

SECTION TWO

THE FIRST STEPS TO SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE When the Head Understands, the Heart Can Follow

When we lie, attack, cling, run, or act like victims, we hurt our partners and ourselves, but because we don't understand why we do those things, we keep repeating them and causing more injury. Although most of us have been stuck in this destructive pattern all our lives, there is a way out—Hallelujah!! With an understanding of Getting and Protecting Behaviors, we can:

- eliminate the mystery and frustration of human behavior
- change the way we feel about the behavior of others—including our spouses—which dramatically changes the way we react to them
- eliminate our own unproductive feelings of guilt
- overcome the frustration of trying to change other people
- identify what we need to change about ourselves

ELIMINATING THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

When we understand our need for Real Love and how we're affected by its absence, we can see that all the lying, anger, withdrawal, whining, and other manipulations used by ourselves and others are just Getting and Protecting Behaviors that result from feeling empty and afraid. Never again wonder why your spouse is behaving badly. Don't make it complicated. Just remember that he or she is empty and afraid. Once you see that, the mystery of these behaviors vanishes, and then you can change forever the way you feel about your partner, as well as how you behave toward him or her.

CHANGING OUR FEELINGS ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE WITH A KNOWLEDGE OF GETTING AND PROTECTING BEHAVIORS

Imagine that you and I are in the Bahamas, enjoying a pleasant lunch, a warm tropical breeze, and the soothing music of a live band as we sit together by the side of a pool. We're having a perfect day, but then someone in the pool starts splashing you—first on your shoes, then higher up on your pants. You can't see who it is because there's a deck chair between you and the person in the pool. At first you ignore it, but eventually you begin to get wet and irritated, and finally you get up from your chair to say something to this idiot who's being so thoughtless. As you stand up, however, to look over the chair that's in your way, you see that the man splashing you is drowning. He's only splashing you because he's thrashing and kicking in the water to keep his head from going under.

How do you feel now? Are you still angry at this man? Of course not—who in their right mind could be angry at someone who's drowning? In fact, as soon as you see why he's splashing you, you not only lose your irritation, but you try to help him out of the water. Let's ask some important questions about this event:

- How long did it take for your feelings of anger to be replaced by a feeling of complete acceptance? It happened in an instant. As soon as you understood that the man was drowning, your anger vanished.
- After seeing the truth of the situation, how much effort did you exert to control your anger? None. When you saw that the man was splashing you only in an effort to save himself, your anger simply disappeared. You didn't have to control yourself or work to make your anger go away.
- What did the drowning man have to do to persuade you to help him? Did he have to pay you? Apologize to you? Beg you? Of course not. You offered him your assistance without any conditions. With a simple flash of understanding, your feelings of anger were replaced not only by acceptance, but by an unconditional concern for his welfare (Real Love).

With an understanding of Real Love and Getting and Protecting Behaviors, the way you feel toward other people in real life—notably your spouse—can change just as quickly and dramatically as your feelings changed toward the man in the pool. You now realize that without sufficient Real Love—without the single most important ingredient required for happiness—people feel like they’re drowning all the time, and then they’ll use the Getting and Protecting Behaviors that allow them to temporarily keep their heads above water. Regrettably, as they’re splashing about in the water with these behaviors, they often affect us in negative ways. When you understand that, the effect is powerful:

- Your feelings change immediately. When you understand that every time your spouse uses Getting and Protecting Behaviors, he or she is simply drowning—not trying primarily to annoy *you*—you can’t stay angry at him or her for one minute longer.
- You don’t have to work at controlling your anger. It will usually go away on its own.
- Your negative feelings are actually replaced by a desire to help your drowning spouse.

When your head understands, your heart can follow. I can’t tell you how many thousand emails and phone calls I have received from people who have described how dramatically their feelings have changed when they’ve finally understood the real reasons for their partner’s behavior.

