels he can’t go on without her. “What? You can’t figure out which channel to watch on TV without her telling you which one? Exactly why do you have no value without her? It’s total baloney. And after you learn to be happy and give yourself value without her, you will begin to notice her respecting you and moving toward you.”

20. “We’re on the verge of separation. Our problem is that we just don’t communicate. If he would just talk to me, I think we could work it all out.”

I started counseling a man about six months ago, and he’s made a lot of progress. He was depressed when he called me, and now he’s not depressed at all. His wife says she still wants a divorce, and he says, “Whatever you want is just fine.” “But I have trouble. How are we going to tell the kids? Help me here. Where are you going to move?” He says, “Don’t worry about it. I’ll find a place.” And he’s Mr. Cool about it. He’s really learned what I teach.

So she was very upset one day and he said, “Why don’t you talk to Mr. MacDonald? He won’t try to talk you out of divorce. He just helps you feel better.” So she agreed. So I talked to her yesterday, and we hit it off real well. I said, “When would you like to talk again?” She said, “How about Thursday?” I said, “Good. Okay.”

I got away with being confrontational with her. Not in a rough way, but definitely confrontational. I said, “You say to me that he does not share feelings with you and has been that way for years. And yet you don’t like that. You feel that you all don’t communicate. But then you tell me that he has been critical and angry because of you’re being so outgoing and working with a lot of men.” And she said, “Yes.” I said, “Can you see the contradiction there?” “Not exactly,” she says. “Well, this is the way people do. Talk to me. Talk to me. Talk to me. Don’t tell me that.”

I said, “Everybody’s problem is exactly the same.” She said, “That’s interesting.” I said, “Yeah. It’s the need to control. His anger wouldn’t be a problem to you if you didn’t need to control. Why doesn’t he have the right to be screwed up like everybody else? Why doesn’t he have the right to be human and get angry? You’re telling him, ‘Be open to me, be open to me. Don’t tell me that.’” She started laughing. She saw it. So I was lucky there.

People say communicating, talking, solves problems. It makes me think of the first marketing book in positioning, Ries and Trout. The very first page in that book, they say what I had discovered. People assume that you can solve any kind of problem by just sitting down and talking about it. They said, “Hardly.” So I say that talking doesn’t work, and that’s why we quit talking. Now, by talking, I mean talking in the normal, usual way, which is blaming the other person and defending yourself. But when we learn the wisdom of empathizing with the other person, and seeing where they are right and agreeing with them, that kind of talking takes care of both people’s pride because you’re coming across as not needing, which makes
your own pride secure. You’re not attacking the other person’s pride when you agree with them and empathize with them.

21. “We’re just two different people when it comes to sex. He wants it every hour and I want it once a month, so we fight about this. And I’m about to leave him, even though I still love him.”

Again, the solution is using your head and making the decision to accept or leave. I told this lady yesterday, “For years I’ve been telling people that divorcing is good and making the marriage work is good. And when I started telling people this many years ago, they said, ‘I thought you were a marriage counselor?’ I said, ‘I am.’ And this attitude makes the option of making the marriage work easier to accomplish, because if a person dreads and hates the idea of divorce, they’re not going to be able to improve a relationship.

In connection with “we’re very different,” if sex is that important or if you like a lot of sex, then get out of the marriage. You get a whole lot more sex if you’re not married. Everybody knows that, unless they’ve been on Mars. Or say, “Hey, sex is not that important. And besides, we have sex once a month and it’s really great when we have it. The other things we have in common, our love and affection for each other is far more important than the physical aspect of sex.

22. “My husband is so controlling. I tell him so, and he denies it. So our relationship is just impossible.”

I help him see that the wife has no self-esteem and therefore, after a period of time (which can different in length from one hour to three years), she begins to have subconscious contempt for him because he’s in love with her. Her self-contempt spills over on him. So she begins to feel negative, or the absence of the old positive, happy, in-love feelings that she used to have.

Now, she does not know there has been a big change in her feelings. She just knows that there has been a big change in her feelings. Okay, so she gives in to those feelings, pulls away from him, and then he behaves in a controlling way. Then he starts arguing, criticizing, complaining from a point of anxiety, fearing that he’s going to lose her and so forth. So then she’s happy that she has discovered a reason for her pulling away. “Oh, it’s because you’re controlling.” But he wasn’t controlling until she pulled away. Whoever’s talking to me, I help them see that, and use the usual techniques.
23. “We were so happy for the first five years, then we began going in different directions. We don’t talk, we don’t share and we do absolutely nothing together. We haven’t even made love in a year. Something has got to change. I can’t go on this way.”