Every time your spouse lies, attacks, acts like a victim, clings, or withdraws from you, he or she is saying that he doesn’t have enough of the Real Love that makes life worth living. He’s drowning and using the behaviors he’s used all his life to protect himself and to get the Imitation Love that temporarily distracts him from the pain that always results from a lack of Real Love. When you don’t understand that picture, you naturally want him or her to stop those behaviors, which are inconvenient and even painful to you. Unfortunately, that’s like telling a drowning man that he should stop struggling, stop bothering you, and just drown. How foolish is that? Even worse, you often jump into the water with him and demand that he

save you from drowning. So now there are two of you drowning, and you're both choking the other as you demand help. It's an impossible situation. When you understand Getting and Protecting Behaviors, you can stop jumping in the water with your spouse. You can stop yelling at him or her from the sidelines and actually help him out of the water instead.

As I tell people that their Getting and Protecting Behaviors are a result of a lifetime of not feeling loved, not just a response to something their spouse did in a given moment, many people still object, and they explain—in great detail—how their partner's behavior really did cause their subsequent feelings. They commonly say—in a variety of ways—“He (or she) makes me so angry.” Every time we get angry at someone, we're implying that she is the cause. After all, we reason, we wouldn't be angry if she hadn't done what she did, so it must be her fault. Because we're all flawed and frequently do inconsiderate things with each other, other people will always give us plentiful opportunities to blame them for our anger. We absolutely must understand, however, that other people do not make us angry, so let's absolutely prove that—right now and for all time.

Imagine that you have only two dollars left in the world, and you're starving. Putting the money on a table, you get ready to go out and buy some bread. Suddenly, I dash into the room, snatch the two dollars off the table, and run away before you can stop me. You'd almost certainly be angry at me and would claim that I made you angry.

Now imagine that the next day I do exactly the same thing—steal two dollars off the table as you're getting ready to go out and buy some bread—but this time you have twenty million dollars in the bank. How would you feel now? Compared to twenty million, two dollars is nothing, and losing it would be insignificant.

We just proved that I didn't make you angry when I took your money the first time. If my behavior caused your reaction the first time, then doing the exact same thing the second time would have made you angry then, too.

But it didn't. Your anger was a reaction to your lack of twenty million dollars, and I wasn't responsible for that.

Every time your spouse, or anyone else, does something inconsiderate—she's late, he gets angry, she withdraws her affection—he or she is taking two emotional dollars from you. If that's your last two dollars—which is how you feel when you don't have enough Real Love—the loss is a big deal. When you have enough Real Love, however, you feel like you have twenty million dollars, and then the loss of two dollars seems relatively meaningless. With enough Real Love—with twenty million in the bank—other people can't "make" you angry anymore when they take two dollars. Their behaviors become minor inconveniences, not major catastrophes. At this point you may think this sounds like a fairy tale, but it's not. When we understand Getting and Protecting Behaviors, and when we have enough Real Love, our feelings and behavior really do change. If you can put aside your skepticism—understandably born of a lifetime of experience—and take the steps described in this report and subsequent teaching materials I'll soon describe, you'll learn for yourself the effect of feeling Real Love and having an accurate understanding of human behavior.

ELIMINATING OUR OWN UNPRODUCTIVE FEELINGS OF GUILT

We've already established that your spouse behaves badly only because she is drowning. The rules are no different for you, so when you treat your spouse badly, you're drowning too and simply trying to protect yourself or get something from her. That doesn't justify your behavior, but it does explain it. A little guilt can be good—it can motivate us to change—but excessive guilt only makes us feel bad. In fact, if you feel guilty enough, you'll likely hide the behavior that makes you feel bad, and then you'll never change it. You don't need to beat yourself when you make mistakes in your marriage, but you do need to recognize your mistakes and take the steps necessary to avoid making them in the future.

It can be especially difficult to avoid feeling guilty when your wife is telling you—with her words and behavior—that you are responsible for her anger, sadness, pain, and so on. Certainly you need to be compassionate

and not dismiss her pain—you need to do whatever you can to accept and love her—but in the same way that she is not responsible for your feelings, you are not responsible for hers. If your spouse is drowning, almost everything you do will become threatening, and she'll react badly to you. Although you can certainly make things worse for her when you're thoughtless and uncaring, you are not responsible for her drowning, which is a result of a lifetime of insufficient Real Love.

OVERCOMING THE FRUSTRATION OF TRYING TO CHANGE OTHER PEOPLE

Almost every day I speak with married people whose complaints boil down to this: How can I GET my partner to stop being critical, angry, neglectful, and so on—in other words, how can I get my partner to stop using Getting and Protecting Behaviors?

Imagine again that you're standing by the side of a pool and watching a man who's drowning. You wouldn't say, "Stop it. You're getting me wet. Why don't you just put your hands at your sides and slip quietly under the water?" But that's just what we're doing when we insist that our partners change their behavior. They're using the Getting and Protecting Behaviors they believe will keep their heads above water, and we respond by insisting that they stop it and simply drown. No wonder our demands for change are ineffective and cause so much frustration for ourselves and our spouses.

The Law of Choice

Drowning people are not primarily trying to hurt us, just doing whatever it takes to save themselves—and they have the right to do that, even if their efforts inconvenience us. That doesn't make their behavior right, but they must be allowed to make their own choices about what they do. Everyone has the right to choose what he or she says and does. That is the Law of Choice, and it's the most important principle in any relationship, including marriage. On many occasions—each of which can seem so very justifiable—you may want to control the choices of your spouse, but the results would be awful. Where would it end? If you have the right to control what *he* does, it's only fair that he gets to control what *you* do. Without the Law

of Choice, everyone would become a puppet dangling from strings controlled by others—an intolerable thought.

If you control me in any way, I'm no longer myself. I've become an extension of you, like your shoes or gloves. But when you're with your shoes or gloves—or anything else you control—you're still alone, the worst condition of all. You might think you want to control what your spouse does, but if you succeed in that effort—if you make all the decisions and do all the thinking—you'll only guarantee your own loneliness. You won't have a partner but a prisoner. Is that what you really want? To be in control but alone? Or do you want to have a relationship with a real person as you allow your spouse to make his own choices?

What you truly want is a real relationship with your spouse, and *a relationship is the natural result of people making independent choices*. In the process of making independent choices, we all make mistakes, and as we do, it is simply unavoidable that the people around us will be inconvenienced, even hurt. If *you* expect to make mistakes, how could you expect that your *spouse* would not make mistakes, including those that inconvenience you? We have that expectation because when we're suffering from the intolerable condition of being empty and afraid ourselves, we naturally expect that everyone around us—especially our spouses—will avoid hurting us and even give us something to fill our emptiness. When they don't fill those expectations, we're disappointed and angry.

Now, this does not mean you can't make a *request* that your partner do something, but be careful: If you're not feeling loving, your "request" will come across as a demand or attack. We'll talk more about requests shortly.

In every situation or relationship, you have three choices:

- Live with it and hate it. This is never a smart choice, since it guarantees only that *you* will be miserable.
- Live with it and like it. This doesn't mean you can't do anything about the way things are. You can make requests, negotiate agreements, take action on your own, and make decisions that change the way you feel and behave. We'll be talking about all these options later.

- Leave it. Sometimes it's not possible for us to be happy—to feel loved and loving—in certain situations or relationships. It may then be best to walk away from an individual interaction or even a relationship.

We try to control other people—including our spouses—only because we are empty and afraid, and we believe that as we control others we will feel safer and less helpless. The truth is, we already have great power. We can *always* make decisions that will enable us to see the world differently and which will bring into our lives more of the Real Love that will make us truly happy. *That* is real power—the ability to change our own feelings and behavior—not the ability to control the behavior of others.

IDENTIFYING WHAT WE NEED TO CHANGE ABOUT OURSELVES

When we see our Getting and Protecting Behaviors as signs of our own emptiness and fear, we don't focus any longer on the mistakes and flaws of other people. We can take the steps to find Real Love and begin to change the way we feel and behave. Until we understand the cause of our Getting and Protecting Behaviors, however, we're doomed to repeat them.

THE LAW OF EXPECTATIONS

Imagine that you're starving in the middle of the desert. In that condition, you'll do just about anything to get food and to protect yourself from losing what little you have. When a man walks by with a backpack full of food, you naturally expect him to help you. After all, if he has what you desperately need, how could he possibly refuse to help?