Well, the remedy for that, of course, is to start doing little things together. Don’t expect something dramatic overnight. But this expression shows a hopeful attitude. “Something has got to change.” They’re not saying that they have totally given up on the relationship, but they can’t go on the way that it is. In other words, “I want it better.” So they just need a little help in breaking it up into positive little steps, doing little things together, and verbally being very nice to each other.

I remember Dr. George Bach, who wrote a book many years ago called Your Intimate Enemy. He taught verbal fighting, I believe in California. He defined it in such a way that it’s professional fighting, that you stay focused on an issue, that you make appointment, and so on. But he gives an example of what he believes in a group therapy session. The group consists of married couples. Dr. Bock says, “Okay, we want to be totally honestly emotionally. We want to say everything that’s going on,” and so forth. And a young man says, “Are

And Dr. Bock says, “Yes.” So the guy says, “Well, I’m having an affair with another woman, and I’m really enjoying it very much.” Well, his wife jumps up from her chair, knocks him down on the floor and starts choking him. The group has to pull her off.

Dr. Bach thinks that’s great stuff. I think it’s a big, fat mistake. I have for many, many years. He says it worked out. But I say it worked out in spite of the hostility, in spite of the degree of honesty. It worked out when she started saying to him, “Well, I can understand why you had an affair.” I can really understand that. I was a cold fish. I was rarely affectionate. So I can understand.” And he says, “Well, I can understand why you were kind of cold. Because I was always working, behind the newspaper, watching TV or whatever. I kind of pushed you out. So no wonder you were cold.”

So I discovered years ago that a relationship starts getting better when they start saying nice things to each other. So I thought the old traditional idea that we’ve got to go like Dante’s Inferno, that we’ve got to go through hell before we get to heaven is not correct. We can bypass hell and go straight to heaven. The old idea that we’ve got to go in a fit, to get angry, we’ve got to show anger, we’ve got to show hurt, we’ve got to show how the other person has hurt us and so on. The relationship never gets better until we get beyond that. So why not go straight to building each other’s ego, which is what it’s all about.

Years ago, I began thinking that all of my studies have been the Freudian psychoanalytic approach, which is about unhappy people, disturbed people, people full of anxiety and depression. What about studying happy people and teaching unhappy to behave the way happy people do. It began working very, very quickly. Happy people are taking care of each other’s pride. It’s as simple as that. It’s a mutual admiration society. And when we get away from that, the relationship deteriorates.
24. “My husband and I are living like brother and sister, just waiting to get the money together to hire a lawyer and get a divorce”

Again, it’s the sex dissatisfaction thing. There’s an interesting book called The New Celibacy. These young authors were on the Phil Donohue Show years ago. They had interviewed many very happily married people who never had sex. They discovered the reason was not because they had any hang-up about sex, thought it was dirty or inferior or something, neither were they punishing the mate or anything like that. It was just that they were so busy, they just got wrapped up in other things and gradually evolved. And all of them discovered that while not having sex, their romantic feelings intensified, which made me think of a theory of Freud’s which called love “Aim-Inhibited Sex.” Love is basically sex has been blocked.

Of course, sex is very desirable, but it’s more important to enjoy the good things that you’ve got and minimize the importance of the things that you don’t have as an important step towards making things better. Also, it’s very helpful to read the book Lover To Lover, by Nora Harlow, which is out of print and difficult to get. It’s got the Ten-Day Plan in it.

I remember a young couple sitting in my office. The wife had a plane ticket to go to Iowa that afternoon. She didn’t hate her husband, but she wasn’t in love with him anymore, and she had a lover in Iowa. So I talked her into doing the Ten-Day Plan with her husband. At the end of the ten days, she said she was head-over-heels in love with her husband. It’s a very unique system of sex therapy that they’ve used at Columbia University School of Medicine.

25. “I keep telling my husband we need to spend more time together, but he just keeps on reading and watching TV and avoiding me. In desperation, I threatened divorce. This got his attention, but now we are arguing. I think the depressing silence we had before was better”

A lot of people feel that they only have the alternatives of angry, upset, arguing or being quiet and depressed. Use your head. Say nice things. Act happy, especially if you don’t feel like it.