Being without Real Love is like being without food. Without sufficient Real Love, we have enormous expectations of other people—for Real Love if they have it, and for Imitation Love if they don't. It's from your spouse that you usually have the greatest expectations of all, and for two reasons: First, it's very likely that he or she actually did fill your expectations for "happiness" in the beginning of your relationship—but filled them with Imitation Love. *That* is why you fell in love with your partner, because he or she gave you enough Imitation Love that you temporarily felt pretty darned good.

But then the effect of Imitation Love wore off, and you wondered why you weren't happy anymore. "When I fell in love with my partner," you thought to yourself, "he made me happy." We like to think that someone else can *make* us happy—for one thing, it relieves us of the responsibility we have for our own happiness. And we like it when people tell us that we make *them* happy, because then we feel worthwhile and important. But giving this responsibility to our spouses has awful consequences—we then have huge expectations that they will *continue* to make us happy, and if we do become unhappy, we can only conclude that our partners are responsible for that condition.

The second reason we have huge expectations of our spouses is that they actually *promised* to make us happy. Regardless of the words actually spoken at the wedding ceremony, what we *hear* our spouses say is this: "I promise to make you happy—always. I will heal your past wounds and satisfy your present needs and expectations—even when you don't express them. I will lift you up when you're discouraged. I will accept and love you no matter what mistakes you make. I give to you all that I have or ever will have. And I will never leave you."

Neither partner is consciously aware of making this bushel of promises, but each partner still hears them and insists that they be fulfilled. When both partners lack sufficient Real Love, however, they can't possibly make one another happy, and then their efforts to do that yield only disappointment and anger, no matter how hard they try.

Expectations can only kill the potential happiness in a marriage, as illustrated by Rachel, a woman who complained to me that her husband, Kevin, never gave her flowers anymore, didn't look at her with affection as he once did, and didn't talk to her when he came home from work. She was in the process of listing more of his failings when I said, "It sounds like you expect Kevin to do a lot of things."

She looked at me like I was stupid. "Why *wouldn't* I? He's my husband."

“What if I *expected* you to give me a dozen roses on my birthday,” I said, “and you only gave me nine? I’d only have one thing on my mind, wouldn’t I?”

“The three roses you *didn’t* get,” she said.

“In fact, even if you did give me a dozen roses, I wouldn’t be thrilled by them—I’d only be *satisfied* that you filled my demand. It can’t feel like a gift when I’m essentially *making* you give me something with my expectations. But if I expect *nothing* from you, even a single rose from you will feel like a delightful gift, real evidence that you care about me. I’ll love it.”

“With your expectations,” I continue, “you make it impossible for anything you get from Kevin to feel like a gift. Everything he does seems like nothing to you. He can never do enough to please you. In addition, he *knows* he can never do enough, and eventually he gets to the point where he doesn’t *want* to do anything with you or for you.”

“I’d never thought of that.”

The Law of Expectations states that we never have the right to expect anyone to do anything for us. That makes sense when we understand the Law of Choice. If we understand that other people really do get to make their own choices—and mistakes—how could we possibly expect them to change their choices to please us? Rachel doesn’t have the right to expect Kevin to give her what she wants.

After I explained the Law of Expectations, Rachel said, “But if I don’t have any expectations, Kevin won’t do anything. How do I get what I want?”

“You can always *ask* Kevin for what you want—nothing wrong with that—but you haven’t been making *requests* of Kevin. You’ve been making *demands*.”

“How do you know that?” she asked.

“When Kevin doesn’t give you what you ‘ask’ for, do you feel either disappointed or irritated?”

Throughout our discussion, Rachel had made it clear that she was experiencing both of those feelings, so she could hardly deny it. “I guess I do,” she said, “but isn’t that natural?”

“Sure, it’s natural, but it also shows that you’re making demands and having expectations, and it’s killing your happiness and your marriage. Kevin is empty himself, so he feels your expectations as a huge burden to carry and as an accusation that he’s not acceptable. He responds with Getting and Protecting Behaviors, and those never make the two of you feel closer.”

Each time we’re angry, we demonstrate that we have expectations that are not being filled. When we understand the Law of Expectations, it’s much more difficult to remain angry at anyone.

There is an exception to the Law of Expectations. If your spouse makes a promise to do or not do something, you have a right to have expectations about his or her behavior. Promises, requests, and agreements will be addressed in additional educational materials described at the end of this report.

Realizing the selfishness of expectations is often quite a blow to married people. The very reason most of us get married is to have someone we *can* expect to love us and make us happy, and when we hear that those expectations are unreasonable, we wonder, Why should we bother to get married at all? Indeed, if our goal is primarily to get what we want from our spouses, marriage often will be unfulfilling and even unfair. When we understand, however, that marriage is really an opportunity to learn how to love our spouses, our perspective on marriage changes considerably.

THE FIVE STEPS TO ELIMINATE ALL CONFLICT IN YOUR MARRIAGE

The subtitle of this report promised five miraculous steps, so let's talk about those now. We've already learned that anger might motivate people to give us what we want—or think we want—in the short term, but it's always hurtful and therefore “wrong.” It communicates the deadly message, “I don't love you.”

I recommend that you write these five steps on a three-by-five card and put it in your pocket or purse. Pull it out and read it several times a day, especially when you're angry. If you'll do that, you will change your life.

- Be quiet
- Be wrong
- Feel loved
- Get loved
- Be loving

Be Quiet

When you're angry, there is nothing you can say that will make you or your spouse feel loved, loving, and happy. Nothing. In the presence of accusations and misinformation, it may sometimes be necessary to point out inaccuracies and injustices that involve your spouse, but if you're irritated, you will make the situation worse, no matter how cleverly you respond and how *right* you believe you are. I've tried hundreds of ways to express my anger at people in a productive way, and I've watched hundreds of others do the same. I can say with absolute certainty that when we're angry at people, we cannot communicate as effectively with them.

This does not mean you can't talk about your anger, but while you're angry at your spouse, do not express your anger to him or her. You'll damage your relationship and your happiness, and you'll make it very difficult to arrive at the best solution to any specific conflict. You can, however, express your anger to another person, not to someone who will only sympathize with you and thereby perpetuate your anger, but to someone who can help you see the selfishness of your anger and then accept you.

This also does not mean you have to agree with or give in to your spouse when you're angry. That's just being a doormat, which isn't healthy. In later materials we'll discuss many things you can do to resolve conflicts, but all these principles and actions are more effective when you're not expressing anger at your spouse.

When I say you need to be quiet when you're angry, I don't mean that you just need to stop talking. You also need to avoid the innumerable non-verbal forms of communicating a lack of acceptance, since it has been estimated that 85+% of our communication is non-verbal. Obviously, you can't avoid all these forms of expressing anger unless you're actually not angry. If you're angry, you will express it in some way. You won't be able to fake it for long, if at all.

Be Wrong

Earlier I suggested that any feeling or behavior that detracts from feeling loved, loving, and happy is wrong. When you're angry, you're trying to protect yourself and get what you want. You're unloving, blind, trying to control your partner, and expecting him or her to make you happy. Because anger always detracts from feeling loved, loving, and happy, it is always wrong, and once you recognize that, it's much more difficult to stay angry or insist on whatever course of action you're pursuing.

When I say anger is wrong, I am not saying you shouldn't be angry, nor that you should hide the anger you feel—we've already talked about expressing anger to other people in order to create opportunities to feel

accepted. Anger is wrong because it simply doesn't work—it's not a loving way to live, and it keeps us from achieving our greatest goal, which is happiness.

You can always find something wrong with the behavior of your partner. That's easy, but it's also irrelevant. It simply does not matter how wrong your spouse is if YOU are angry. You cannot change the interaction or the relationship in a positive way until you admit the error of YOUR anger.