My wife knows about one theory on this, about the importance of acting. A few months ago, she said, “This LA Law program that you enjoy?” I said, “Yeah.” She said, “You know the short guy that’s married to the tall blonde? He fell in love with her on the show and they got married?” I said, “Yeah.” She said, “Well, they’re married in real life.” I said, “Really? I didn’t know that.” And something else, she says. They say that when they’re not getting along on the TV series, they’re not getting along in their personal life. And when they are getting along great, when they’re real happy in the TV series, they get along great in their personal lives. She said, “That proves your idea on the importance of acting.”
26. “She says our marriage is dead. I’ve already talked to an attorney. I want a divorce.”

He says, “This last week has been hell. I’ve tried everything. I tell her we used to be happy, and we can do it again. She doesn’t care. We get into fights. I called her crazy and selfish. Nothing worked.” Calling her crazy and selfish never works.

The obvious answers are getting him to use his head, start thinking rationally, realize that he does not need her, that he can be very happy without her, that there are thousands of beautiful, sweet women who would do anything to have a guy like him. But he’s been acting like such a pea-brain, that he doesn’t realize that. So I say to him, “You’ve been telling your wife, ‘I’m a pea-brain. I’m a pea-brain. I can’t see that other women would want me. Don’t you want to live with a pea-brain?’” She says, ‘No, thank you.’”

27. “I had an affair. It didn’t mean anything. It’s over, and my wife won’t forgive me.” She says, “Your hurt me in the past, so why should I believe you’re going to change?”

Well, this woman’s obviously still in love with her husband. She just doesn’t know how to get over these bad feelings. So I tell him, “Be understanding and apologize very sincerely,” which he’s already done. “Act as if you are very accepting of the idea.” I say, “Have you been acting as if you were accepting of the idea of your going separate ways?” “Oh, no.” I said, “Well, how do you like the results of that? Why don’t you try something else? Something different? Something new? And I think if you act accepting, ‘I don’t blame you. Of course you can’t trust me. I don’t blame you.’ And begin enjoying your friends and gently, gradually pull away, you will observe her pursuing you.

28. “My husband has a drinking problem. He yelled, “Why don’t you mind your own business?! I don’t tell you what to drink or how to run your life.” I was caring about him, but he can’t see that.”

If she would stop talking to him about his drinking, ignore what she doesn’t like, and talk about the things that she does like, defend him, make excuses for him, and give it time, he will get better.

Often, a guy comes around to, “I’ve got a drinking problem, and I’ve got to work on it.” That’s when she stops harping and complaining.
29. “I’m having an affair with a married woman. Our sex is fantastic. We fell in love when we met. Communication was instant and great. I’m obsessed with her, but she refuses to leave her husband and it’s lessening her interest in me. I can’t stand her new coolness and the fact she refuses to leave her husband”

First, I would show him how to become independent of her and to pull away. Now, sometimes that’s very difficult to do. The married woman in this case is not totally rejecting my client. She wants to keep seeing him, but on a piecemeal, partial basis, rather than total commitment. His ego needs total commitment.

So my first approach is to help him improve the relationship by removing all pressuring her. Now, if I can’t succeed at that, then I get him to pursue her hot and heavy until she is so turned off by him that she totally rejects him and doesn’t want to see him at all, and insists on it. So then he’s forced to accept the loss. Sometimes, if you make a situation much worse, then it forces the person to change.

30. “Our marriage has lost its excitement. There is no enthusiasm about anything. We don’t argue. We’re not about to separate. But is there something we can do to bring a little of the old fire back? Or do all marriages ultimately drift into permanent boredom?”

There’s a lot going on here in this particular situation, because they both want it to get better. When both people want it to get better, they need very little counseling. It’s when one is totally pulling away and doesn’t want the marriage at all.

So here it’s an easy thing to help revive in each person’s imagination the original qualities. A few years ago, I surprised myself a little bit. I told my wife, “I’m in love with your soul.” And I don’t even hardly believe in soul as a psychological concept, particularly. But I meant her character and her personality, because she’s so sweet and so compassionate with other people. So I help people revive what were the original qualities in the other person that made you feel excited about them, that made you feel sold on them. And it works.
31. “I keep falling in love with jerks who never can commit. What should I do?”

Well, enjoy the jerks. Stop expecting more. As soon as you see that a man cannot or will not give commitment, pull away. You’ll quickly notice he begins to pursue you. I recommend very strongly to women the book called The Rules, by two Jewish women. I don’t remember their names. The Rules Book 1, and of course they came out with The Rules Book 2. It’s a very small paperback. It tells a woman exactly how to get a man to fall in love with her, and how to want to marry her, but most importantly how to stay in love with her. They act like this is a male/female thing, but it works both ways. It’s basically playing hard to get.