Every time we're angry, there are two ways we can go. First, we can blame our partner and demand that he or she change. Or, second, we can admit that we're wrong and do what's necessary to find the Real Love that will eliminate our anger. We often choose blaming because it seems easier in the moment. But does it ever work? Does it ever eliminate the anger that poisons our happiness and our relationships? When we see the utter futility of blaming and anger, it's much easier to admit that we're wrong and to take truly productive steps to change ourselves.

Feel Loved (Remember That You're Loved)

Feeling unconditionally loved really is like having twenty million emotional dollars. With Real Love nothing else matters; without it nothing else is enough. Sometimes, however, we do have a few million in the bank but simply forget we have it when confronted by a particularly stressful situation, like when our spouses are vigorously attacking us. On those occasions, we have what we need, but we temporarily lose access to it. If we make a conscious decision to remember that there *are* people who genuinely love us, we can often gain immediate access to our millions, lose our emptiness and fear, and thereby lose our need to use anger as a Getting and Protecting Behavior. It is not possible to feel loved and angry at the same time. Of course, this step is only effective if we've previously found people to unconditionally love us. This subject requires extensive explanation and examples and will be addressed in additional educational materials described at the end of this report.

Get Loved

Sometimes you may take the three steps above, but you still won't have enough Real Love in the bank to handle a situation with your spouse. On those occasions, you'll need to beef up your supply of love. Again, this process is described in additional educational materials described at the end of this report. I'm not trying to be evasive by alluding to "additional materials." It's just an extensive subject, but allow me to give you an example right here of finding Real Love, as well as an illustration of the use of the three-by-five card I mentioned a few paragraphs ago.

Late one evening, as Richard angrily confronted Linda about something she'd done, she began to feel increasingly irritated. She thought of a dozen brilliant, biting things to prove that she was right and he was wrong, but she remembered how badly conversations had always gone when she'd said those things, so she made a decision to practice being loving rather than insist on being right. Quietly, she pulled from her purse a three-by-five card, upon which she had written the five steps to eliminate anger. First, she resolved not to express her anger verbally at Richard, although she recognized that she was probably showing it in many non-verbal ways. Second, she realized that no matter what Richard was saying, no matter how unkindly he was behaving, her anger was selfish, unloving, and wrong. Third, she remembered the many occasions where she had felt unconditionally accepted and loved by friends as she had told the truth about HER OWN mistakes, flaws, and fears.

Despite all those efforts, however, she was still irritated, so she took the fourth step. She said, "Richard, I have to make a phone call right now, but I'll be back in just a few minutes. Is that all right?"

Then she went into the next room and called her friend, Elise. "Sometimes I just want to scream," she said. "He can be so demanding and critical—about everything."

"When Richard gets angry at you like that, what is he really telling you?"

“That he doesn’t care about me.”

“Right. At least in that moment, he cares a lot more about what he wants than about what you need. Anger is a Getting and Protecting Behavior, and we use it to get what we want and to protect ourselves. Anger is always selfish. So you’re right, he’s telling you he doesn’t care about you. But he’s also telling you something about himself, unrelated to you. What is it?”

“I’m not sure.”

“Why do people use Getting and Protecting Behaviors?”

“Because they’re empty and afraid?”

“Sure, and why would Richard be empty and afraid?”

Linda sighed and smiled. “Because he doesn’t feel loved.”

“So when he’s angry, he’s not only telling you he doesn’t care about you. He’s telling you he needs to be loved himself. And then how do you respond to that need?”

Chuckling now, Linda said, “I get angry at him, which only makes him feel worse. Then he protects himself by getting even more angry. It doesn’t make much sense, does it?”

“No, it’s kind of crazy, really,” said Elise.

“So how can I love him if I don’t feel loved myself.”

“Do you feel less angry at him right now?”

“I don’t feel angry at all.”

“That’s because you’re getting the love you need. I’m not doing anything fancy here. I’m just accepting you and caring about you while you’re being angry and unloving, and you can feel that. Nice feeling, isn’t it?”

When Linda went back to her conversation with Richard, she was carrying with her the love she had received from Elise, and with that love, she was able to listen to Richard and respond to him in a loving way. This is a very important concept.

Be Loving

One morning, Richard asked Linda to mail a package for him at the post office. She agreed, but when he got home that evening, he was furious to discover that his package was still on the dining room counter. Pulling from his pocket a three-by-five card tattered at the edges, he was reminded to be quiet—he didn’t call her on the cell phone and say the unkind things running through his mind—and he understood that he was wrong to be angry. He also remembered that there were people who cared about him, but he was still angry, so he called his friend, Glenn, and said, “Dang it, I needed that package to go out today, and she knew that. But she didn’t do it.”

Glenn briefly acknowledged that Linda had been inconsiderate and had inconvenienced Richard, but then he talked to Richard about the selfishness of *his* anger, and he was accepting and loving toward Richard as they spoke. Still Richard couldn’t let go of his fixation on the inconvenience of the situation and the offense he felt. So Glenn finally said, “Are there any dishes in the sink?”

“What are you talking about?” asked Richard.

“Go look and see if there are any dishes in the sink.”

Richard took the portable phone into the kitchen and said, “Sure, a few.”

“Wash them and put them away,” said Glenn.

“Is this like a joke? What does this have to do with her not mailing the package?”

“You can see that your anger isn’t helping you or your relationship. Right now you’re getting the acceptance you need, and you’re remembering that you have other people who care about you. But you’re still angry, so I’m suggesting that you’d feel more loved and loving if you did something loving for Linda. As you wash the dishes—as you consciously choose to do something for her—you might be able to start thinking about her happiness and remember the importance of a loving relationship with her instead of fussing about what you didn’t get for yourself.”

Richard washed the dishes. He also cleaned up the rest of the kitchen, and by the time Linda got home, he wasn’t angry at all. As soon as she walked in the door, she gasped, both because she realized she hadn’t mailed the package and because she saw what Richard had done in the kitchen. They had a wonderful conversation, quite different than they would have had if Richard hadn’t taken the five steps to eliminate anger.

Doing something loving for your spouse when you’re angry at her may be the last thing you feel like doing, but sharing love with others can often have the miraculous effect of multiplying the Real Love we have, even if the people we love give us nothing in return. If, therefore, you make a conscious decision to behave in a loving way toward your spouse when you’re angry at her, you’ll often find that the resulting love you feel will eliminate your anger.

Sometimes you don’t have to do something loving for your spouse to eliminate your anger at him or her. You might, for example, be a hundred miles apart and have no immediate way to demonstrate your love. But if you do something loving for someone else, the love you subsequently feel can eliminate the anger you feel toward your spouse. Real Love from any source is healing and energizing.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

In the subtitle of this report, I promised four bonus questions. We tend to make comments about what our partner is doing—usually a lot more than we realize. I've watched couples comment—which usually means offer criticisms—about each other several times a minute for hours, and they don't even recognize it. These comments often lead to arguments, and if not, at least resentments that simmer and cause much more destruction than anyone knows. I therefore suggest that before we offer ANY comment to our partner about HIM, we must be able to answer YES to ALL FOUR of the following questions.

First Question: Is this any of my business?

Most of the time, other people do not like us meddling in affairs that are none of our business. They feel violated. They sense that we're suggesting that they're simply not competent enough to handle a situation without our interference. When you're tempted to make a comment about what your partner is wearing, or eating, or doing (most of the time), ask yourself whether it's really your business. The answer is almost always NO.

It doesn't matter that you are "just trying to help," or that you're "right." Mostly people do not want our opinion about what they're doing. If they did, they'd ask for it.

Second Question: Does this really matter?

Suppose your answer to the first question is yes. Your wife is driving, for example, and she's about to take an exit that you KNOW will delay your arrival by at least two minutes. Is her decision your business (First Question above)? Yes, a little. After all, you're a passenger, and any decision she makes about driving will affect you.

BUT does a two minute delay really matter? Think about it. Are you willing to make a comment about her decision and save two minutes at the cost of undermining her confidence and almost certainly causing some element

of resentment toward you? In short, are you willing to damage your marriage for a two minute gain? Please. Most of the comments we make about other people just don't matter, and we need to simply shut up. People are eager for our wisdom to a far smaller degree than we might suppose.