A very successful movie actor, Warren Beatty, was single and a womanizer for many years. Then just a few years ago, he met this actress, fell madly in love with her, which he had never done before, and married her and continued to have a happy marriage. The interviewer said, “What was different about her, since you never felt this way about any other woman?” He said, “Integrity.”

I was exchanging this with my wife as we were driving up to Marble Falls a few weeks ago, and she says, “Yes, it fits your idea perfectly. She didn’t pursue him like all the other women had done. She kept him at arm’s length,” was the way my wife put it. She kept him at arm’s length.

32. “My husband is a severe alcoholic”

One of the gynecologists who came to me for psychoanalysis became very sold on me, came to me one day and said, “Homer, I’ve got this woman patient that I’ve been trying to get her to leave her husband, and I can’t get her to leave. Can I refer her to you?” And I said, “Why do you want her to leave her husband?” “Well, the husband is a very severe alcoholic. She’s got her own business; it’s a building supplies business which she has built up by herself. They have no kids. They’ve been married for 7 years. While she was unconscious in the hospital, her husband took a lit cigarette and burnt her body all over. And everybody’s trying to get her to leave her husband, but nobody can. So can I refer her to you?” I said, “Sure.”

So he referred her to the psychiatric clinic, and Dr. Murray thought he would treat her first. He tried to get her to leave her husband, and couldn’t. She seemingly was falling in love with him, and he didn’t know what the heck to do about that. So he said, “I’m referring her to you.” I said, “Okay, that’s good.” I cut my teeth on women falling in love with me. During psychoanalytic training, that’s no big deal. So he referred her to me.

Her name was Tammy West. I said, “Why don’t you leave your husband?” She said, “Two reasons. Number one, I love him.” Now he was a severe alcoholic and refusing any kind of treatment. “I love him, that’s why. And the second reason is that if I divorced him, I would have to share my income with him, even though he didn’t help me build up my business at all.
And I’m not going to do that.” I handled this in one session. I said, “If you really loved him, you’d leave him because he’s not going to be motivated to change, to improve. I guess you will agree that he needs a lot of emotional help?” “Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.” “That he is a mess the way he is. He’s hostile, he’s sadistic, he’s still attached to his parents in Ft. Worth, Texas, has to travel from San Antonio to Ft. Worth very regularly. He’s over-dependent on them.” She says, “Yeah, yeah, I agree.”

I said, “Well, if you really loved him, you’d leave him because you’re so-called love is keeping him the way that he is.” She said, “I see that. Okay. But the fact remains I’d have to share my business with him if I divorced him.” And I said, “I want you to talk with a judge.” I didn’t have any judge in mind. “I want you to talk with a judge privately in his chambers, and find out what the judge thinks about that, because I think judges are average human beings and they’re going to see the unfairness of your having to share the business that you built up totally. Even though you did build it up during the marriage, your husband didn’t help you at all.” She says, “No, I’m not going to talk to any judge.” I said, “Well, that’s a homework assignment.”

See, psychoanalysts were not doing homework assignments. That became a new innovation dreamed up by Dr. Albert Ellis in New York City, starting in about the middle of 1955. I didn’t even know anything about Dr. Ellis at that time.

So anyway, I said, “Well, I’m requiring that.” She said, “I’m not going to do it.” I said, “Then, I’m not going to see you anymore.” See, I was coming from a position of not needing to keep my patient. Otherwise, if I had been coming from a needing position of needing to keep her, then I could not have taken that stand. That’s what gave me my negotiating power. I said, “Then I’m not going to see you anymore.” She said, “Really?” I said, “That’s right.” She said, “Well, I can tell that you can help me.” I said, “Well, not if you don’t do what I tell you to do, I can’t.” She said, “Alright. You’re a hard man to do business with, but I’ll do it.”

So she talked with a judge privately in his chambers, and the judge told her, “You can keep your business totally on your own.” So she got a divorce and kept her business. And of course, as almost always, the ex-husband took treatment, got over his alcoholism. But she didn’t want him back. She was enjoying her freedom and her independence too much.

33. “I’ll take counseling, but not to save this marriage. I’m head over heels in love with another man, and he’s head over heels in love with me”

In about 1982, there was a journalist named Sam in San Antonio. He came in with his wife, a very pretty schoolteacher. They were both in their late 30’s, and had been married a few years. She said, “I’ll take counseling, but not to save this marriage. I’m head over heels in love with another man, and he’s head over heels in love with me. We’re seeing each other every day.” She said this in front of her husband, which was not news to him. She said, “I
will take counseling for two reasons. Number one, I want to be supportive of my husband because he’s very depressed about my moving out and filing for divorce. I don’t hate him.” I almost fell out of my chair when she said this. She said, “And maybe I might learn something.” Because when people want a divorce, they think they know it all.