Unfortunately, we have seen very poor examples from others all our lives when it comes to this issue. People have simply not weighed the consequences. They have just given advice because they wanted to, whether it was their business or not, or whether it mattered or not. From the time we were small children, we saw people offer advice about almost everything: the clothes we wore, how we combed our hair, our posture, the way we sat in a chair, and so on. So now we tend to do the same. We open our mouths and say whatever pops into our heads. Not wise.

Third Question: Am I being unconditionally loving?

If you are the least bit impatient or irritated as you offer a suggestion—if you think you can hide it, you're dreaming—it will be received as a criticism, and your interaction will go badly. Be quiet.

Fourth Question: Can the other person HEAR what I'm about to say in a loving way?

There are occasions when we can actually answer yes to the first Three Questions, but our partner is simply not in a position where he can HEAR what we want to say.

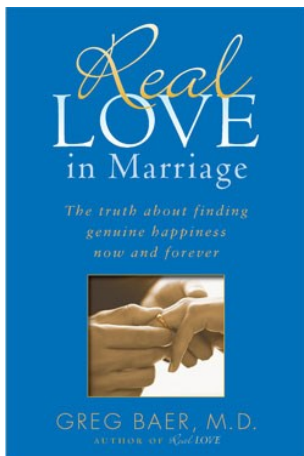
- She may just not be in the mood to hear a comment that could be remotely perceived as critical, even if you don't intend it that way. How can you tell? Look at her face.
- It might be a subject that she has indicated in the past that she just doesn't want to talk about.
- She might be completely concentrating on something else, and she doesn't want to be interrupted. How can you tell? Again, look at her face. Not complicated.

When your partner is not in a place to hear what you have to say, the answer to the Fourth Question is no, and you get to shut up again. Offering comments is productive only when you can answer yes to all Four Questions. I encourage you not to test this statement. Why? Because you already have mountains of proof—from your own experiences—to confirm the need for all Four Questions.

LEARN MORE

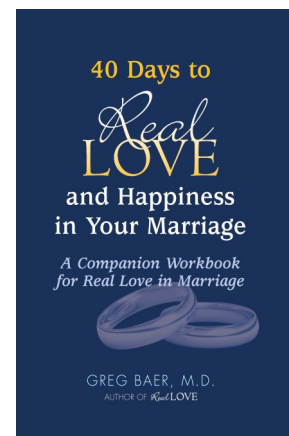
In this brief report, we have already discussed a great deal about human behavior and relationships. These principles are indispensable in the pursuit of personal happiness and fulfilling marriages. Thousands of couples all over the world who have learned these principles and how to implement them practically have revolutionized their families.

It simply is not possible in a report of this size to describe everything about eliminating all conflict and achieving a spectacular marriage. For that reason, I invite you to learn much more, both about additional principles and about application of the ones we have discussed.

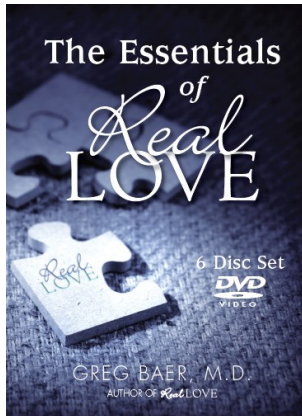


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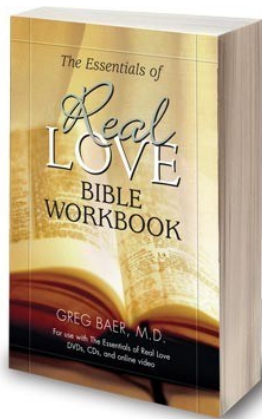
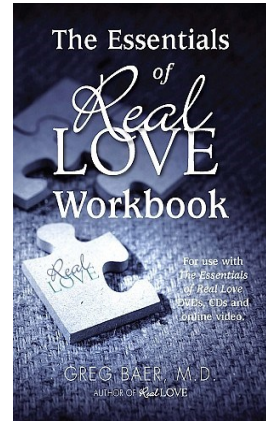
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