I then asked her to wait in the waiting room, and I talked with him privately. I said, “Sam, I guarantee to save your marriage.” He said, “What are you going to do about the other guy?” I said, “Not anything.” He said, “But that’s the problem.” I said, “If you learn what I teach, you will have no competition at all. Almost all people without a lot of training are just babies.” He said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Well, this guy that she’s in love with and he’s in love with her, he will get upset if he doesn’t get his way.” Sam laughed a little bit. He said, “I don’t think so. This guy’s too smart for that.” I said, “Well, we’ll get to see, won’t we?”

So in private with her, I said, “Will you have lunch every two weeks with your husband, so you can give me some feedback on how he’s doing?” She said, “Sure. I’ll do that.” I said, “Now, I want you to enjoy this love affair that you’ve got.” She said, “Why do you say that?” I said, “Because it’s not going to last, that’s why.” She said, “Why do you say that?” I said, “Because all people are just babies. They get upset if they don’t get their way.” She laughed a little bit and said, “Well, I think you’re wrong.” I said, “Okay, that’s fine.”

Five or six months later, she had gone through three or four different guys, and back in love with her husband. I said, “Explain this to me.” She said, “Well, you’re right. Not any of the guys that I was in love with or dating could stand me having lunch with my husband. They would all feel very jealous and upset by that. And I thought, ‘I don’t need this.’ And in the meantime, I could talk to my husband about anything, and he wouldn’t get upset about it. And anybody who would take all the shit I’ve given my husband and still loves me, I have to love him back.” That’s what she said about that.

In my opinion, that comes from the power of not needing. I have forty-four different strategies, but there are just two or three basic strategies that the others are dependent upon. One of the main strategies is, of course, the tremendous power and learning that comes from not needing. He learned to not need his wife, and this made him very attractive to her and also set him up in contrast with the other men friends that she had, because each one of them needed her and was constantly pressuring her to get more.

34. “My mate is never ‘there,’ never supportive of me.”

A couple years ago, my son in Austin got married. My wife went to the trouble of finding out his new wife’s birthday, and bought her a little gift – not real expensive, but a nice gift. She wrapped it beautifully and I mailed it. Now, Austin’s only 80 miles away, so the mail travels in 1 or 2 days easy. Every day, my wife Ruby asked me, “Well, has Eleanor or Russell phoned or written to say that they got the birthday gift?” And I said, “No, no they haven’t.” So I’m feeling defensive.

So finally she gets tired of asking me, so she stops. Three weeks later, we go to a matinee on Sunday. And on the way back from the movie, all of a sudden she brings it up as we’re
traveling in the car. She says, “Have you heard from Russell or Eleanor that they got the gift?” And I said, “No.” I’m beginning to feel defensive again. My wife says something negative and I think to myself, “Homer, why don’t you practice what you preach? Do a little empathizing here.” So I said, “People just don’t have manners anymore,” which is not typical of me. I’m finding fault with my son. We love and adore his new wife. She’s very mature, very pretty, and very much in love with Russell, so we couldn’t be happier. So here I’m saying they don’t have good manners anymore. Immediately my wife says, “Well, maybe they haven’t gotten it yet.” Haven’t gotten it in 3 weeks? That would have been an appropriate remark after 1 or 2 days or 3 days, but she never said that at the beginning. But here, after 3 weeks, it shows the power that if she jumps up and down on somebody else and I defend them, then she jumps up and down on them and me. But if I jump up and down on them with her, then she reverses and defends them.

Now what if I had said, “Maybe they haven’t gotten it yet?” Then I’m defending them. That doesn’t work, because that’s what I said at the beginning. But agreeing with your mate’s feelings does work magic.

If you get stuck, or need help, I’m available for telephone counseling, and you can reach me by calling 210-602-7806. If you have the ability to email me -- please include the following information in an email addressed to HomMcD@aol.com...

-- Your full name
-- The time zone you're in
-- A convenient time for me to call you
-- A 2-page summary of the current situation of your relationship.
  Please do not give a history, just the present situation.

I will study your summary, so please include any questions or specific concerns you would like addressed. There is no charge or obligation for this initial consultation, so I encourage you to write. I will discuss the cost of counseling when we speak. Please be sure to provide all the information I need to contact you.

I truly want you to save your relationship, and I’m available to help you.

Sincerely,

Homer McDonald